

The
Last
of the
Giants

— RED CREEK TREE —
NATIONAL CHAMPION DOUGLAS-FIR
B.H. CIRC. 41'-2" , 12.6 M
HEIGHT 241 FT. , 74 M
CROWN SPREAD 75 FT. , 23 M
AGE EST. 700 - 1000 YEARS

Canada's Largest Tree . . .



The Red Creek Tree Story

CANADA'S LARGEST LIVING TREE began as one among thousands of sun-loving Douglas fir seedlings that sprouted after a great fire swept across Vancouver Island.

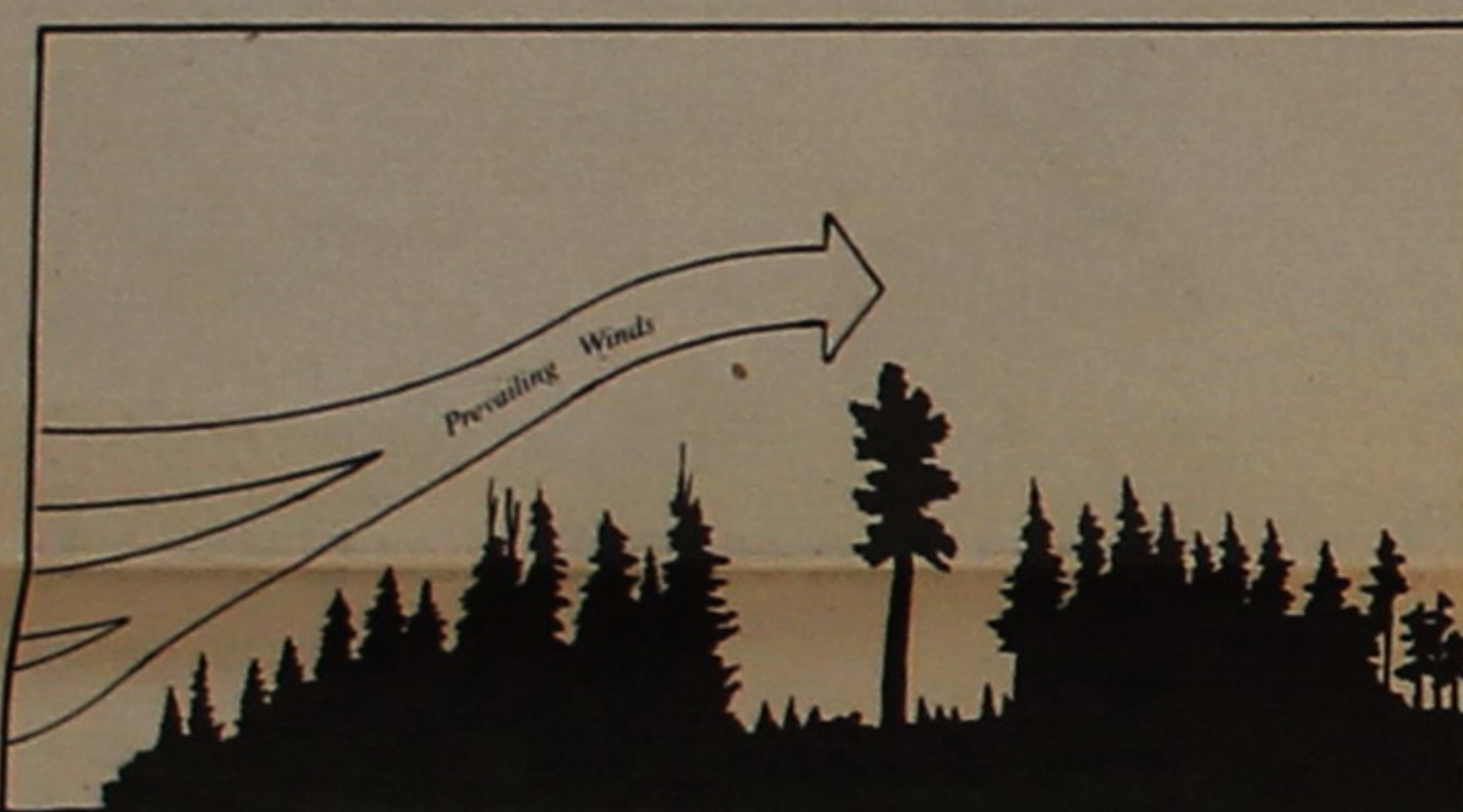
For close to one thousand years the Red Creek Tree has grown on a small plateau overlooking the San Juan River Valley. It has withstood the droughts of summer, the wild gales of winter, had its top blown off at least twice and its limbs shattered countless times. Still this survivor grows vigorously, sending up yet another leader from the battle-scarred crown.

