

Wood Honors Laura Perrott Mahan (1868-1937) as Assembly District 2's Woman of the Year

March 23, 2022



Last week, Assemblymember Jim Wood (D-Santa Rosa) announced he selected Laura Perrott Mahan, early 20th century advocate for the preservation of redwood groves in Humboldt County and California, as 2022 Woman of the Year for Assembly District 2.

“This is very unique, and maybe the only time ever, that a Woman of the Year has been chosen as someone from history, more than 100 years ago,” said Wood. “I was inspired to choose Ms. Mahan after hearing from John “Griff” Griffiths, an interpreter at Humboldt Redwoods State Park, during a tour of the park late last year. We stopped at her memorial and Griff, a masterful storyteller, shared her story and I knew immediately that she deserved to be honored for her advocacy and work.”

Laura Perrott was born on November 29, 1868, near Loleta, California. Her mother, Sarah van Duzer, was a Humboldt County native, and her father, William, had worked his way from Michigan to California to become a successful Humboldt farmer.

In 1908, she married James Mahan, a lawyer, and soon became actively involved in local civic and reform organizations. She was a member of the Eureka Women’s Club (which focused on education and forestry) and a member of John Muir’s Sierra Club.

Mahan was an effective organizer and fundraiser and she, along with her fellow women’s club members, enlisted Eureka City business owners to designate local redwood groves as city parks. In 1913, she helped form and became president of the Redwood Park Committee, which wrote a resolution, forwarded to the U.S. Congress, demanding that several redwood groves be declared a national park. She also organized the influential Women’s Save the Redwoods League in 1919 to expand conservation advocacy and activism.

Mahan continued to advocate and protect the redwoods for the rest of her life. By the time she died in 1937, her work had helped preserve multiple groves of irreplaceable redwoods.