

# Ancient Pioneer Cabin Tree felled by fierce California rainstorm



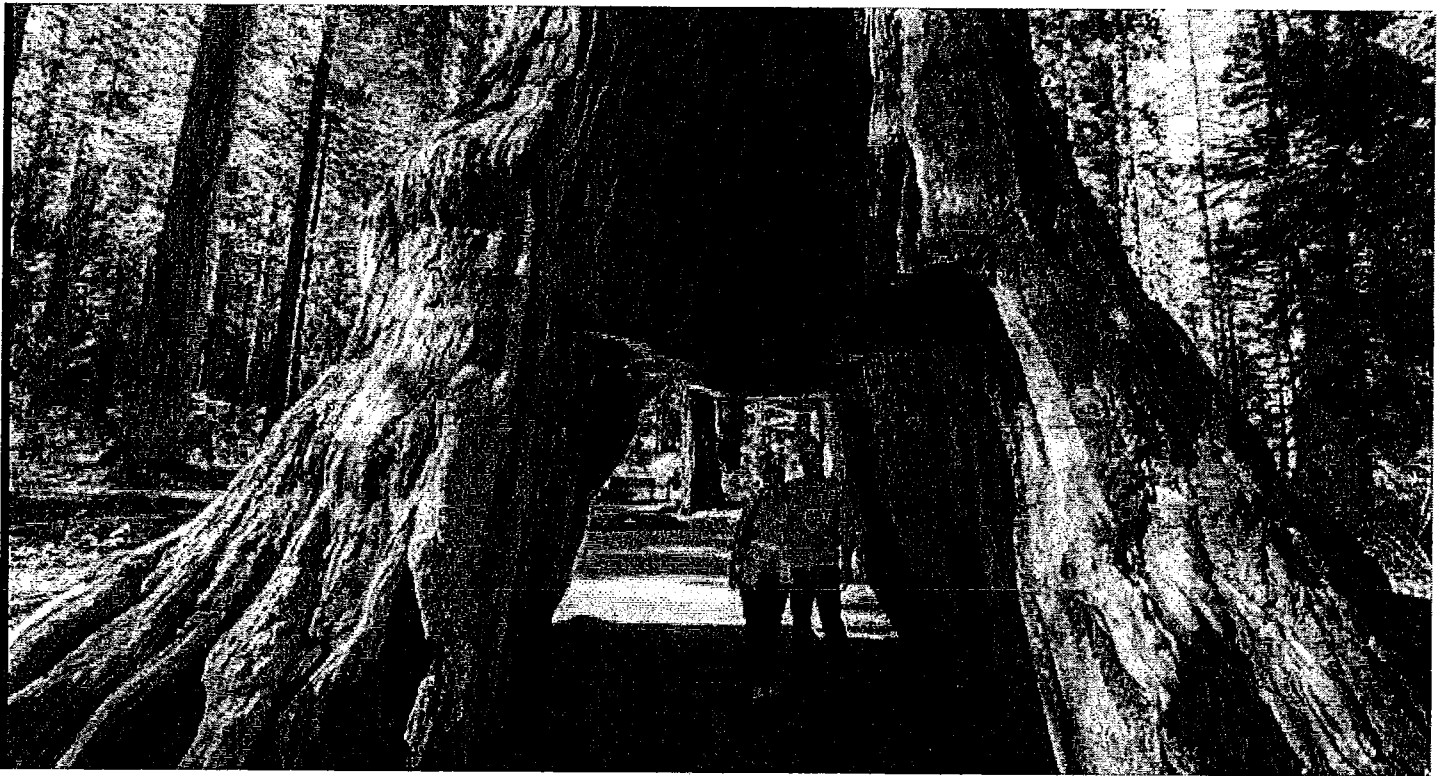
## PIONEER CABIN TREE BEFORE THE STORM

For 2,000 years, the “Pioneer Cabin Tree” grew in peaceful grandeur in a land not yet called California. It reached ever taller as the Native American Miwoks hunted, Aztecs mined gold, Chinese perfected silk, the Romans expanded their empire and waves of new immigrants arrived in North America.

Sunday, with the stunning finality of a beheading, it fell.

The aging giant sequoia — known for an immense cabin-shaped hole in its trunk — was pronounced dead at 3:30 p.m. Sunday. It had been toppled by fierce winds and 8 inches of rain in its home in the North Grove of Calaveras Big Trees State Park in Arnold, northeast of Stockton, California.

No one saw it fall because the trail was closed due to rising creek waters. An astonished park guide discovered the shattered tree on an afternoon walk, then called authorities.



## PIONEER CABIN TREE WITH HUMANS FOR PERSPECTIVE

### **Tree Postmortem To Take Place**

The grove is now partitioned off as tree pathologists arrive to conduct a detailed report of its death. There are no immediate plans for its fate. It will most likely remain where it fell, providing habitat for many creatures and slowly decomposing to improve the soil for future sequoias.

