

## Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park A History



Boyes House at the Elk Prairie. Photo August 2015

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## Introduction

For those who travel California's north coast—visitors and locals alike—Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park (the Park) is the ultimate park experience. Uniquely situated, the Park includes ancient redwoods, streams, ocean beaches with towering cliffs, and a large prairie surrounded by the giant trees, each with its own specially-adapted flora and fauna, the latter including salmon and steelhead, Roosevelt elk, and the elusive marbled murrelet. Through the foresight and vision of the Save the Redwoods League and the State of California, protection of these incomparable values became a reality through decades of fund-raising and land purchases, culminating in today's 14,000-acre Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park.

The focus of this paper is a Euro-American history with broad coverage of the activities and people associated with the land before and during establishment of the Park. However, it fully acknowledges that the Park is within traditional Yurok territory. Their villages along the coast, fishing places on Prairie Creek, hunting and gathering sites in the prairies, and trails along and through the Park are the ethnographic component of the Park's rich heritage—culture and nature—folded into a magnificent reserve for all time.

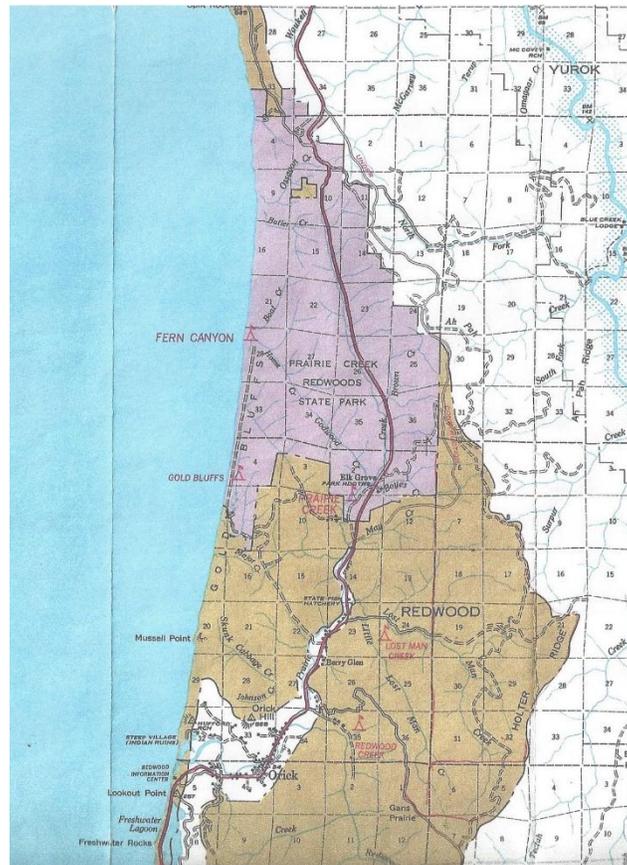
## Methods

Land ownerships, starting with patents and coming forward through the grantor/grantee process, were researched in the Humboldt County Recorder's Office in Eureka. With names and dates, it was then possible to search newspapers and other sources for information about people, events, and the Park.

The Arcata *Union*, which began publication in 1886, and the Blue Lake *Advocate*, 1888, were particularly helpful in gathering information on the Orick and Prairie Creek areas. They are available on microfilm at Humboldt State University Library. Other newspapers available on microfilm are the Humboldt *Times*, Humboldt *Standard*, the merged *Times-Standard*, *West Coast Signal*, *Ferndale Enterprise*, *Alta California*, and the *Western Watchman*. Thelma Hufford's "Orick News" columns in the Arcata *Union*, beginning in 1974, provided information that could not be found elsewhere. Often written with a historical perspective, these columns relied on "old timers," for first-person accounts. Thelma's informants included Ida Francis, whose grandmother was a Yurok woman, Annie Frey; Eunice White, daughter of Annie; Robert and Dick Davison, son and grandson, respectively, of the Arthur Davisons who came to Prairie Creek in the 1880s; and Margaret Lara, daughter of James and Josie Marks, Yurok residents. The "Orick News" also reported on local contemporary activities relevant to the Park. Savina Antonioli Barlow wrote about the Orick area in the Humboldt *Times* and Arcata *Union*. Other resources available in the Humboldt Room at HSU Library and consulted as part of this research included maps, miscellaneous papers in the pamphlet file, and published books. Tax assessments on microfilm at the County Library in Eureka provided information on land ownerships, developments on particular parcels, and personal property, such as numbers and kinds of livestock. Research in the Courthouse, the HSU Library, County Library, and on-site was conducted during the spring and summer of 2015.

## Setting

The Park is located in the far northwestern corner of Humboldt County, plus a few hundred acres or so in southern Del Norte County in township 13 north, range 1 east. The majority of the Park, however, is in township 12 north, range 1 east with approximately 2000 acres in the northern portion of township 11 north, range 1 east. Its western boundary is the Pacific Ocean; to the east, the highway bypass, completed in 1992; and on the north and south, Redwood National Park, first authorized by Congress in 1968. Old Highway 101—the Newton B. Drury Parkway--bisects the Park, running north and south and passing through the famed Elk Prairie.



Six Rivers National Forest Map 1988. Park in purple.

The Park is a “redwoods” park, meaning that the purpose of acquisition by Save the Redwoods League and the State of California was preservation of virgin groves of redwood trees. And those groves are magnificent. But there are other significant values: Prairie Creek, winding through the Park from north to south to join Redwood Creek, produces salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout; big leaf maples, some with extraordinary-sized leaves and other riparian species nurture this lovely watercourse; several meadows and the well-known Elk Prairie add diversity and beauty; and eight miles of beach, perpendicular bluffs, and Fern Canyon are distinct features of this redwoods park.

The region between Humboldt Bay and the Klamath River remained isolated and unoccupied by Euro-Americans until the spring of 1850. Prior to that, although ships had passed by and the shoreline was part of navigators' knowledge, the region remained the exclusive domain of the indigenous residents, Wiyot around Humboldt Bay and northward to about Little River and from there to the Klamath and up that river to about Bluff Creek, the land and waters belonged to Yurok people.

The object of locating Humboldt Bay by a land party in December 1849 was gold, more particularly, a supply port to move freight and passengers into the region for the purpose of mining. That first wave of miners was headed for diggings on the upper Klamath and Salmon rivers and east to the New River country on the Trinity River. But as these first gold-seekers trudge along the beach north of Trinidad, glittering specs were observed in the black sands below the high bluffs between Redwood Creek and the Klamath River. The reaction was nothing short of hysteria with claims that every man who worked the black sands would go home with unimagined wealth. That, of course, was far from reality, but the stories brought hundreds to the area, initiating settlement along Redwood and Prairie creeks.

The Park's history goes back to those first days, and over time, a number of influences charted that history, several of which are presented in this paper: 1) patenting the Public Domain; 2) mining at Gold Bluffs; 3) travel through the Park; 4) settlers; 5) the Civilian Conservation Corps; 6) redwoods preservation and Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park; and 6) Newton B. Drury.

### **Patenting the Public Domain**

For the purpose of "settling the West," Congress enacted general land laws which permitted individuals to claim and become owners of the Public Domain. Under such laws, patents, generally of 160 acres, were issued to individuals, mostly by the United States, but, some by the State of California. Each statute had specific conditions for any person making application for a patent. For example, the Act of 24 April 1820 provided that public land could be purchased for \$1.25 per acre with a minimum purchase of 80 acres and a down payment of \$100. It further provided that squatters could preempt these conditions and purchase land more cheaply if they had made improvements to the land, such as a house or fencing. The public land identified under this Act was in the Northwest Territory and Missouri—"The West" (Wikipedia).

For legitimate settlers, who intended to earn a livelihood off the land and "squatted" in good faith, the process worked well, and patents, the very foundation of establishing a legal chain of title to a piece of land, were issued, often years after settlement. Most settlers' patents for land now inside the Park were granted by the United States under the Act of 24 April 1820 and the Homestead Act of 20 May 1862 (Recorder's Office). When the State of California issued a patent for the "Elk Prairie," the enabling statutes included the Preemption Act of 4 Sept. 1841 and the Act of 3 March 1853, which provided for survey of public lands in California and the granting of preemption rights (Patents 15:625). Mineral Certificates, issued by the United States, were granted for surveyed mineral claims. The Timber and Stone Act of 1878 provided that 160-acre tracts of timber deemed "unfit for farming" were available for \$2.50 per acre. Despite the Act's stipulation that the land was to be used "exclusively" by the entryman, it was under this

statute that much of the magnificent redwood forests in northwestern California fraudulently passed into the hands of speculators and large timber companies (Shepherd 2015).

Once these northwestern townships were surveyed in the late 1870s, and the plats filed in the United States Land Office at Eureka, they were officially opened to entry and patent. In 1883, the United States Land Office, Humboldt District, began publishing Timber Land Notices in the Humboldt *Times*. A notice for a parcel, now within the Park, appeared in March of that year.

Notice is hereby given to whom it may concern that Rudolph Surben, Humboldt County, Cal., has made an application to the Government of the United States to purchase the following described tract of timber land, under the provisions of an Act for the sale of timber land in California, Oregon, and Nevada and in Washington territory, approved June 3, 1878, to wit: SW quarter section 2, 11N1E, 160 acres. All parties holding adverse claim, thereon, are hereby required to present the same before the Register and Receiver within sixty days from the date hereof, or the entry will be perfected under the provisions of said Act. C.F. Roberts, Register. (*Daily Times Telephone* 26 March 1883)

Surben deeded this quarter section to David Evans, who then transferred the parcel, along with large tracts in three other townships, to James D. Walker, all on the same day as the Notice (Deeds 14:195; 17:104). Using dummy entrymen, a couple of low-level hatchet men, a notary and county recorder who knowingly participated in the scheme, and a couple of wheeler-dealers in the Bay area, many thousands of acres of virgin forests passed from the Public Domain into the hands of Scottish investors, and from them, to large timber companies (Shepherd 2015). The grantee index books registered 426 transactions for David Evans between November 1882 and July 1883. Assuming each transaction was for 160 acres, those deeds constituted 68,160 acres (Recorder's Office).

Most of the forests involved in these shenanigans were south and east of the Park, although it appears there were also fraudulent patents in 12N1E. It is unclear how extensive the fraud was in this township as these patents were cancelled, but a few sections at the southern end of the Park in 11N1E were part of the Evans, et al. debacle. When the first Timber Land Notices began to appear, Eureka resident Mr. C.F. Keller wrote a letter to the editor.

...These runners or land spies, having determined that a piece of land is worth filing on, at once inform their employers, giving probable amount of timber, the chances of getting at the same, and the number and location of the tract to be gobbled. The clique in Eureka, having received reliable data, at once casts about to procure suitable parties to file on these lands. With this object in view, they approach that class of our population who have no family ties and to whose mill, everything is grist, so long as there is any pay in it. Having spotted their man, they approach him, when something like the following dialogue takes place:

“Would you like to make fifty dollars easy?”

“You bet I would,” comes the answer, “but how?”

“Oh, that is very easy, all you have to do is to go to the land office and file on a piece of redwood land.”

“Oh, yes, that's easy enough said, but where is the land?”

“You need not trouble about that, I will furnish all the necessary data concerning the land you are to file on.”

“Well, but,” says our man, “will somebody ask any questions?”

“Never fear,” says the tempter with a knowing wink, “that is all right; we have attended to that little affair.”

“Well, how about the fifty dollars?”

“You need have no fear on that head; I will pay you the money as soon as the land has been secured.”

“All right,” says our noble citizens, and away goes another slice of Uncle Sam’s land into the maw of the insatiable land-grabber.

Now, Mr. Editor, this is no secret. I have no notion that this community will be surprised by this statement, but, can nothing be done to stop these land thieves and this nefarious practice? If these rascalities were carried on somewhere else, say a thousand or more miles away from Eureka, we should no doubt speak about them in very bitter terms, but here, mum is the word. Bread and butter depends on our remaining quiet. . . .

Something ought to be done. I think we ought to give them the showing up they deserve. It is better to talk about this now when we may, perhaps, prevent some of the wrong than to wait until they have accomplished their object and then denounce them when it is too late to remedy. (*Weekly Democratic Standard* 24 March 1883)

“Mum” was definitely the word, as the men orchestrating the local goings-on were prominent and powerful, mainly David Evans and Joseph Russ. Things continued apace until early 1884, when a federal grand jury in San Francisco indicted and named six Humboldt County men, not with conspiracy to defraud the Government of its land, but some obscure charge of “subornation of perjury,” meaning they told the entrymen to lie! There was another indictment but the name was withheld because the person was out of the State (*San Francisco Chronicle* 21 Feb. 1884). The unidentified person was Joseph Russ, who was either so revered or so feared that no one dared associate his name with illegal happenings (*Humboldt Standard* 24 March 1884; Shepherd 2015). The timberland frauds of the 1880s resulted in one of the “most valuable tracts of timber land in the country,” located between Eureka and the Klamath River, passing from the Public Domain into private hands (*San Francisco Chronicle* 21 Feb. 1884).

Government investigations, reports, and legal maneuvers consumed years, but nobody went to jail, not Evans and friends, not the middle men in San Francisco who facilitated transfer of the forests to the Scottish Syndicate, not the various timber speculators and companies that acquired the land from the Syndicate. Low-level Charles Beach was convicted, but never served time (*Weekly Humboldt Standard* 29 Nov. 1888; *Western Watchman* 10 Aug. 1889). A few years later, however, northern California’s own homegrown boy practiced the trade in both California and Oregon and he did go to jail, as a “Looter of the Public Domain.”

Stephen A. Douglas Puter, aka S.A.D. Puter, was born in 1857, grew up near Blue Lake, learned the woods early in life, surveying and logging, while perfecting the “business.”

Having participated in the survey of these lands [Scottish Syndicate areas], and located a good many people thereon, I was familiar with the entire tract from one end to the other, and well-posted on all the methods that the company [California Redwood Co. of Evans, et al.] had employed in acquiring title thereto. It was only three years ago, in fact, that I went down to Humboldt County with C.A. Smith, a millionaire lumberman of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and sold him 30,000 acres of the same tract which had been cancelled and relocated by citizens of Humboldt County. (Puter 1908)

During the spring of 1900, Puter acquired at least 5000 acres of Park land that was patented in the 1890s under the Act of 24<sup>th</sup> April 1820. These forests and those in six other townships were immediately transferred to Charles A. Smith. Between June 1900 and March 1901, eleven deeds recorded these transfers for a total of 29,290 acres (Patents and Deeds, Recorder's Office). Puter explained that these were legitimate transactions after the previously-cancelled patents of the Evans era were relocated by Humboldt County citizens. Regardless of this assertion that the letter of the law was met, the reality was that the intent of the law was violated. As with Evans, et al., the end result was the concentration of large tracts of land in the hands of timber speculators and companies. One such transfer from Puter to Smith in June 1900 included more than 4000 acres now in the Park.

Deeds 72:152 (19 June 1900) S.A.D. Puter of Oregon to Charles A. Smith, Minneapolis, 825 acres outside the Park and in 12N1E, now Park land: SE qt, SE qt SW qt sec 3, 200 acres; NE qt NW qt, N half NE qt sec 10, 120 acres; all section 11, 640 acres; W half sec 12, 320 acres; SW qt sec 13, 160 acres; N half, SW qt sec 14, 480 acres; E half, SE qt SW qt sec 22, 360 acres; NE qt sec 23, 160 acres; E half sec 24, 320 acres; NW qt sec 25, 160 acres; SW qt sec 26, 160 acres; E half, E half NW qt, NE qt SW qt sec 27, 440 acres; E half, SW qt sec 34, 480 acres; and W half sec 35, 320 acres. Total in 12N1E: 4,320 acres.



“Puter at work in his cell” from *Looters of the Public Domain*. 1908. p. 294.

According to Puter, even with a “legitimate” deal, Smith never wanted to pay the price negotiated by Puter, and, as a result, Smith lost a couple of really large purchases, the Hooper Bros. properties and Vance lands. From his jail cell, Puter had nothing nice to say about Mr. Smith.

In my opinion, this man, C.A. Smith, although possessed of millions, is, without question, the most selfish, covetous and avaricious land grabber with whom I ever had dealings—ever ready and willing to do business with me when I had land to offer that he knew had been obtained fraudulently, because, as he figured, he could get them cheaply, and in the hope of securing such lands at a figure less than half their market value. (Puter 1908)

In 1916, the C.A. Smith Timber Company sold its Park lands to The Sage Land and Improvement Company (Deeds 135:118). Other Park tracts were conveyed to Sage in 1926 from Hammond Lumber Co. (Deeds 177:277) and Northern Redwood Lumber Co. (Deeds 179:417). Big transactions came in 1931, when Save the Redwoods League purchased 2,280.26 acres (Deeds 295:10) and 2,611.78 acres (Deeds 206:97) from Sage. Added to the 160-acre grove, previously donated by Zipporah Russ in 1923, the Sage purchases were sufficient to officially establish Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, a reserve of just over 5000 acres (Deeds 164:290).

Large Park for Prairie Creek Region—Regarded as the initial step toward the formation of a new state park area in that district, a tract comprising more than two thousand acres of timber and open land in the Prairie Creek region north of here has been deeded to the Save the Redwoods League, it was learned Wednesday. The tract, which lies partly in Humboldt and partly in Del Norte counties, was formerly the property of The Sage Land and Improvement Company, and was transferred to the Save the Redwoods League in a deed filed with the Humboldt county recorder a few days ago. The deed was filed at the request of the league, following receipt of the instrument from the headquarters of the Sage Company in Albany, New York. The tract lies in one of the most scenic regions in Northern California, and includes 2,280.26 acres, according to the deed. All of the land is located in townships 12 and 13, north, range 1 east, H.B. & M.

Indications that the tract will be converted into a state park area were seen in the deed itself, which establishes title to “unit 1, Prairie Creek.” Consummation of the deal, it is understood, resulted from a recent visit to the properties by Harry A. Sage, executive head of The Sage Land and Improvement Company. (*Blue Lake Advocate* 7 Nov. 1931)

The *Advocate* reported on only one of the two Sage transactions, but fully recognized that the Prairie Creek region would become a state park. Over the next half century, the League and the State enlarged the Park, adding parcels on the edges and purchasing in-holdings. Acquisition of the Gold Bluff Beach properties was a priority to secure the Park’s western boundary, protect the fragile bluffs and Fern Canyon, and provide a memorable Park experience for visitors.

Before moving on, remember the Surben patent application... After passing through the hands of Evan; James Walker, the go-between for Evans and the Scottish Syndicate; H.W. Swift, T.W. Harvey and R.S. Walker, another laundering transaction; and the American Lumber Company, the Scottish Syndicate’s company, the SW qt sec 2, 11N1E, disappeared with that last transfer in 1889 (Deeds 17:104, 17:118, 31:569). It disappeared because the Land Office in Washington cancelled the patent as part of its effort to correct some of the illegal activity that was going on in northwestern California. But it wasn’t gone for good. In 1896, John McCoy

received a patent for the SW qt sec 2, 11N1E, immediately transferring it to Edmund Bond, who conveyed the 160 acres to Puter (Patents 16:181; Deeds 56:107, 72:133). Incorporated into the large transactions from Puter to Charles Smith, the quarter section travelled through Smith, the C.A. Smith Timber Co., and Sage Land and Lumber Co. (Deeds 72:152, 102:143, 135:118) before reaching its final destination in the Park, arriving not as the whole SW qt but in pieces: the NE qt in 1948 (Official Records 61:347); W half in 1949 (Official Records 105:368); and the SE qt in 1953 (Official Records 272:399).

