

*Trees*

# Landmark: What Now? A Monument to Trees

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The redwood tree was first discovered and named in what is now Santa Cruz County.

And men fought bitter battles over the Sequoia sempervirens, the tree that became the official tree of the State of California.

In early lumber days, many a tidy fortune came out of the redwood forests of Santa Cruz county. Business-minded pioneers looked at the giant redwoods with dollar signs in both eyes — and the cry of 'Timbrrrrrrrr!' rang through the hills.

In later years, concerned and prominent citizens fought to save several of the more spectacular groves.

After months of struggle and controversy, Big Basin was designated a state park in 1900-01. Welch's Grove near Felton became Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park in 1953-54.

There is something almost mystical about the towering redwood tree. Its very name, "sempervirens," means "always green." And men have always been amazed at the redwood's magic ability to survive forest fires and send out new green shoots.

The "palo colorado" or red tree, first got that name in October of 1769 when the Spanish explorers of the Portola Expedition were

making their way up the Alta California coast.

On October 10, the Franciscan priest who was with the expedition and kept a daily diary, Father Crespi, wrote that the coastal hills were "well forested with very high trees of a red color, not known to us."

He continued to write that... "In this region there is a great abundance of these trees and because none of the expedition recognizes them, they are named Palo Colorado (red tree) from their color..." The Portola Party, headed by Don Gaspar de Portola, was in the area of "a little lagoon" near today's Watsonville, at the time of their discovery.

Today a stone monument and bronze plaque at Pinto Lake commemorate the landmark event. It was placed in 1968 by the citizens of Watsonville and members of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

The redwood itself was something of a mystery at first. In 1794 an English botanist, Archibald Menzies, collected specimens of the tree and sent them to England. The species was not classified until 1824 when it was believed to be a Bald-Cypress and was given the label of Taxodium sempervirens. In 1847 another botanist, Stephen Endlicher, decided that the tree was not a Bald-Cypress after all, but was an entirely new genus.

Being a linguist as well as a botanist, and at the time fascinated with the Cherokee Indian alphabet

believed invented by the Chief Sequoyah, Endlicher named the new tree genus for the chief, although the spelling differs.

As California settlements moved inland in the early days, the Sequoia gigantea of the Sierra, which is much greater in bulk, was discovered and named. The 13-mile-wide strip of redwood forests in this area runs from Watsonville to San Francisco and totals approximately 650 square miles.

From the time the first power sawmill in California was built at Zayante in 1841-42, until the turn of the century, approximately 10 billion board feet of lumber were harvested from the strip, according to figures

compiled by the late Henry Washburn. He was a University of California Agricultural Extension service farm advisor, and served as director for Santa Cruz County UC Ag Extension for more than 30 years.

This impressive total in board feet, if valued at even a modest \$20 per thousand board feet, would add up to \$200 million dollars gleaned from about 650 square miles of forest area.

Except for state parks, most of the virgin redwood stands were cut long ago. Today's ecology-minded selective cutting is done in second-growth stands.

Another entire business, that of redwood novelties, grew up out of redwood

burls — those masses of distorted fibers full of little "eyes" which are dormant buds. When cut and polished they make elegant table tops and other objects. If left as is, and placed in a dish of water, a burl will sprout a miniature forest of tiny redwood "trees."

The two Sequoias, sempervirens and gigantea, are natives of only one state, California. But in past centuries the redwood grew in many areas of the world. Fossils have been discovered in Nevada that date from the Pliocene and Miocene periods, from 12 to 25 million years ago.

