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Coordinates: 38°28'05"N 123°00'10"W

Location	20601 Bohemian Avenue Monte Rio, California, United States
Coordinates	 38°28′05″N 123°00′10″W
Elevation	991 feet (302 m)
Land	2,700 acres (1,100 ha)
Annual attendance	about 2,500
Operated by	Bohemian Club
Established	1878

Writer and journalist [William Henry Irwin](#) said of the Grove,

- In the summer of 1980, Rick Ologher gained entrance to the Grove with the help of an employee and posed as a worker during two weekends of the annual encampment. His efforts, the first magazine reporting from inside the Grove, were published in the August 1981 issue of *Mother Jones*.^[15] Around the same time, *ABC Evening News* aired a special report on the Bohemian Grove.^[16]
- In the summer of 1989, *Spy* magazine writer *Philip Weiss* spent seven days in the camp posing as a guest, which led to his November 1989 article "Inside the Bohemian Grove".^[1] He was eventually discovered and arrested for trespassing.
- On July 15, 2000, *Alex Jones* and his cameraman Mike Hanson clandestinely entered the Bohemian Grove and shot footage of the *Cremation of Care* ceremony. Jones claimed it was a "ritual sacrifice".^{[17][18]} From this footage, documentary filmmaker *Jon Ronson* produced the episode "The Satanic Shadowy Elite?", in which he characterizes the proceedings as an "overgrown frat party", while Jones produced "Dark Secrets Inside Bohemian Grove", describing what he said were Satanic rituals.^[19]
- On January 19, 2002, 37-year-old *Richard McCaslin* was arrested after his nighttime infiltration of the Bohemian Grove, where he set several fires. He was heavily armed and wearing a skull mask and outfit with "Phantom Patriot" written across the chest.^[20]

The Bohemian Club's all-male membership includes artists and musicians, as well as many prominent business leaders, [government officials](#), former [U.S. presidents](#), senior media executives, and people of power.^{[21][22]} Members may invite guests to the Grove. Guests may be invited to the Grove for either the "Spring Jinks" in June or the main July encampment. Bohemian Club members can

schedule private day-use events at the Grove any time it is not being used for Club-wide purposes, and they are allowed at these times to bring spouses, family, and friends, although female and minor guests must be off the property by 9 or 10 pm.^[23]

After 40 years of membership, the men earn "Old Guard" status, giving them reserved seating at the Grove's daily talks, as well as other perks.

The Club motto is "Weaving Spiders Come Not Here," which implies that outside concerns and business deals (networking) are to be left outside. When gathered in groups, Bohemians usually adhere to the injunction, although discussion of business often occurs between pairs of members.^[2] Important political and business deals have been developed at the Grove.^[23]

Facilities

The main encampment area consists of 160 acres (65 ha) of old-growth [redwood trees](#) over 1,000 years old, some over 300 feet (91 m) tall.^[24]

Sleeping quarters, or "camps", are also scattered throughout the grove. There were 118 as of 2007. These camps, which are frequently [patrilineal](#), are the principal means through which high-level business and political contacts and friendships are formed.^[2]

The preeminent camps are:^{[2][25]}

- Hill Billies
- Mandalay
- Cave Man
- Stowaway
- Uplifters
- Owls Nest
- Hideaway
- Isle of Aves
- Lost Angels
- Silverado Squatters
- Sempervirens
- Hillside
- Idlewild

The Grove features the following gathering places:

- *Grove Stage* – an amphitheater with seating for 2,000, used primarily for the Grove Play production, on the last weekend of the midsummer encampment. The stage extends up the hillside.
- *Field Circle* – a bowl-shaped amphitheater used for the mid-encampment "Low Jinks" musical comedy, for "Spring Jinks" in early June and for a variety of other performances.
- *Campfire Circle* – has a campfire pit in the center of the circle, surrounded by carved redwood log benches. Used for smaller performances in a more intimate setting.
- *Museum Stage* – a semi-outdoor venue with a covered stage. Lectures and small ensemble performances.
- *Dining Circle* – seating approximately 1,500 diners simultaneously.
- *Clubhouse* – designed by [Bernard Maybeck](#) in 1903, completed in 1904 on a bluff overlooking the [Russian River](#),^[26] a multi-purpose dining, drinking and entertainment building; the site of the Manhattan Project planning meeting held in 1942.
- *The Owl Shrine and the Lake* – an artificial lake in the interior of the Grove, used for the noon-time concerts and also the venue of the *Cremation of Care*, which takes place on the first Saturday of the encampment. It is also the location of the 12:30 p.m. daily "Lakeside Talks." These significant informal talks (many on public policy issues) have been given over the years by entertainers, professors, astronauts, business leaders, cabinet officers, [Central Intelligence Agency](#) directors, future presidents and former presidents.^[27]