## The Gold Bluffs

The gold frenzy that sparked the explosive settlement of California brought Argonauts to its far northern shore in the spring of 1850. The first arrivals disembarked at Trinidad, where they began their inland trek to the Trinity, Klamath and Salmon rivers, anticipating that it would take only a little sluicing of gravel and water to make them rich. Others traveled northward along the Pacific's shores until they encountered the sheer cliffs—the Gold Bluffs—beyond Redwood Creek. Glittering color in the storm-deposited black sands along the Bluffs' beaches initiated a rush to this new El Dorado.

Twenty-seven miles beyond the Trinity [Trinidad] there is a beach several miles in extent, and bounded by a high bluff. The sands of this beach are mixed with gold to an extent almost beyond belief....The gold is mixed with the black sand in proportions of from ten cents to ten dollars the pound. At times when the surf is high, the gold is not easily discovered, but in the spring of the year, after a succession of calms, the entire beach is covered with bright and yellow gold. Mr. Collins, the Secretary of the Pacific Mining Company, measured a patch of gold and sand and estimates it will yield to each member of the Company, the snug little sum of \$43,000,000. (*Daily Alta California* 9 Jan. 1851).

Less than a year after the first landfall of Euro-Americans, the Bluffs were the destination of hundreds, including intrepid adventurer, Goldsborough Bruff, who recorded his wanderings with words and sketches. Bruff hiked up the beach from Trinidad in January 1851, enduring rain and difficult walking conditions until arriving at the Bluffs.

The settlement is named the "Middle Station" of the company. We clambered up the soft steep sides of the hill, on a tangled path of brush, roots and briars, and in about 400 yards from the beach at 4 p.m. reached the Station—a couple of log houses and two tents. We were kindly received by the Generals [sic] Wilson and Messrs. Burnell, Collins, and soon joined them at supper....

The cabins stand upon a very small level space, with a good spring near them. In front, the hill and forest rises, and in rear, the hill rapidly declines to the deep gorge and stream. Tall grass and ferns grow luxuriantly. Around the cabins are the stumps of the pines, where the trees were felled to construct them, and clear the space....

Early in the morning, hazy, but it soon cleared off. After breakfast we walked up the beach to the "Upper Station," about 1½ miles. At half the distance, the cliffs are very tall....Large pines and firs crown their summits. Much pebble and gravel are on the beach—The Upper Station, like that we left—is located on a plateau above a dell and stream, and surrounded by hills, forests, and thickets—But the situation is more agreeable and healthy—for a larger space is cleared off, and the surface is more elevated. They are making a garden-spot.

The mountain-brook here, has cut its way through hills of clay and gravel, making perpendicular cliffs on the lower side, of great altitude, and it babbles through a deep and thickly-

wooded cleft in the hills. The ascent to the station is also about 200 yards from the beach, over wet yellow clay and gravel. The accommodations are a good log house, a frame cook-house, with tent roof, and another small frame structure, for a sleeping place. And a good spring of water. A lot of handy fuel is cut and piled up.

The Steamer *Chesapeake* has arrived, and now lies opposite this station, about a half mile from the beach, in the day; but at night she will have to haul off considerably. She has stores to land, and will try to do so. The surf is a great impediment. Midway between ship and shore they have anchored a buoy, from which a line extends to the beach. They float casks of goods to the line, and attach them by "travelers," and when ready, the people on the beach pull them ashore.... (Bruff, editors Read and Gaines 1944)



"Middle Station Gold Bluff" from Bruff, *Gold Rush; The journals, drawings, and other papers of J. Goldsborough Bruff*. Edited by Read and Gaines 1944.

Through the winter and spring of 1851, the *Alta California* published dispatches regarding the unprecedented gold strike at Gold Bluffs. Ships departed daily for the “richest diggings in California,” and “\$1,000,000” could be a man’s reward within a short time (*Daily Alta California* 11 Jan., 26 Jan. 1851). Mr. Collins and General Wilson of the Pacific Mining Company told outlandish stories—“thousands of men cannot exhaust this gold in thousands of years”—enticing the gullible to invest in the company (*Daily Alta California* 9 Jan. 1851). The *Alta’s* editor took all this bluster with a grain of salt, noting that if a thousand men couldn’t exhaust the gold in a thousand years, then there was really “no necessity of being in a very great haste to get a share of the stuff and the correct news which is sure to come may be worth waiting for” (*Daily Alta California* 12 Jan. 1851). The “correct news,” of course, was that Gold Bluff beach was not the new El Dorado. In fact, the difficulty of extracting the fine gold from the heavy black sand was beyond the facilities available to a single miner. For a first-hand look, the *Alta* sent a reporter to the scene.

From the Gold Bluffs, Our Special Reporter—Herewith, we give the account of our reporter whom we sent up on the *Chesapeake* for the special purpose of seeing and reporting the facts respecting that region which has caused so much excitement lately....

The *Chesapeake* arrived at Trinidad on the 21<sup>st</sup>, making the run from San Francisco in sixty hours. Most of her passengers were landed at Trinidad, and she proceeded to the Gold Bluffs, for which place she had a large quantity of freight for the Pacific Mining Company. Trinidad bids fair to become a town of importance, especially should the Gold Bluffs be worked to any considerable extent. Within the last month, it has received a large addition to its population, and the proposition to make it the seat of justice of Trinity County will undoubtedly be seconded by the Legislature....

The Bluffs are about thirty miles north of Trinidad, and to reach them is a matter of no slight fatigue. High hills and deep gulches are quite a relief after traveling twenty miles ankle deep in beach sand. The Gold Bluffs present to the ocean a perpendicular front of from one to four hundred feet in height, and extend a distance of about six miles. At the base there is an abundance of talus slate mixed with quartz, and we were shown specimens of quartz gold, though in very small quantities. At times the ocean breaks against the bluffs, rendering traveling along the beach a very hazardous matter, for several days together; but in ordinary weather the beach at the foot of the bluffs is from twenty to fifty yards in width. The beach is a mixture of gray and black sand. In some places the black sand covers the surface to the depth of an eighth of an inch, and can be easily gathered, though we must say that during our stay at the bluffs, the exhibitions of black sand in any great abundance were rare. It is found mixed with scales of gold, very fine, so fine, that it cannot be separated by ordinary washing. The beach changes with every tide and occasionally, no black sand is to be seen on the surface. In digging into the beach, the gray and black sand is found mixed together, the gray largely predominating. In the rills which trickle down the bluffs, the gold is to be found, in quantities, perhaps greater than in the black sand. It is probable that the gold has been washed from the bluffs into the ocean and is cast upon the beach by the action of the waves.

The scenery in the region of the bluffs is really magnificent. The stupendous height of the bluffs, the cascades—the water rushing over the top of the bluffs and meeting no impediment until it strikes the beach at the base, two hundred feet or more—form scenes which an artist might

study with profit. The bluffs are broken by three gulches in which the Pacific Mining Company have located their log houses and tents....

The Pacific Mining Company lay claim to a large portion of the beach, and have erected three log cabins, and laid in a large store of provisions, preparatory to working the bluffs on an extensive scale. They have a large number of laborers on the ground, and have employed a chemist to extract the gold from the sand, and are sanguine in the belief that their enterprise will yield them a handsome percentage. If the sand yields anything like the quantity of gold which has been represented, we cannot doubt the ultimate success of the Company, if their affairs are managed prudently.

But for individuals, single handed, we have no word of encouragement. The expense of reaching the Gold Bluffs is nearly one hundred dollars and the cost of getting provisions there more than fifty cents per pound. Even suppose they succeed in getting large quantities of the so-called black sand, without some economical method of separating the gold, it will be valueless. We saw men in the vicinity of the bluffs who had expended all their means in reaching there, and are now unable to return. (Daily *Alta* California 2 Feb. 1851)

That the Bluffs were the source of the gold particles seemed to be an unquestioned fact. Washing of the surf against the base of the Bluffs, calving of large masses onto the beach and ultimately into the ocean, and redeposit of black sand and gold particles on the beach by storm surfs appeared to be the process. But how did the gold come to be in these beach cliffs?

In 1874, A.W. Chase, United States Coast Survey, presented a paper before the California Academy of Sciences, entitled, "The Auriferous Gravel Deposit of Gold Bluffs," in which he connected the Bluffs' gravels with those of the Klamath River (Chase 1874). The prevailing theory, explained by Elliott (1881), was that at some remote period, the Klamath River discharged its waters into the ocean at the Bluffs, leaving the tall escarpment as evidence. Elliott suggested that nearly everyone held this view. He then wrote, at some length, about the possibility that it was the Trinity River that deposited the Bluffs.

Another theory is that it is the former bed of the Trinity and that the Klamath and Trinity at one time had separate and distinct channels, at least as far as the present coast line. A few miles north of the present mouth of the Klamath is a distinctly marked line of gravel which bears as strong evidence of having been a former river bed as does the Gold Bluff section, and which extends inland and northward toward the Klamath Lakes, the source of the Klamath River. This is said to be the former bed of the Klamath, separate and distinct from the Trinity, and that the latter river found its way into the ocean at Gold Bluff.... (Elliott 1881)

Klamath or Trinity—one of these rivers had run its course along the Bluffs, depositing gold-bearing gravels that tantalized hundreds with the prospect of great wealth, but the difficulty of extracting those tiny pieces of gold was the challenge that pretty much squashed any such outcome. Although there were plenty of individuals who tried via a common-property approach and others who did file claims, the long-term, large-scale mining operations at the Bluffs were vested primarily in two companies: the Edson Adams family at the Upper Bluff and the Union Gold Buff Placer Mining Company (John Chapman) at the Lower.

### **Upper Bluff**

The Upper Bluff consisted of the Pioneer Placer Mine, Lot No. 37, 159.24 acres; Pioneer 1 through 8, known as Lots 39 through 46, 960 acres; and Eden Placer Mining Claim, Lot 47,

83.45 acres (Official Records 259:229). The Charter Oak, Lot 48, 12N1E, was also claimed by the Adams Family. In addition there were other claims at the northern end of the Bluffs. One was the Amoney Creek Placer Mining Claim, Lot 51, part of section 4, 12N1E, patented by Robert, Anthony and Charles Johnston in 1892 with entry in 1891 (Patents 13:549). That claim was later owned by J.H. Crothers, who conveyed it to the Save the Redwoods League in 1952, along with lots 3 and 4, section 33, 13N1E, and lots 4, 5, 8, 10, and 11 in section 4, 12N1E, for a total of 187.47 acres (Official Records 205:633).

The other claim, patented to the Eureka Placer Mining Company in 1892 (entry in 1884), contained 74.84 acres and was located in sections 3, 9, and 10, 12N1E, at Ossagon Creek (Patents 13:611). In 1888, the seven stockholders of the Eureka Placer Mining Company sold their claim, plus ditches, flumes, reservoirs and pipes, to Edson F. Adams for \$1000 (Deeds 25:121). The Eureka Claim was included in Elliott's coverage of the Gold Bluffs.

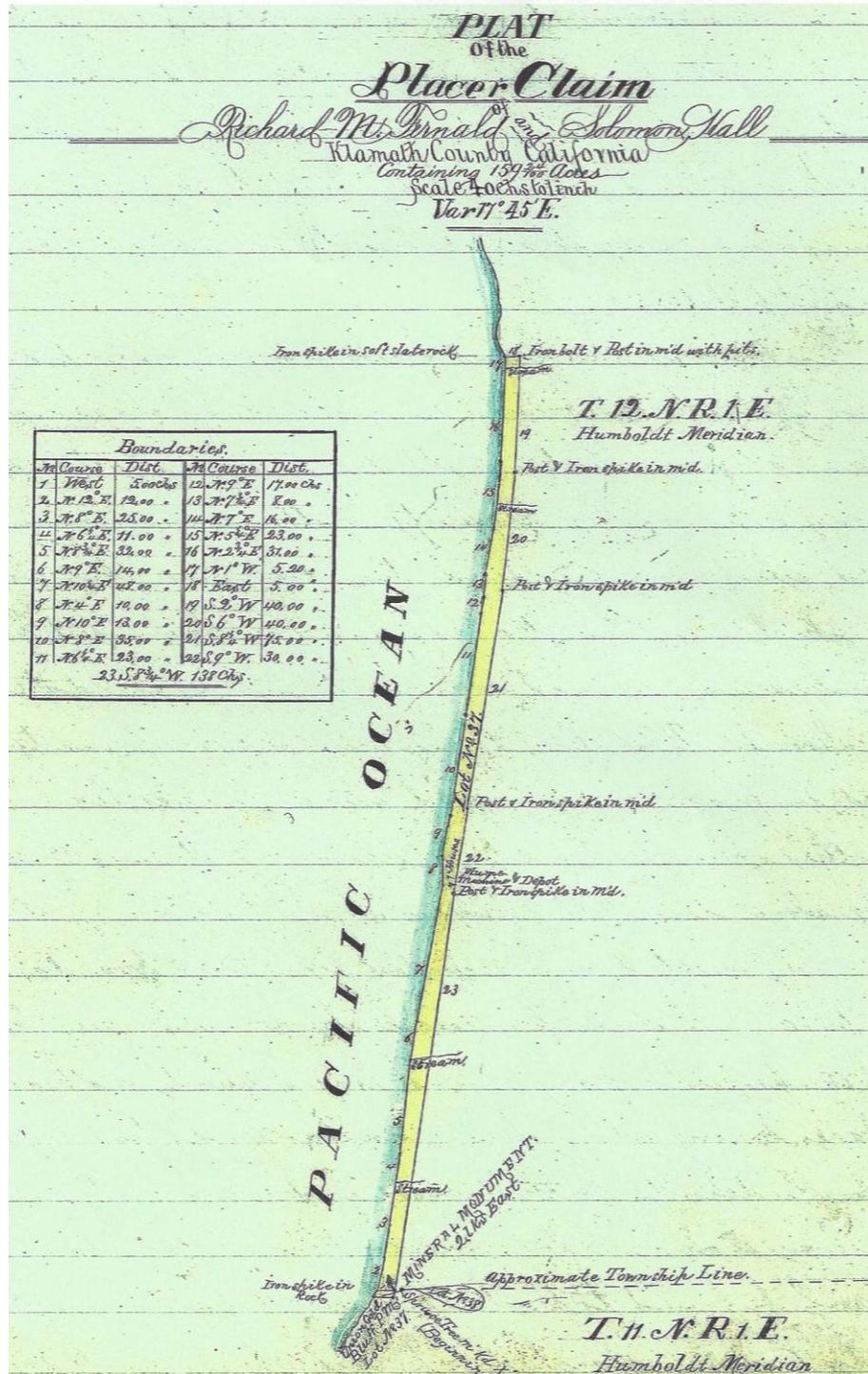
The Ossegon—This is the name of the placer that was opened on the upper or northern edge of the Klamath gravel bed on the coast, and adjoining the Upper Gold Bluff claim. It is nine miles south of the Klamath River. The name is a corruption of the Indian designation, which is articulated by the Klamath Indians, "osh-she-gan." The mine is owned by a stock company known as the "Eureka Gold Mining Co." and all the stock is owned in Eureka. A dam was built and water brought on from a small creek bearing the name of the mine. The dam and other works were thrown up hastily, as is too frequently the case in such enterprises, and the company was calculating upon a rich return from a trifling outlay. But the winter rains came, washed out their dam, it having been made of soil with nothing to stay it, and otherwise destroyed the improvements such as they were.

The works were reconstructed and a strong dam built, 250 feet in length, 13 feet high and had a holding capacity of 80,000,000 cubic feet. The ditch was half a mile in length and at the pressure box had 150 feet elevation. The sluice was composed of 60 boxes, 12 feet long, three feet wide and six blocks or riffles to the box....This Ossegon Creek is but one of many that are available on or near the Klamath gravel bed and timber is to be had on every hand. (Elliott 1881)

In addition to the Ossagon waterworks, a 600-foot by six-foot square tunnel was constructed by Cornish miners to transport water from upper Prairie Creek into the headwaters of Butler Creek and thence to a reservoir. The tunnel's opening was on the Joseph Stockel homestead [NE qt sec 15, 12N1E], identified in 1976 by a single apple tree alongside the highway (Hufford, "Orick News," Arcata *Union* 11 March 1976).

The first Mineral Certificate for the Upper Bluff was issued by the United States to Richard M. Fernald and Solomon Hall on 18 May 1878, pursuant to the Revised Statutes of the United States, Chapter, 6, Title 32. Fernald and Hall "did on the 31<sup>st</sup> day of Oct. 1874 enter and pay for said claim, being Mineral Entry Number 18 and designated by the Surveyor General as Lots 37 and 38 in 11N1E and 12N1E, 159.24 acres" (Patents 4:603). Lot 37 is listed in subsequent transactions, but this is the first and last mention of Lot 38. The detailed description of the claim involved a 10-inch spruce tree, marked with an "X" on the north, south and west sides; a cast iron U.S. Mineral Monument eight inches in diameter and three feet high, marked with the raised letters "Pioneer;" an iron spike one inch in diameter inserted into a rock; and lines identified with degrees, minutes and chains, all too nebulous and complicated to locate from a desk chair in 2015.

A few months after receiving the patent, Fernald and Hall sold the Pioneer Placer Mine to Edson Adams (Deeds Y:245). Edson Adams was born in 1824 in Connecticut, made his way to California in 1849. and in 1850, with two other men, laid out the City of Oakland. The 1870 U.S. Census reported Adams with real estate valued at \$200,000 and personal property at \$5000;



Plat of Fernald and Hall Placer Mining Claim. Patents 4:605. Recorder's Office.

Edson identified himself as a “capitalist” in the 1880 U.S. Census. His obituary described him as “one of the wealthiest and most prominent citizens of Alameda County.” When in failing health and no longer able to handle his business affairs, he put his elder son, Edson F. Adams, in charge. Upon his death in December 1888, he was survived by his widow, Hannah Adams, sons Edson F. and John C., and a daughter, Mrs. Julia Prather, wife of Thomas Prather, president of the Union National Bank. In addition to his Oakland property, including Adams Point, he owned land elsewhere in the state, in Oregon and Arizona, and “valuable mining properties and sums of money invested in good securities” (*Daily Alta California* 15 Dec. 1888).

In 1891, the Adams heirs received a mineral patent for the Eden Placer Mining Claim, Lot 47, 156.55 acres, in 12N1E (Patents 14:481). On 23 July 1894, the heirs were granted eight mineral patents, all entered by the senior Edson Adams on 24 Sept. 1888, and designated as Pioneer numbers 1 through 8, each 160 acres, and being Lots 39 through 46 (Patents 14:510, 515, 520, 526, 531, 537, 543, 549).

