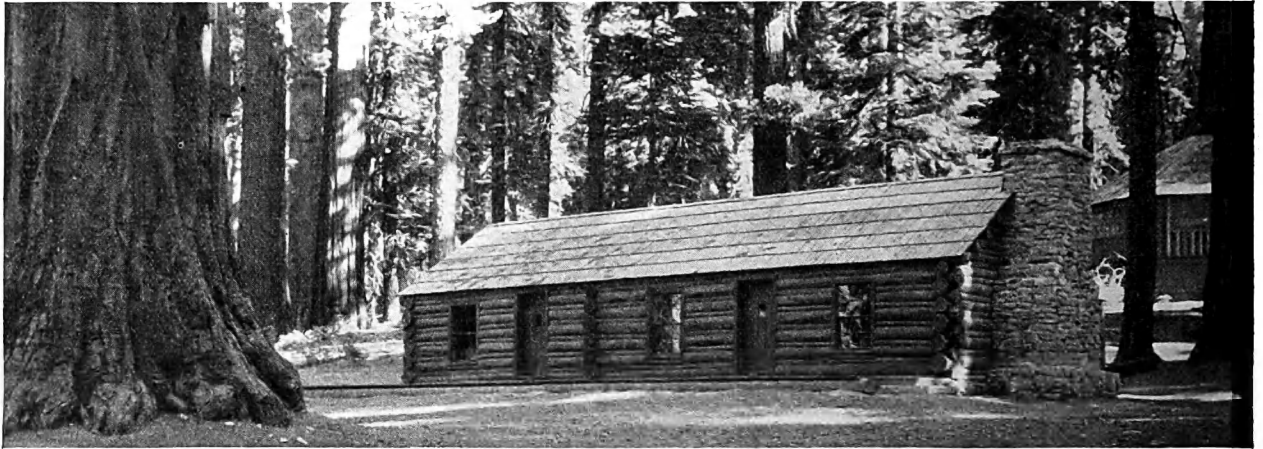


## MAGAZINE SECTION



MARIPOSA GROVE MUSEUM

### A NEW TRAILSIDE MUSEUM IN YOSEMITE

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A departure from usual museum practice was recently made by the National Park Service in the building and equipping of the new Mariposa Grove Museum in Yosemite National Park, which was opened to the public on May 5, 1932. In designing this museum the customary show-case idea, the idea of making an exhibit stand out and catch the eye, was entirely subordinated to the idea of quiet harmony. The new museum has been so planned that the visitor may step from the great museum of the outdoors into the small log cabin museum without experiencing any break in the quiet, serene influence that is felt by all who visit the Big Trees. Neither glaring lights nor clashing colors disturb those who enter to rest awhile and learn the story of the Big Trees from the unobtrusive exhibits, which are accurate, simple, brief, and above all, harmonious.

The Mariposa Grove Museum has been designed to harmonize with its environment in every way. It is housed in a one-story log cabin 18 x 50 feet, built as an exact replica of an old historic cabin which formerly occupied the same site. Detail photographs of the old cabin were closely followed in laying each log and stone, and the new logs were expertly painted to give an appearance of age

so realistic as to excite favorable comment from an artist of national repute. The cabin blends with the surrounding Big Trees as though it had always belonged there. Mere external harmony was not thought sufficient, however, hence the interior was also made to match the Big Trees. Native materials were used throughout—unfinished log walls, puncheon floor, massive hand-hewed Sequoia furniture, and native granite fireplace. The exhibits themselves are subdued, being all mounted on monks-cloth panels with labels hand lettered on rich tan cardboard. Even the white cotton in Riker mounts has been delicately tinted to match the brown tones. All mounts, photographs, labels, and panels are framed in burned redwood, which gives a dark brown natural grain finish. As a final touch the visitors' register is supplied with brown ink made from the heart sap of Big Trees.

A trailside museum should be confined to information about the things surrounding it, hence the exhibits deal exclusively with the Sequoia and its environment, past and present. Each exhibit, although complete in itself, forms a link in the story of the Big

Trees, a story which is told as simply and briefly as possible. A test of this brevity and simplicity showed that the average eighth grade child could in half an hour assimilate the story so well as to enable him to guide his parents intelligently through the entire museum.

Long labels are tabu, and no acknowledgements of donations appear on the labels, all donors being listed on a rustic plaque near the main entrance. Photographs on "old master buff" paper are used freely and in many instances are tinted. In cases where photographs of rare prints would ordinarily be used there have been substituted pen and ink sketches made on the same tan cardboard as is used for labels. The situation of the museum on the upper slopes of a 7,000 foot mountain, miles from electric power lines, created an illumination problem that was solved by compressed natural gas which is obtainable from the larger oil companies in small portable drums. It furnishes a subdued lighting which is highly desirable in this instance, but the open flames prevent installing lights inside cases, hence no glass cases are used. Because of the difficult lighting problem it was impossible even to place glass over

photographs and exhibits other than a few Riker mounts, hence labels and pictures have been protected with an invisible waterproof laquer prepared especially for photographs. Valuable specimens such as fossils are protected with individual plates of thick celluloid. Material in Riker mounts is processed to insure permanency, and the cardboard mounts are completely hidden behind redwood frames and celotex panels covered with monk-cloth. Rustic iron fittings are used in

hanging the exhibit panels as well as in door hinges and fire irons.

All these details combine to make an exhibit conforming with the spirit of ageless calm that pervades the Grove. The visitor feels no strident command to weary his eyes with startling curiosities, nor overload his mind with scientific facts; instead he feels a compelling urge to rest awhile upon the thousand-year-old bench that is placed where he may absorb the mellow glow from the old granite

fireplace. As he gazes into the fire with its ancient andirons and crane his thoughts are led back through time, back to a true perspective of man's infinitesimal niche in space and time. Pondering upon the things he has seen in the Grove and the museum, his restless spirit at last attains the calm, serene philosophy of the Big Trees, "the noblest of a noble race." Thus is achieved the supreme purpose of the Mariposa Grove and its museum.