One hundred years ago there were other great Douglas-firs that compared in size to the Red Creek Tree. But if winds or fires didn't knock them down, early loggers did. Thriving in the drier lowlands and hills of eastern Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland, the enormous firs were easy prey for turn-of-the-century lumbermen who saw no end to the virgin forests. Now these forests are almost all logged, and it is only by chance that the Red Creek Tree has survived as a living monument to remind us of the great forests that once existed.

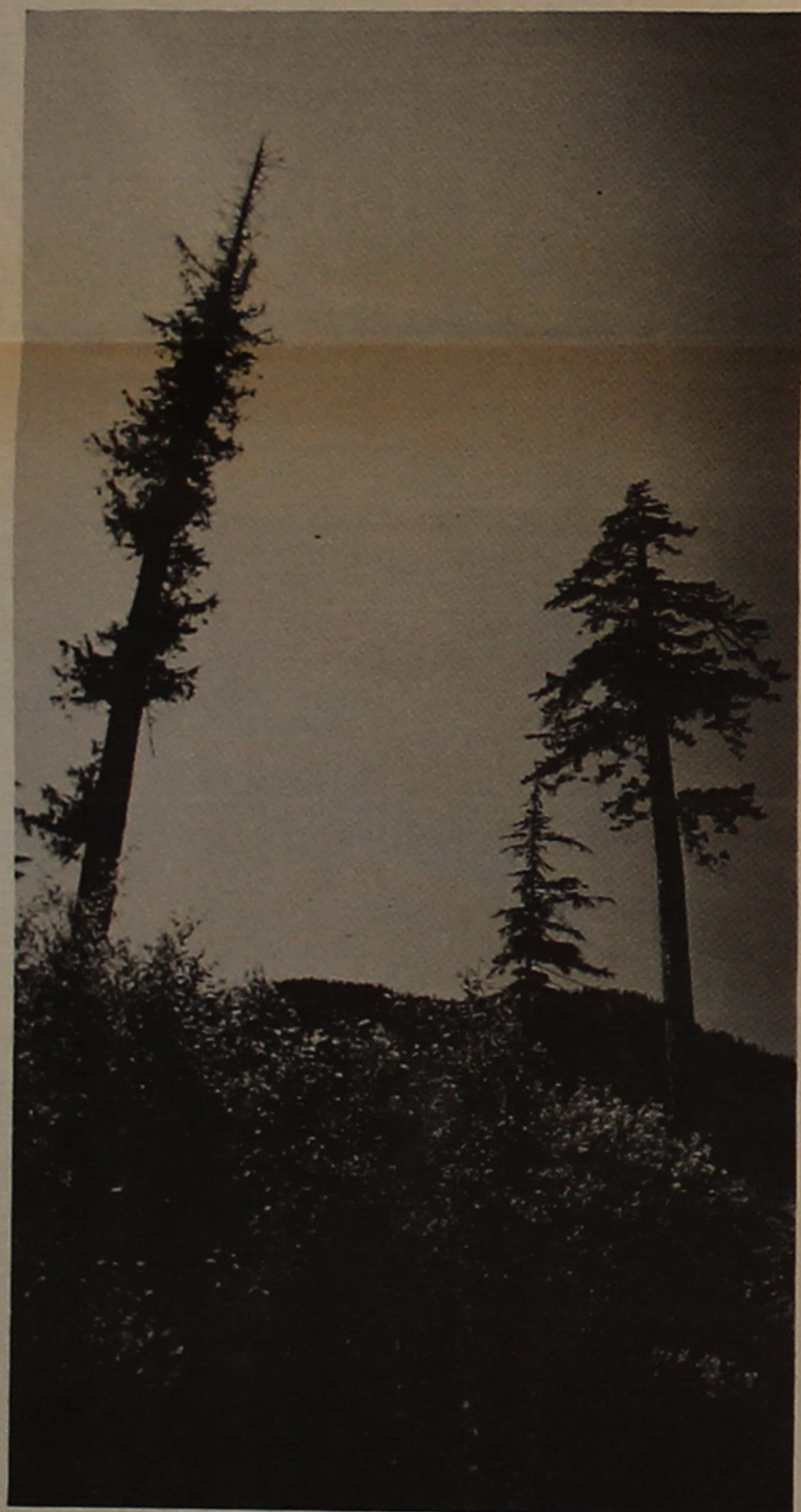
It seems only fitting that as the golden sunlight fades from the pendent cones and this monarch enters the twilight of its life, that we establish the first Canadian Landmark in B.C. to honour the nation's largest known living tree.