When *Western Watchman* editor William Ayres made a trip “Up the Northern Coast” in the fall of 1890, he remarked that the Upper Gold Bluff mine, five miles from the Elk Prairie,

looks like a deserted village with its sixteen buildings, all unoccupied. The old block house and rifle tower built in times of Indian troubles is a prominent feature, and could it speak, would doubtless tell an exciting story. Only one or two men are here looking after the property. (*Western Watchman* 22 Nov. 1890)

The block house and rifle tower were associated with mining operations prior to the Adams tenure, obviously before the mid-1860s, if the statement about construction during “Indian troubles,” is correct. Of the claims held by the Adams family—the Eden, Charter Oak, Eureka, and the Pioneer—it appears mining activity was concentrated at the Pioneer claims. The 1898 tax assessment listed no improvements at the Eden, Charter Oak, or Eureka claims, but for the Pioneer, improvements were valued at \$4000 for Lot 37 and \$1600 for Lots 1-8 (1898 tax assessment p. 914).

Exaggerations and a little obfuscation were part of the mining business, as reported in a Blue Lake *Advocate* story.

Black Sands of Ossegon; A Property on One Occasion Rated High; The Bottom Went Out All at Once; Old Dick Fernald Put the Englishmen Wise Through Our Correspondent (Special to the Blue Lake *Advocate*). In the very early eighties, an Englishman came to this county by the name of Crossman; he was a capitalist, also a partner in one of the largest London businesses, and came here with the object of investing capital. During his peregrinations through the county, he drifted up to the Upper Bluff, a property belonging to Edson Adams of Oakland, and at the time under the management of Dr. Hood. Mr. Crossman became enamored with the place on account of its good possibilities, to say nothing of the fishing, elk, bear, deer, etc., which were said to be in the immediate vicinity, and went down to Oakland to interview Mr. Adams to see what kind of deal he could make for this bonanza.

He was told that for a sum of 60,000 pounds, or about \$300,000, he could own a three-quarters interest in the Adams holdings at the Upper Gold Bluffs, which included a large prairie a mile or so back from the coast. Mr. Crossman returned to England, secured the backing of Rothschild and others, and then came back to Humboldt, accompanied by Mr. Gus Bowie, said to

be at that time the greatest authority on the coast on placer mining....Mr. Crossman engaged Mr. Bowie to investigate the Upper Bluff and he received a remuneration of \$2000 for his services which lasted exactly one month....

A party of Mr. Crossman, Mr. Bowie, Dr. Hood and the writer traveled to the Upper Bluff so that Mr. Bowie could make an inspection prior to any investment by Mr. Crossman.

We arrived at the Bluffs, were received by Mr. Adams, Jr., and found a nicely appointed cottage, most picturesque situated overlooking the grand old placid Pacific, and last, and by no means least, a perfect jewel of a Chinaman. This fellow could cook and keep house in the Queen's taste and Mr. Crossman's attempts at pigeon English in conversation with our cook while he waited at table, added considerably to our hilarity.

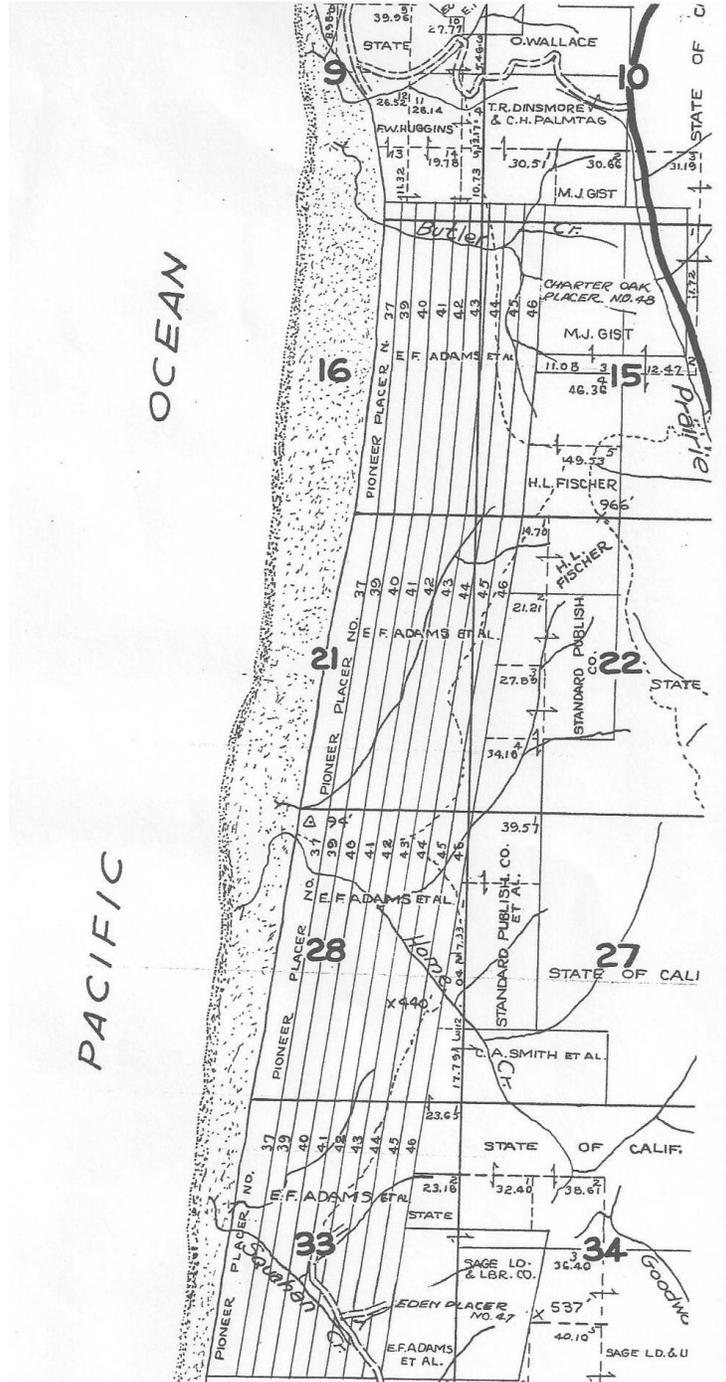
As most of your readers know, the Upper Bluff property consists of a wide expanse of coast line, bounded on the south by the Chapman's Bluffs and on the north by Ossegon Creek, then owned by a Eureka syndicate. How far the Adams land extended [illegible], I am not prepared to say, but it took in the prairie [illegible]. For the first ten days or so, Mr. Bowie would go out each morning, accompanied by a Mr. Huntley and a mule, and I may safely say that every portion of the bluffs was carefully prospected at all altitudes right down to bed rock, the theory being that the gold was in those bluffs and that the rich beach sand, which was thrown up on the beach by the action of the waves originally came from the mainland. Mr. Bowie watched Huntley as a cat would a mouse for fear he might salt some of the ground, however, there was no need of this as Huntley was a good, honest fellow and proved himself such. During these days, I was always around when the panning was going on, and when Bowie got down to black sand, there were but mighty few colors, and never at any time sufficient to warrant an outlay of \$300,000, at least in my judgment....When they reached Ossegon, they found plenty of colors.... After leaving Ossegon, the prospecting was done inland and I did not learn results....

The writer described his own exploration with Dr. Hood, who showed him an area back of the beach that was very rich, so rich, that the writer reported that it was no exaggeration that he saw over 2000 colors in a milk pan, after deposited soil had been washed. "The edges of the sand were literally yellow with colors." The good doctor denied any salting, but the writer and the other members of the party agreed to take photographs of the rich land to show Mr. Fernald, the original owner of the claim, upon their return to Arcata. Mr. Fernald responded:

"Dr. Hood is as smart as a steel trap all right, but he didn't salt the land on you, that part is rich—very rich. And I'll tell you why. For over eighteen years I rode up and down that beach twice a day on the lookout for black sand and whenever it was there in paying quantities, I would wave a white handkerchief as a signal to my men to bring down the mules. Each mule had a pack saddle on, and on each saddle was a pair of heavy canvas bags, and then we would skim the pay sand up with wide mouthed shovels and empty them into the bags; when the bags were full, they were carried up near the house and dumped on a level where we could handle the sand at our leisure. Now you can understand that these canvas bags would thoroughly sodden with sea water and if left in that state would make the mules' backs sore, so I used to turn these bags inside out to dry and my drying ground was that bank where Hood showed you so many colors—why that bank has the salting from my bags for over 20 years—of course, it is rich...." (Blue Lake *Advocate* 2 Jan. 1909)

The Metsker Map (c. 1950) shows the Pioneer claims, narrow linear lots extending from south to north, four miles, through sections 33, 28, 21, and 16, embracing

the lower reaches of Squashan, Boat, Home, Cascade, and Butler creeks, and extending barely beyond the southern boundary of section 9, 12N1E. The Eureka Placer Mine on Ossagon Creek was located inland in the northeastern corner of section 9, northwestern corner of section 10, and maybe 10 acres in the southwest quarter section 3, 12N1E; Eden Placer No. 47, in portions of southwest quarter section 34 and southeast quarter section 33, 12N1E.



Pioneer Claims. Metsker Map c. 1950.

Although Lower Bluff activities were often reported, there were few newspaper accounts about the Upper Bluff. A 1900 note said that the Upper Gold Bluff mine “has turned out to be a stock ranch and in a couple of years, Mr. Adams will be dairying quite a number of cows.” A few years later, the newspaper reported that “nothing is being done with the Adams plant at the Upper Bluffs and a lot of expensive machinery is standing idle with a man in charge” (*Arcata Union* 28 Oct 1905). In 1910, the Edson Adams Estate was assessed for six cows, 10 heifers, 11 calves, four stock cattle and six steers (*Arcata Union* 23 June 1900; 1910 tax assessment p. 1018).

A 1908 article stated that Capt. A.D. Campbell and J.E. McKenzie of Seattle, and two others had formed a company to lease from “Mr. Adams of Oakland the Upper Gold Bluff property at the mouth of Ossagon creek.” Having also leased the nearby Thomas Tighe place, the company was to construct a road a mile long between the beach mine and the county road, but nothing more was heard of this venture (*Blue Lake Advocate* 9 May 1908).

The land remained in Adams family ownership until 1951, when it was deeded to A. Speckert by surviving family members, both John C. and Edson F. Adams by this time deceased. This transfer was subject to a contract with the California Barrel Company for the sale of spruce timber, and reservation of mineral rights (Official Records 173:460, 464, 473). A. and Martha Speckert transferred half interest in the land to Joe Hearin (Official Records 173:489). Two years later, the Speckerts and the Hearins sold the land to The Pacific Lumber Company, excepting from the conveyance, all mineral rights and the right to extract the same, provided that operations for mining, dredging, and extraction would not interfere with logging operations (Official Records 259:229).

In 1959, the State of California filed a condemnation suit for “extension, improvement, and development of State Park System” against The Pacific Lumber Company, three Adams descendants, Wells Fargo Bank as Trustee for Adams estates, and Bernard and Freda Kirsch, to remove the mineral reservations (Official Records 566:378). When The Pacific Lumber Company finally conveyed portions of sections 33, 34, 27, 28, 21, 22, 15, 16, 9, and 10, 12N1E, to Save the Redwoods League in 1965, the deed noted that the mineral rights were then owned by the State of California (Official Records 838:121).

### **Lower Bluff**

Lower Bluff claims were designated Union Gold Bluff Mining Claim, Lot 34, 194.15 acres; the Chester Consolidated Placer Mining Claim, 894.91 acres; and the Arcata Consolidated Placer Mining Claim, 292.55 acres, all in sections 4, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 20 in 11N1E and section 33 in 12N1E (Official Records 485:225).

The first Mineral Certificate for the Lower Bluff was issued by the United States to the Union Gold Bluff Placer Mining Company, pursuant to the provisions of the Revised Statutes of the U.S., Chapter 6, Title 32, on 14 Aug. 1878. The patent, granted to Joseph Greenbaum, John Chapman and George H. Tilley, noted that these men “did on 31 Oct. 1874 enter and pay for said claim, being mineral entry Number 19 as Lot No. 37, embracing a portion of the un-surveyed Public Domain in the County of Humboldt and containing 194.15 acres” (Patents 4:584). In 1891, Chapman, and Sigmund and Gussie Greenbaum were granted mineral certificates for Lots

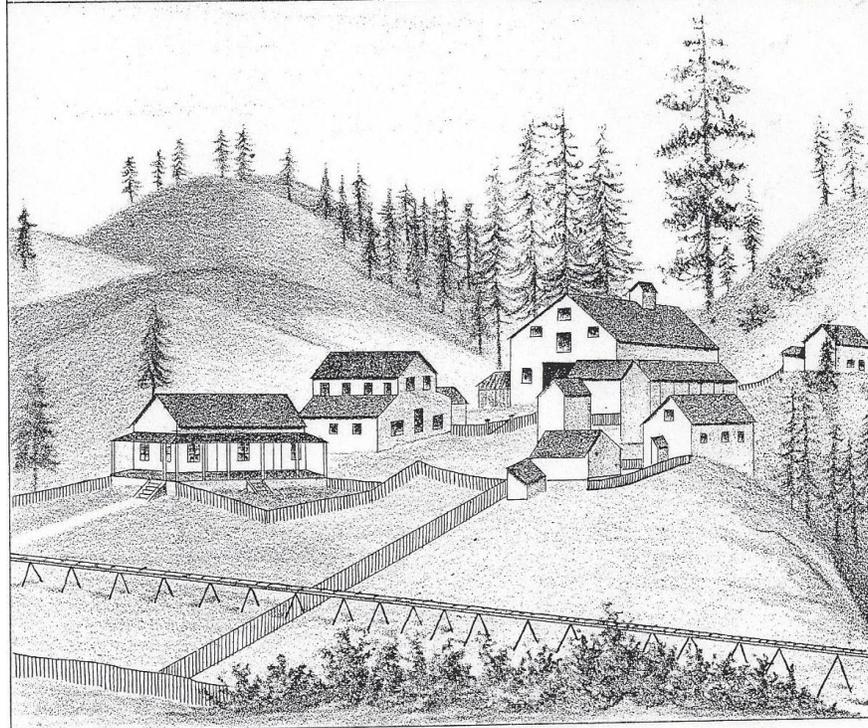
38-42, known as Chester Consolidated Placer Mining Claim, being a portion of sections 4, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 20, 11N1E, containing 894.97 acres; and in 1892, Lots 49 and 50, known as Arcata Consolidated Mining Claim, 292.55 acres (Patents 14:288, 295).

In 1901, the Lower Gold Bluff claims were sold first to a middle man, Frank M. Shideler, who transferred the “timber, mine and mining property situated in Gold Bluff Mining District” to another middle man, E.D. Alford of South Norwalk, Connecticut. Alford conveyed the claims to Sturges Whitlock of Shelton, Fairfield County, Connecticut that same year (Deeds 77:89, 94; 77:98). In 1955, the president of the Gold Bluff Mining and Lumber Company, Olive Whitlock Fulton, and secretary, Lillian Whitlock Terrell of New York County, New York, daughters of Mr. Whitlock, transferred the claims from the company to themselves (Official Records 353:226). The following year George Barnes obtained the land, but the grantors reserved the mineral rights (Official Records 386:467). George and Lorene Barnes conveyed the Union Gold Bluff Mining Claim, Chester Consolidated Placer Mining Claim, and Arcata Consolidated Placer Mining Claim and other tracts in sections 4, 8, 9, 17, 16, and 20 in 11N1E and section 33, 12N1E, to Save the Redwoods League, the mineral rights again reserved as well as land lying north of a described line, but including a 40-foot right of way which had been conveyed to Arcata Redwood Company in 1956 (Official Records 485:225). In a Bill of Sale, Barnes also sold the League personal property, including an electric light plant, water pump, water tank, refrigerator, space heater, furniture, water heaters, and a “pair window drapes” (Official Records 485:227). These items suggest that Barnes was living on the claims at Lower Bluff.

The John Chapman name, first the father and then the son, was long associated with Lower Bluff mining. The elder Chapman, born in New York in 1832, came to California in 1849, apparently on his own, despite his young age. He eventually came to Arcata and entered into business on the Plaza under the name of Greenbaum and Chapman (Arcata *Union* 26 April 1905). A chance meeting in San Francisco in 1872 with a representative of an eastern “submarine association,” proposing to dive for gold along the Gold Bluff, may have encouraged Chapman to begin his mining career, a career that essentially consumed the remainder of his life (*West Coast Signal* 17 April 1872). The submarine people didn’t show up, but Chapman did, and within a few years, he and his family were living at Lower Bluff, as were company employees.

Fire at Gold Bluff. We learn...that the dwelling and boarding house of the Lower Gold Bluff Mining Co., had a narrow escape from destruction by fire on the 20<sup>th</sup> ult. The fire originated in the roof from a defective stove pipe and was only checked by the superhuman efforts of Mrs. Orman and Mrs. Chapman. The destruction of the building would have involved a loss of \$6000 or \$8000. As it was, the residence was badly damaged and lumber to repair it was ordered from Crescent City.... (*West Coast Signal* 4 Aug. 1875)

Elliott (1881) reported that John Chapman, Esq. was one of the “fortunate owners and successful operators” in the Gold Bluff area, far more restrained than the *Examiner*, which said that Mr. Chapman was “cleaning up \$1000 a day,” washing the black sands (*Humboldt Times* 1 Jan. 1881). Regardless of the truth, mining along the Lower Bluff was pursued more seriously than at the Upper Bluff and over the years, supported two generations of Chapmans and those who worked for them.



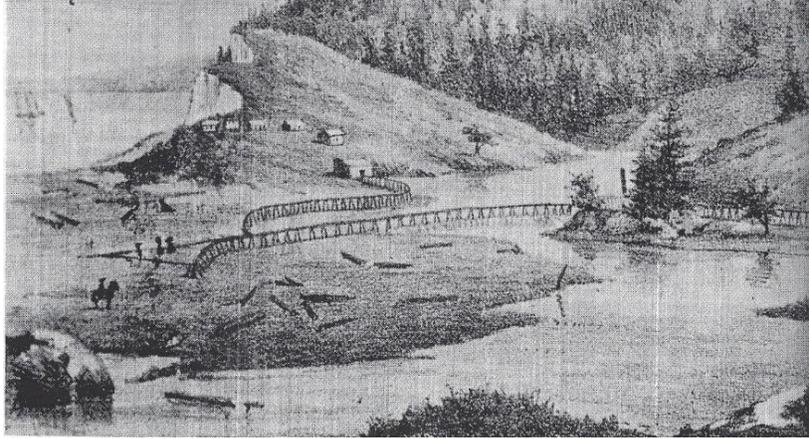
**COVE. FLUME & RES. OF JOHN CHAPMAN, GOLD BLUFF.**  
Elliott 1881. *History of Humboldt County, California*. p. 180.

In 1893, it was announced that Chapman had sold (actually leased) the Gold Bluff property to Nevada men who would immediately begin “vigorous prosecution of operations” with new machinery and “no expense spared” in an effort to make it pay (*Blue Lake Advocate* 5 Aug. 1893). Despite “packing some very rich sand” and Manager Hightower’s reports that everything was “progressing favorably,” the Nevada men were shortly in financial trouble (*Western Watchman* 19 May, 30 June 1894).

