



## Portola and Castle Rock Foundation

*Inspiring the Protection of Castle Rock and Portola Redwoods State Parks Through Quality Educational Experiences and Infrastructure Improvements*

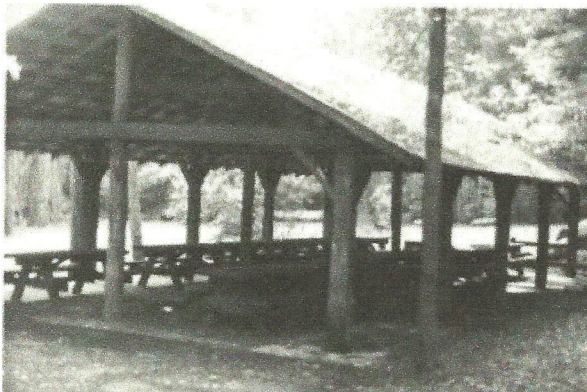
### President's Message

Thank you for your support. I'm looking forward to meeting more of you as we continue our mission to make your Park experience the best ever. In this newsletter, we bring news of park improvements projects you're helping support, we highlight our 2015 Volunteer program, announce a special Members hike on March 7, and we share stories of the parks' histories and our memories of them. With support from donors, members, and volunteers, the Portola and Castle Rock Foundation will continue to make a difference. Hope to see you on the trails in 2015!

--James Rauhen

### 2015 Portola Redwoods Project: Rebuild the Ramada

From 1943 to 2011, Park visitors extensively used a Ramada structure, located adjacent to the Campfire Center and surrounded by second-growth Redwoods. The Ramada has been the site of many family and group events such as weddings and family reunions, and as an inclement weather shelter for multiple generations.



Along with Donor partners Peninsula Open Space Trust and Save The Redwoods League, the PCR Foundation is working with State Parks to build a replacement structure to maintain the look and feel of the original structure. We are actively fundraising to help cover our cost for this project. The new Ramada is anticipated to open by the end of this year.

Once completed, the Ramada may be reserved by groups for special events, is available for general picnicking use and also provides a meeting and project area for the Jr. Ranger interpretive program.

### 2014 Castle Rock Accomplishment: Remove Waste Tires

In 2014, The PCR Foundation sponsored the cleanup of a toxic and dangerous tire waste dump that predated Castle Rock State Park. This project was a cooperative effort including State Parks, the South Skyline Fire Safe Council, CalRecycle and the Portola and Castle Rock Foundation.

Over 8,000 old tires were removed. To read more about this project, please visit our website and click on the Latest News (located at the bottom of the page).



## The Luck of Portola Redwoods State Park

It was in the middle of nowhere, far from the cities and towns lining San Francisco Bay. And there was one absentee landlord after another. William Page of Searsville and Mayfield built his Page Mill Road through the wilderness to reach it in the late 1860s. He logged it, leveraged it and lost it. Then Alexander Peers of Mayfield logged it and sold it. In the meantime, Spring Valley Water Works planned to dam up Pescadero Creek as it flowed through the area and send all the water north to San Francisco. Then wealthy businessman Timothy Hopkins of San Francisco purchased it and added it to his already vast timber holdings in the area. When John Hooper, the wealthy San Francisco businessman felt Woodside had become too crowded for a summer place, he bought it to replace his Mountain Home Ranch. In the 1920s another wealthy San Francisco businessman and member of the philanthropic Shriners organization, William Crocker, found it. All of this happened in the space of less than sixty years.

Crocker's Shrine Committee gave us our first glimpse of what would become their Shriners' Grove. In its January 1924 report the Committee described "...an abandoned wagon road following the west side of Peters Creek almost to the west edge of the Tract." That road is what was left of a portion of the road Page had built and Peers had abandoned forty years before. Today we know that road as Portola State Park Road, the entrance road to the park. The Committee continued in its report to say "...waters in all the creeks abound with trout, fishing being particularly good on upper Evans Creek... Evans Creek is suitable for a water supply... The remains of an old saw mill may be seen near the north line... on Slate Creek."

It was a beautiful place, but the danger of forest fires was always present. Western Shore Lumber Company held most of the land to the west of the Shriners' Grove, and some large parcels to the south and east. Hubbard and Carmichael logging operations were to the east. If it wasn't dynamite blasts by loggers to clear roads, it was deer hunters and their campfires. Once a fire started, the loggers, youths conscripted from local conservation camps and local families manned bucket brigades for hours before the first fire engine arrived. The largest blaze in the area — seven thousand acres of timber — burned for a week in the 1930s; San Mateo County issued its first county-wide disaster alarm to mobilize a crew of more than 800 men. It took them a week to put out the flames.

