

State Redwood Parks--Democracy At Work For All

FORESTS AND STREAMS OFFER RELAXATION AND RECREATION

By CHET SCHWARZKOPF
Photos by Humboldt Times

Everyone in Northern California knows—or has heard of—Dyerville. Many of us, however, thought of it only as some sort of a government ranger station having to do with state parks, and let it go at that—outside of noting that it is located at the confluence of Eel river with its south fork; which is a good fishing spot, surrounded by towering redwoods. Let's drop in and learn what goes on at Dyerville. The clean-cut homes and administration building look inviting. And there is always a swarm of tourists pulling in to get maps and information. It is a busy place these mid-summer days.

A courteous spoken lady refers you to Assistant Superintendent Llewellyn Griffith, and you meet a dynamic, keen-eyed man who is deeply interested in redwood parks, and who is a wellspring of information. He invites you to sit down, and you both light up.

"This station is a part of what is known as the Division of Parks and Beaches," he explains. "It is headquarters for the state park system of all Northwestern California—from the Oregon line to northern Mendocino county, which includes a very valuable redwood area.

"In fact," he continues, "the valuation of the redwood state parks in California's northwest is just over \$7,000,000—against a total valuation of all California state parks of \$22,000,000. So you can get an idea, from that, what we have here."

Superintendent of the Dyerville headquarters is Mr. E. P. French, you learn; while Edgar Nash is chief ranger, and Brookling Tatum, naturalist. Obviously, these men are handling a big job at Dyerville—and just as obviously, they are interested heart and soul in what they are doing.

WHAT REDWOOD PARKS MEAN

"The California state redwood parks belong to the people, and it's our job to see that the people get the most out of their great heritage here," Mr. Griffith continues. "In case it interests you, we are under the California Department of Natural Resources, and our division has six branches scattered throughout the state—of which Dyerville is one.

"The Division of Parks and Beaches was started in 1927 by Governor C. C. Young, and has beaches, historical monuments, and deserts—as well as redwood forests—under its jurisdiction. We also have the Calaveras redwood park in the high Sierras, and are restoring the old gold rush town of Columbia to its original state, and the gold discovery site at Marshall's monument.

"But you are interested primarily in redwoods. Our parks are acquired by matching funds with individuals and organizations. The people voted a \$6,000,000 bond issue in 1928 for that purpose, and the state will put up dollar for dollar to purchase redwood groves.

"Our division recently has acquired additional forests at Mill creek, along the Smith river, and Prairie creek, and more are being considered. We now have over 60,000 acres of redwoods—while the whole state park system has 500,000. So we are doing all right.

"And—we are pleased to say—the attendance in the redwood parks in the northwest has been 80 per cent higher than last year."

FACTS ABOUT REDWOODS

Assistant Superintendent Griffith knows his redwoods—although he modestly disclaims credit, saying he put in most of his 25 years state service in the beach division, and only about a year and a half in Humboldt. "Redwoods are one of the most efficient living things," he states, warning to his subject. "They resist disease, fire, and insects to a phenomenal degree.

"For instance—pine trees are vastly more vulnerable to fire than redwoods, as you know. And yet their losses to insect killers are six times as high as their losses to fires. That will give you an idea of the redwood's superiority.

"In fact, the sequoia is one of earth's masterpieces. It is also one of the oldest species, dating back 100,000,000 years—long before mankind got its start. Redwood fossils have been found all over the earth, and some date back to the age of reptiles.

"There have been great climatic changes on our earth during the sequoias' time, for petrified specimens have been found in such places as Greenland and Spitzbergen. And the so-called Queen of the Forest, at Callstoga, is a fossilized sequoia gigantea—that's the high Sierra species—showing these once lived along the coast. That tree is estimated at 6,000,000 years of age.

"Another thing—no sequoia or redwood ever dies of old age. They die of over-growth, toppling over finally when their shallow root system no longer can hold them against winds and weather.