Trinidad. The Gold Bluff Mining Company seems to have got into financial difficulties, as the Sheriff passed through here yesterday en route to the Bluff for the purpose of levying upon the company’s possessions at that place. The attaching parties are said to be Robert Swan, the McDonald boys, and Ed Chapman, and the amount, about \$900. (*Arcata Union* 21 Dec. 1895)

Swan attached the Union Gold Bluff, Chester Consolidated and Arcata Consolidated claims and successfully sued Hightower for merchandise delivered and court costs (*Ferndale Enterprise* 3 Jan. 1896; *Blue Lake Advocate* 23 May 1896). The Lower Gold Bluff Company suspended operations that fall and the property reverted to the Greenbaums in San Francisco (*Arcata Union* 17 Oct. 1896). John Chapman was back at the Lower Bluff in 1897, resuming management and living at his old residence, which his family visited during the summer months, staying in their lovely Arcata home at 10<sup>th</sup> and J streets during the school year (*Arcata Union* 31 July 1897, 18 June 1898). Under Chapman, operations were soon in “full blast,” handling the richest sand he had encountered in a long time (*Arcata Union* 27 Jan. 1900).

At the Lower Bluff, dredging of the lagoon was a major part of operations. In 1900 Chapman leased the “Lagoon mine” to Messrs. Pierce & Wishart, who had two gold-saving



Elliott 1881. "Lagoon & Mining Flumes on Gold Bluff." Frontispiece.

machines designed to handle 20 tons of sand per hour. While these gentlemen and their ten employees dredged the lagoon, Chapman continued packing the black sands, amassing 300 tons piled up and ready for washing with the expectation that it would average \$50 per ton (*Arcata Union* 1 March, 9 June 1900). Meanwhile the Pierce and Wishart venture expanded with a 20-horse power engine, four additional separators and a new pump, with the expectation of mining 100 tons of sand per day (*Arcata Union* 23 June 1900). "Down to good paying sand," suggesting at least \$50 per ton, the Lagoon was producing \$5000 day. But perhaps, not, since those fellows disappeared and the Lower Bluff claims passed from the Greenbaum and Chapman ownership in August 1901 (Deeds 77:89).

Gold Bluff Sold; Best Known Mining Property in Humboldt Passes into the Hands of Eastern Capitalist--After negotiations extending over a period of a number of months, the well-known beach mining property known as Chapman's or Gold Bluff has been purchased for the sum of \$50,000 by the Hon. Sturgis W. Whitlock and daughter of Derby, Conn., Hart D. Munson of New Haven, Conn., and others holding small shares. The larger part of the money was put up by Mr. Whitlock, who is a millionaire and a member of the famous Singer Sewing Machine Company....

The property was owned by John Chapman, who is at present operating the mine, and S. Greenbaum of San Francisco. It consists of about 1400 acres, the mining property occupying a narrow strip along the beach, a large proportion of the remainder being in valuable timber lands.

The sale of this property is an important matter for the northern end of the county and the Orick section, as Mr. Shideler is authority for the statement that the owners intend expending at least \$50,000 in development work.... One of the first moves will be the building of a wagon road from the main road in the vicinity of Orick to the beach, a distance of five or six miles. This contract will be an absolute necessity on account of the large quantity of heavy machinery to be transported and Supervisor McLeod has signified his intention of building the bridge over Redwood creek this coming summer....

The sale of the property was made by Mr. Frank M. Shideler, who recently returned from a trip to New York, where he was successful in interesting the gentlemen named above in the matter.... (*Arcata Union* 1 Jan. 1902)

Incorporation of the Gold Bluff Mining and Lumber Company of Connecticut was filed with the State of California on 30 April 1903 with a capital stock of \$120,000. (*Journal of the Senate, State of California*; online). As the GBM&L Co. took charge of its new acquisition, the

senior John Chapman retired to his home in Arcata, replaced by the junior John Chapman in the on-the-sand, day-to-day management of operations (Arcata *Union* 11 Jan., 15 March 1902). The Lagoon was again the focus of operations.

Mining News....The plans for the big mining dredger are now complete....mining will be done in the lagoon near the beach. The dredger instead of being stationary, will float in the lagoon and remove the sand from the bottom. This lagoon is half a mile long and about 600 feet wide and the sand was found to be more than 30 feet deep in many places and a quantity of it assayed \$50 to the ton....The engines are to be 150 horse power and the machine is guaranteed to handle 2000 tons per day. Mr. Brown, representing the Golden State Iron and Miners Company, is now at the Bluffs making arrangements to build the dredger. It is what is known as the "clam shell" dredger, and is similar to the one this company is building to operate themselves at Oroville. A couple of ship carpenters will be taken up as soon as their services can be secured and will commence work on the big barge. It is expected that they will be three weeks or a month completing it. The timbers of which it is to be composed will be hewn out on the spot and a crew of men are at work doing this. Mr. Munson has purchased five young mules from Thomas Bair to use at the scene of operations. (Arcata *Union* 15 March 1902)

During the spring and summer of 1902, there was considerable activity at the Lower Bluff, as the company prepared for operations.

The boiler for the saw mill was taken up some days ago and the mill will be ready to run next week as they are now engaged in hauling out logs. About 2M feet of lumber will be cut principally pine, and a number of buildings will be put up consisting of a cook house, bunk house, barn and other buildings. Twenty-five thousand shakes have been split out and will be used in roofing. The mining plant will be built on two barges, one of which will contain the engine, boiler and dredging apparatus, while the other will contain the gold washing machinery. The dredger will be built on a barge, 60x80 feet, while the other barge will be smaller, 60x40 feet. They will float side by side and will be operated in the Lagoon at the Bluff. Mr. Munson now has in his employ 38 men and the force will be increased by several ship carpenters who will build the barges. (Arcata *Union* 19 April 1902)

Construction of the road to Gold Bluff Beach (Davison Road), still in use and, maybe not significantly better than the original one, was underway in the spring of 1902. Frank Hufford built the road with six-horse teams working two at a time, a Fresno scraper, and 15 men with pick and shovel (Hufford and Barlow 1976). By June, freight was being hauled on the new road and Eber Beaulieu and W.R. Pine took the first buggy clear through from the county road to the Bluff ranch, a quarter of a mile further down the coast than where the new mill was located (Arcata *Union* 14 June, 28 June 1902).

All the while, as this new activity and that of the previous fifty years radically changed things at the Lower Bluff, Yurok people were living at espä<sup>w</sup>, an important town situated on the lagoon (Waterman 1920). Members of prominent Yurok families living on lower Redwood Creek came from Gold Bluff—Eunice White's family (the Tipseys) and that of her husband, Ed, (the Browns and Mastens) (White 1971; Blue Lake *Advocate* 9 Sept. 1939; Humboldt *Times* 29 Dec. 1964).

Despite all the excitement and grand plans, the constabulary once again passed through Orick bound for the Gold Bluff Mining & Lumber Company works, followed a couple of weeks

later by Sheriff Brown, who shut down operations. The dredger and machinery were under attachment by a San Francisco firm, having lost patience with the company's failure to pay its bills (Arcata *Union* 28 Feb., 14 March 1903). The Bank of Arcata also got into the act, attaching all of the Lower Bluff claims to secure \$1,944.24 with interest (Humboldt *Times* 8 July 1903; Blue Lake *Advocate* 11 July 1903). Internal squabbles and reshuffling of managers ensued.

Financial troubles in California apparently reflected those occurring in Connecticut, when mine owner Sturges Whitlock, former state senator and one of the best-known manufacturers in the state, filed for bankruptcy. The local Connecticut newspaper reported Whitlock's liabilities at \$193,000 with less than half that amount in assets and blamed his sons, (of which he had none) for internal quarrels (Bridgeport *Herald* 9 Aug. 1903). All fair grist for the newspaper mills that loved sensation, then as now. Emissaries from Connecticut, including Whitlock's son-in-law, A.T. Terrell, came out to take stock in the spring of 1904, but the junior John Chapman, the go-to-guy at Lower Bluff, didn't start the "wheels rolling" until later that year (Arcata *Union* 14 Dec. 1904, 24 May 1905).

Up Coast News. George Hufford...has just been up to the Gold Bluffs and reports things moving lively there. John Chapman [the junior Chapman] has the big dredger working, and a crew of six men are busily engaged in extracting the precious metal. The machine has been working about two weeks and a cleanup will be made in a few days. A new process is being tried from anything yet used and it is hoped it will prove successful. (Arcata *Union* 28 Oct. 1905)

The senior Chapman died in April 1905 after years of devotion to the Lower Bluff (Arcata *Union* 26 April 1905). The junior John Chapman continued his association with the Bluff until 1911, when he opened a store in Orick after the mine shut down (Blue Lake *Advocate* 14 Jan. 1911). Subsequent trips to Arizona and a move inland to Bridgeville could not stem the tide of tuberculosis from which Chapman died in 1913 at the age of 38 (Arcata *Union* 1 Aug. 1912, 9 Oct. 1913).

Black Sands at Orick to be Processed for Gold—After lying dormant for the past four or five years, the famous black sands forming the ocean beach a short distance above Orick, the property of the Gold Bluff Mining Co. of Connecticut, are again to be worked, this time by a company already organized and financed, and by a chemical process entirely different from any other method ever tried for extracting the values from sand.

For the past two months, A.W. Capps, president of the Lower Bluff Mining Co., and the investor of the process for extracting the values from the sands, has been at work securing a lease on the property from the owners. The greater part of this time has been spent in this county with occasional visits to other points in the past few days, the negotiations for the property, consisting of over 1200 [acres] have been closed, Capps securing for the company he represents a long time lease.... (Humboldt *Times* 19 Jan. 1913).

What became of that enterprise is unclear, but another operation was announced two years later, when Samuel Wallace leased the property from the Connecticut owners. Wallace was going to save platinum from the black sand, the value of which was somewhere between that of gold and silver. The new machinery came by truck to Orick, but had to be unloaded and conveyed from the Davison place by teams and sleds (Arcata *Union* 27 May 1915).

Always with a new machine, or new process, or even a new objective, Gold Bluff mines struggled throughout their history; there were no gold nuggets at the Bluffs, only tiny specs, and extracting them from sand in significant amounts, was simply not feasible. The *Arcata Union* (13 July 1916) noted that many ventures in hopes of saving gold in paying quantities had operated along the beaches between Arcata and Crescent City, but “so far as we have heard, the failures have been more frequent than otherwise.” Little mention of mining at the Bluffs throughout the 1920s and 1930s suggests that the era of company operations was over. What was left were just “old gold miners,” hanging on in small shacks at the base of the bluffs into the late 1950s (*Times-Standard* 31 Dec. 1983).

People lived at Lower Bluff, occupying left-over cabins, but during World War II, Coast Guardsmen, stationed at Orick, rotated duty at the Lower Bluff, where they patrolled the beach with dogs. Orick became “strangely deserted and quiet,” when the post was abandoned in the spring of 1944, thirty dogs and Guardsmen taking their leave (*Blue Lake Advocate* 18 March, 10 June 1944).

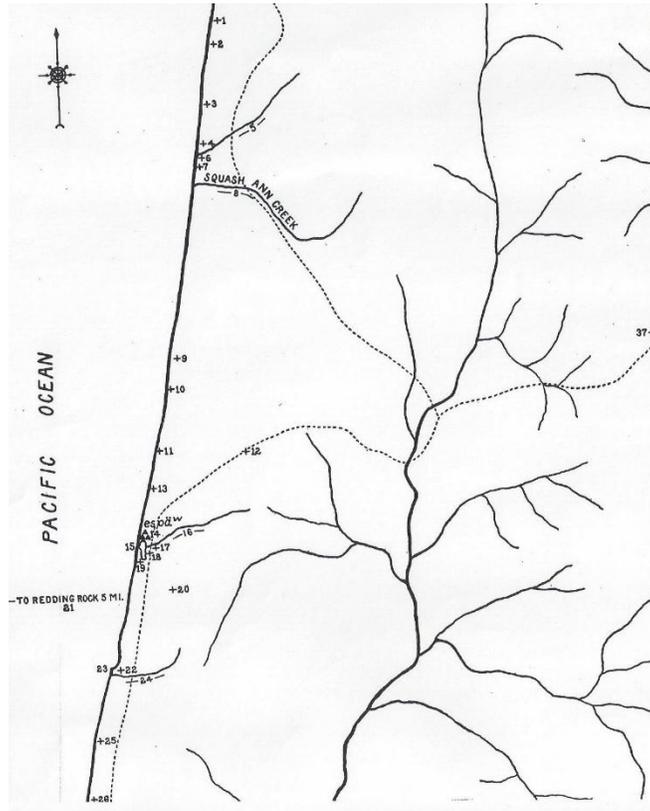
Orick News—The WWII barracks used by the Coast Guard are being demolished at Gold Bluffs at Espa Lagoon. Prairie Creek Park rangers have been stationed there since the park took over the beach and Fern Canyon up to Ossagon Trail.

Before the park’s time, the barracks were rented out. At one time Louise and Charley Ellis lived there and had cattle on the beach and hillsides. The Fales family lived there awhile also and they had cattle. During WWII the barracks were Coast Guard residences and the men stayed there for six or seven days at a time and alternated with others who were living at Orick Inn. They patrolled the beaches with police dogs. When the state park acquired the beach lands, various rangers lived there...Two mobile homes were hauled in to replace the barracks for ranger residences last week. (Hufford, “Orick News,” *Arcata Union* 6 Sept. 1989)

## Travel

The indigenous people of northern California had an extensive network of travel corridors, connecting towns and procurement sites along the coast and from the coast to the interior. The coastal trail from the Klamath passed through o’segen, known as the surf fish drying place, then crossing the creek there, it turned somewhat inland (Waterman 1920; Hufford, “Orick News,” *Arcata Union* 21 April 1977). Crossing qwo’san wroi’ (Squashan Creek), the trail turned southeasterly to the Prairie at which point a branch headed easterly to the Klamath River with the main trail continuing southwesterly to espä<sup>w</sup> and then down the coast. Klamath River people fished Prairie Creek, one reference indicating that as many as thirty people were “doing a big business” catching salmon during the fall of 1891 (*Western Watchman* 2 Jan. 1892). According to Charles Boyes, who was serving as State Park foreman in 1935, the Prairie was

quite a rendezvous for the Indians living on the Klamath River. They preferred the salmon found in Prairie Creek to those found in the Klamath. Moreover, elk, deer, and bear were so plentiful that frequent trips were made to Boyes Prairie for fish and game. (*Humboldt Standard* 13 July 1935)



Map 29, Rectangle H. Waterman 1920. "Yurok Geography."

Those trails were preempted by the newly-arrived whites, moving up the coast and across the mountains after gold, but as settlement extended to Big Lagoon and Redwood Creek valley, along Prairie Creek and on up to Requa and Crescent City, people wanted a wagon road. Not only was there a need to move freight and passengers, the trail on the Big Lagoon spit was treacherous and the call was for a route that skirted the lagoon at its eastern end. Robert Swan, Orick's merchant and major land-owner, agitated for the road, as did Editor Ayres of the *Western Watchman*, during a time when the County Supervisors were debating the construction of a southern route out of the county—the two routes, north and south, competing for funds and support.

The Klamath Road—Is there any prospect of a wagon road from Redwood Creek to the mouth of the Klamath river being built in the near future? The people of the northern part of the county are anxious that this road should be built. While we are not opposed to building roads in the southern part of the county, we think it is in the best interest of the county to have at least one road leading into the county from the north. At present there are two roads leading into the county from the south, while there is no way of getting in from the north excepting over a miserable and dangerous trail.... (Humboldt Times 19 March 1891)

Just where the road was to be constructed from the Humboldt side and whether Del Norte would do its part consumed months of discussion (*Western Watchman* 21 March; 18 April, 9

May 1891). In the fall of 1892, a bond issue for construction of the Klamath Road carried nearly three to one, with a bid from the State Board of Examiners for the whole issue of the bonds accepted by the County in August 1893 (*Western Watchman* 12 Nov. 1892; *Blue Lake Advocate* 26 Aug. 1893). Construction contracts were let that fall (*Blue Lake Advocate* 25 Nov. 1893). By the spring of 1894, the road from Big Lagoon through to the Del Norte County line was nearly completed and in June the Northern Stage Company began running between Trinidad and Crescent City (*Arcata Union* 17 March, 30 June 1894).

Requa—Three cheers for the Crescent City and Klamath, and Trinidad and Klamath stages! We are all delighted to know that we can go to Crescent City or Humboldt without going on horseback. The wagon road is all open except one mile on the south side of the river in Del Norte county, but teams manage some way to get over that mile, for six teams crossed the river Friday....(*Blue Lake Advocate* 7 July 1894)



Lentell Map 1909. HSU Library Humboldt Room. Map coll.

The Klamath Wagon Road from Orick north proceeded right up Prairie Creek, mostly along the same route as the later Redwood Highway, except that at the Del Norte line, it followed the coast (Lentell 1909). Travel across Redwood Creek at Orick relied on the ferry until the summer of 1903, when the first bridge was completed (*Arcata Union* 23 May 1903; *Blue Lake Advocate* 8 Aug 1903). Despite constant graveling during winter and early spring, road conditions could be pretty rough.

The Stage Was Delayed—The Crescent City stage had quite a time making the last trips and the storm of Monday and Tuesday played havoc with the road above Orick. On account of the large number of trees across the road, the stage driver had to leave the stage about ten miles above Orick and carry the mail sack in on foot. There were four passengers who had to foot it in the whole ten miles and one heavy-weight commercial traveler had to carry a large sample case the entire distance.... (Arcata *Union* 20 Jan. 1906)

The summer of 1910 saw commencement of an auto stage route between Trinidad and Crescent City, a few months before California voters approved an \$18,000,000 bond issue for construction of a state highway system (Arcata *Union* 4 June 1910; Humboldt *Times* 18 Nov. 1910). The resulting Redwood Highway inched its way north from the San Francisco Bay area with northern Mendocino and southern Humboldt counties waiting until 1914 for the first construction work (Humboldt *Standard* 2 April, 21 July 1914). Further north, it was another four years before the “marsh” road between Eureka and Arcata was underway and another seven years from then before it was paved (Humboldt *Standard* 3 July 1918; Arcata *Union* 5 March 1925). Construction up the coast was so delayed that the stretch through what is now the Park didn’t begin until 1927, and in Del Norte County, at the end of the line, highway construction was still struggling into the 1930s, a good twenty years after passage of the state highway bond issue.

Highway Clearing Starts at Orick—No time is being lost in starting work on the 15 mile section of state highway from Orick to the Del Norte line....The contract for clearing was let to Englehart Paving and Construction Company on a bid of \$54,000. The clearing will involve the falling and removal of a considerable number of large redwood trees, as the road passes through a large tract of virgin timber in the Prairie Creek district. According to the plans...the big trees will not be cut up but will be allowed to lay as they fall or are dragged out of the right of way. Two camps have already been established for the work and several crews of expert choppers and sawyers are now on the job and the work will go rapidly forward. (Arcata *Union* 7 April 1927)

H.W. Hauser Company completed the stretch from one mile south of Orick to six miles north by the end of August 1928, and Englehart was completing the stretch from the end of the Hauser contract to the Del Norte County line, both portions surfaced with their first layer of gravel (Arcata *Union* 30 Aug. 1928) Two years later, the highway was paved from Orick to the Del Norte line (Blue Lake *Advocate* 14 June 1930).