Nevertheless, the Shriners proceeded to build tent cabins, group cabins and a meeting hall. They acknowledged Hooper's request that no commercial development be allowed, but they made plans for a 500 acre golf course and a subdivision of 254 quarter-acre private cabin sites that would bring in lease and maintenance fees. With word that many private cabins were to be built at the Shrine Grove, Pacific Gas and Electric Company extended electric lines all the way down the road. But the discretionary money went elsewhere; only one lot was purchased. Now, the Shriners' cabins and lot plans are long gone, but their large 1930's style meeting hall survives today as the park's Visitors Center.

The Shriners' membership dropped in the mid-40's along with interest in the Grove; they said it was due to the sacrifices of war. A Temple publication gave the sad news: "The Islam Redwoods Shrine will be completely closed on and after April 1, 1942 due to a limited budget." This was no April Fool's joke. The front-page headline reported: "State Park Board Favors Islam Park Purchase." Negotiations began almost immediately. The State of California purchased the sixteen hundred and sixty acre Shriners' Grove for \$112,500 during the winter of 1944-45. It was the very fact of being in the middle of nowhere that provided the time and luck to save Portola Redwoods State Park; John Hooper's desire to protect the forest's beauty became a reality.

Within a few years, the first campsites were laid out. Since then this popular park has enjoyed a steady stream of visitors, campers and hikers. Imagine how many photographs have been taken and glued into family albums over the years. Imagine how many personal letters and diary entries were made describing its beauty. Imagine if we knew where they were.

This story contributed by Sheri Jansen-Olliges, author of Timber Barons. Her book and others are available for purchase at the Portola Redwoods Visitor Center Store.

## Volunteer Training 2015

State Park Volunteers have done a great job of providing eyes, ears, and boots on the ground in Portola Redwoods and Castle Rock State Parks. Park Staff keep the parks operating at reasonable levels of stewardship, but the Parks still need our help. We need more volunteers at Castle Rock, a mainly hiking, rock climbing, and backpacking park, and Portola Redwoods, a mainly camping and hiking park.

The 2015 volunteer training program will take place on March 28th, April 4th, April 11th, and April 18th. Please visit our website for more information or email [Volunteer@PortolaAndCastleRockFound.org](mailto:Volunteer@PortolaAndCastleRockFound.org).

Volunteers help Park Staff by being another set of eyes in the park, help visitors by providing useful information and help everyone by staffing the Portola Redwoods Visitor Center Store. Proceeds from the store are used by the Foundation to provide additional interpretive resources for both Parks.

## Members Only Hike – Castle Rock State Park – Saturday, March 7th

On Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, Miles Standish, former Park Ranger for Castle Rock State Park, will lead a 3 mile hike for Portola and Castle Rock Foundation members through parts of Castle Rock State Park.

Beginning at 10am in the main parking lot, Miles will lead the group to Castle Rock, Castle Rock Falls and Goat Rock!

## My First Climb at Castle Rock State Park

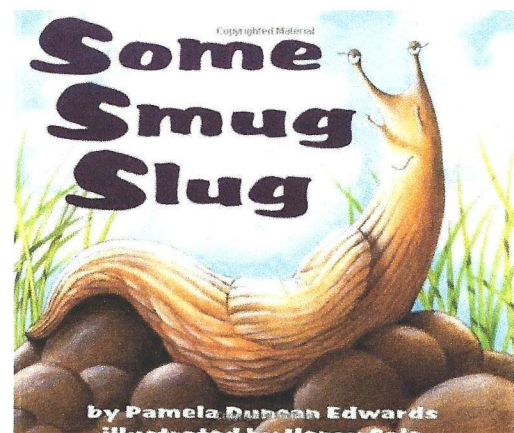
Even as a child I've always been fascinated by rocks and always wanted to scramble and climb on them. By the time I lived in California, I was fascinated by the Sierra Nevada Mountains. I went with my brother to Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite Park where we hiked in to Upper Cathedral Lake and I scrambled up a pile of rock called Mt Treseder. It was wonderful, but I couldn't get quite to the very top. I explored the rest of the mountain top, which was a large sloping plateau with breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains. I knew I had to learn how to rock climb. About that time I went on a few Sierra Club hikes and saw their local schedule. There was a thing called the Rock Climbing Section of the local chapter of the Sierra Club, and they had meetings and trained climbers! It was September, 1966.

The trail is moderately steep in places and members should bring sturdy shoes, water and food for lunch. A camera and some binoculars would also be useful.

Space is limited. An email invitation was sent via Eventbrite to members. You may sign up for the hike via this email or send an email to [Info@PortolaAndCastleRockFound.org](mailto:Info@PortolaAndCastleRockFound.org) to sign up. Not a member yet? Sign up today via our website.

