A Walk Through Time

The coast redwoods that surround you are all young, the offspring of massive old-growth trees that once covered the East Bay hills. Here, a giant redwood stump remains, and helps tell the story of previous generations and the span of time.

Match the events in human history below with the growth of the giant redwood.

1,000 Years Ago – Seedling
Imagine the parents of the redwoods in this park beginning as a tiny seedling more than 1,000 years ago.

1,000 Years Ago and More – Native Peoples
This region was home for thousands of years to the Ohlone and Miwok people, who spoke Ohlone and Miwok languages. Some used redwood sprots for basketry. They used other forest plants for food, medicine, and tools. Today’s Ohlones and Bay Miwoks continue to cherish redwood forests.

1769 – Early Spanish Exploration
Father Juan Crespi is credited with writing the first description of California redwoods. His land expedition traveled through “plains and low hills, well forested with very high trees of a red color ...” and because none of the expedition recognized them, they are named redwood (palos colorados) from their color.

1820 – Rancho San Antonio
From ridge top to bay, these lands were once part of a vast 44,000 acre Spanish cattle ranch that stretched from El Cerrito to San Leandro. Luis Peralta, a one-time Spanish soldier, received the land grant for his military service, and divided the land among his four sons and their families.

1845 – Logging of East Bay Hills
Roughly 5 square miles of old-growth forests was logged, leaving only a “sea of stumps” by 1860. They even dug out the stumps for firewood or shingles. The Palo Alto Mill was built at the confluence of the nearby Palo Alto and Sausal Creeks to process the wood from this forest.

1934 – Establishment of East Bay Regional Park District
“Parks for the People” was the rallying cry of an East Bay greenspace campaign during the Great Depression. Frustrated citizens saved pristine watershed lands from development, creating one of the first regional park agencies in the country in 1934. The opening ceremony for the new park system was held right here in Redwood Bowl in 1936.

2018 – Redwoods and Global Climate Change
Parks can be a living laboratory for scientists studying the effects of rising global temperatures. Both the size and longevity of redwoods help the trees store more climate-altering carbon dioxide than other plants. While redwoods cannot solve our climate problems by themselves, the protection of redwoods and other forests is part of the climate-change solution.

While you are here, slow down, absorb the stillness and consider the time it will take for this forest to reach its prime once again.