



A Chronology of Cathedral Grove

1856 - 2009

Compiled by Dr. Karen Wonders
For www.cathedralgrove.eu

Note: The presence of indigenous cultures in the area we now call Cathedral Grove, and the continued Title and Rights of First Nations after settler claim to Cathedral Grove, have received no attention in official histories.

1856

— Mt. Arrowsmith is named after British cartographers Aaron and John Arrowsmith by Capt. Richards of the Royal Navy who surveys and charts Vancouver Island.

— Cameron Lake and Cameron River are named after Scottish miner David Cameron, chief justice and first judge of the new British colony of Vancouver Island. The mouth of Cameron River at Cameron Lake is the site of the ancient tree stand, Cathedral Grove.

— Scottish fur trader and settler Adam Horne "discovers" an ancient indigenous trading trail

from Qualicum on the eastern side of Vancouver Island across the Beaufort Range into Alberni Valley which is later used by settlers. Horne Lake, in the next valley north of Cathedral Grove, is named after him.

1860

— Newly founded BC Legislature passes resolution to cut big timber at Barkley Sound as ship spars for export to Britain. Grants 15,000 acres of forestlands for the colony's first sawmill, set up on Alberni Inlet by Capt. Edward Stamp.

1861

— Royal Navy Lt. Richard C. Mayne conducts survey of the interior of Vancouver Island, passing over the Alberni Summit. He camps by a lake where he notes he shoots an elk in "a grove of great timber."

1864

— Vancouver Island Exploring Expedition.

1880s

— Alberni Valley is black with the smoke for month after month as settlers and logging companies clearcut the old growth Douglas fir forests and burn the stumpfields.

1885

— First proposal to government by citizens to protect Cathedral Grove in a park that extends from Mt. Arrowsmith to Mt. Horne including the Cameron Valley and Cameron Lake.

1886

— Wagon road of 86 km is built from Alberni Inlet to Nanaimo on the northern shore of Cameron Lake.

— Southern Vancouver Island land grab by robber barons of 1,900,000 acres (23% of the Island). BC government transfers Crown land to Scottish coal baron Robert Dunsmuir who agrees to build the Esquimalt and Nanaimo (E&N) Railway between Victoria and Nanaimo. The Cathedral Grove Watershed and much of the east coast of Vancouver Island is included in this land grab.

1887

— John Macoun, naturalist to the Canadian Geological Survey is guided to the Arrowsmith Massif by "Qualicum Tom."

1889

— Robert Dunsmuir dies and his son becomes the owner of the E&N Railway. He sells off some of the best forestlands including "Block 35" (Cathedral Grove) to Victoria Lumber and Manufacturing Company in Chemainus, owned by American lumberman John A. Humbird who makes a fortune selling primeval Douglas fir lumber to markets around the world.

1900

— Canadian Forestry Association is formed as a lobby force for the timber industry.

1901

— Entomologist and botanist James Fletcher explores Mt Arrowsmith and Cameron Lake with the Tseshaht guide Charlie Clutesi (father of author-artist George Clutesi) and others. Fletcher urges that the ancient forest at Cameron lake be preserved: "One of the finest pieces of standing timber in the world. The very size of the trees as up to the present there are no railways there, would protect it for many years."

— British artist – mountaineer Edward Whymper (first to ascend the Matterhorn) makes the first European ascent of Mt. Arrowsmith c. 1903.

— BC deputy minister of agriculture and member of the Natural History Society, J. R. Anderson, who also climbed Mt. Arrowsmith, proposes that the "magnificent forest around Cameron Lake . . . one of the finest pieces of standing timber in the world" be protected.

1902

— Trans-Pacific Submarine Cable is completed from Bamfield on Barkley Sound to Australia. Bamfield is connected to Parksville via Port Alberni with an above-ground line on poles.

1903

— Above-ground telegraph cable from Bamfield to Port Alberni is replaced with a submarine cable up Alberni Canal to Port Alberni. Line continues above ground to Parksville.

1903 – 1907

— BC premier Richard McBride opens all forest lands to speculators, allowing anyone to stake a timber claim on unoccupied Crown land. Many Americans rush to buy up land including John D. Rockefeller Jr. of New York who bought 18,000 acres of old growth forestland in the Ash River Valley, north of Alberni.