Douglas-fir cone, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*

Buffer Zone Crucial for Tree's Survival



Existing natural buffer-zone must remain to protect the Red Creek Tree from prevailing winds.



Several miles northeast of the Red Creek Tree once stood the massive Koksilah Fir (left) of near equal size. It blew down in 1979, only a few years after the surrounding area was clearcut logged. Ironically the posts in the photo are part of a "nature trail" built on top of the fallen Douglas-fir so people can enjoy the tree. To get an idea of the magnitude of the Koksilah Fir, look closely at the photo to reveal a man standing near the end of the trunk. Without any protection from the winter winds the two neighboring trees (above) await their fate.



New Federal Minister May Be Sympathetic

The Honourable Tom MacMillan, new Federal Minister of the Environment is taking stronger stands for conservation. Public pressure will encourage him to end the delay in implementing the Canadian Landmarks Program, and to advocate the Red Creek Tree as B.C.'s first Landmark candidate. Write today: Honourable Tom MacMillan, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0H3.

World's Largest Douglas-fir

The only living Douglas-fir known to be larger than the Red Creek Tree grows within the sanctuary of Olympic National Park in Washington State. Named for the rainforest valley in which it grows, the Queets Fir is 45 feet 5 inches in circumference at breast height, 221 feet tall with a 61 foot branch spread. The massive trunk, where broken at 202 feet, is still 6.7 feet thick.

The Queets Fir and the Red Creek Tree are lone survivors of ancient Douglas-fir forests. All the others of their age group in these forests have long since been replaced by western hemlock which, unlike Douglas-fir, is able to reproduce in the deep shade of the old-growth forest. Both trees merit international recognition as the largest of their species in the world.

Benefit Poster

Western Canada Wilderness Committee announces the publication of a new poster, *The Last of the Giants*. Suitable for framing, the poster features a beautiful full-colour 13" by 26" photo of the Red Creek Tree. They are only five dollars each, including tax, postage and handling. Get your copy while the limited supply of 2,000 lasts. (Order form is on the back page.) All proceeds go towards protecting Canada's tallest, oldest and largest trees as Canadian Landmarks.



Canadian Landmark Status Essential

"Canadian Landmark" is a new land use designation currently being implemented by Parks Canada under the National Parks Act. Landmarks are defined as relatively small sites containing natural or cultural heritage features of national significance. The Red Creek Tree site meets all the established criteria and presents an excellent opportunity for governments and private industry to work together in a spirit of cooperation to protect one of our most outstanding natural features—Canada's largest known living thing.

