

Hello my name is Ben Brown, Director and Curator of the Clarke Historical Museum

The establishment of Redwood National and State Parks was a controversial one. It was a decision that involved thousands of people from Humboldt County to Washington DC over a hundred-year time span that continues even to today.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Redwood National and State Parks. To commemorate and reflect on the monumental decision to create a National Park in Humboldt County, a new exhibit, titled The Redwoods Provide(d): Stories from Redwood National and State Parks is now on display at the Clarke Historical Museum in Old Town Eureka.

We decided in our examination of the Park to investigate the two main sides of the controversy- those who supported the establishment of the park and those who opposed it. Reasons to support or oppose the park changed over the course of the decades-long debate and our exhibit strives to illuminate the reasoning of individuals and groups involved within a specific period. We focus in on the years 1960-1980, when the pivotal events leading to the park's establishment were taking place. At the time, logging technology was developing quickly with the introduction of bulldozers and advancing mechanized saws, allowing the rapid logging of old growth forests. Concurrently, a new environmental preservation movement was sweeping the country and the Redwoods became a major battleground for debates on how people should relate to natural resources.

The exhibit displays include items from several groups involved in the 1960s through the 1970s paired with items from the Clarke collections. Notable items on display are an old growth chainsaw, maps used in congressional hearings on expanding the Parks, and a copy of a National Geographic article that many see as a major turning point in promoting public support for the park. There's also the stereoscope used to map the Parks using aerial photography. This goes along with a new display on the Opera Alley wall featuring Arcata High School photography students reflecting on what the Redwood National and State Parks means to them as well as photographs from Fortuna native Mike Shoys on the Art Wall.

The Redwoods Provide(d): Stories from Redwood National and State Parks is on exhibit until January 5, make sure not to miss it!

This exhibit is graciously sponsored by Save the Redwoods League and Green Diamond and features items from the National Parks Archives, Timber Heritage Association, and involved community members.

The Clarke Museum and the Eureka Visitor Center are located in the historical Bank of Eureka building located at 240 E street in Old Town Eureka, make sure to check out the weekly Friday market from 5-8pm, located right outside the building! These are just another example of how we help make Eureka a great place to live and a welcoming place for visitors. Please consider becoming a member today and supporting the important work we do.

This is Ben Brown with Community Comment.