

1923 tourist guide listed five spots with 'big trees'

Continued from page 5

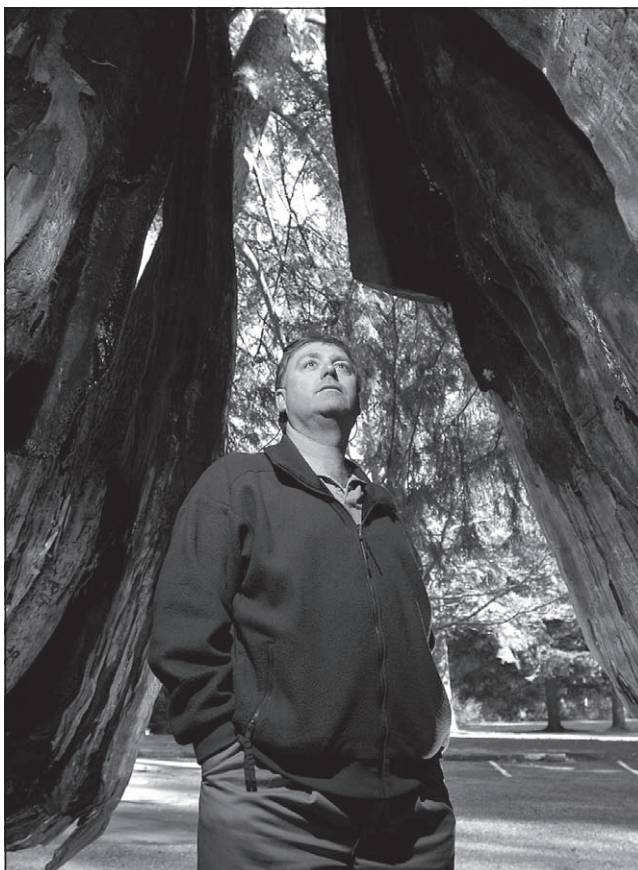
Stephen came to Vancouver around 1990, so his family hasn't been in the city long enough to have historic photos taken in front of the hollow tree. But he's snapped pictures of his son and his friends climbing around on what remains of it. And he noted that some good can come of wind storms and fallen trees.

"This clearing here was forest until a blow down occurred during Typhoon Frieda," he said, pointing at the green lawn behind the hollow tree's parking lot. "They cleaned it up and made it a picnic area. People do see good things out of this."

IT'S A TOSS-UP which of Stanley Park's many thousands of trees is the best known. Just down the trail from the hollow tree lies the red cedar known as the "National Geographic tree" thanks to a photograph of it being included in the pages of the *National Geographic* magazine of October 1978. It wasn't quite as big as the hollow tree at the time the article was written (44 feet, four inches, according to the magazine) but it was living and the hollow tree wasn't.

The hollow tree, however, has been featured on postcards that have been mailed around the world. One postcard collector's website includes 37 postcards of Stanley Park's hollow tree, all dating from the late 1890s through the 1930s. (The website can be found at www.tunneltree.com/tunneltree/NW/bigtree/bigtree.htm.)

The postcards, some in black and white, some colorized, were churned out by Vancouver-based companies like the Novelty Postcard Company,



Parks board urban forester Bill Stephen says hemlocks growing out of the stump were topped to prevent them from acting as sails during windstorms. *photo Dan Toulgoet*

Coast Publishing Company, European Import Company, and Gowen Sutton Company. Postcard publishers in Montreal, Los Angeles and Germany also produced images of the hollow tree. One caption recorded the hollow tree's circumference as 64 feet and (incorrectly) stated that it was "2,000 years old."

Other big trees in Stanley Park also made it onto early postcards. The "Seven Sisters" were seven massive Douglas firs and western red cedars that once stood near the spot where Tatlow Walk and the Bridle

Path intersected. According to *The Stanley Park Explorer* by Richard M. Steele, the Seven Sisters may have been named after the Sutherlands, seven sisters whose waist-length tresses were featured in advertisements for hair tonic, and who visited Vancouver in 1900. Tatlow Walk was created in 1911 to take park visitors past these forest giants.

The Seven Sisters were cut down in 1951 when the parks board deemed they had become dangerous and might fall, but back in the 1920s were one of several must-see attractions

in the park.

A 1923 tourist guide to Stanley Park shows, on its map, five spots where "big trees" can be found. These include the hollow tree, the Seven Sisters, and the "Monarchs of the Forest," which were located northeast of the hollow tree.

The brochure boasts that the "greater part" of the park's nearly 1,000 acres "is in the condition of natural forest." It maps out the park's three-mile Bridle Path and 30 miles of trails, noting: "These forest walks are of great beauty, and afford the visitor many opportunities for seeing the splendid Douglas firs and other trees for which the park is famous."

Carol DeFina, communications coordinator for the parks board, says part of the hollow tree's attraction is that it's on the main thoroughfare through the park, easy to find and accessible by car. But that's only part of what makes it so popular.

"In terms of its iconic status, it really is, I consider, arguably one of the most visited and most known landmarks of our city," DeFina said. "All you have to do is go and visit the [City of Vancouver] archives and see the number of photographs that have been taken in that tree."

"Whenever I'm in the park I always stop by the tree and there's always someone getting their photograph taken. And they always have an interesting story about how they came [to the park] when they were a kid and they haven't been here since and they're from Nova Scotia or somewhere and they love the tree. If you come to Vancouver, you come to the tree. It's part of our heritage."