



REDWOOD CREEK Cultural History



Early history

The Huimen—the southernmost Coast Miwok tribe—lived at the site and shaped the landscape through fire and selective vegetation management. Three shell middens have been found on what was once the shore of a large lagoon at the site.

1817: The founding of nearby Mission San Rafael Archangel likely marked the beginning of grazing and timber harvest in the watershed.

1838: The Redwood Creek watershed was part of a large land deed to William Richardson who named the area “Rancho Saucelito.” Richardson noted abundant elk, deer, bears, and mountain lions on Mt. Tamalpais.

1847: Richardson and a neighbor opened the first timber mill in Marin County to process redwoods from Mt. Tamalpais and other nearby areas.

Late 1800s: Dwindling redwoods and increasing demand for dairy products from San Francisco led Richardson to sell Rancho Saucelito to Samuel Throckmorton who turned parts of it into dairy farms. Most of the dairies were leased by Portuguese and Swiss immigrants who made the beach the center of their community. Tenant dairy farms remained operational at the site into the mid-twentieth century.

1870: The area’s first wagon road connected Sausalito to Bolinas along present-day Hwy 1.

1896: Recreation at Mt. Tamalpais expanded with the opening the Mill Valley and Mt. Tamalpais Scenic Railway, and in **1898** the first trail map is published, including several trails—the Lone Tree (a portion of today’s Dipsea), Cataract, Kent, Throckmorton, Bootjack, and West Point (now Rock Spring)—that still exist today.

Early 20th century: Most of the old growth redwoods had been harvested except the stand in present-day Muir Woods and 1,300 acres in Kent Canyon.

Early 1900s: Muir Beach was earlier known as Bello Beach after Antonio Bello, a Portuguese settler, who supposedly bought the entire hillside for a \$10 gold piece.

1900s: The practice of removing large dead trees from Redwood Creek in Muir Woods is discontinued with the recognition that it creates ideal salmon habitat

1904: Hikers from San Francisco’s Olympic Club held the first Dipsea Race; an event that is still popular today.

1905: William Kent purchased Redwood Canyon and, in **1907** donated much of it to the federal government. Days later, President Theodore Roosevelt designated Redwood Canyon a national monument named Muir Woods.

1912: The Marin Municipal Water District was formed to protect the natural resources of land in the upper part of the watershed and use it to provide water to the citizens of Marin.

1919: Bello established a hotel with a tavern at Muir Beach and began subdivisions for blue collar summer cabins.

1928: Panoramic Highway opened.

1928: Mt. Tamalpais State Park was established after three decades of pressure from conservation groups. Only 200 acres at its inception, the park is now more than 6,300 acres.

1930s: Amadeo Banducci Sr. began leasing portions of the nearby Silva dairy for flower and vegetable farming.

1937: Annual visitation to Muir Woods tripled to more than 180,000 visitors per year with the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge.

1945: Green Gulch and Muir Beach were purchased by cattleman George Wheelwright who created pastures of exotic grasses by building levees along Redwood Creek and removing native scrub vegetation.

1969: Wheelwright donated Muir Beach to the State Parks, and by 1972 sold Green Gulch to the San Francisco Zen Center under terms that would keep the area mainly in agriculture.

1970s: The Pelican Inn bed and breakfast opened at Muir Beach.

1972: The Golden Gate National Recreation Area was founded and the National Park Service began purchasing land in the watershed.

1995: Cattle grazing and farming within the watershed is completely phased out.

2003: 500 feet of unstable and erosion-prone road decommissioned at Muir Woods preventing 989 cubic yards of sediment from being washed into the creek.

2004: The National Park Service buys the Banducci flower farm and begins a multi-year restoration of the site.

2009: Restoration and realignment of the Dias Ridge Trail completed