"The vitality of redwoods is amazing. They will continue to live after their heart wood has been burned out by fire, and only a hollow shell remains. Not only will they live, but continue to grow as Nature patches the internal damage. Our coast redwood, or sequoia sempervirens, will start either from its cone, or shoot. But the high Sierra redwood—sequoia gigantea—will start from its cone only. Both the coastal and Sierra redwoods are the last stand of their species in any amount, on earth. And once upon a time, they were one of earth's most abundant trees.

"And that gets us to the heart of the matter. The redwoods are one of California's greatest assets. There are so few left, now . . . To save the remainder, we need the backing of public opinion, and more funds to buy additional forests. In other words, the redwoods need more friends to offset the attacks of predatory people who would even take away the state parks, were it possible. I am no sentimentalist, but this is the redwoods' last stand. And it is up to ourselves—you and me, the people—to preserve a reasonable amount of them forever, if possible."

PARK EMPLOYEES' JOBS

There are six district employees at Dyerville headquarters, you are told; while others are scattered in varying amounts over the entire park system from Mill creek's three, to Richardson Grove's six. In between are four at Prairie creek, three at Patrick's Point, and two each at Van Duzen state park, Williams Grove, Stephens Grove, and the new Hickey Grove park.

All of these places have camping and trailer facilities for the public, and it is the duty of the assistant and deputy rangers there to see that the premises are kept up, and that visitors are given every service and courtesy. It is especially stressed that every effort be made at all times to build up good will between the public—who owns the forest-parks—and the men in park service.

All of the ranger jobs, as well as office and supervisory personnel, are under civil service. The state provides excellent homes for its park rangers, with utilities furnished, and a very low rental deducted from their monthly paychecks.

"Griff," as the assistant superintendent is known to his friends, is especially proud of his division's personnel, and the spirit of the organization. "Why, our state employees are preparing an exhibit of

Redwood Empire flora for the county fair at Ferndale," he states, "and they are doing the whole job on their own time. They figure it will help build up good will locally."

In charge of the Ferndale fair exhibit is Ranger Ray Nelson of Prairie creek state park—ably assisted by Mrs. Gladys Watson, of the Dyerville office, in whose care is a virtual museum of flora, as well as a rare specimen of the Dawn redwood from China.

MEET THE NATURALIST

And now, the obliging Mr. Griffith has to leave on business, so you are introduced to Naturalist Brookling Tatum, a scholarly and positive-spoken man, who is "on loan" to the division for the summer months. Among other things, it's "Brook" Tatum's job to answer questions on all flora in this region. He has found it a help to show color slides to fire circles at the various parks in the evening, when visitors and campers gather 'round.

Brook also conducts nature tours every Tuesday afternoon from Dyerville to the great grove at Bull Creek Flat. In this connection, he keeps bulletins posted at all park headquarters in the redwood area, so that people will know in advance about the tours.

"Those tours, as well as the slide lectures, add to everyone's knowledge," Brook says. "Our great job is to bring conservation to the fore, and impress it upon the visitors' minds. And what better place to accomplish such an end than among the redwoods? We have got to keep everlastingly at it in the schools, as well—but that's another branch of this work. It is a mass proposition.

"Your forest here is a direct result of many factors—soil, climate, micro-organisms, and nature's balance. It is our job to preserve that entity as much as present knowledge will permit.

"For instance—everyone knows the redwoods are here. What they may not know is some of the other flora. In this immediate area we have California laurel, big leaf maple, tan oak, alder, madrone, Douglas fir, huckleberry, woodwardia—and bracken sword fern, lady fern, deerfern, five-finger maidenhair, fairy lantern, fairy bell, fat and slim Solomons, Clintonia, mountain iris, redwood sorrel, sugar scoop, elk clover, redwood and tiger lilies . . . and the list I've given you is far from complete. This countryside is literally a naturalist's paradise. No wonder they named it after von Humboldt, the world-famed nature scholar.

And by the way," he adds, "Mrs. Watson has a very complete exhibit of the smaller flora at the Dyerville museum. By all means check it over, for everything is labeled. That is an education in native plants, right there."