The Redwood Highway through the Park served travelers well and was sufficiently benign to Park resources that there was no major outcry for changes until 1963, when the California Highway Commission proposed expanding the Redwood Highway through the Park to a four-lane freeway. In response to strong opposition from State Parks, Save the Redwoods League and conservationists, the Division of Highways proposed a couple of equally destructive alternatives, one along Gold Bluffs Beach and another along the ridge above. After some heated debate, cool heads prevailed and a bypass was constructed to the east, opening for traffic in the fall of 1962 (*Redwood Record* 7 May, 30 July 1964; San Francisco *Chronicle* 19 Nov. 1965; Save the Redwoods League Bulletin Fall 1962). At the suggestion of the Save the Redwoods League, the old Park highway was dedicated as the Newton B. Drury Parkway to “honor the man most responsible for the purchase and protection of Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park” (Save the Redwoods League Bulletin Fall 1962).

## Settlers

The first white men along the beach at Redwood Creek were not settlers, just passersby headed elsewhere in pursuit of gold. That elusive bonanza was soon replaced with the region's real wealth—the land itself and its big trees—and men came to settle. Charles Jewell was reported to be the first to turn from the beach and head up Redwood Creek into the valley (Humboldt *Times* 29 March 1967). Just when that was is unclear, but by the mid-1870s, George Griffin and Robert Swan were there, initially in search of gold, but soon well established as ranchers, land-owners, and merchants (Stanton and Van Kirk 1995). Traveling up the coast from Trinidad, they would have encountered Yurok people in towns at Big, Stone, Freshwater, and Redwood lagoons. Waterman (1920) identified two towns at the latter place.

On the south side of the Redwood Creek lagoon was the important settlement of o-re'q<sup>w</sup>, where he located six well-defined house-pits, plus evidence of two sweat-houses and a cemetery. This town was one of five in Yurok territory in which the jump dance was held. When Waterman conducted his field work in the summer of 1909, only one family was living there, although originally there may have been between 24 and 36 residents. An old town above the slough on the north side of the creek was apparently abandoned before contact, but Waterman documented five house pits there. Further up the coast at the Lower Bluff lagoon was the town of espä<sup>w</sup>, which had four houses and a sweat-house, possibly more in aboriginal times. Through marriage, espä<sup>w</sup> and the Klamath town of ho'paw were closely related as documented by Waterman (1920) and Spott and Kroeber (1942). At the north end of the Bluffs was the town of o'segen with three houses and two sweat-houses (Waterman 1920).

Griffin partnered with a Yurok woman, Annek Tepsaw or Tipsey, who was half from o'segen and half from espä<sup>w</sup> (Spott and Kroeber 1942), and they were the parents of four daughters, three of whom participated materially in the development of Orick, along with two other children born to Annie and Emil Frey after Griffin's death in 1883. Swan and Annie's sister, Ha-away, were the parents of a daughter, Minnie (Lowry) (Stanton and Van Kirk 1995). Within a few years after his arrival in the valley, Griffin had substantial numbers of livestock, both dairy and beef cattle. Daily entries in his Journal recorded "packing sand over the hill," feeding calves, cleaning up the garden and setting out strawberry plants, clearing land, slaughtering a beef, settling up with the Union Gold Bluff Company for beef, plowing, sowing oats, peas, and barley, and whitewashing the milk house (Family papers). Entries in Griffin's Journal (1879-1880) show that he had accounts with at least 35 men for beef, hay, butter, potatoes, bacon, tobacco, sugar, candles, flour, cooking and eating utensils, and more. The accounts also indicate that Griffin was paying others for their labor.

In search of grazing and farming lands, the homesteaders sought the prairies of the Bald Hills, and the beautiful bottom land along Prairie Creek and in the Redwood Creek valley. Among the Prairie Creek patentees: John Godwood received a homestead patent to SW qt sec 35, 12N1E. in 1893 and another patent under the 24 April 1820 Act in 1894 for the SE qt sec 22, 12N1E (Patents 14:350, 409); Neil McCrimmon, 1894, NE qt sec 25, 12N1E, (Patents 16:32); Alexander Dutch, 1895, SE qt sec 14, 12N1E (Patents 16:197); Donald McKellar, 1896, Lots 1 and 2, S half NE qt sec 1, 11N1E (Patents 16:170); David Dutch, 1896, homestead, SE qt sec 1, 11N1E (Patents 15:379); John Stockel, 1896, homestead, NE qt sec 15, 12N1E (Patents 15:434); Amos Roberts, 1898, homestead, NW qt sec 26, 12N1E (Patents 17:25); Marie Johnson Gist,

1915, SE qt SW qt, SW qt SE qt sec 10, E half NW qt sec 15, 12N1E (Patents 22:70). And, of course, the iconic Elk Prairie.

Located within portions of the SE qt sec 2 and the E half of the NW qt and W half of the NE qt sec 11, 11N1E, the Prairie was claimed by both mining companies and a couple of individuals. It provided the miners with forage for their pack mules and, when cultivated, vegetables for their employees (*Western Watchman* 25 June 1892). In 1885, E.F. Adams listed a possession interest and claim to the SE qt sec 2, 11N1E, 160 acres (1885 tax assessment p. 861). That same year, the Union Gold Bluff Mining Company also asserted a possession interest and claim to “land on Prairie Creek,” 160 acres (1885 tax assessment p. 877). Louis Lisbon, said he, too, had a possession interest in the SE qt sec 2, 11N1E (1890 tax assessment p. 927). But it was claimant number four, Andy Harris, who eventually got the prized patent. When Editor Ayres was traveling up the coast in 1890, he stopped by Andy’s Prairie home.

Six miles up the creek is the prairie which lies back of Gold Bluff, and where Mr. A.J. Harris has located. He has a fine claim but the mining companies are contesting his right to settle on it. The case was to have been tried Friday, the 14<sup>th</sup>. Some way I feel a sympathy with the settler who is trying to make a home in these unbroken wildernesses. On the creek and its branches, there is fine bottom land enough to make comfortable homes for 30 to 40 families, but it has been gobbled up by the syndicates, and it lies here in silent occlusion useless to mankind. I think it is egregiously wrong that desirable lands are thus withheld from use, when there are so many seeking homes. It is a shame and disgrace that our system of the laws permits it...the traveler passes over miles and miles of the very finest character of bottom lands on this creek, by a narrow trail, seeing not a sign of a human habitation, or any evidence of cultivation or occupancy. (*Western Watchman* 22 Nov. 1890)

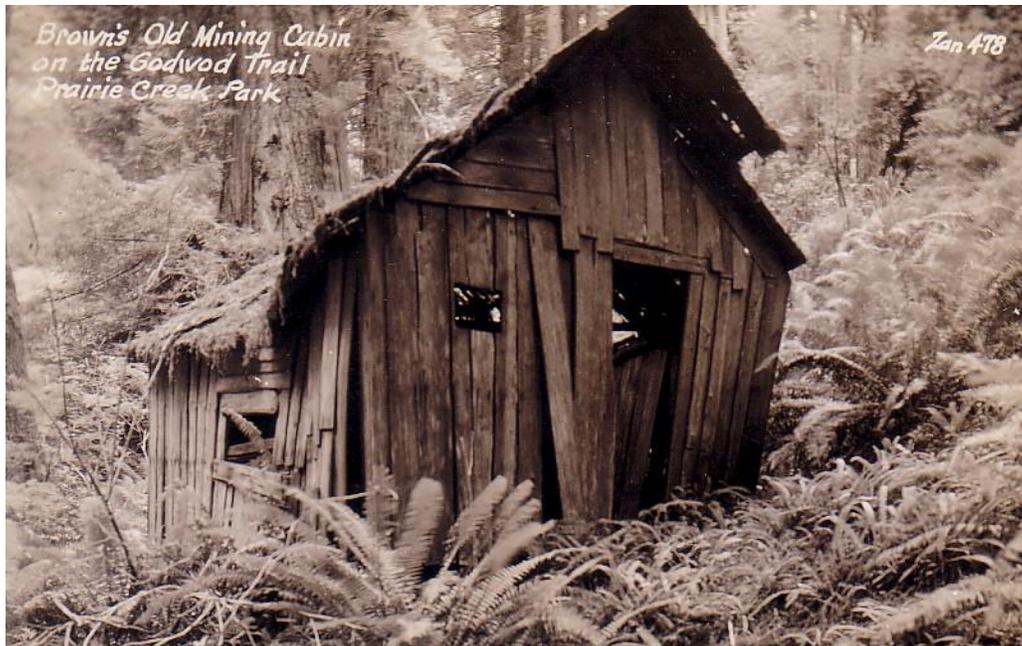
The first legal challenge was by Adams, Lisbon, et al., who sued Harris to oust him from his home. He prevailed, however, and decided at that point to get out the materials necessary for fencing his entire holdings (*Western Watchman* 13 Dec. 1890). The second challenge came from John Chapman of the Lower Bluff, who sued Harris for unlawful entry on land he claimed, but had never patented. The jury found in favor of the plaintiff, but granted Harris 15 acres based on possession for more than two years. The Arcata *Union* commented on the decision.

The land in controversy has been in the possession of Chapman, and cultivated for him for over 15 years. It is a portion of the prairie upon which the Gold Bluff mining claim has long depended for its forage and vegetables, and had been improved and cultivated by that company. It is rather late in the history of California now for men to enter premises already fenced and under cultivation as this man Harris seems to have done. We know of such cases that would not have been settled in the courts 25 years ago, and this is one of them. (Arcata *Union* quoted in *Western Watchman* 25 June 1892)

Editor Ayres would have none of it, responding to the *Union* that its last words hinted at “lawlessness of the worst stripe, the wildest kind of anarchy.” If Chapman had been in possession of the Public Domain for such a long time, he had had ample time to obtain legal title through a patent, but had not. Ayres, of course, could not restrain himself from also castigating Evans and his Scottish friends for violating U.S. land laws and removing the public’s land from entry by the salt-of-the-earth settler.

According to the *Union*, Mr. Chapman has been using, and profiting by the use of Uncle Sam's land for 15 years without paying a cent of rental and because of this fact wants to hold it forever in defiance of the law on this subject. The editor of the *Union* ought to know that such is not the spirit of the United States land laws. Mr. Harris is a bona fide settler of the class that the government has made it a policy to encourage, a man who will build up, improve and develop the great resources that lie in the wilderness. Mr. Harris has led in the attempt to settle this fertile section, and he should be sustained by the moral endorsement of our people so he is sustained by the law, the shotgun policy of the *Union* to the contrary, notwithstanding. There has been too much of that sort of thing by illegal grabbers of large bodies of land in this county. It is time it should cease. (*Western Watchman* 25 June 1892)

Another trip by Mr. Ayres in the spring of 1897 gave him the opportunity to identify other settlers along Prairie Creek: Arthur Davison (S half NE qt, W half SE qt sec 22, 11N1E, 1900 tax assessment p. 868), another location for David Dutch (NE qt SE qt sec 22, 11N1E, 1900 tax assessment p. 868), John [James] McDonald (E half NW qt, NE qt SW qt sec 21, 11N1E, 1898 tax assessment p. 913), R. McIntosh (NW qt sec 23, 11N1E, 1910 tax assessment p. 1026), and William Strehlow (E half NW qt, NW qt NE qt sec 14, 11N1E, Patents 17:88), "all located in the woods and brush."



Francis Brown claimed the NE qt and SE qt sec 34, 12N1E in 1893 and 1894. (Patents 14:188, 487). Photo by "Zan" (Alexander Stark) c. late 1940s. Courtesy of Jerry Rohde from Wes and Dixie Johnson coll.

Law suits and intimidation, including two barns destroyed by fire, the "work of an incendiary," did not deter Harris, who proceeded to settle on and farm the Prairie (*Western Watchman* 8 Dec. 1894). He raised and thrashed grains, sawed lumber, and cut fire wood, all by manual labor, but an engine was planned as was a prune orchard (*Western Watchman* 1 Dec. 1894). In 1900, Andy Harris received a patent for the 320 acres from the State of California (Patents 15:625). Born in Livingstone County, Illinois in 1854, he married his first wife, Jenett

McIntosh in Nodaway, Missouri in 1880 and they were in northern California by at least 1883 when the second of their four children was born. Jenett died in April 1897 at age 38 and is buried in Myrtle Grove Cemetery in Eureka. Harris and his second wife, Nannie Brooks, were married in Eureka in 1898 and were the parents of four children. Andy Harris died in Washington State in 1948 (Ancestry.com; U.S. Census Schedules; Humboldt *Times* 27 April 1897).



“The fine open prairie home of A.J. Harris. This is really a fine place, at least 200 acres of clear land, 100 acres in crops, comfortable dwelling house and two large barns, quite an orchard and the place generally well-stocked.” (*Western Watchman* 8 May 1897). Photo August 2015.

Harris was a persevering, energetic farmer. In 1895 he was assessed for personal property valued at \$620, including furniture, machinery, five horses, 10 cows and calves, four stock cattle, 50 hogs and 20 tons of hay (1895 tax assessment p. 428). By 1900, improvements on the SE qt sec 2, 12N1E, were valued at \$600, indicating substantial structures—barns and house. At this assessment, personal property more than doubled that of 1895 and included 20 cows, 10 calves, five stock cattle, 40 hogs, and 20 sheep, plus the always-present poultry and dog (1900 tax assessment p. 979). A visit to the Harris Ranch in 1901 produced a glowing report.

The Harris ranch on Gold Bluff Prairie is one of the largest ranches in the upper country. There are 320 acres of land in all, of which 140 acres are perfectly clear and in crops. Mr. Harris has a saw mill on the place, operated by horse power, and all his barns and other buildings are made of sawed lumber. Twenty-one cows are being kept on the place, and are busily engaged in raising calves for beef. Mr. Harris estimates that each cow can raise three calves per year and that there is more money to this than in making butter. He also raises large quantities of hay and grain and does his own threshing. “Andy” is known far and wide for his hospitality, and did all possible to make the trip of the *Union* man pleasant. (*Arcata Union* 4 May 1901)

That October, while Harris was in Arcata on business, he reported that a “traveler arrived at his house on September 25<sup>th</sup>, who has since decided to remain permanently, a son, 12 pounds” (Arcata *Union* 12 Oct. 1901). That was Andy and Nannie’s second child, Andrew Jackson Harris. Perhaps looking for greener pastures, Harris advertised his ranch in the summer of 1901.

For Sale! The Harris Prairie Creek Ranch on Prairie Creek, Humboldt County. The ranch comprises 320 acres, of which 140 acres is fine redwood land, 180 acres of bottom land all cleared. Eighty acres is planted to growing crops of hay and grain; will sell with the place about 60 head of stock, 22 cows, 13 head of horses, 40 head of sheep and goats, and a large band of hogs; also a complete outfit of agricultural implements. Place contains two barns (one 80x60), good house and other necessary buildings. Place is well fenced, has good water, and contains a four-acre orchard of young trees, all bearing. Good facilities for irrigation and will carry 100 cows. Is 48 miles from Arcata and is a popular stopping place for travelers.

Would prefer to sell the place as a whole, but will sell the timber separately, if necessary. Terms: one-half down, remainder on mortgage. Price \$50 per acre, including everything. Inquire or write A.J. Harris, Orick.

Even at a bargain-basement price, the ranch did not sell for another four years. While he waited, Harris got the mail contract between Trinidad and Del Norte County, which he operated for a year and a half (Arcata *Union* 1 March 1902; Blue Lake *Advocate* 22 Aug. 1903; Arcata *Union* 26 Sept. 1903). Still waiting for the ranch to sell, Harris continued to farm, bringing cows and hogs to Arcata and raising seed oats for sale, more than ten tons in 1905 (Arcata *Union* 22 Aug., 17 Oct. 1903, 18 Feb. 1905). Finally, in late 1905, the newspaper announced that Andy Harris had disposed of his fine ranch at Prairie Creek (Arcata *Union* 13 Dec, 1905). A.J. and Nannie Harris sold the entire 320 acres to William Boyes in November 1905 (Deeds 94:16).

Born in Quebec in April 1854, William Boyes came to California in 1877, settling first in Mendocino County, then, after his arrival in Humboldt County, he resided in several locations before purchasing the Prairie Ranch, where he lived out the remainder of his life. William and Emma Boyes had two children, Charles Boyes and Ethel (Mrs. Walter Gillis). William died in early 1932 at his Prairie home; Emma, reserving a life estate after the ranch was acquired for the Park, died there in July 1939 at age 77 (Blue Lake *Advocate* 16 Jan. 1932; Humboldt *Times* 27 July 1939).

When Harris offered the ranch for sale, the advertisement noted that it was a “popular stopping place for travelers” (Arcata *Union* 20 July 1901). But, of course—a bright opening in the redwood forest along the Klamath Wagon Road. Whether the Harrises specifically made provisions for the traveling public is unclear, but the subsequent owners did.

Oaks, Prairie Creek—This nice stopping place, kept by William Boyes and wife, is well patronized. Auto parties going up the coast always speak for rooms on their return. Clean beds with spotless linen and towels have a charm not always in evidence at western road houses. The balmy redwood air, favored by the unfailing ocean breeze, gives the traveler an appetite to relish the good things prepared by Mrs. Boyes and daughter, Ethel, which include honey, butter, eggs, ham and bacon, products all of which are guiltless of the contamination of commerce....few hungry people pass the Oaks, and Mrs. Boyes and daughter well understand the preparation of short order meals. (Blue Lake *Advocate* 3 Aug. 1907)

At the time of the reporter's visit at the "Oaks," about ten travelers were either having lunch there or spending the night. In August 1910, the Boyes home at Prairie Creek was the scene of Ethel's marriage to Walter Gillis of Samoa. The charming daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Boyes, Ethel was "universally known as a most estimable young lady;" Mr. Gillis held a responsible position as store manager and buyer for the Samoa Mercantile Co. (*Blue Lake Advocate* 6 Aug. 1910). William and Emma were doing more than feeding hungry strangers and marrying off a daughter, they were earnest farmers—"honey, butter, eggs, ham and bacon"—translate to bee hives, dairy cows, laying hens, and hogs. In 1910, the Prairie Creek property was assessed at \$3,790 with personal property at \$1000, including a piano, buggy and wagon (no auto yet), 12 cows, five heifers, 10 calves, a bull, six hogs and 175 sheep (1910 tax assessment p. 1032). At some point, Boyes sold the sheep and expanded his dairy herd to 20 cows, but by 1925 his livestock operation was focused on stock cattle, 20 listed, plus two steers (1919 tax assessment p. 1425; 1925 p. 1578).

