



The Redwood Cabin Story

A Burst of Change

The site of the Redwood Cabin in upper La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve tells a story of change through time. Long before the cabin's construction, the Ohlone people occupied the land for many thousands of years. In the 1800s, Spanish and Mexican colonization drastically changed the population and landscape of present-day California. In 1821, following Mexico's independence from Spain, the land throughout California, including present-day San Mateo County, was divided into land grants known as ranchos. The cabin was located on the lands of the former Rancho San Gregorio, which extended from the Pacific Ocean to the Santa Cruz Mountains. The California Gold Rush of the mid-1840s, and the development of the city of San Francisco, led to a logging and population boom in the area. This area had remained relatively unchanged up until this dynamic burst of energy leading up to the cabin's creation.

Laying the Foundation

In the mid-1900s, when cars became more widely used, a rush of visitors flocked to the Santa Cruz Mountains to fish, hunt and camp. One of these recreators, businessman William Benjamin Allen, worked with two laborers to construct the cabin as a family vacation home on his land near the Town of La Honda in the 1920s. The building may have been designed by Finnish builder Lee Erickson, a local builder of similar cabins. The cabin remained in the Allen family until 2002, when the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District purchased the property.



Historic Status

The Redwood Cabin was eligible for historic listing for its representation as one of the few remaining examples of a permanent 1920s recreation cabin in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and its unique architecture. At 66 feet long and 30 feet wide, this one-story cabin sat on a slope in a small grove of redwood trees and was assembled with redwood logs of all sizes. The Redwood Cabin retained its key historic architectural features; rustic log construction, vertically set posts, saddle notches and stone chimney; and remained in its original rustic setting from when it was constructed in the 1920s until its removal approximately 100 years later.



Looking Ahead

Midpen conducted a public process to thoughtfully and thoroughly explore many options for the cabin including retaining the cabin in its current state, stabilizing the cabin and repairing and rehabilitating the cabin for reuse. Ultimately, the Midpen board of directors decided that preserving the cabin through photos and words, while removing the structure and restoring the site, was the best course of action due to the cabin's remote location and history of trespassing and public safety concerns.

The Redwood Cabin was removed in spring, 2023. After its removal, minor regrading work was completed to bring the site closer to its natural topography. The landscape will naturally become reseeded throughout the years. The Redwood Cabin preserved a moment in time for nearly a century. This new chapter will now preserve and protect the natural landscape in perpetuity.

Written by: Ellen Tjosvold, 2023

Reference: Page & Turnbull, Inc. "La Honda Creek Redwood Cabin Historic Resource Evaluation Report" San Francisco, March 26, 2020.