Tatum, you learn, is engaged in a long-time study of Pacific coast flora, and supplies schools and colleges, as well as interested organizations, with color pictures and data as requested. An expert photographer, he does his own work, and has numbers of pictures on exhibition at Dyerville, along with the living flora.

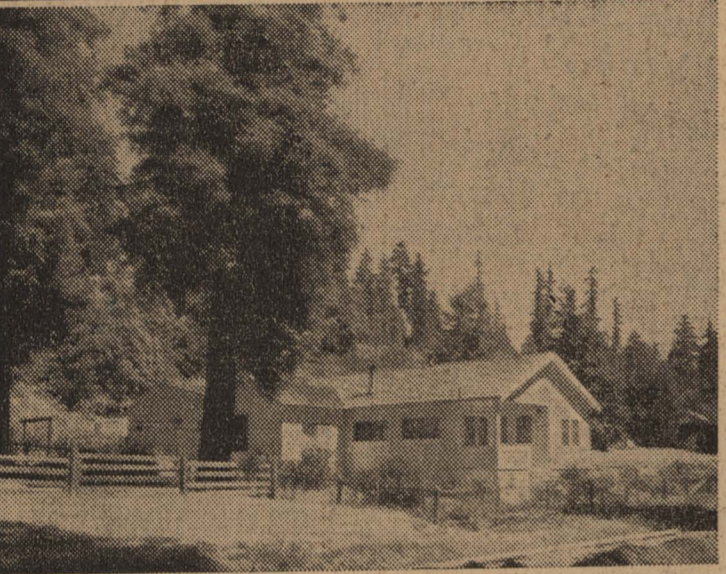
A VISIT TO CAMP PARKS

Brook volunteers to take you through a couple of nearby camps and parks, so you drop into Burlington campground, first. Here is a beautiful setting, in charge of ranger Jack Kent. Nine acres are already in use, and the state has just purchased another acreage adjoining it, into which roads are being built. All facilities are provided, and each camper, or trailer, has a big stove table for eight, and a commodious cup-board. Needless to say, all of Burlington's 25 camping units are taken.

Next, you drop into Williams Grove, a 60 acre woodland that adjoins the south fork of Eel river, and has a huge natural swimming pool. Ranger in charge is Ralph Banfill, with Bill Meyers, deputy; and Naturalist Milton Frinke. There are 100 campsites, and 25 picnic sites here—set amid a primeval elysium whose like is nowhere else on earth. Here you see a sample of the Redwood



A sociable confab by Williams Grove office.