Tax assessments can be helpful in determining a construction date for a house, but for rural pieces of land the information can be problematic, since barns and outbuildings are part of the improvement mix. The Harris/Boyes property involved several houses and barns, adding to the difficulty, and further complicated because of possible errors in the listing of the improvement values on the different parcels. It is clear that Harris had a house, barns, and outbuildings on the southeast quarter of section 2, variously assessed at \$200 in 1898 (p. 909); \$400 in 1899 (p. 892) and \$600 in 1900 (p. 979). The 1910 assessment for Boyes put the improvements in section 11, listing nothing for section 2, which appears to be an error (p. 1032). Also confusing is a 1915 improvement value of only \$50 in section 2 (p. 880). For 1917, 1919 and 1925, improvements on section 2 were listed at \$500 (p. 1262), \$500 (p. 1425), and \$630 (p. 1578), respectively. Did they tear down the Harris house in the mid-teens to construct the present Craftsman bungalow? Could the house be a remodel of an earlier house?



Boyes House. Photo August 2015.

Craftsman houses had their origins in California, but their popularity spread throughout the country during the 1910s and 1920s. Although altered with modern materials, notably the windows, the Boyes House, nonetheless, retains the Craftsman form and mass, highlighted by several identifying features common to the architecture—low-pitched, gabled roofline; layered gables and dormers; knee braces in the gable ends; and wide, overhanging eaves. Retention of the river-rock chimney base makes the house solidly rooted in its origins. Just when it was built is unclear, but possibly the old house has observed nearly a century of Prairie history.

The 1925 assessment could also reflect another house—a summer home—constructed by Mrs. Fred Lundblade on the Boyes ranch. That house burned down in October 1926 and subsequent litigation by Mrs. Lundblade was partially decided in her favor, the Boyes ordered to pay her \$850.00. She had sought \$2,365 for the cost of the building and furnishings and breach of contract. It was her understanding before construction of the house that she could purchase it, but upon completion, the Boyes informed her that the land upon which the house stood was not for sale. The newspaper noted that since the suit was instituted, the house was “destroyed by fire, the origin of which is a mystery” (*Arcata Union* 14 Oct., 30 Dec. 1926).

Automobiles used the old wagon road prior to construction of the Redwood Highway, but perhaps it was the coming of the highway that caused William and Emma to build an auto camp or maybe it was simply a new name for the 1907 “Oaks.” The course of events is unclear. In the spring of 1929, the Orick Community Sunday School motored to the “Elk Grove Auto Camp” for an outing. They searched the forest edges for trillium, then listened to local Yurok women, Mrs. Ed White and Mrs. Luther White, tell stories about the redwood tree and the sacred pepperwood (*Arcata Union* 25 March 1929). Another 1929 reference indicates that the Auto Camp was in operation around 1927, when Frank Tunsen was manager (*Arcata Union* 24 Oct. 1929). In the summer of 1930, the Boyes leased the camp to Justin E. and Maude E. Turner.

That certain auto and tourist camp consisting of cabins and their accessories and service station and store located on the Boyes Ranch near Prairie Creek, and formerly rented by Frank Millerbis and said auto camp and service station is bounded on the west by Prairie Creek; also between four and five acres of said ranch adjoining said camp and lying between the highway and Boyes Creek, the land leased covers about seven acres. (Leases 8:109)

The lease was to run for five years at \$50 per month for the first year, \$60 for the second and \$75 for subsequent years. The Turners were not to permit or carry on unlawful business, but were to “faithfully carry on auto camp, service station and store” (Leases 8:109). Remodeling of the Camp during that summer included a new water system, additions, and improvements needed to make it an “attractive comfortable and modern camp in every way” (*Blue Lake Advocate* 14 June 1930). The Turners operated the Camp into the summer of 1931, when personal and outside events changed the course of the Prairie forever.

William Boyes was in declining health. He spent time at St. Joseph hospital in the fall of 1931, returning home with a nurse to care for him until his death in January 1932 (*Humboldt Times* 28 Oct. 1931; *Blue Lake Advocate* 16 Jan 1932). During Boyes last illness, the State was negotiating land purchases for a state park at Prairie Creek, and the beautiful prairie at the Boyes Ranch, which already had visitor services and developed infrastructure, would be a very desirable acquisition. William and Emma were to benefit—financial security and a home for

Emma after William's passing. In October 1931, Save the Redwoods League purchased the 320-acre Prairie from the Boyes.

William and Emma H. Boyes to Save the Redwoods League, SE qt sec 2; W half NE qt, E half NW q sec 11, 11N1E, subject to all rights of Southern Pacific Co. under a deed and agreement made between William and Emma Boyes and Southern Pacific Co. dated 30 June 1909, deeds 107:409 [SP Co. purchased rights of way but never built a railroad]. Reserving to William and Emma and survivor a life estate of one acre in section 2 upon which their home now stands, with a right of way for road purposes from said acre in a convenient route to State highway during their lifetime. Also reserving right to take water for domestic purposes only for use on that one acre from spring located in vicinity of one acre home site. Also reserving the right to move from its present location and to erect on the one acre home site that certain small building containing their electric lighting plant, this work to be done at the Boyes' expense. (Deeds 205:397)

After the Yurok people were dispossessed of the Prairie and it became a place of claims and counterclaims by mining companies and settlers who plowed it and ran their livestock on it, the Prairie was at last reserved. Set aside for its beauty and resource values, and for the public's enjoyment, the Prairie had one last ride, a ride that has ever since focused the visitor's attention to this remarkable place in the redwoods.

### **Civilian Conservation Corps**

Among President Roosevelt's many alphabet agencies, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was his favorite. Authorized by an Act of March 31, 1933, entitled, "An Act for the Relief of Unemployment through the Performance of Useful Public Works and for Other Purposes," the CCC involved the departments of War, Interior, Labor and Agriculture. Labor selected the enrollees, War organized the units, and Interior and Agriculture planned and supervised work programs. Initially the objective was to enroll 250,000 young men during the authorized two years (Fechner 1933-1935).

In less than a month after the Act was adopted by Congress, the first camp was established in Virginia. Within three months, 250,000 men plus 25,000 veterans and 25,000 experienced woodsmen were in place in almost 1500 forest and park camps, working on a variety of projects: communication lines, trails, bridges, campground buildings, park structures, waste disposal systems, fences, and fire lookouts, prevention, and control (Fechner 1933-1935).

Establishing camps, recruiting enrollees, providing for the military command and professionals, and transporting people and supplies were huge undertakings, but it all happened overnight, like full-scale war mobilization. The departments of the Interior and Agriculture, working with state forestry and park agencies, planned the work programs. The organization was very hierarchical, at least at the camp level, where military personnel provided the management and leadership for the camp companies. Young, single men were enrolled for a six-month period, assigned to a company, and often sent to camps far from their homes. California's initial quota was 11,000 men. Locally, it was hoped that 400 of that quota would be assigned to Humboldt County camps, since most of the approximately 250 men who first registered for the CCCs at the Humboldt County Welfare office were assigned to camps elsewhere (Humboldt *Times* 30 April, 5 May 1933).

Early May saw the arrival of Col. Pendleton and his staff (including his long-time Quartermaster, Capt. Joe Underwood) to open the CCC district office in Eureka. The prospect of “new money” flowing through the “channels of trade” in Eureka was exciting news, as the district began work on two camps, one at Orleans in Humboldt and the other at Hawkins Bar in Trinity County (*Humboldt Times* 9 May, 10 May 1933). Immediate arrival of 25 men from the Presidio in San Francisco for construction of these camps began intense CCC activities in northwestern California (*Humboldt Times* 12 May 1933). No forever-planning-and-bidding process, common in today’s world, contracts for furnishing building materials were let to county firms in less than a week. The new camps were to have four barracks for the enrollees, one for the foresters, an infirmary, wash house and showers, a cooler, kitchen and mess, also a large administration and recreation building, and construction was to take one week! (*Humboldt Times* 16 May 1933).

Additional camps were soon under construction: Gasquet F-18, Siskiyou National Forest, Del Norte County; Big Bar F-27, Hyampom F-29, and Mad River F-30, all in the Trinity National Forest, Trinity County (*Humboldt Times* 18 May 1933). Other camps were announced but never built. Some camps were established and then temporarily abandoned to be reopened at a later date, but the longest operating camps were in the national forests at Orleans, Hawkins Bar, Big Bar, Mad River, and Gasquet; the long-running park camp was at Burlington. By June these camps were being filled with enrollees, 100 at Mad River; 109, Orleans; 70, Gasquet; 106, Big Bar; and 100 at Hyampom. Enrollees from Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky and Indiana, recruited from the Fifth Army Corps, arrived at the Burlington/Dyerville camp in June (*Humboldt Times* 8 June, 17 June 1933). The Hawkins Bar camp was under the command of Clyde Steel, First Lieut., 30<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry, assisted by Second Lieut. Mathew Santino, CAC-Reserve (*Humboldt Times* 17 May 1933).

Lt. Santino was associated with several camps in the Eureka district, including Prairie Creek. A native of Kansas City, Missouri, Santino was a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, and the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. Upon his retirement from the U.S. Army as a Lt. Colonel in 1956, he settled in Eureka, where he participated in numerous fraternal and civic organizations, including the Eureka Board of Education for 22 years. He donated his CCC scrapbook to Humboldt State University Library and it now resides in the Humboldt Room. Among items in his materials are camp newsletters and photographs of the CCC camp on the river bar near Dyerville and the Prairie Creek camp in the Elk Prairie. Lt. Santino died in Eureka on Aug. 30, 1984 at the age of 74 (*Times-Standard* 1 Sept. 1984).

The battle front against depression in the Eureka district of the Civilian Conservation Corps, commanded by Lieut. Col. L.L. Pendleton, C.A.C., covers as much territory as the entire western front during the World War. From north to south, the district extends 400 miles and from west to east by airline about 80 miles. However, the distance by negotiable roads is much greater and from headquarters in Eureka to the various camps ranged from 45 to 270 miles....Two camps are on paved highways and another only a few hundred yards away, but the other six are reached by roads that give to the traveler the combined thrill of a rollercoaster and airplane, hedge hopping.... (*Humboldt Times* 2 July 1933)

In less than three months after the CCC was authorized by Congress, a camp was assigned to Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park.

New Camp to be Established at Prairie Creek—Announcement yesterday that this Ninth Corps area would establish a conservation camp at Prairie Creek, Del Norte County [sic] for World War veterans now unemployed, was accompanied by a report that these men would be commanded in the various camps throughout the state only by officers of the regular Army and reserve corps who had served with the American Expeditionary Forces. (*Humboldt Times* 11 June 1933)

Bids for the Prairie Creek camp, which was entirely new construction, were mailed in late September, with the intent that local men would be hired at union wages when needed and that materials would be purchased locally (*Humboldt Times* 26 Sept. 1933). Col. Pendleton and Capt. Underwood inspected the Prairie Creek site before the bids were opened, but it had already been determined that Lt. Edwin P. Crandall, company commander at Hyampom, would bring a detachment of 15 men and a non-commissioned officer to start the construction. As soon as the camp was completed, the entire personnel of the Hyampom camp transferred to Prairie Creek (*Humboldt Times* 30 Sept. 1933). Lt. Crandall, detached from the 11<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, was assisted by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Mark Thomas and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Frank Tandy with Capt. John H.P. Copenhauer as the medical officer (*Humboldt Times* 7 Oct. 1933). By mid-October, the Prairie Creek camp was 30% completed and Capt. Underwood was urging contractors at all camps to speed the work, hoping all would be completed before the rains arrived (*Humboldt Times* 19 Oct. 1933).

C.C.C. Work Commended by Park Officials; Various Camps to be Inspected by Two Officials—The work being done in state parks by the Civilian Conservation Corps is of outstanding benefit with the developments being accomplished which would have many years to complete, declared Newton B. Drury, Executive Secretary of the Save the Redwoods League, upon his arrival here from an inspection of the new camp at Prairie Creek.

Drury was accompanied by Col. Charles P. Wing, Chief of the Division of Parks, and Emerson Knight, Inspector of State Park work for the Emergency Conservation Administration. The three men were profuse in their praise of the new construction, under the direction of First Lt. Edwin P. Crandall, 11<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, and Capt. Mark Thomas, F.A. Res., including the landscaping of the camp under the direction of Mr. Meyers. The personnel of the Prairie Creek camp is the same which carried the Hyampom camp to high honors in the Ninth Corps Area competition, leading all others in California and second on the west coast. The men will inspect the park camp at Dyerville today.... (*Humboldt Times* 21 Nov. 1933)

With completion of ten camps to winter standards, Capt. Underwood announced in December 1933 that a total of \$111,834 had been expended, almost half of that for civilian labor, mostly from Eureka, and since May, total construction expenditures totaled over \$200,000. The camps at Hawkins Bar, Gasquet, Orleans, Big Bar, and Mad River were converted lumber camps with a lower average cost for reconstruction. Three tent camps were winterized. Construction costs for the new Prairie Creek camp included lumber \$5176; hardware \$400; millwork \$560; roofing, floor and wall covering \$1022; plumbing \$1327; electrical material \$411; civilian labor \$1056; misc. \$466. (*Humboldt Times* 9 Dec. 1933).

In addition to their conservation duties, the CCC enrollees were involved in education and recreation programs. Educational advisor J.H. Cameron was assigned to Prairie Creek, where

he arranged for evening speakers like Mr. Littlefield, State Park Foreman at Prairie Creek, who addressed the company with a “highly interesting talk dealing with the various means and methods one should employ if he finds himself lost” (*Humboldt Times* 7 April 1934; *Humboldt Standard* 25 May 1935). No report of how well the Prairie Creek guys did educationally, but of the 78 southern boys stationed at Camp Humboldt Redwood at Weott in 1939, half returned home with high school or 8<sup>th</sup> grade diplomas or vocational proficiency certificates as a result of the camp’s educational program (*Humboldt Times* 16 March 1939).

Camp recreation and competitive games between camps were big activities in the CCCs. The *Humboldt Times* sports page carried regular reports on boxing events in Eureka, and basketball and baseball games between the various CCC units.

Four CCC teams tangled in two fast games of basketball last night with the result, the Prairie Creek [team] continued their phenomenal playing to sink Big Bar 36 to 17, while Headquarters nosed out Hawkins Bar in a thrilling game, 23 to 22. The entire Prairie Creek team was excellent and it is an impossibility to pick out any outstanding stars. Plenty of colleges in this country would be very happy, indeed, to have such players as Linotti, Finney, McLean, McNeil .... (*Humboldt Times* 24 Feb. 1934)

Because the Prairie Creek boys were playing “some fine basketball,” they were matched with the Humboldt State Teachers College junior varsity in a preliminary game to the Chico-HSTC game at the college gym (*Humboldt Times* 1 March 1934). Spring brought baseball and the Prairie Creek enrollees continued their athletic prowess.

Camps near town took in picture shows, but distant camps, like Prairie Creek, Hawkins Bar and Big Bar, had the entertainment brought to them, a “convertible talking picture apparatus,” making the rounds each week showing recent releases (*Humboldt Times* 8 June 1934). The Prairie Creek camp had an infirmary and a contract physician, Dr. Hadley of Arcata, loaned personal equipment, instruments, and 500 medical books, along with hundreds of medications, to the camp facility (*Humboldt Standard* 28 Sept. 1935). And there was friendly competition between camps for the “best camp” award.

Prairie Creek C.C.C. Camp Acclaimed First in Area by District Head Officer—Under its commander, Captain Mark Thomas, Field Artillery Reserve Officer, the Prairie Creek C.C.C. camp won the Eureka District title by being declared the most outstanding organization of the District by Lieut. Col. L.L. Pendleton, Commander of the Eureka District. The camp is known as the 1903<sup>rd</sup> Company of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The award comes as a distinct achievement as the other nine camps in the District were all outstanding, losing the honor on a few undone details.

One of the main factors winning the honor for the Prairie Creek camp was the new State Camp Park recently completed by the boys. The camp site is near the Prairie Creek headquarters and upon being finished was acclaimed by the California State Park Commission as one of the finest in the state. The camp is made up of several individual camp sites, having all necessary sanitary conditions, including stoves, running water, etc.

Other factors on which the boys and the officers were graded included, besides forestry work, administration, initiative and general efficiency shown by everyone connected with the organization. The award, which is made semi-annually, is in connection with a nation-wide contest sponsored by the Army and Navy Journal service publication of Washington, D.C....Fred

A. [Strain] of the USFS is in charge of the camp and also of all forestry operations in the state park area served by the company....

Prairie Creek camp is located a few miles north of Orick on the Redwood highway. It is a beautiful camp and, with its natural surroundings, is looked upon as outstanding. Some of the achievements by the Prairie Creek corps are building of roads, installing fire suppression and prevention facilities, and other modern improvements necessary to make the surrounding territory safe but beautiful. (Humboldt *Times* 15 July 1934)

Fred A. Strain was a college-graduated civil engineer and among the professionals needed to lead and supervise the unskilled, but willing-to-work CCC enrollees. Born in Indiana in 1881, Strain worked as a mining engineer and was living in Oakland at the time of the 1930 census, returning there to act as engineer for the City after his stint with the CCCs (U.S. Censuses, 1930, 1940). “The Big Tree Breeze,” reported on Prairie Creek’s tourists facilities.

New Tourist Haven Ready near Orick—Under the direction of the State Park superintendent, Fred A. Strain, an area of the Prairie Creek State Park near Orick, California, has been turned into a wonderful haven for tourists. The State Park foreman and enrollees of C.C.C. Company 1903 have erected a custodian’s lodge and stove from hand-hewn materials. The old cabins on the site were remodeled and modernized and a number of new cabins were built. A modern laundry and bathhouse complete the new facilities at the camp center. Nearby along the banks of Prairie Creek, numerous camp sites have been located, all of which are accessible by car. Each camp site is provided with a camp stove and with a table made from a cross section of a giant redwood, which is circled by comfortable redwood stools. The entire area has been landscaped with ferns, rhododendrons and other native plants and shrubs. This new camp ground is now open to the public and it is anticipated that many campers and tourists will be attracted to the park during the summer months. (Humboldt *Standard* 13 April 1935).



“Custodian’s lodge.” Photo by “Zan” (Alexander Stark) c. late 1940s. Tim McKay Postcard coll. HSU Library Special coll. 2007.02.1879. Is that a tanoak in the background? Was this the location of the “Oaks” stopping place?



Camp along Prairie Creek with table from “cross section of a giant redwood, circled by comfortable redwood stools.” Photo by “PAT” (Frank L. Patterson) c. late 1930s. Tim McKay Postcard coll. HSU Library Special coll. 2007.02.1883.



Camp center. Photo by “PAT” (Frank L. Patterson) c. late 1930s. Tim McKay Postcard coll. HSU Library Special coll. 2007.02.1884.

Between 1933 and 1942, the CCCs constructed over 1500 buildings and structures in California State Parks., including hundreds of Diablo stoves, picnic tables, and campsites, along with open air theatres, recreation halls, visitor centers and bridges. At Prairie Creek, the CCCs built the administration building, comfort station number 1, 12 Diablo stoves, 28 picnic tables, and a campfire center (California Dept. of Park and Recreation, online).

