



Cougar Annie's Garden

Margaret Horsfield

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Cougar Annie's Garden tells the haunting tale of a five-acre garden in the wilderness of Vancouver Island's West Coast. Surrounded by rainforest and mountains, inaccessible and remote, this garden has endured for over eighty years. It is powerful with story, rich with legend and history, and Margaret Horsfield's book brings all these elements together in her critically-acclaimed book. Cougar Annie's Garden has been widely acclaimed in Canada since its publication.

In 1915 Ada Annie Rae-Arthur came to this part of the coast as a pioneer settler. She set to work clearing the land. What emerged was no ordinary stump farm out in the bush, it was a vision, a dream and a passion. Slowly, over the years, a garden of strange, mesmerising beauty took shape in its clearing in the deep forest, featuring hundreds of varieties of imported shrubs and trees and perennials.

Wily and stubborn, Ada Annie operated a mail-order nursery garden; she also ran a general store and a post office from her home. She bore eight of her eleven children here, and she outlived and outworked four husbands. A crack shot and a skilled trapper, she became a cougar bounty hunter, killing over seventy of the big cats. She became known as Cougar Annie. Until she was in her mid-nineties, she remained in her beloved garden,

Many types of West coast lore, many strands of history combine in this book to weave together Cougar Annie's story. Many tales are told of the grim courage, blind hope and bitter losses that have shaped history here.

Time plays ironic tricks on this isolated part of the coast. Failed enterprises lie rotting in the bush. The population has diminished. Settlements and homesteads have been abandoned. The very landscape has been radically altered because of the logging in this part of Clayoquot Sound. People have left and dreams have died, all around here.

Cougar Annie's Garden tells of a dream that has survived, and lives on. Against all odds, this remarkable garden has outlived its equally remarkable owner. Although it was radically overgrown at the time of her death in 1985, it has now been completely restored, and now enters a new era. Thriving with fresh energy and beauty, the garden stands sentinel on this part of the coast, an indomitable survivor.

The non-profit Boat Basin Foundation is taking over ownership and administration of the garden, its aim being to preserve the garden and to establish a site for botanical field study in Clayoquot Sound. Construction on study cabins has now begun and the first group of students, from San Francisco, has already spent time at the garden on a study trip.

This is Margaret Horsfield's fourth book. It features art work by Takao Tanabe and Briony Penn and a foreword by Peter C. Newman. In the spring of 2000 this book received the Roderick Haig-Brown award for best book about British Columbia during the past year; it was also shortlisted for the Hubert Evans non-fiction prize and it was runner-up for the Lieutenant-Governor's medal for historical writing about British Columbia.

The book is a full colour production, with over 100 colour pictures and 50 black and whites.



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