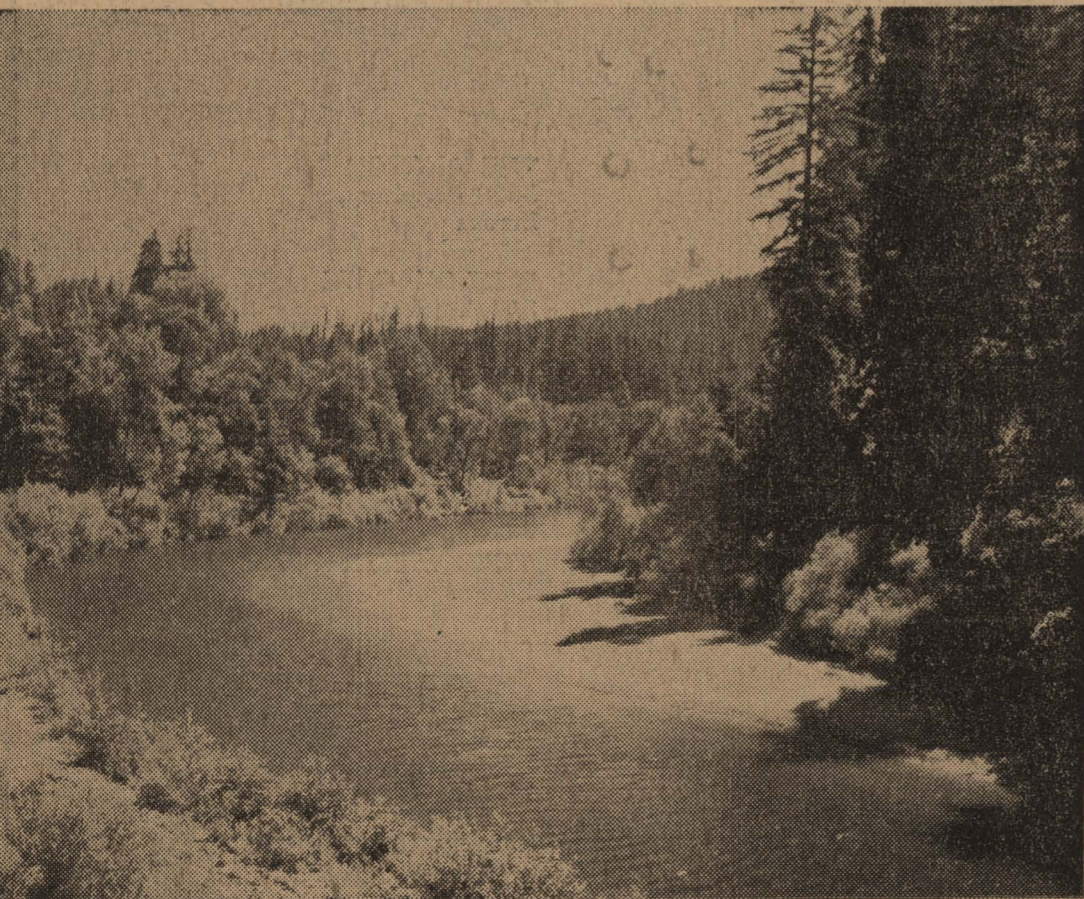
The park rangers occupy fine modern homes.



A ranger lends a hand to a newly arrived family.



This hollowed-out giant fell untold years ago.



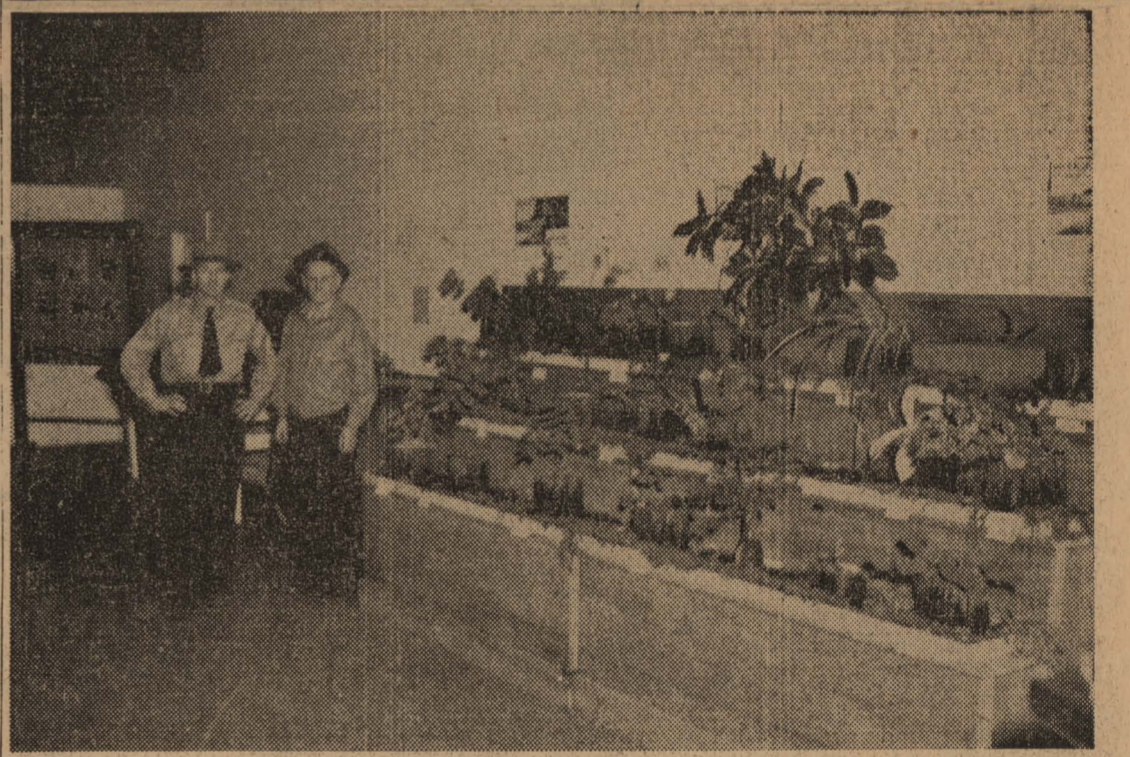
South fork of Eel river makes its great bend near Williams Grove.



