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An Owl's Eye View of the Bohemian Grove . . .

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Date: 1997
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Description:

Detailed "owl's eye" view of the camp grounds at Bohemian Grove, in Sonoma County, California, showing the camp grounds of the Bohemian Club's summer retreat.

The tradition of a summer encampment was established six years after the Bohemian Club was formed in 1872. Henry "Harry" Edwards, a stage actor and founding member, announced that he was relocating to New York City to further his career. On June 29, 1878, somewhat fewer than 100 Bohemians gathered in the Redwoods in Marin County near Taylorville (present-day Samuel P. Taylor State Park) for an evening sendoff party in Edwards' honor.

Freely flowing liquor and some Japanese lanterns put a glow on the festivities, and club members retired at a late hour to the modest comfort of blankets laid on the dense mat of Redwood needles. This festive



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gathering was repeated the next year without Edwards, and became the club's yearly encampment. By 1882 the members of the Club camped together at various locations in both Marin and Sonoma County, including the present-day Muir Woods and a redwood grove that once stood near Duncans Mills, several miles down the Russian River from the current location.

From 1893 Bohemians rented the current location, and in 1899 purchased it from Melvin Cyrus Meeker who had developed a successful logging operation in the area. Gradually over the next decades, members of the Club purchased land surrounding the original location to the perimeter of the basin in which it resides.

Writer and journalist William Henry Irwin said of the Grove,

You come upon it suddenly. One step and its glory is over you. There is no perspective; you cannot get far enough away from one of the trees to see it as a whole. There they stand, a world of height above you, their pinnacles hidden by their topmost fringes of branches or lost in the sky.

Not long after the Club's establishment by newspaper journalists, it was commandeered by prominent San Francisco-based businessmen, who provided the financial resources necessary to acquire further land and facilities at the Grove. However, they still retained the "bohemians"-the artists and musicians-who continued to entertain international members and guests.

Detailed Condition: