

# Towering Giants

For thousands of years before humans occupied the Bay Area, these dense, primeval forests of giant redwood trees stood majestically. Redwoods are restricted to the narrow “fog belt” of the central and northern California coastal area. Within this region, summer fog streams in from the ocean, delivering essential moisture. The redwoods in the Oakland Hills are an isolated pocket and one of the most “inland” natural stands.

The Ohlone Indians were the first people to visit this forest. It was a place they avoided because of its darkness and the presence of grizzly bears. The first loggers moved into the forest in 1846. They quickly discovered that a single tree could produce 15,000 shingles. Redwood lumber was also excellent for construction and termite resistant. From these forests, lumber was shipped to San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland. By 1865, only a “sea of stumps” remained of the redwoods in the East Bay Hills.

In the following years, the broad stumps of those ancient giants sprouted rings of descendant trees, which can still be seen in this forest. The stumps have long since rotted, leaving rings of trees as muted evidence of their historic existence.

This redwood forest was once the home of grizzly bears, mountain lions, elk, and condors. Most of these are gone now, yet the trees remain as testimony to a towering grove that endured for thousands of years.



Courtesy of the Bancroft Library

Grizzly bear