Just a sample of the crowds enjoying the river's deep pools.



Dyerville headquarters of Division of Parks and Beaches.

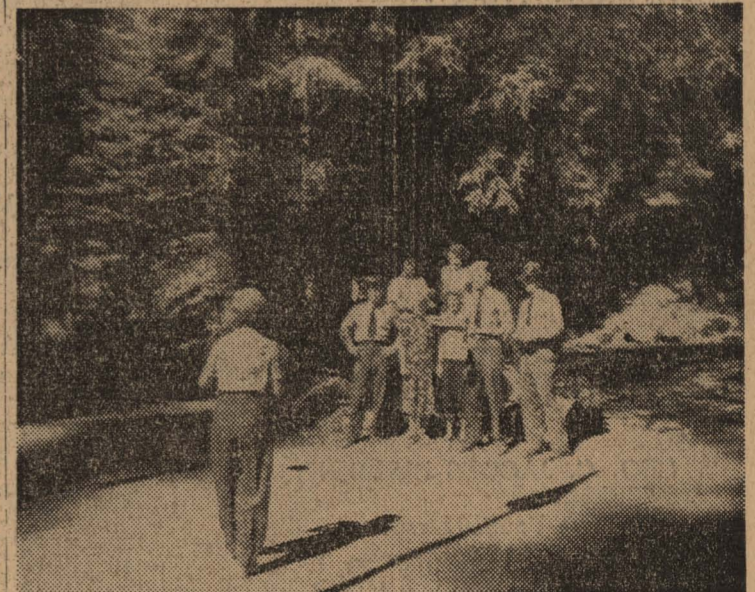


Brookling Tatum (left) and Assistant Superintendent Llewellyn Griffith are justly proud of living flora exhibit at headquarters.

Empire at its best, and you can see Brook is impressed with it also—despite the fact that he works in just such a setting himself.

"This is just a sample of what the state has to offer in any and all of its redwood parks along the north coast," he says, examining an unusual fern he has picked. "Take Prairie creek park for an example—you have over 50 miles of trails, and 8,000 acres at your disposal, as well as an ample supply of cabins and sites. "And Mill creek park, along Smith river, has another flush 8,000 acres, with all facilities, in one of the finest stands of redwood on earth. There are others to the north, too—like Dry Lagoon beach and Patrick's Point, and others.

"We are in one of the Humboldt Redwoods State Parks, here. Believe it or not, there are over 21,000 acres in this series that runs from Dyerville south to the Mendocino line—and most of it lies along the river. Much of it is in memorial groves, where there are no camping facilities—yet. But Richardson's and Stephen's Groves are famed camping places, as you of course know. They have stores, dance



Look at the little birdie! Photographer catches jolly group getting "mugged" at Williams Grove.

pavilions, swimming, and fireside gatherings. Everything possible is being done to achieve an ideal.

"Point about all this is that these parks belong to the people, and the division wants the people to get all the benefit and pleasure possible out of them . . . as well as maybe learn a few angles about the out-of-doors and conservation.

"That's what we're all working for—and I'll say that the department heads, and everyone associated with them, are doing a bang-up fine job. This service has a spirit that's hard to beat. "In the final analysis, this IS democracy. It's your government of, by, and for the people—for the common good. And if that be preaching, make the most of it!"