## Portola Redwoods Visitor Center Store ... Book Review

Join Sami the slug on a super adventure. Will Sami survive to see the end of his journey? What will happen and will Sami meet any new friends? *Some Smug Slug* is a fun family read about one of the banana slug's cousins, the smug garden slug.

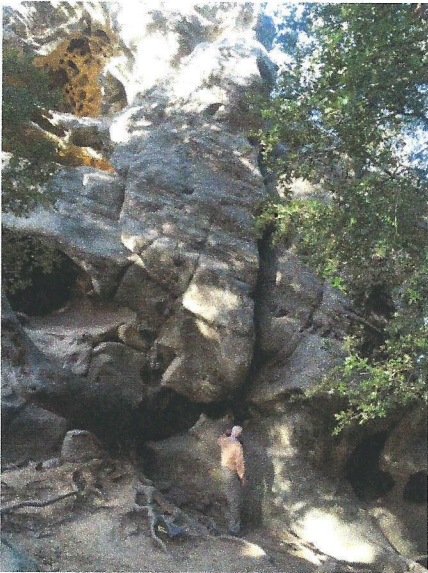


This book and many others are available for purchase at the Portola Redwoods Visitor Center Store.

I went to the next meeting and signed up for training at Castle Rock. We met at the Saratoga Gap and drove to a place where you could park along Skyline Boulevard not far from the Rock. I was loaded with 2 ropes and we all walked the quarter mile to the rock. It was set at the top of a small rise. It was very interesting looking, about 40 or 50 feet high with caves and bulges and pretty vertical. Some of the “teachers” went to the top and set up the climbs, tying in the belayers and throwing the ropes down for two separate climbs.

While others were climbing, we, the learners were shown a traverse around the rock base as a training exercise. My turn came to do an evil looking bottomless cleft at the right front corner of the rock. The instructor wrapped the end of the dangling belay rope around my waist about 3 times then tied what they called a bowline on a bight with the loose end and my “life line” to the belayer. I walked to the climb and put hand to rock.

Hmm, not much in the way of handholds, and where do you put your feet? This is a chimney I was told, should be pretty easy, you just put your back against one side and feet, knees, or hands against the other side, but you have to lever yourself up into it. You put one of your feet up under your butt and push up, and you can use any hand or foothold you can find. OK, but how do you start this thing? There’s nothing here. I keep falling out. I get some pointers and finally get up into the chimney, but too far into it. I felt nice and secure but I didn’t have enough room to move. The Instructor chuckled. You’ll have to move out a bit to move up. I’m only 8 feet above the ground and tied to a belay rope going to the top but it was so hard to get there I didn’t want to have to do it again. I move out just far enough to allow me to push up with my right foot and I could reach a sort of handhold with my right hand. OK, now I can see a place to put my left foot on the other side of the chimney. With that I can put my left hand behind me and move myself up another foot. I can now see more foot holds and hand holds just above me (so that’s why the instructor had me put my back on this side) and I move on up on them, partly using hand and footholds and chimneying.



It did get easier and soon I found myself moving on to a rounded sort of ledge that was the end of the chimney. I stood there, about 40 feet above the ground and about 6 feet below the edge of the sloping top of the rock. I was encouraged to “mantle” up to the top but didn’t have the skill or strength. Alright then go across left to the continuation of the other side of the chimney, kind of an arête. I could stretch to get a left foot over there on a small ledge, but felt I’d fall off if I tried to move over. Nothing for my hands! I moved my left foot back and forth a couple of times looking for a handhold. I was assured that there was stuff there to use, just step over and you’re up as the rest is easy. Right, but I couldn’t find anything I understood how to use. I could have been belayed back down, a bit like a rappel but I was determined to finish so I looked at that narrow, slightly sloping arête to the left, with its small ledge, judged the distance – and jumped. I stuck to it but mainly because I got both hands on a small knob and the friction of my stomach and thighs against the rock. I awkwardly pulled myself up a bit and got my feet on the magic foothold. I was soon and easily up on top from there. Success, finally!

Now I know the secret. There’s a small dish like indentation on the wall about shoulder high that you can palm to give enough balance to step over, but I’ve never been able to mantle directly from the ledge to the top.

I’ve done a lot of climbing since 1966 and still love it!

This story contributed by Stu Langdoc, long time PCR Foundation Board member and volunteer.

Do you have a story about your first hike at Portola Redwoods or Castle Rock State Park? Share it with us at [Info@PortolaAndCastleRockFound.org](mailto:Info@PortolaAndCastleRockFound.org). We might feature it on our website or in a future newsletter.