The aerial of the Prairie Creek CCC camp is dated 1934 in Mathew Santino's scrapbook. A note in the Humboldt *Times* that summer announced plans to make a series of aerial photographs of the ten camps comprising the Eureka District on the recommendation of Lt. Philip B. Foote, Air Reserve, of the Prairie Creek camp (Humboldt *Times* 5 July 1934). The photo shows the present visitor center under construction. The "old cabins on the site," mentioned on 13 April 1935, appear in the photograph directly in front of what they called the "custodian's lodge" (visitor center). Were these cabins part of the Boyes Auto Camp built prior to the establishment of the Park? The CCC camp itself is extensive—perhaps seven or eight barracks, probably the administration building where the cars are parked, infirmary, recreation hall, mess and kitchen, built around a square with radiating walks from the centered flagpole. The baseball diamond and basketball court are clearly visible. The Redwood Highway is paved and striped. Just what the buildings are at the turn into the camp is unknown. In an "Orick News" column, Thelma Hufford reported Robert Davison's remembrances of the camp.

They had barracks for the men, headquarters, cookhouse and shop. Mr. Paddock was mechanic at the shop. There was a post exchange with library books, cigarettes, and candy for sale; and a post office building. There was a camp doctor who also helped local people in emergencies.

A picture of the state park store shows a gasoline pump in front and on the ridge of the roof was a sign with big letters that read "California State Park System, Prairie Creek State Park, Elk Grove."

The CCC boys did a great deal of work. They cleared campsites using the earlier heavy drag saws. When the highway was built across the prairie about 1926, the contractors left huge piles of debris and big trees on both sides of the road. [Arcata *Union* article 7 April 1927] The CCC boys cleared away all of that.

Some of the big trees were made into rails that make up the present rail fence along the prairie. Some logs were bucked into cords and cords of firewood. Many of the logs with the debris were hauled and dumped into a deep canyon on the Osegon Trail. The old swinging bridge across the creek in the park was built by the boys. So was the all-redwood visitor center with the hand hewn beams and huge double rock fireplace.... (Hufford, "Orick News," Arcata *Union* 17 March 1977)

The *Standard* article of 13 April 1935 reported that the CCCs had remodeled the old cabins and built a number of new ones. The total number of cabins is unclear, but in 1947, the State Park Commission authorized construction of more cabins in the Prairie Creek Park (Blue Lake *Advocate* 8 Nov. 1947). When California's state parks opened for the 1948 summer season, Prairie Creek provided 45 camps and six cabins, as of May 15, but another 25 new camps were to be ready July 1 (*Redwood Record* 13 May 1948). For some years, resort owners along the Redwood Highway, particularly in southern Humboldt County, had opposed development in the State Parks because such public facilities unfairly competed with private enterprise.



Prairie Creek Civilian Conservation Corps Camp. Photo 1934. Lt. Mathew Santino's scrapbook, HSU Library Humboldt Room.

No Cabins or Concessions is Decision of State Park Commission—The State Park Commission at its meeting in San Francisco last Friday reaffirmed its policy of erecting no cabins or concession buildings in any of the State's parks, wherever private financed facilities of adequate standard exists in the immediate vicinity. The Commissioners went even further. They formally agreed that five cabins now under lease to private individuals in the Prairie Creek State Park, Humboldt County, will be torn down upon expiration of leases and not replaced.

Occasion of the Commissioner's action was the appearance before it of some 75 Redwood Empire resort owners, county supervisors, and other officials, representatives of granges, chambers of commerce and REA officers and affiliated units. Leader of the delegation was Albert F. Beecher, president of the REA, protesting a possible expenditure of state funds to construct new cabins and concessionaire structures in Prairie Creek Park.

In accordance with a previous policy of the Commission established in 1945, the State will not build such structures in competition with adequate private individuals in the region of any park...On their part, resort owners in attendance agreed to continue their program of maintaining high standards of cleanliness, accommodation and reasonable price scales in private wayside facilities in the Empire. (*Redwood Record* 25 Nov. 1948)



Photo by "Zan" (Alexander Stark) c. late 1940s. Postcard courtesy of Jerry Rohde from Wes and Dixie Johnson coll.

Reporting on the same matter, the *Del Norte Triplicate* (26 Nov. 1948) said that the 75 speakers at the Commission's meeting were protesting the "building of ten cabins in Prairie Creek State Park at a cost of \$50,000 to be leased by the state for concessions." In an "Orick News" article in 1980, Thelma Hufford said the cabins at Prairie Creek were removed in the early 1960s (Hufford, "Orick News," *Arcata Union* 31 Jan. 1980).

The Prairie Creek CCC camp was active through at least the fall of 1935, when the State undertook an elk count, but a note a year later mentioned that the abandoned camp was being "hastily rehabilitated" for fire-fighting purposes (*Humboldt Standard* 25 Oct. 1935; *Humboldt Times* 4 Oct. 1936). Dry conditions well into October 1936 caused a rash of fires throughout Humboldt County. With the reopening of the CCC camp, two hundred men were deployed from Hawkins Bar, San Jose, and Stephens Grove to Prairie Creek and from there to the Klamath area. But Prairie Creek had its own fire in the north part of the Park.

The worst fire reported yesterday was at the Prairie Creek State Park. Over 100 men from both the CCC and forestry service are engaged in combating the flames. The fire originated from smoldering remains of a fire which did large amounts of damage in the park two weeks ago. (*Humboldt Times* 18 Oct. 1936)

Fire-fighting crews at Prairie Creek were replaced by a company from Lava Beds on November 1 (*Humboldt Times* 13 Oct. 1936). Spring 1937 saw a contingent of 81 new enrollees arriving at the Prairie Creek camp, for a total of 161 men, two thirds of whom were from Kentucky, the others from West Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana. Stationed there temporarily, they were soon on their way to Yellowstone National Park for the summer, leaving a fire suppression crew at Prairie Creek (*Humboldt Standard* 24 April, 16 July 1937). In the summer of 1938, a fifteen-man fire suppression crew was stationed there, "housed" in tents, suggesting that the

buildings had been removed or were not suitable for occupancy (*Humboldt Times* 14 July 1938). Full occupation of the CCC camp at Prairie Creek apparently ended in late 1935 or early 1936.

The Park's earliest facilities were constructed by the CCC enrollees in 1934 and 1935, including the present visitor center, campsites (minus those first cupboards, fireplaces, and tables/stools), the split-rail fence which still identifies the Park, and trails. Not only in Prairie Creek, but throughout California—in parks and forests—the hard work and craftsmanship of thousands of CCC enrollees and their supervisors made enduring impressions on the landscape and left a proud legacy.



Elk Prairie fence. Photo August 2015.

## **Redwoods Preservation and Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park**

Efforts to establish a redwood park in Humboldt County date to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Eureka school children petitioned the federal government for a Redwood National Park.

“We, the children of Eureka schools, have been studying about our redwood forests and along with the rest of the people of our county, we feel that representative groves of these trees should be preserved for ourselves and coming generations of children and we respectfully petition the U.S. government to take some action toward establishing a national forest of redwoods.”  
(*Humboldt Times* 5 March 1908)

A few years later the Native Sons of the Golden West began a campaign to establish a park, either on Pacific Lumber Company land at Dyerville or the Carson Woods near Fortuna. Their effort was sufficiently successful that legislation was introduced in Sacramento, but the campaign waned and no park resulted (*Humboldt Times* 30 Jan., 19 May, 20 May, 1910; *Humboldt Standard* 31 Jan. 1911). The object of this early preservation movement was for a park of two or three hundred acres, just a token to remind people of the magnificent forests that once existed (*Humboldt Times* 31 May 1910).

That began to change in the fall of 1910, when Californians passed the \$18,000,000 bond issue for the construction of a state highway system with two primary north/south corridors, one through the central valley and the other, a coastal route (*Humboldt Times* 18 Nov. 1910). The Redwood Highway, constructed through Sonoma, Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte

counties, traversed the most spectacular of the remaining redwood groves, notably in the latter two counties. As construction progressed northward, two realities were apparent. First, the redwood forests were being liquidated, particularly in southern Humboldt, not simply for sawed lumber, but for grape stakes, fence posts, and railroad ties. And secondly, if the far northern part of California intended to reap any tourist benefit from the highway, there had to be some preservation along the corridor. Acknowledging that tourist would not be interested in coming to Humboldt County and spending their money to see stumps, Humboldt County businessmen mobilized behind the preservation movement.

To get the ball rolling, Congressman Raker introduced a resolution in Congress regarding the establishment of a redwoods national park in Humboldt County (*Blue Lake Advocate* 13 April 1912). That began a long and arduous journey for redwoods preservation, first with single groves, then state parks, and finally Redwood National Park in 1968. The journey was fostered by a number of key individuals and organizations, to whom present and future generations owe an undying debt of gratitude. Local businessmen, national leaders, and a California-based organization were instrumental in bringing the issue to the public. It was, however, the women who were the grassroots movers, organizing, sallying forth into the forests to take a stand before the saws, pushing public officials to action, and steering the movement to success.

Things began to coalesce in early 1914, when delegates to a meeting of the Humboldt County Federation of Women's Clubs assembled at the Unitarian Church in Eureka to discuss a proposed redwood park and hear an address by George Burchard, "How Shall We Acquire a Redwood Park for Humboldt County?" (*Humboldt Standard* 10 Jan. 1914). Club women and the local business community partnered to promote the redwoods beyond northern California.

Will Urge Redwood Park—The State Federation of Women's Clubs began its session at Riverside yesterday with a large attendance. One of the subjects of interest to Humboldt that will come before the Federation will be securing of a National Redwood Park for this county.

This matter will be brought up through a letter from the joint meeting of the County Federation of Women's Clubs and the Humboldt Promotional Committee and will particularly be called to the attention of Mrs. Lovell White, California's delegate to the National Federation of Women's Club to meet in Chicago in June. In the National Federation, Mrs. White is chairman of the Women's Forestry Committee and will undoubtedly urge the endorsement of the National Federation, representing 2,000,000 women of this country.

In addition to the letter sent the Federation of Clubs at Riverside, Secretary Irvine of the joint meeting here and of the Promotions Committee has sent similar letters to every Senator and Representative. The circular letter is as follows:

"Dear Sir:

"I respectfully call your attention to the fact that a bill is now before Congress which seeks to preserve a large tract of redwood trees for a National Park. Under the provisions of House Resolution No. 4, the Congressional Committee is empowered to visit the largest groves of these rapidly disappearing wonders—majestic trees that were old before the Man of Nazareth was born—for the purpose of selecting a virgin forest of massive growth for a National Park.

"I am writing in behalf of this organization and a large number of Women's Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, conservation organizations and other combinations of the best citizens of Northern California who are trying to preserve some of our mighty redwood forests for a National Park

“These wonderful trees, as you doubtless know, are the oldest and most majestic of all the sky-piercing *Sequoia sempervirens* that were God’s first temples. I enclose a picture for your inspection, though no picture of an object so majestic can ever convey more than a suggestion of the original.

“It is evident that if the children of tomorrow are to be permitted to see these precious relics of prehistoric America—sublime survivors of far-away centuries—there is an urgent need of immediate conservation, for the tracts closest to the railroad and the State Highway are disappearing before the woodsmen from the mills at the rate of three or four thousand acres each year.

“It is believed that no spectacle that California can offer the tourist from the East or from foreign countries will ever equal the mighty redwoods, for which reason it would be a shame if they were destroyed before practical conservation might take care of them.

“Won’t you go on record as earnestly in favor of speedy Congressional action on this vital measure?” (Humboldt *Standard* 29 April 1914)

Nationally, Stephen Mather, Director of the fledgling National Park Service, urged prominent conservationists John C. Merriam, Madison Grant and Henry Fairfield Osborn to investigate the situation in 1917. Traveling up the new Redwood Highway, they found the forests threatened by logging in Mendocino County, but passing into Humboldt, the party observed intact forests and upon reaching the Bull Creek-Dyerville area, found dense forests of gigantic redwoods. Recognizing, that without action, these forests would also be destroyed, Save the Redwoods League was founded (Save the Redwoods League webpage). Incorporated as a California non-profit organization in 1920, the League dedicated its first memorial grove in 1921—the Bolling Grove on the South Fork of Eel River (Humboldt *Standard* 6 Aug. 1921).

Director of the National Park Service Stephen Mather, accompanied by Madison Grant, conservationist (but, terrible-to-say, an outspoken racist), visited the region in the summer of 1919 and urged “vigorous action,” deploring the logging “crime,” being committed against the “finest body of timber in the world” (Humboldt *Standard* 9 Aug. 1919). Mather stressed that while there was “sympathy and interest” outside the region, locals had to do their part. “In Washington,” he said, “there is support to be secured for the park, but it can be won only by putting up a strong fight, making a noise that will be heard across the continent and by keeping everlastingly at it.” Mather and Grant agreed that the redwoods along the highway needed preservation, but also the trees extending to the ridgetops on both sides of the South Fork Eel.

Madison Grant made a unique appeal for the preservation of the redwoods, his idea being that justice should be done the hardy and magnificent trees that are making their last stand on the Pacific coast. He told his audience of Humboldt people something that many of them did not know, namely that centuries back the redwood covered nearly half of the northern hemisphere, being found in China, Japan and in northern Europe. Climate changes and other disturbances gradually drove it into narrower and narrower quarters until today it survives only on the northern coast of California.

“This last surviving group must be protected from the barbarians that we are,” Grant declared, branding the unchecked destruction of the forests as a national crime for which posterity would hold a strong indictment against the people of the present day.

“You must assert yourself if you intend to save these groves,” Grant said. “You should organize a local branch of the Save the Redwoods League and get down to business. Make an awful row and you will be heard. The man who makes the most noise frequently gets what he wants.” (Humboldt *Standard* 9 Aug. 1919)

Within the week, the women of Humboldt County met and formed a local Save the Redwoods League and quickly mobilized (Humboldt *Standard* 11 Aug 1919). In her big Pierce-Arrow, Kate Harpst drove the women canvassers to various places in the county to recruit members and select chairwomen (Humboldt *Standard* 6 Sept. 1919). Activity was brisk on all fronts as the trees continued to fall. The Women's League and Eureka businessmen focused the campaign on the redwoods at Dyerville and Bull Creek. They asked photographer Kenneth Kilburn to make a documentary of the Dyerville redwoods to be shown as a trailer to the motion picture version of Peter Kyne's *Valley of the Giants*, and they pushed the Board of Supervisors to take action (Humboldt *Standard* 16 Oct. 1919). Some timber operators agreed to limited cutting, and with County funds and substantial contributions from Mather and Congressman William Kent, redwood groves were purchased (Humboldt *Standard* 13 Sept. 1919).

Preservation activities were intense throughout the first half of the 1920s as the women, business leaders and Save the Redwoods League continued the race with the timber operators. Dyerville Flat trees were falling under the axes of the Pacific Lumber Company. Laura Mahan, a remarkable woman of uncompromising resolve and no little political skill, led the Women's League, all of which culminated at the Board of Supervisors in 1925 (Humboldt *Times* 12 Feb. 1925). Decades later, her tree-sitting sisters would have made Laura proud. A tribute to Laura and her husband, James, appeared in the Ferndale *Enterprise* (19 Jan. 1940).

New frost covered the fallen trees and the ground. Where the detached sun of the late November morning had pierced its way through the labyrinth of yet unfelled redwoods, dark paths sliced, knifelike, across the whiteness to reveal the oxidized red of freshly cut stumps and of chips from the undercuts of age-old redwoods, felled but a few days before. The casual silence of the dense grove of redwoods was broken by the voices of men, undistinguishable above the clatter of a gasoline motor, and the fuzzy rasping of a motor-driven drag saw.

On a trail from the west, a man and a woman rapidly approached a crew of men from a nearby logging camp. Startled by the amazed appearance of the two unexpected visitors, the loggers watched the couple greet the crew foreman and begin a particularly animated conversation with him. The words of the conversation did not reach the men but a certain tenseness did. Abruptly the woman ceased talking and climbed hurriedly onto a nearby stump, solidly in the path on which a huge redwood would soon be felled by the sweating workers. The men dropped their tools and the puffing motor coughed itself into quiet. Drama tightened the air.

That was the morning of November 19, 1924, on the eastern edge of the Dyerville flats. It was the climax of a twenty year struggle to save from destruction one of the greatest stands of *Sequoia sempervirens* civilization had ever know.

Simply and without the need of drama, a bronze plaque mounted in imperishable stone now rests at the scene of the original drama to tell the story in a few words. It reads:

Laura Perrott Mahan  
1867-1937  
James P. Mahan  
1869-1937  
Pioneers in the  
Save the Redwoods League

The Save the Redwoods League story deserves its own telling, but long-story-short, without the League and its impressive leadership, including the Drury Brothers, the redwoods

state parks would be but a shadow of today's reserves. The League had an uncanny ability to raise big money and negotiate purchases. Initially, those activities occurred in southern Humboldt, along the South Fork Eel River, but a 1923 event in northern Humboldt led the League and the State into new territory, a territory that eventually resulted in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park and the Redwood National Park that Eureka's school children urged sixty years earlier.

In the summer of 1923, Zipporah Russ, widow of Joseph Russ, donated the NE qt sec 35, 12N1E, to the State of California (Deeds 164:290). In the heart of what would become Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, the 160-acre grove is located along Prairie Creek and the Redwood Highway, and was given as a memorial to the Pioneers of Humboldt County and in memory of her husband (Ferndale *Enterprise* 13 July 1923).

Zipporah Russ to State of California, NE qt sec 35, 12N1E, 160 acres, excepting rights of Southern Pacific Co., 23 Feb. 1910 (Deeds 110:379). This conveyance is made upon the conditions that the property shall be devoted to the public forever as a REDWOOD PARK, and that the timber thereon shall not be cut, mutilated or destroyed. This park shall remain in its natural condition, in the condition it is now in and would be in for all time, were it left untouched by the hand of man, other than the building of a highway over and through the same and the brushing out of the necessary trails, for the better view of the timber in case such be necessary, to be known as the "The Humboldt County Pioneer Memorial." (Deeds 164:290, 5 June 1923)



Russ Memorial Grove. Photo by "PAT" (Frank L. Patterson) c. 1923-1930. Tim McKay Postcard coll. HSU Library Special coll. 2007.02.1886.

In 1927, legislative action in Sacramento resulted in the creation of a state park commission and provided for a comprehensive survey of potential park sites; it also called for a \$6 million bond issue, to be submitted to the voters in November 1928. A progressive Governor

C.C. Young appointed the first State Park Commission in 1927 and with the overwhelming passage of the bond issue the following year, California was well on its way to developing an unrivalled state park system (Engbeck 1980). That comprehensive survey, conducted by Frederick Law Olmstead, reported favorably on 125 California park projects, charting the direction for expending the \$6 million. Northern Humboldt's share included parks at Big, Stone and Freshwater lagoons; Prairie Creek; Del Norte Coast; and Mill Creek on Smith River (Humboldt *Times* 3 Jan. 1929).