1905

— E&N Railway sold to Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) which aims to develop tourism at Cameron Lake by promoting the giant trees as a object of curiosity and wonder and

therefore does not cut them down for timber.

1907

— CPR begins a new road to Alberni along the southern side of Cameron Lake, laying waste to many of the big trees in the ancient stand of Douglas firs and cedars.

— American Edward T. Buxton, owner of the Red Cliff Land & Lumber Co. buys 30,000 acres of Crown forestland in the Alberni Valley. He tours the new road from Nanaimo to Alberni and comments that the huge fir tree forest on Cameron Lake is "like being in a cathedral."

— Alberni Land Company, the owner of the Alberni townsite, makes a deal with the CPR to extend railway to Alberni.

— The railway is promoted to benefit the logging industry. One of the first companies to start exporting timber from the Alberni Valley is Barkley Sound Cedar Company.

1909

— E&N Railway reaches eastern end of Cameron Lake from Parksville. CPR builds Cameron Lake Chalet as a resort destination for visitors which remains popular for five decades. Passengers continued to Port Alberni by stage coach.

1910

— CPR moves old wagon road from north side of Cameron Lake to the south side, through Cathedral Grove. The new road is cleared, blasted and graded. The landmark geological form called Angel Rock overlooking Cameron Lake is partly destroyed.

1911

— Last stagecoach through Cathedral Grove.

— 10 November. Nanaimo Board of Trade supports resolution of the Vancouver Island Development League to protect Cathedral Grove which is written by J. R. Anderson, secretary of the Natural History Society: "We have a grand heritage in our noble forests."

— 10 December. E&N Railway is completed to Port Alberni and first passenger train

passes through Cathedral Grove.

— Strathcona Park, BC's first provincial park, is established. It contains mostly logged forests and high rocky mountain areas.

1912

— BC Forest Act is drawn up as a result of a Royal Commission on Forestry. BC Forest Service founded to serve the timber industry.

— Port Alberni is incorporated.

— Pack trail was completed from Cameron Lake to an overnight hut at 4200 feet on the slopes of Mt Cokely, and to the Arrowsmith Massif, the oldest European made trail on Vancouver Island.

— Harvey MacMillan becomes BC's first chief forester, a position he holds until 1916 when he quits to pursue his career as a timber baron.

1914 — 1918

— During WWI, Harvey MacMillan lobbies Britain, Europe, South Africa, China and Japan to buy old growth Douglas fir lumber from BC.

1919

— Harvey MacMillan founds H. R. MacMillan Export Co. and begins to buy private holdings of the 1 1/2 million acres of primaeval Douglas fir forest on southern Vancouver Island.

— 24 December. Letter published in the Port Alberni News by J. R. Anderson, vice president of the Natural History Society of BC. He repeats his formal request to the BC government and the Canadian Forestry Association to protect the giant firs at Cameron Lake as national heritage, dedicated to the memory of dead soldiers: "monuments erected by the hand of man fade into insignificance when compared to this natural monument erected by the hand of God."

— Port Alberni alderman B. I. Hart urges council and other organizations to save Cathedral Grove from its owners, the "axe

men," and warns that its demise will be a "calamity to this district. . . There is not to be found anywhere in the world a more beautiful nature park."

1920

— November. Professor of botany at Chicago University, George D. Fuller, writes to the Victoria Board of Trade. He pleads for the "most magnificent Douglas fir forest in the world" to be protected in a park that includes Cameron Lake, and Mt Arrowsmith.

1921

— 29 January. Hurricane storm uproots thousands of giant trees in the Cathedral Grove Watershed.

1920s

— Alberni Pacific Lumber Company buys timber holdings in Alberni Valley.

1923

— August. The American founder of the Victoria Lumber Company in offers to sell the big tree stand owned by his company to the BC government for \$500,000 but the offer is refused.

— March. Victoria Lumber Company makes plans to clearcut Cathedral Grove to produce telegraph and telephone poles, but nothing comes of it.

— Canadian lumberman Frank J. D. Barnjum from Halifax Nova Scotia is reputed to have saved the big trees at Cathedral Grove as part of his national forest preservation. In 1931 Barnjum bought a 2,300 acre remnant of "virgin" forest but following his death in 1932 it was sold to logging companies.