Camp valets

Camp valets are responsible for the operation of the individual camps. The head valets are akin to general managers at a resort, club, restaurant, or hotel. Service staff include female workers whose presence at the Grove is limited to daylight hours and central areas close to the main gate. Male workers may be housed at the Grove within the boundaries of the camp to which they are assigned or in peripheral service areas. High-status workers stay in small private quarters, but most are housed in rustic [bunkhouses](#).^[2]

Security

The Bohemian Grove is protected by a sophisticated security team year-round. The Bohemian Club employs ex-military personnel to help secure the area. They use high-end security equipment, including thermal/night vision cameras, motion detectors, and vibration sensing alarm systems. The level of security is particularly heightened during the time periods that members are on-site. During these times, the local Sheriff's office,^[28] California Highway Patrol, and, if warranted by the guest-list, the United States Secret Service help to secure the areas and roads surrounding the encampment.^[1]

Women

Although no woman has ever been given full membership in the Bohemian Club, the four female honorary members were hostess [Margaret Bowman](#), poet [Ina Coolbrith](#) (who served as librarian for the club), actress [Elizabeth Crocker Bowers](#), and writer [Sara Jane Lippincott](#).^[29] Since Coolbrith's death in 1928, no other woman has been made a member. These honorary members and other female guests have been allowed into the Bohemian "City Club" building and as daytime guests of the Grove, but not to the upper floors of the City Club nor as guests to the main summer encampment at the Grove.^[29] Annual "Ladies' Jinks" were held at the Club especially for spouses and invited guests.^[29]

In 2019, [Sonoma County Board of Supervisors](#) member Lynda Hopkins, who was elected to the district encompassing the Grove, wrote an open letter criticizing the role the Bohemian Club had in making it difficult for women to get into politics, their lack of investment in the community despite members' personal wealth, and the anachronistic and hegemonic attitudes she felt described the Grove.^[30]

Traditions, rituals, and symbols

Symbols

The club's patron saint is [John of Nepomuk](#), who, according to legend, died at the hands of a Bohemian monarch rather than disclose the confessional secrets of the queen. A large wood carving of St. John in cleric robes with his index finger over his lips stands at the



Bohemian Grove members during Spring Jinx Encampment



A Bohemian tent in the 1900s, sheltering [Porter Garnett](#), [George Sterling](#) and [Jack London](#)



Aerial image of Bohemian Grove buildings



Side entrance to the Bohemian Grove

shore of the lake in the Grove, symbolizing the secrecy kept by the Grove's attendees throughout its long history.^[2]

Since the founding of the club, the Bohemian Grove's mascot has been an owl, symbolizing wisdom. A 30-foot (9 m) hollow owl statue made of concrete over steel supports stands at the head of the lake in the Grove. This statue was designed by sculptor and two-time club president [Haig Patigian](#). It was constructed in the late 1920s.^{[31][32][33][34]} Since 1929, the Owl Shrine has served as the backdrop of the yearly *Cremation of Care* ceremony.^[2]

Cremation of Care

The *Cremation of Care* ceremony is a theatrical production in which some of the club's members participate as actors. It was first conducted in 1881. The production was devised by [James F. Bowman](#) with George T. Bromley playing the High Priest.^[35] It was originally set up within the plot of the serious "High Jinks" dramatic performance on the first weekend of the summer encampment, after which the spirit of "Care", slain by the Jinks hero, was solemnly cremated. The ceremony served as a *catharsis* for pent-up high spirits, and "to present symbolically the salvation of the trees by the club ..."^[36] The *Cremation of Care* was separated from the other Grove Plays in 1913 and moved to the first night to become "an exorcising of the Demon to ensure the success of the ensuing two weeks."^[37] The Grove Play was moved to the last weekend of the encampment.^[29]

The ceremony takes place in front of the Owl Shrine. The moss- and lichen-covered statue simulates a natural rock formation, yet holds electrical and audio equipment within it. For many years, a recording of the voice of club member [Walter Cronkite](#) was used as the voice of The Owl during the ceremony.^[1]

Grove Play

Main article: *List of Grove Plays*

Each year, a *Grove Play* is performed for one night during the final weekend of the summer encampment. The play is a large-scale musical theatrical production, written and composed by club members, involving some 300 people, including chorus, cast, stage crew and orchestra.^[38] The first Grove Play was performed in 1902; for three years during *World War II* (1943–45) the stage was dark. In 1975, an observer estimated that the Grove Play cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000, an amount that would be as high as \$175,000 in today's dollars.^[38]