British Columbia Forest Products Ltd. (B.C.F.P.) recognizes the heritage value of the giant Red Creek Tree, and has left an area of virgin forest around it. Encroaching logging, however, raises the question of permanent protection.

B.C.F.P. Chief Forester Jack Toovey says that the value of timber in the buffer zone is not a major concern. "We aren't being greedy and saying we can't spare that timber," he said, "but we've had a real problem with the blowdown along the edges of clearcuts in the San Juan Valley, and are not sure what effect that would have on the buffer zone." Reflecting the company's concern for the tree he added, "We want to do what is best for the tree."

The current provincial government considers this unofficial status is adequate, but many believe this magnificent tree should be officially protected as a Canadian Landmark by Parks Canada. Formal designation will ensure that changes in company policy do not threaten the Red Creek Tree.

The Western Canada Wilderness Committee, acting out of concern for the Red Creek Tree and other record-size trees in Canada, published a newspaper in 1985 which featured the Tree and asked for citizens to exert pressure on the governments to establish Canadian Landmark status. Response was encouraging. Several hundred people wrote to MPs and MLAs supporting the need for immediate government protection.

The Red Creek Tree exists in a fragile balance with its environment. Much of the forest around the Tree is an even-aged stand of western hemlock and amabilis fir; this buffer-zone covers a steep north facing slope which is partially protected from the prevailing winds.

To the west and north, an older forest of western hemlock, western red cedar and the occasional Douglas-fir merges into second growth forest dating back to the

days of railroad logging. Careful planning of the boundaries and possibly the topping of the trees near the forest edge could well eliminate extensive blowdown.

The crown of the Red Creek Tree rises some 75 feet above the surrounding forest. Fallen limbs indicate that the most wind damage has been sustained since the area immediately around the tree was cleared some years ago. This suggests that the surrounding forest helps to deflect wind upwards and around the crown. If the buffer area were clear-cut, the entire tree would be exposed to unchecked winds that would weaken the tree and eventually blow it down. In addition to wind protection, the uncut forest on the steep slopes guards against erosion and provide an esthetic natural setting for the tree. The need for a buffer forest was recognized in Oregon State, where two areas of forest were set aside years ago for the protection of isolated record-sized Douglas-fir trees, one in Clatsop County in 1962 by The Crown Zellerbach Corporation and the other near Coos Bay in 1975 by the Bureau of Land Management. The Red Creek Tree needs and deserves similar protection.



Its lowest branches at 109 feet, the wind-torn crown hides the broken top. The Red Creek Tree once stood perhaps eighty feet higher than at present.

Historic Record of B.C.'s Douglas-firs

Even before loggers arrived in the 1800's, Douglas-firs over eleven feet in diameter at breast height were uncommon. While many giants undoubtedly went unrecorded, we do have reliable records of some of the largest. According to these records, a hundred years ago there were six Douglas-firs larger than the Red Creek Tree; today it is the last living example

