The General MacArthur White Pine

Forest County

Although General Douglas MacArthur never saw this tree, at one time it was probably one of the largest known white pines in the United States or the world. It was certainly a magnificent relic of the past and deserved to be one of the attractions that lured thousands of tourists annually to the Nicolet National Forest, near Newald in Forest County.

Estimated at over 400 years of age, and given the name of one of Wisconsin's best-known citizens in honor of both of them, the MacArthur Pine, with a circumference of 17 feet 6 inches, height of 140 feet, and crown spread of 48 feet, ranked as the second largest white pine in Wisconsin in the 1980s.

The towering sentinel gave us an indication of what the northern portion of the state must have looked like before the lumberjacks got to work with their axes to make Wisconsin, by 1907, pre-eminent in lumbering among all the states. It is figured that the tree contained more than 8,000 board feet of lumber, enough to build a house.

The tree that Paul Bunyan must have spared was discovered by a U.S. Forest Ranger in 1945. It could be seen about four miles from Newald beside Highway 139.

Erosion over the centuries uncovered the pine's huge, gnarled roots and left them hollowed and open to small burrowing animals who shared the tamarack swamp with the giant. Unfortunately, root disease and decay and fires from lightning strikes took their toll. The MacArthur pine burned to the ground in 2003, possibly due to lightning.

Standing at the foot of the tree and looking straight up for 80 feet to the first branches, one could see why shipbuilders prized *Pinus strobus* for the masts of sailing vessels. The MacArthur Pine was indeed a noble specimen, better known and more photographed than the state's largest pine (larger only by inches) in the Brule River State Forest in Douglas County.

Source: Bob Ellingson, Lakewood

General Douglas MacArthur White Pine