Small tracts were gradually added to the Russ grove: A.D. Roberts 160-acre homestead in NW qt sec 26, 12N1E (acquired by the County and conveyed to State in 1929, Deeds 196:104); the Leach 150 acres in sections 3 and 4, 12N1E, in 1929 (Deeds 196:172); Cottrell parcel, SE qt sec 23, 12N1E, in 1931 (Deeds 205:112); Boyes Prairie Ranch in 1931 (Deeds 205:397); Perrott tract, NE qt sec 26, 12N1E, in 1932 (Deeds 208:302; 209:9); Gist parcel in 1934, SW qt SE qt sec 10, 12N1E (Deeds 217:236).

Two big acquisitions officially established Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. The Sage Land and Improvement Company of New York, which had acquired thousands of acres of redwoods from Charles Smith in 1916 (Deeds 135:118; 135:118) and smaller amounts from other interests, conveyed nearly 5000 acres to the League in two transactions on October 16, 1931 (Deeds 205:10; 206:97).

Prairie Creek Redwoods in State Park—With a princely gift of \$500,000 from Edward S. Harkness of New York in 1931, matched in part by funds from the California State Park Commission and the Save the Redwoods League, a large part of the magnificent Prairie Creek redwood forest north of Eureka, Humboldt county, totaling approximately 6,000 acres and costing approximately \$1,000,000, has been preserved, it was announced recently by J.D. Grant, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Save the Redwoods League, with the delivery of deed from the League to the State Park Commission of lands acquired from the Sage Land and Improvement Company. The plan for a great Redwood Preserve in the basin of Prairie Creek was formulated by the league several years ago. The decision of Mr. Harkness to aid in the preservation of the Prairie Creek forest was made after a careful study of the area and comparison with other outstanding areas in the Redwood belt.

With the present park project in the Prairie Creek region an accomplished fact, the essential part three of the League's four major projects of preservation have been accomplished. These are the Bull Creek-Dyerville Forest, the Del Norte Coast Park, and the Prairie Creek Park. Small acquisitions have been made in the Mill Creek Smith River area north of Crescent City.

The primary unit of the Prairie Creek park will extend from Boyes Prairie about five miles north of Orick northward to the Del Norte county line, for a distance of about seven miles along the Redwood highway, and from the ridge that divides Prairie Creek basin from the Klamath river watershed on the east, to a minor ridge on the west which is located in general about a half mile from the highway, which penetrates the heart of the park for its entire length.

Besides two tracts, purchased from the Sage Land and Improvement Company, 2,280 and 2,611 acres, respectively, the Boyes tract, 286 acres, and Cottrell tract, 160 acres, have recently been purchased; and several areas previously acquired in the region are included in the State Park system; the Russ Grove, 160 acres, the Roberts and Leach tracts, 160 and 150 acres, respectively, and several parcels of vacant U.S. Government land.

One of the interesting features of the new State Park is the herd of Roosevelt elk which roams between Prairie Creek and the ocean. This species, like the California Grizzly Bear, is now nearly extinct. Only about 300 head of the animals remain in this region, according to game

authorities, but they are seldom seen. State Park officials plan to provide a sanctuary for these animals such as is afforded the native animals in our National Parks. (*Blue Lake Advocate* 12 March 1932)

As the League acquired redwood groves, they were transferred to the State and incorporated into the Park. Late Depression years and World War II limited acquisition activities, but by the mid-1940s, both the League and the State were purchasing redwoods to consolidate Park boundaries and fill-in gaps. The Sage people, now Sage Land and Lumber Co., Inc. conveyed 239 acres to the League in December 1944—parcels in section 2, 11N1E and 80 acres in section 35, 12N1E (Deeds 272:415). The State acquired almost a 1000 acres from Sage in 1947, consisting of parcels in sections 22, 27, 33, 34, and 35, 12N1E (Official Records 18:365). The Stockel homestead, NE qt section 15, 12N1E, was purchased by the State that same year (Official Records 22:404). Another significant purchase in 1947 was the Godwood Creek area from the Sage Company. With League funding (almost \$95,000), the State purchased parcels in sections 34 and 35, 12N1E, totaling 186 acres (Official Records 23:69). Report of that purchase identified James Irvine as the donor.

Park Commission Ok's Prairie Creek Matching Funds—The State Park Commission, Division of Beaches and Parks, last week authorized matching funds to go with Save the Redwoods League funds in the purchase of a 160-acre addition to the park along the James Irvine Trail deep in the Redwoods.

The League funds were given by the late James Irvine of Orange county. The Park Commission informed the League at the same time that no more money can be appropriated for coast redwood purchases from the present \$5,000,000 fund. The Commission also authorized an item in its budget for construction of new rental cabins at the Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park (*Del Norte Triplicate* 31 Oct 1947)



John Godwood's cabin. Photo by "Zan" (Alexander Stark) c. late 1940s. Tim McKay Postcard coll. HSU Library Special coll. 2007.02.1893.

The elk on the beach and in the Prairie attracted considerable attention over time. They were considered nearing extinction at one time and at other times, terrible pests for ranchers

along lower Redwood and Prairie creeks (*Blue Lake Advocate* 18 July 1931). Nonetheless, in 1948, the Park's Madison Grant Memorial Forest and Elk Refuge was dedicated to the memory of Grant, one of the founders of the Save the Redwoods League. The refuge included 1600 acres of the "finest of the Coast Redwoods [and] habitat of the last remaining band of Roosevelt Elk in California" (*Blue Lake Advocate* 31 July 1948). At that point, the Park was 8000 acres in size (*Humboldt Times* 7 Aug. 1949).



At Elk Prairie, Visitor Center in background. Photo by "PAT" (Frank L. Patterson) c. late 1930s. Tim McKay Postcard coll. HSU Library Special coll. 2007.02.1905.

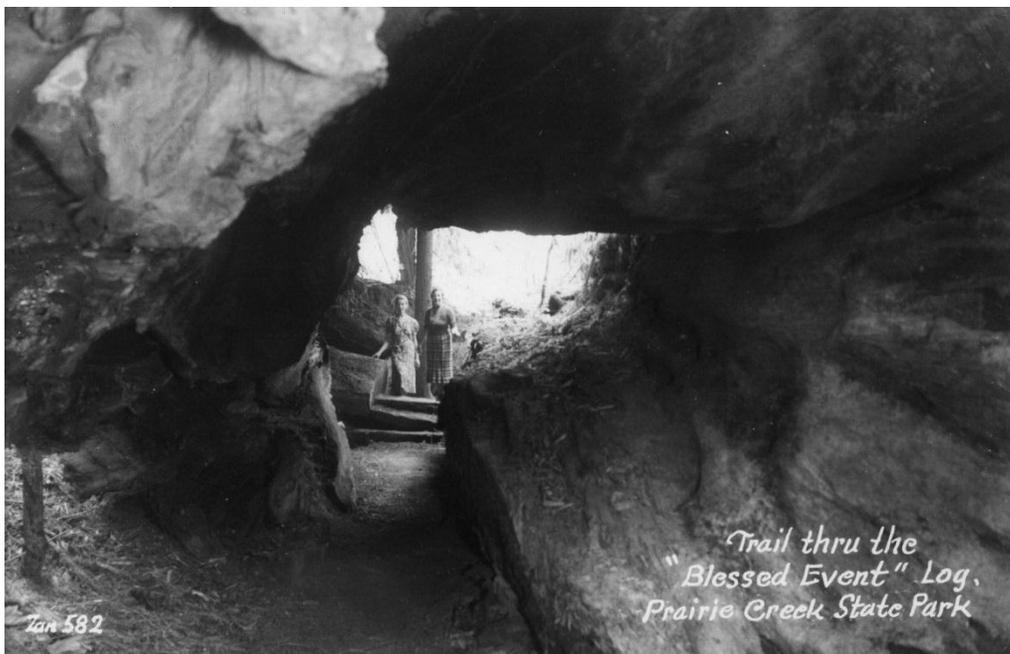
In 1948, Grizzly Park Lumber Company conveyed something over 700 acres to the State in sections 15, 22, 10, 27, 28, and 33, 12N1E, "excepting and reserving unto grantor until May 1, 1958, title to all timber standing, lying, growing and being on described premises with right to cut, harvest and remove" ! (Official Records 100:176). Piece by piece, the State rounded out the Park: the Sampair property of 110 acres in section 10, 12N1E, in 1948 (Official Records 77:341); forty acres from Hammond in section 28, 12N1E, in 1949 (Official Records 91:125); 370 acres from Sage in sections 2 and 3, 11N1E, and section 34, 12N1E, for \$152,634 in 1948 (Official Records 61:347); 80 acres from Sage also in section 34, 12N1E, in 1951 (Official Records 192:148); another 80 acres in section 34, 12N1E, from Sage in 1952 (Official Records 229:400); the Huggins property in section 9, 12N1E, in 1963 (Official Records 775:474); and major acquisitions from The Pacific Lumber Company—1000 acres in 1963 (Save the Redwoods League, *Special Gold Bluffs Bulletin*, 1965). Reserved mineral rights and ownership of property along the Park's western boundary at Upper Bluff and Lower Bluff were a continuing concern for the League and the State, even the iconic Fern Canyon remained in private ownership.

Long in the possession of the Upper Bluff mining company, Fern Canyon survived that ownership (even miners recognized the specialness of the place), but it needed lasting protection. Park benefactor and Save the Redwoods League member James Irvine negotiated for the Canyon with Edson Adams, but both men died before any resolution, Adams in 1946 and Irvine, a year

later (*Blue Lake Advocate* 10 Aug. 1946, 6 Sept. 1947). A wealthy rancher with property in Orange County, California and in Montana, Irvine came to Redwood Creek for many years to fish and visit, purchasing 66 acres at the mouth of the creek in 1916 (Deeds 133:71). Well-known to hikers is the James Irvine trail that leads from the Prairie Creek visitor center to Fern Canyon.

James Irvine Trails. The old, well-marked trails up Godwood Creek and along the ridge south of Godwood Creek, which converge on Home Creek and follow thence to the Pacific Ocean, are designated and marked as the James Irvine Trails, in recognition of the substantial contribution and assistance which James Irvine gave during his lifetime toward the acquisition of the Redwood forest lands through which these trails run. (Save the Redwoods League 1947-48)

A State Park Commission report in 1952 described the canyon, noting its “unique beauty, with walls 30 feet high covered with a solid growth of five-finger ferns on Home Creek,” and the need for acquisition which would include a “mile of scenic and recreational beach...with historical value” provided by early-day placer mining (Save the Redwoods League Bulletin, Extra 1952). Subsequent League bulletins displayed photos of the Canyon and reported on negotiations, but it took another thirteen years to bring this lovely place safely into the fold (Save the Redwoods League Bulletins 1956, 1957, 1961, 1962, 1965). In May 1965, The Pacific Lumber Company donated the 30-acre Canyon, but Save the Redwoods League and the State



Trail through a log named “Blessed Event.” Photo by “Zan” (Alexander Stark) c. late 1940s. Tim McKay Postcard coll. HSU Library Special coll. 2007.02.1885.

purchased the remaining parcels in sections 33, 34, 27, 28, 21, 22, 15, 16, 9, and 10, 12N1E, the mineral rights on these parcels already in the hands of the State (Official Records 838:121). For 2000 acres (North Tract of 1000 acres agreed to in 1963; 500 acres on Home Creek in 1965 and the South Tract of 500 acres), The Pacific Lumber Company received \$2,400,000 from the League and the State (Save the Redwoods League, Special Gold Bluffs Bulletin 1965). A very formal events took place on January 18, 1966, when the State received title to the Upper Gold

Bluff property (Save the Redwoods League Bulletin Spring 1966). The Lower Bluff property was already in the Park, acquired by the League in 1958, but the mineral rights were still reserved (Official Records 485:225).

Fern Canyon Given to State for Park by Pacific Lumber—A transaction, adding 2,125 acres to Prairie Creek Redwoods Park near Orick, will include the 30-acre area of Fern Canyon, donated by The Pacific Lumber Company, it was announced yesterday by The Pacific Lumber president and Save the Redwoods League, and state resources chief Hugh Fisher.

The Canyon, covered with rare fern species and described by the National Park Service as a “unique and fragile jewel,” long has been a favorite objective for conservationists, and its beauty has made it famous among local residents. The transaction for additional park acreage was for \$2.4 million to be paid to the lumber company. Deed to the 30-acre Fern Canyon site will be presented to Fisher by Murphy [of the PL Co.] today in Sacramento....

Fern Canyon, named for the 50-foot high cliffs covered with rare five-finger fern, connects the old State Park boundary with the ocean

“This is a major step in our long-standing program of working with citizen groups,” Murphy said, “in preserving for the public most outstanding of the scenic and heritage values in our timber properties.

“We are pleased that some of the most beautiful and most inspiring of the areas now preserved and held for the state park system, such as parts of the Avenue of the Giants and additions to Prairie Creek and Grizzly Creek parks, have been made through cooperation of the founder and succeeding owners of the company,” he added.

The original parcel of land for Prairie Creek Redwoods Park, four miles north of Orick, was donated in 1923 by the family of Joseph Russ, Pioneer Eureka lumberman. The new acquisition brings the park’s area to 12,423 acres. Photo of Fern Canyon. (*Humboldt Times* 12 May 1965)

Since 1965, the League and the State have purchased additional parcels to bring the Park to 14,000 acres of redwoods, prairies, streams and beaches. Prairie Creek is a park lover’s park, welcoming to people of all ages and abilities.

#### Prairie Creek: A Remarkable Return to the Forest Primeval....

Great temples with a shaggy green ceiling hundreds of feet high, Prairie Creek Redwood State Park and the two other redwood parks (Del Norte and Jedediah Smith) on the coast north of Eureka are places to recapture the feel of the primeval forests. The parks owe their existence to the insistent vision of the Save the Redwoods League, which raised millions of dollars to purchase memorial groves of redwoods from the lumber companies. Some groves, as a matter of conscience, were donated by lumbermen.

The park is now home to herds of California’s largest land animal, the Roosevelt elk. Previously in danger of extinction, this ungainly but attractive animal now ranges north to Alaska. The world’s largest spruce, the Sitka—a beautiful tree with a straight trunk, buttressed base, conical crown and long horizontal branches—is found here in abundance, growing around the meadow through which Prairie Creek runs, in the forest among the redwoods and on down to the edge of the sea at Gold Bluffs.

Opportunities for hiking abound. You can follow the old miners’ supply route from the meadow on Highway 101 to Gold Bluffs Beach, probably the loveliest hike in the park. Herds of big Roosevelt elk often roam the beach and even walk out into the surf. The James Irvine Trail is an easy four-mile walk; part of it is along Home Creek, which flows through magnificent virgin redwood forest down to a special place—Fern Canyon. Fifty-foot high walls are covered with black-stemmed five-fingered ferns, fountains of sword fern and feathery fronds of the delicate

lady fern. This lush canyon was formed by the creek cutting through the soft conglomerate that makes up the bluffs.

Fern Canyon and the beach can also be reached by narrow, winding Davison Road, which leaves Highway 101 just 3.6 miles south of the visitor's center. On Gold Bluffs Beach there is a campground with tables, toilets and piped water. Separate camps for backpackers and bicyclists are adjacent. Winds can be strong and summer mornings are often closed in with fog. During bad winter storms the beach is closed. Developed campgrounds with flush toilets and hot showers are in the meadow near the visitor's center. (Weiss 1986)

## Newton B. Drury

The highway that winds through the Park is designated the Newton B. Drury Parkway, but probably few, far too few, have any inkling who this man was or why his name has been attached to an old highway. He was, unquestionably, the pivotal force in the save the redwoods movement, a force to be reckoned with for nearly sixty years and whose leadership was found at every level—in the Save the Redwoods League board room, in Sacramento, and in Washington, D.C. He served in highly-positioned offices, never swerving from his passion to conserve and protect the grandest places in the Redwoods, in California, and the nation. Nearly all the

redwoods in the State Park system came to that protection because of Newton B. Drury.



His personal vita is full of notable accomplishments and superlatives, but nothing compares to the real thing—those living, breathing Redwoods, protected in the California State Park system. Newton B. Drury was a San Francisco native, born in 1889, a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley in 1912, and a passionate conservationist from his first involvement in Save the Redwoods League in 1920. That was the year the League approached the Drury Brothers (Newton and Aubrey) advertising and public relationships agency to take on management of the fledgling organization. Newton became Executive Secretary (today's Executive Director) to begin an extraordinary professional career. During his years at the League, he was instrumental in raising \$25 million dollars to preserve 135,000 acres of redwoods in thirty California state parks (*New York Times* 16 Dec. 1978).

Through the years, Drury served the League in various capacities and at various times, mostly as the Executive Secretary, but in later years as president and chairman of the board. When the State Park Commission was created in 1927, he was appointed as its Land Acquisitions Officer, clearly putting him on the trail of redwood groves waiting for state park acquisition. In 1940 he became Director of the National Park Service. He returned to California in 1951 to become Director of the California Division of Beaches and Parks, a position he held until 1959, when he resumed his work at the League (Engbeck 1980).

Newton Drury was the consummate diplomat and fund-raiser. For almost sixty years, he was the face of the redwoods—their unflinching advocate and passionate lover. Drury was honored with many awards, one from the University of California Alumni Association in 1973. At the presentation, the speaker addressed the 84-year-old Drury:

“When ecology was a word of infrequent use, you set enduring records for the promotion of state and national scenic wonders. A naturalist in every fiber of your being, your counsel on environmental affairs has been sought and followed by Presidents and Governors. Chief guardian of the great National Park system for more than a decade, you extended protection over America’s natural treasures. As a dedicated servant of your home state, you were Director of the Division of Beaches and Parks, and under your guidance, California parks, historical monuments, and recreational sites grew to seven score and more. Your generous public spirit is also evident in your unswerving adherence to your beloved Save the Redwoods League, which you helped found more than a half century ago and now serve as president. Your concern for the welfare of humankind is everywhere apparent. Your quiet influence and hopes for the future are felt in the primeval forests, in the mountains and deserts, along our coastlines, in the wild flora and fauna. In recognition of your achievements, the California Alumni Association proudly confers on you its highest honor, the California Alumni Association Award.” (Save the Redwoods League Bulletin Spring 1973)

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#### Postcards.

Six postcards are the work of "Zan," Alexander J. Stark, a Mill Valley, California photographer. Born in Michigan in 1889, he was manufacturing lantern slides in San Francisco when he registered for WWI in 1917. When he returned from the military, he resumed his photography and was still a "photographer of postcards" at the time of the 1940 census. In 1936 he became the official photographer for the Redwood Empire Association. He moved to Sonoma in 1952, perhaps at the time of his retirement. He died there in 1967 and is buried in Golden Gate National Cemetery (California Views, The Pat Hathaway Photo Collection at Caviews.com; U.S. censuses; Ancestry.com).

Four postcards are the work of Frank L. Patterson, "PAT," born in Klickitat, Washington in 1883. He was active in Oregon by at least 1920, when the census of that year reported his occupation as photographer working out of his home. Frank Patterson was in San Quentin from May 1940 to January 1946. He then worked in San Francisco from 1946 to 1959, when he was sent to Napa, where he died in 1961 (Nor-Cali Postcard Photographer Bio. Notes; U.S. censuses).

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The Redwood Highway through Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. Photo by "Zan" (Alexander Stark) c. late 1940s. Tim McKay Postcard coll. HSU Library Special coll. 2007.02.1901.