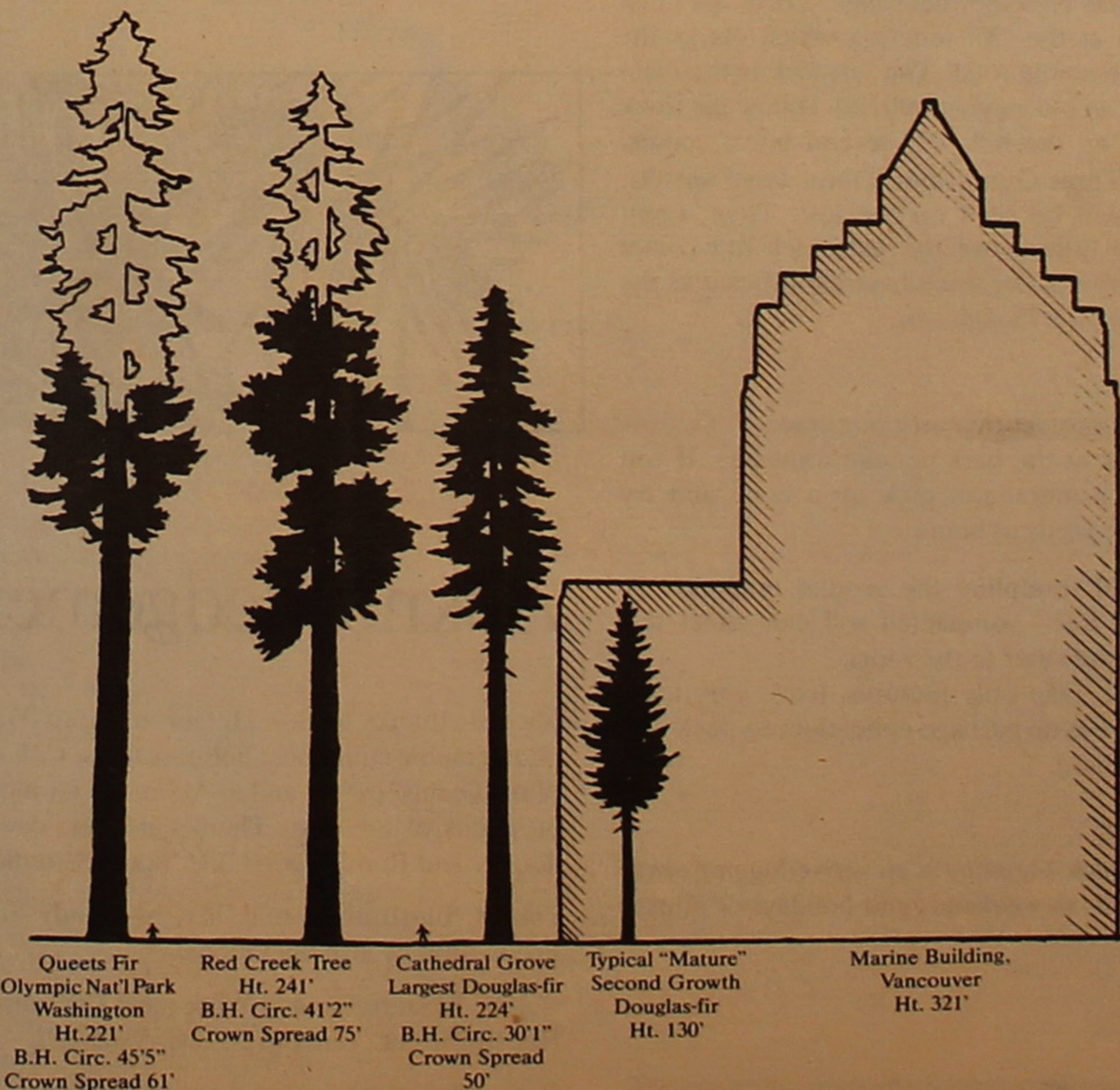
of the "top ten" great trees of British Columbia.

Heights are not included in our records as many of the trees had lost their tops, and original heights were the subject of much speculation. According to verified reports the tallest of these trees exceeded 350 feet in height.

	DBH*
Mercer Creek Tree (measured in 1923)	17.6 ft.
Westholme Tree (blown down in 1913)	16.0
Lynn Valley Tree (felled in 1902)	14.2
Lynn Valley Tree No.3 (felled in 1909)	13.9
Kerrisdale Tree (felled in 1896)	13.7
Robertson River Snag (felled in 1946)	13.5
Red Creek Tree	13.1
Koksilah Tree (blown down in 1979)	12.7
Alex Russell Tree (felled in 1886)	11.9
Caycuse Tree (felled in 1959)	11.7

(*Diameter at Breast Height)

Ancient Trees Tower Above Second Growth



* Diagram shows trees' original heights before tops were blown off.