Court cases

Women's employment

In 1978, the Bohemian Club was charged with discrimination by the [California Department of Fair Employment and Housing](#) over its refusal to hire female employees. In January 1981, an administrative law judge issued a decision supporting the practices of the club, noting that club members at the Grove "urinate in the open without even the use of rudimentary toilet facilities" and that the presence of females would alter club members' behavior.^[39] However, the judge's decision was overruled by the State Fair Employment and Housing Commission, which on October 17, 1981, ordered the club to begin recruiting and hiring women as employees.^[40]

The Bohemian Club then filed a petition in California Superior Court, which ruled in favor of the club, finding "the male gender [to be] a bona fide occupational qualification."^[41] It was revealed that the trial judge had previously participated in club activities, yet the request that he be disqualified was denied.^[42] The Fair Employment and Housing Commission appealed to the California Court of Appeal which reversed the lower court's decision, holding that the Bohemian Club's private status did not shield it from the "same rules which govern all California employers."^[43] The *Supreme Court of California* denied review in 1987, effectively forcing the club to begin hiring female workers during the summer encampment at the Grove in Monte Rio.^[44] This ruling became quoted as a legal precedent and was discussed during the 1995–96 floor debate surrounding California Senate Bill SB 2110, a proposed law concerning whether tax-exempt organizations (including fraternal clubs) should be exempt from the *Unruh Civil Rights Act*.^[45]

Logging

Outside the central camp area, which is the site of the old-growth grove, but within the 2,712 acres (1,098 ha) owned by the Bohemian Club, logging activities have been underway since 1984. Approximately 11,000,000 board feet (26,000 m³) of lumber equivalents were removed from the surrounding redwood and Douglas fir forest from 1984 to 2007.^[46] The club's forester, Edward Tunheim, resigned his post in 2006 over club pressure to increase logging. Tunheim was concerned that excessive logging would encourage more brushy undergrowth and thus increase the fire danger.^[47]

In 2007, the Bohemian Club board filed an application for a nonindustrial logging permit available to landowners with less than 2,500 acres (1,000 ha) of timberland, which would allow them to steadily increase their logging in the second-growth stands from 800,000 board feet (1,900 m³) per year to 1,700,000 board feet (4,000 m³) over the course of the 50-year permit.^[46] The board had been advised by Tom Bonnicksen, a retired forestry professor, that they should conduct *group selection* logging to reduce the risk of fire burning through the dense second-growth stands, damaging the old-growth forest the Club wants to protect.^[48]

The Club stated that an expansion of logging activities was needed to prevent fires, and that money made from the sale of the lumber would be used to stabilize access roads and to clear fire-promoting species such as *tanoaks* and underbrush.^[49] The [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) instead recommended *single-tree logging* to preserve the habitats of *murrelets* and *spotted owls* in senescent trees. Philip Rundel, a [University of California, Berkeley](#) professor of biology, said that redwoods are not very flammable and "This is clearly a logging project, not a project to reduce fire hazard".^[46] Reed F. Noss, a professor at the [University of California, Davis](#), has written that fires within redwood forests do not need to be prevented, that young redwoods are adapted to regenerate well in the destruction left behind by the fires typical of the climate.^[50]

After controversy raised by opponents of the harvesting plan, the Club moved to establish their qualification for the permit by offering 163 acres (66 ha) to the [Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation](#) in Missoula, Montana, for a conservation easement. A further 56.75 acres (22.97 ha) were written off as not being available for commercial logging, bringing the total to 2,316 acres (937 ha) and thereby qualifying for the permit. Opponents and their lawyers interpreted the relevant law as counting all timberland and not just the portion subject to the logging permit. They stated that if the total of timberland is counted, 2,535.75 acres (1,026.18 ha) are owned by the Club, so the permit should not be granted.^[46]

On March 10, 2011, Judge René A. Chouteau rejected the Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) that the [California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection](#) had approved. The suit, brought by the [Sierra Club](#) and the Bohemian Redwood Rescue Club, sought to have the NTMP annulled. The ruling called on the Bohemian Club to draft a new NTMP offering alternatives to its proposed rate of logging. At present the Bohemian Club is not allowed to log any of its property.^[51]

Wage theft



A dress rehearsal for the 1909 Grove Play, *St. Patrick at Tara*



The Owl Shrine covered in moss, standing among trees behind a stage at one edge of a man-made pond

See also

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