1925

— BC Forestry Association is founded as a lobbying group for the timber industry.

1926

— Mt Arrowsmith's sister summit, known locally as the "Hump" is named Mt. Cokely after Leroy Cokely, a surveyor.

1928

— Governor-General of Canada, Frederick Freeman Thomas (Viscount Willingdon), names "Cathedral Grove" during a 1928 visit to BC.

— 8 August. Qualicum Beach Board of Trade carries a resolution to preserve Block 35 (Cathedral Grove) "as a memorial of bygone days and of great educational value to all." The estimated value of one third (1200 acres) of Block 35 is \$160,000.

1929

— Associated Boards of Trade of Vancouver Island endorses resolution to "take prompt measures to preserve forever, for the public benefit, the well known stand of timber at Cameron Lake, known as Cathedral Grove."

1936

— Cathedral Grove is valued at \$585,000.

— 6 February. Hector Stewart, editor of the West Coast Advocate writes: "Cathedral Grove must not be logged! . . . It is inconceivable that any government in its sober senses would be foolhardy enough to commit such a sin against the beauties of nature."

— 12 March. Alberni MLA Arnold Hanna warns: "No axe or saw has yet touched Cathedral Grove and I would like to tell the Minister of Lands that if this area of timber is not saved for posterity as a timber reserve, this government may as well close up."

— 25 July. Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor General of Canada, writes a letter pleading that Cathedral Grove be preserved: "do not let the wonderful natural growth of Vancouver Island disappear through carelessness – see that you protect that growth for the future good of your island. You have a treasure house that is worth saving."

— July. BC Minister of Lands Wells Gray submits a proposal to preserve Cathedral Grove to the Department of Lands and the CPR, suggesting cash or timber as an exchange with the Victoria Lumber Company.

1939

— Efforts to preserve Cathedral Grove are set aside when WWII begins and the BC Forest Act is suspended. Logging and lumbering are classified as war industries.

1940

— Alberni Road around Cameron Lake is straightened and Angel Rock is blasted to allow logging trucks easier passage and to encourage development of a large pulp mill at Port Alberni.

1940

— 20 December. Government establishes two parks at Little Qualicum Falls and Englishman River Falls.

1942

— 9 July. At a meeting in Port Alberni the Tourist Association of the Pacific Coast protests against the government for not protecting Cathedral Grove. Supported by the Vancouver Board of Trade.

— 6 August. Port Alberni mayor Mike Hamilton writes BC chief forester: "Reports indicated you are opposed to preservation of Cathedral Grove. Be advised people here are very determined on its preservation."

— 12 November. Victoria Local Council of Women writes CPR about need to protect Cathedral Grove as a war monument.

1943

— Sloan Report is published on the forest industry to stimulate the management of a perpetual yield system and make logging companies responsible for forestlands.

1944

— April. H. R. MacMillan makes a murky deal to take over Victoria Lumber Co. and consolidate his huge timber holdings on Vancouver Island.

— At a meeting of the Vancouver Island Tourist Association in Port Alberni, H.R. MacMillan is pressured to donate Cathedral Grove to the public. After a contentious public fight the timber baron stormed out of the meeting shouting "All right! You can have the

God-damned Grove," slamming the door as he left.

— 20 November. H.R. MacMillan writes BC Premier John Hart that he will make a gift of a 330 acre (136 hectare) forest tract, including 30 acres of big trees known as Cathedral Grove, to BC for park purposes. It was calculated to contain c. 25,000,000 board feet of lumber. In exchange MacMillan is to be repaid all taxes paid on the land since it was acquired in 1889 by the Victoria Lumber Co. Also MacMillan retains its right of way through the park so it can resume logging Block 35, which he pledges to do until after the year 2000.

— 28 December. Resistance to naming the park after H. R. Macmillan is expressed in a letter to the editor of the Alberni newspaper: "its awe-inspiring beauty, its cathedral-like spires of the tall trees from which is derived its name, will never die. It is, and always will be, Cathedral Grove. . . one of the last large stands of timber traversed by a highway and its setting aside as a park is the result of years of agitation."

— Government begins to construct a highway, 30 feet wide with a 25 strip on either side, through Cathedral Grove to replace the old Alberni Road.