The tree had a huge hole excavated through its trunk that humans can drive or walk through.

“It’s sad from the perspective of human history, how many generations of families have walked through this beautiful tree,” supervising park ranger Tony Tealdi said.

### **Many Remember Its Wonder**

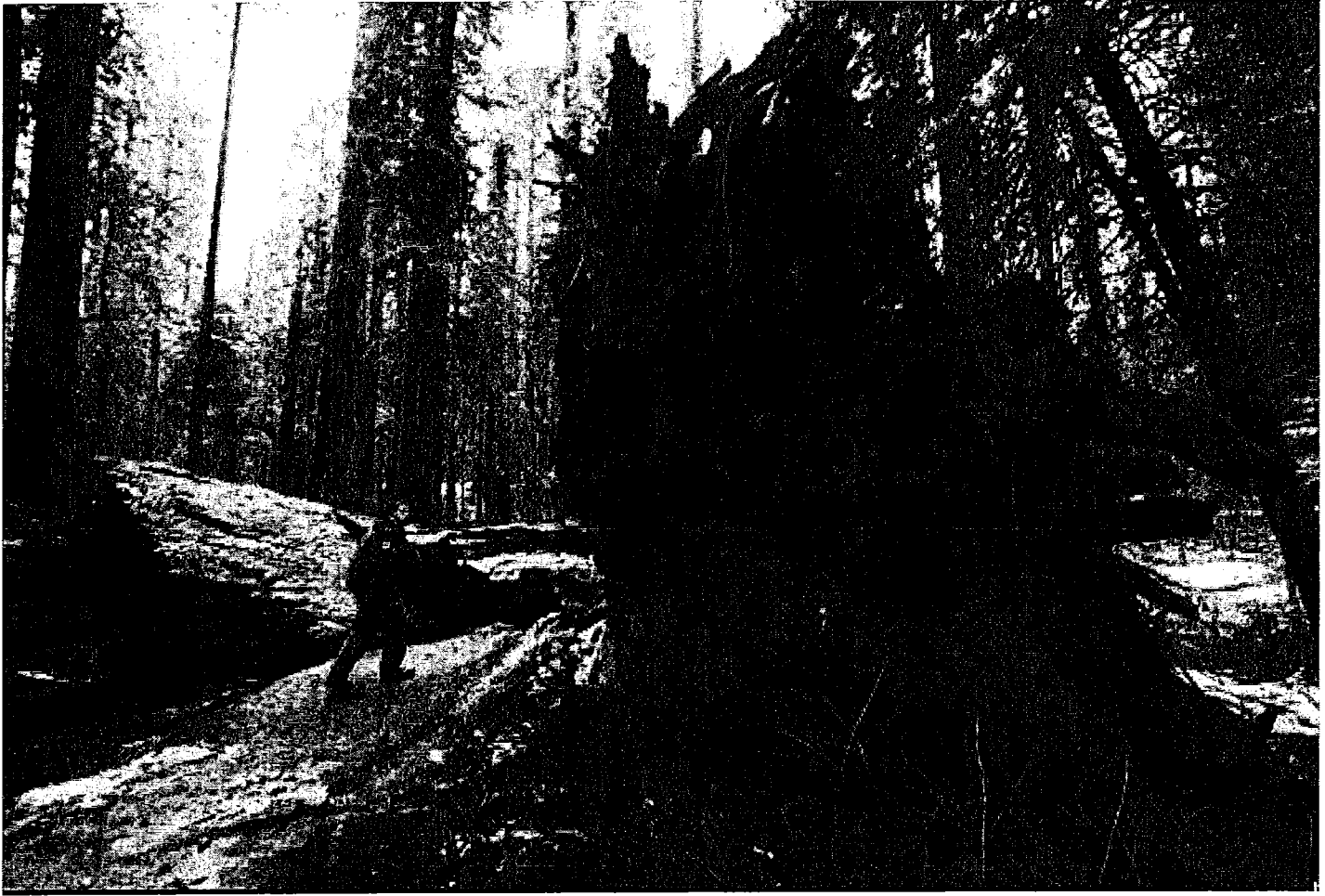
By Monday night, more than 10,000 people had commented on the Calaveras Big Trees Association’s Facebook post. Some shared stories about their visits over the years.

“It is so so sad,” said Mariam Alslugire, an 18-year-old who visited the tree last week. “It was so beautiful. I feel so lucky to have seen it. It was worth the trip.”

“I walked through it. It was so big it could fit 15 to 20 people inside the trunk,” Alslugire said. “There were icicles of tree sap hanging down, and below the trunk was ice and snow. To see it in winter was such a cool experience.”

Willie Wiener of Leona Valley said, “One of my earliest memories is camping amongst the sequoias and driving our car through this monument.”