Big Tree Search

All tree lovers of British Columbia will be interested in the newly formed Big Trees Program. While several other Canadian provinces have already compiled lists of their big trees, until now B.C. with its spectacular forests had neither a record of its large trees nor a method of protecting them. The objective of the Big Trees Program is to produce an official register, and to provide protection for these special trees. Many record-size trees are growing unrecognized in wilderness areas, parks and back yards. The Program asks for your help in locating B.C.'s biggest trees.

The Big Trees Program is a cooperative effort. The Association of B.C. Professional Foresters is assuming responsibility for validation of measurements. The (continued on page 4)

Help Protect The Red Creek Tree

A Living Monument



Enormous roots give false impression of windfirmness. The Red Creek Tree is actually in a fragile state of balance which could easily be upset if surrounding forest is logged.

Big Tree Search (Cont'd)

Faculty of Forestry of the University of British Columbia is providing technical support and the B.C. Forestry Association will be maintaining and updating Big Tree records.

"Champion" candidates in some 20 tree species have already been catalogued by Randy Stoltmann of West Vancouver who now chairs this committee which includes Fred Lowenberg of the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters, John Worrall of the U.B.C. Faculty of Forestry, and Bill Young of the B.C. Forestry Association. Committee members are convinced that there are many more big ones out there and will be working to expand the current list to include some 60 to 70 species.

If you suspect that you have located a possible Big Tree candidate, send information about the tree to: B.C. Forestry Association, 410-1200 West Pender Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6E 2S9.

- Yes, I support the creation of a Canadian Landmark under the *National Park Act* to protect the Red Creek Tree, Canada's largest known living thing.
- I enclose \$1000 \$100 \$50 \$20 other to help your committee identify 'Canadian Landmark' sites and inform the public of the importance of saving Canada's largest, tallest and oldest trees.
- Please send me _____ copies of the poster, *The Last of the Giants*, featuring a full-colour photo of the Red Creek Tree for only \$5 each. (Includes postage and handling)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Postal Code: _____

Please return to:

Western Canada Wilderness Committee
1200 Hornby Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2E2

Come Visit the Red Creek Tree

DIRECTIONS

To visit the Red Creek Tree, follow highway 14—the West Coast Road—northeast from Victoria for 66 miles (106 km) to Port Renfrew. From the junction at Port Renfrew double back about 1.5 miles (2.4 km) and turn left onto the Red Creek Mainline. Follow this straight and level logging road east for nearly 9 miles (14.5 km) disregarding minor spur roads. The last portion of the road traverses a recently logged hillside and may be somewhat rough. There is a small parking area at the "Y" junction which marks the end of the driveable road. The left fork is the overgrown bed of an old logging railroad. Follow the track on the right up the hill past several burnt cedars. Shortly the "Three Guardsmen", three large western red cedars, will be seen on the left. Then, upon entering a lush little alcove, the Red Creek Tree comes into view. A sign at the tree's base identifies it as the national champion Douglas-fir.

REMINDERS

- Please help protect this very rare tree:
 - Do not pick at the bark or take souvenirs. If you must have a memento, pick up a cone and try planting the seeds at home.
 - Try to avoid trampling the ground immediately around the tree—compacted soil can affect the flow of groundwater to the roots.
 - Cones aside, take only pictures, leave only footprints. There is no garbage collection, so pack out your own refuse.

SAFETY TIPS

The Red Creek Mainline is an active logging area. Limit your visits to weekends and holidays or after 5

pm on weekdays. When driving on logging roads, remember:

- Always yield to logging vehicles.
- Always use headlamps so you will be seen.
- Check your fuel and spare tire prior to leaving the highway.

Taking reasonable care, a visit to the Red Creek Tree is an magnificent day trip from Victoria.



Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Bob Herger and Bart Walton for photographic equipment and assistance with the "Last of the Giants" poster, and to Al Carder for information on giants of the past. Thanks are also due to Jack Toovey and Ron Elder of B.C. Forest Products.

Photos, Illustrations and Text by Randy Stoltmann
Production by Athena George

© 1986 Western Canada Wilderness Committee, 1200 Hornby Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2E2.

Reproduction permitted if credit is given.