1947

— 25 February. BC government officially declares Cathedral Grove as MacMillan Park.

— CPR donates 839 acres on Cameron Lake to connect MacMillan Park with Little Qualicum Falls Park.

— BC Forest Act is amended and the province is divided into Tree Farm Licences.

1951

— MacMillan merges with the American owned timber company Bloedel, Stewart and Welch to form MacMillan Bloedel, the largest logging company in Canada.

1951

— MacMillan merges with and Powell River Logging Company.

1961

— Canadian Overseas Telecommunication Corporation constructs a cable system to the south Pacific which passes through the northwest side of Cathedral Park between Highway 4 and the E&N Railway grade.

1962

— Fibre optic cutline is cleared through Cameron Valley and Cathedral Grove to accommodate the under-ground "COMPAC" co-axial cable from Parksville to Port Alberni.

1972

— 607 hectares of logged land on the northern slopes of Mt Cokely is sold for a dollar by MacMillan Bloedel to the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District for a regional park.

1975

— MacMillan Bloedel clearcut logs so much of the Cameron River Valley (Cathedral Grove Watershed) that the Little Qualicum River runs brown with siltation for four years.

1992

— BC government releases MacMillan Provincial Park Master Plan.

— After public protests against clearcutting at Clayoquot Sound, TimberWest buys out Fletcher Challenge. The BC government concedes to public pressure and expands the Carmanah Provincial Park to include the Lower Walbran Valley. TimberWest contracts out much of its work to Hayes Forest Services in Duncan.

— Commission on Resources & Environment decides against making Arrowsmith Massif into a Class A Provincial Park.

1995

— Regional District of Nanaimo considers protecting the Arrowsmith Massif.

1996

— Cathedral Grove: MacMillan Park by Jan Peterson is published.

— February. Government announces that to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Cathedral Grove it will provide \$100,000 towards a parking lot and interpretive centre for the park.

— Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Foundation is formed.

1997

— 1 January. "Qualicum" hurricane force storm results in massive windthrow in many of the big trees in Cathedral Grove.

1998

— Public Access Resolution Committee garners support of over 30 clubs, societies, federations and outdoor groups to petition the Regional District of Nanaimo to turn "Block 1380" into a wilderness regional park: Mt Arrowsmith.

— TimberWest helicopter logs an old growth Douglas fir forest, ignoring the protests of hikers and conservation groups and destroys a heritage trail on the steep mountainside above Cathedral Grove, leaving a sea of 800 year old stumps.

1999

— E & N Railway from Parksville to Port Alberni (through Cathedral Park) is bought by Florida based company AmericaRail.

— 1 November. American forest annihilation company Weyerhaeuser acquires MacMillan Bloedel for CAD\$3.6

— BC government pays Weyerhaeuser \$5.5 million for 140 acres of mostly logged over forestland and leftover stumps adjacent to Cathedral Grove, on the windward side of the valley, on which it plans to build a parking lot.

— Weyerhaeuser (MacMillian Bloedel) requests the removal of its private forestlands from Tree Farm Licence 44. Request meets strong opposition and is rejected.

2000

— 10 November. Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve is designated by UNESCO.

2001

— TimberWest acquires a parcel of private land and logs a pristine trail that begins at the Alberni Highway beside Cathedral Lake, just a few kilometers from Cathedral Grove.

— BC Parks reveals its plan for parking lot in Cathedral Grove with no public consultation.

— First protest demonstrations by impromptu group Friends of Cathedral Grove (FROG). Video "Save Cathedral Grove" made by Phil Carson. Strong public protests against the parking lot result in its withdrawal.

— Deal made between the Regional District of Nanaimo and the timber companies to "lease" the land from Cameron Lake to the Arrowsmith Ski Park, for the Old Arrowsmith Trail and regional park use.

2004

— 9 February. Government contracted logging crew arrives in Cathedral Grove to clear the land for a parking lot. Spontaneous protest by citizens who defend the trees and refuse to leave.

— March. Government announces plans to privatize 73,000 acres of Crown forestland, part of "Tree Farm License 44," a quasi legal deal which benefits Weyerhaeuser. There is no public or First Nations consultation.