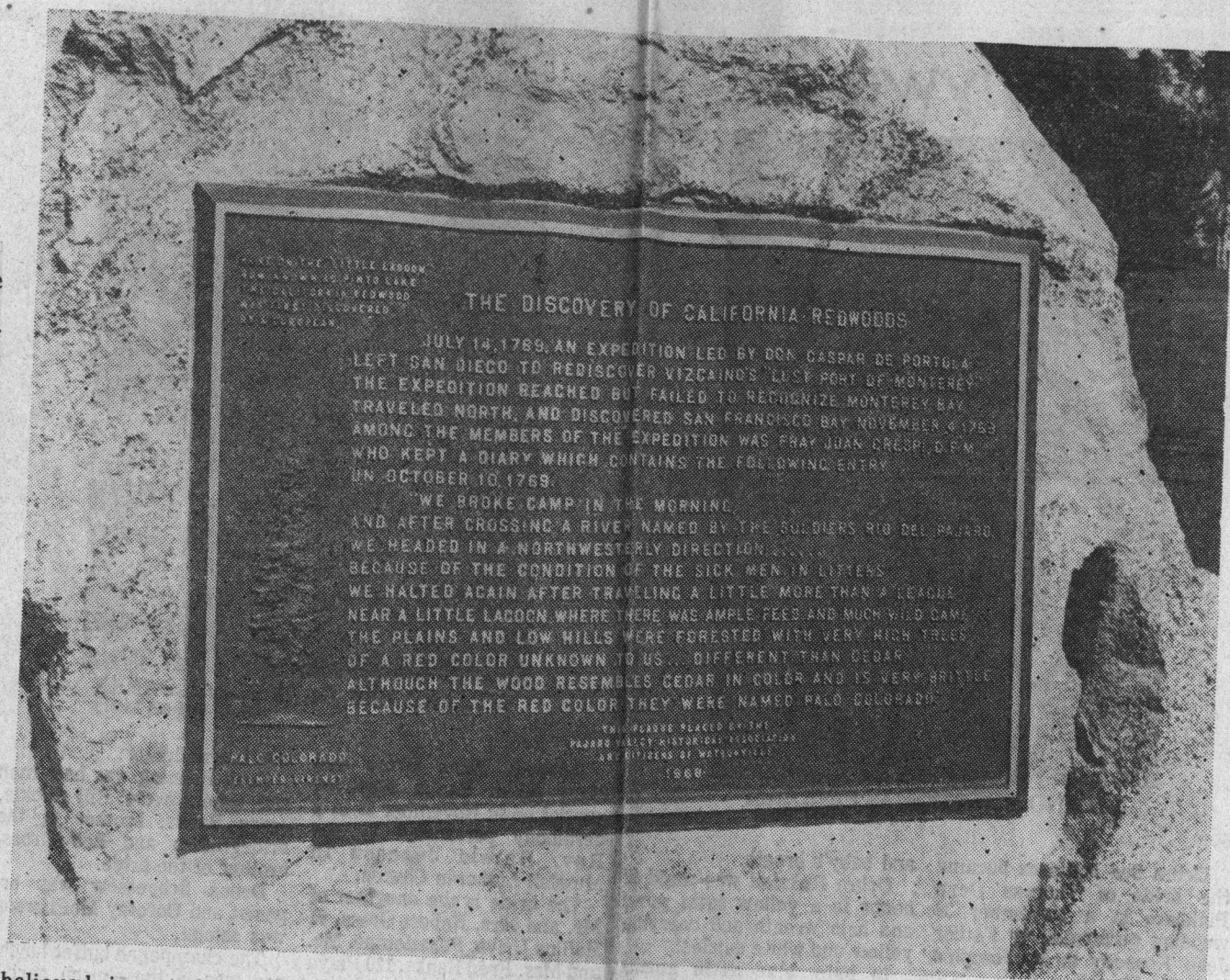
The sempervirens thrives in fog-kissed groves reach-

ing from Monterey County to the Oregon border. Sempervirens live to be about 2000 years old.

In Santa Cruz county two of California's finest stands of Sequoia sempervirens may be visited at any time of year: Henry Cowell park near Felton and Big Basin park north of Boulder Creek.

But don't overlook the landmark monument at Pinto Lake. That is where a band of awe-struck Spaniards reined in their mules to stare up in wonder at the tallest trees they had ever seen...

That was where Padre Crespi first recorded the words "palo colorado" — red tree.



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