“We cried when we saw it on the news,” Jane Kostopoulos of Phoenix, Arizona, said. “What I think they should do with the remains,” her sister Georgette suggested, “is make mini-sculptures of the tree and use the money to preserve the forest, the trees and everything.”



## **PIONEER CABIN TREE AFTER IT FELL**

### **Perhaps It Was Just A Matter Of Time**

Truth be told, the tree had been ailing.

“It wasn’t doing very well,” Tealdi said, adding that it suffered from trunk and root decay. “There was only one limb alive on it. With the hole cut into it, it was not able to fend off fires and could no longer support the growth at the top of the tree.”

Indeed, the hole — carved out in 1881, when the tree was privately owned — appears to have been created after Mother Nature already inflicted a major wound. Old photos show a gaping hole in the trunk, caused by lightning strikes in the 1800s. Lightning later knocked off its crown and opened up its side.

One of the most popular sites of Yosemite National Park was its “Wawona Tunnel Tree,” which had a hole in it carved large enough to accommodate automobiles and became a tourist attraction. Soon, the owners of the Pioneer Cabin Tree followed suit. The once-popular Arnold site had lost visitor traffic as the roads to Yosemite improved, and owners sought to bring people back. For the next 60 years, tourists rode horses and carriages, then drove cars, through the tree.

## Tree Stopped A Hunter Cold

While the tree might not have been fatally wounded by decades of traffic driving through it — long since banned — it was likely weakened by damage to its shallow roots. Sequoia roots extend only 6 to 8 feet underground and can grow as long as a football field in every direction.

It was a giant sequoia, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, the type of redwood famed for its thickness, not height. It stood approximately 100 feet tall and was 22 feet in diameter at breast height. Sequoias live naturally only in groves on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada. They are the largest living things on Earth.

It belongs to a grove that was discovered in the spring of 1852, when a backwoods hunter named Gus Dowd chased a wounded grizzly bear in an unfamiliar forest. Suddenly he was stopped in his tracks by a breathtaking sight — trees of monstrous proportions.

The Pioneer Cabin Tree was one of the last of the historic “tunnel redwoods” in the Sierra, Tealdi said. The Palace Hotel Tree and Smith Cabin Tree remain standing in the more remote South Grove at the park. Yosemite’s Wawona tree still stands, as do three coast redwood “tunnel trees” in northwestern California.

## Nature Returns To Nature

The felled sequoia — and its 150 surviving siblings in the grove — was an ancestral remnant of once-vast conifer forests that blanketed a cooler and wetter California, and now face threats from climate change.

“Old trees are our parents, and our parents’ parents, perchance,” author Henry David Thoreau wrote in 1855.

Yet even in death, the tree will remain a marvel — and a critical contributor to the forest's ecosystem, Tealdi said.

“That tree will be food and home and shelter for animals for generations to come,” Tealdi said.

As it decays, “it is nature going back into the forest.”

1. \_\_\_\_\_ How many years old was the pioneer cabin tree  
A. 200      B. 2,000      C. 20,000      D. 200,00
2. \_\_\_\_\_ What kind of tree was the pioneer cabin tree  
A. Oak      B. Redwood      C. Maple      D. Sequoia
3. \_\_\_\_\_ What caused the pioneer cabin tree to fall  
A. A storm      B. Disease      C. Asian Ash Borer      D. Chain Saws

4. \_\_\_\_\_ The article says a tree postmortem is going to take place, this means scientists are going to look at what about the tree?
- A. How much lumber can be made from the tree
  - B. How old the tree was in years
  - C. What caused the tree to die
  - D. How closely the tree is related to redwoods
5. \_\_\_\_\_ What affect did cutting the car size hole in the trunk of the tree have on the tree.
- A. The hole had no affect on the tree
  - B. The hold made the tree more likely to burn
  - C. The hole made the tree less likely to be damaged by stroms.
  - D. The hole made the tree more likely to get diseases
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Before the hole was enlarged by humans what natural thing caused a hole to begin to form.
- A. Lighting
  - B. Insects
  - C. Woodpeckers
  - D. Diseases
7. \_\_\_\_\_ How deep do Sequoia tree roots go under ground
- A. 8 feet
  - B. 16 feet
  - C. 32 feet
  - D. 64 feet
8. \_\_\_\_\_ According to the article what is the largest living thing on Earth
- A. Blue Whales
  - B. Sequoias
  - C. Redwoods
  - D. Mr Oney
9. \_\_\_\_\_ What was a hunter pursuing/hunting when he discovered this grove of Sequoias back in 1852.
- A. Deer
  - B. Mountain Lion
  - C. Grizzly Bears
  - D. Beavers
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Siblings are brothers and sisters. The pioneer cabin tree has how many smaller siblings that are still alive.
- A. 15
  - B. 200
  - C. 75
  - D. 150