— Government implements the "Private Managed Forest Act" thereby weakening environmental protection, controls and standards on forest practices. Section 21 of the Act removes the ability and authority of local governments to affect controls over those lands: zoning, community planning, and watershed protection.

— Government reject alternative route for through Cathedral Grove and instead begins widening and upgrading Highway 4.

— April. 10,000 people sign a petition against the planned Cathedral Grove parking lot.

— May. In a landmark ruling by the BC Court, Judge Quijano denies the government's request for a SLAPP injunction that would prevent members of the public from entering publicly owned land in Cathedral Grove.

— 12 July. Members of the Friends of Cathedral Grove (FROG), Western Canada Wilderness Committee and Hupacasath Chief Councilor Judith Sayers meet with government officials to discuss the parking lot. Swedish website www.cathedralgrove.se is launched.

2005

— 30 May. Weyerhaeuser sells its BC coastal timber holdings to Brascan for CAD\$2.4 billion. Brascan forms Cascadian Forest Products Inc and Island Timberlands to manage its logging operations on Vancouver Island. Logging operations increase to 24/7.

— 3 November. Supreme Court of Canada rules that Hupacasath First Nation should have been consulted prior to the privatization of 70,300 hectares of private forest land in Tree Farm Licence 44. The Court rejects arguments by the Crown and Brascan that Aboriginal Title could not exist on fee simple or private land.

—10 November. Brascan is renamed Brookfield Asset Management.

— 11 December. BC environment minister Barry Penner threatens to shut down the entire Cathedral Grove Park rather than consider alternatives to the government's parking lot plan.

— BC Nature Trust with a donation from the estate of H. R. MacMillan buys 145 hectares (350 acres) of forestland adjacent to Cathedral Grove, almost doubling in size what it tributes as the "H. R. MacMillan Park."

2006

— 5 April. The BC government announces: "With the implementation of traffic calming

measures, BC Parks will no longer be proceeding with the construction of a new parking lot in Cathedral Grove."

— 6 April. Western Canada Wilderness Committee kicks off campaign to protect all of Cathedral Grove including Cathedral Canyon and increase the size of the protected forest to 1,300 hectares.

— April and May. Island Timberlands clearcut logs the ancient spruce stand called Pachena Grove, located on Pachena Bay near Bamfield.

— May. First reports of helicopter logging in Cathedral Canyon by Island Timberlands.

2008

— January. Brookfield spins off its timber assets on Vancouver Island, including 50% of Island Timberlands, to a partnership based in Bermuda, further removing the forest lands and watersheds from public interest and control. BC government secretly purchases large share of the stocks.

— Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities passes the "Liquidation of Island Heritage Resolution" calling for a moratorium on the sale and land transfer of all land currently zoned as Forest or Resource Land and a moratorium on development approvals within those forest lands.

— 1 October. Island Timberlands announces its logging plans for Cathedral Grove.

— 5 October. Protest at Cathedral Grove against logging by Island Timberlands.

— 7 October. Protest against Cathedral Grove logging outside the Island Timberlands corporate office in Nanoose.

— 11 October. Arrowsmith Park plan receives support from Hupacasath First Nation.

2009

— 2 February. TimberWest (Brookfield) announces that it plans to sell off 54,000 hectares of land (540 sq. km), about 11% of Vancouver Island, as real estate and forms marketing division Couverdon.

— 10 February. Arrowsmith Parks and Land-Use Council formed protest logging in the Cathedral Grove Watershed – Cameron Valley. Joins over 25 community groups to protests against logging by Island Timberlands (Brookfield).

— 14 February. Island Timberlands is caught helicopter logging next to Englishman River Provincial Park, removing 300 to 500 year old giant Douglas firs. The operation endangers Parksville City Councillor, Chris Burger, his 8-year old son and two local filmmakers.

— 20 February. Alberni MLA Scott Fraser condemns Private Managed Forest Land Act in Legislature and protests against the logging by Island Timberlands operation next to Englishman River Falls Park.

— 28 February. Protest against Island Timberlands logging of the rare and endangered old growth Coastal Douglas-fir forest on a small island in the Englishman River and the impact that will have on the quality of the community's drinking water source.

— 2 March. A protest rally to support ancient forest protection is held outside the new office of the minister of agriculture and lands, Ron Canteloni, in Qualicum Beach.