

British Columbia



Published by the Forest History Association of British Columbia

No. Twenty-two Victoria, British Columbia December, 1989

THE ALEZA LAKE FOREST EXPERIMENT STATION - THE EARLY DAYS by Bill Young

It was some sixty years ago that a few far-sighted people established two forest research stations in British Columbia. The Cowichan Lake Research Station and the Aleza Lake Forest Experiment Station. The latter no longer exists and is the subject of this short historical review.

The original Aleza Lake Demonstration Forest was reserved for experimental purposes in 1924. Located to the east of Prince George and in the heart of the northern interior's spruce - true fir forests, the area was originally comprised of some 6,100 acres of mature forest and 200 acres of cutover land. All logging in the reserve was to be experimental in nature and followed by investigation of the regeneration phases.

P.M. Barr of the Forest Branch's Research Division identified the specific needs to be:

- a study of reproduction in the virgin spruce - true fir forests and of the factors controlling it,
- a survey of reproduction conditions after forest fires in spruce stands, and
- an investigation of the rate of growth of the stands remaining in logged-off areas, and the establishment and survival of natural reproduction in these areas.

The year 1925 saw activity begin with the construction of a road, development of several miles of fire protection trails, and the building of a cabin for field crews. Part of the forest was cruised and mapped during the year in preparation for initial experimental logging.

Improvements continued during 1926 with the extension of the trail system, road improvements, and construction of a second building to house field staff. The winter of 1926 - 1927 saw the first logging activity underway. Logging continued during the winter of 1927 - 1928 and incorporated research investigations into alternative methods for slash disposal and brush control. In addition to ongoing improvements to the road and trail system, a fire tower was erected on the station in 1927 and ground prepared for a small experimental forest nursery.

While the main emphasis at the station during this period concerned the initiation of research projects addressing the harvesting and silviculture of spruce - true fir forests, it is worth noting that the first sowings in the small Aleza Lake experimental forest nursery took place in 1928. At the conclusion of the 1928 field season, the Aleza Lake Forest Experiment Station was the site of a workshop involving the staff of the Fort George and Prince Rupert Forest Districts who were scattered throughout the northern interior of the province.

Three new buildings were added to the station in 1929 - a house for the foreman, a cookhouse, and a barn. The Great Depression of the 1930's began to have an effect on the programs at the station in 1930. While research plots continued to be established and remeasured on schedule, the logging program was restricted to just ten percent of what had been planned for the year. In 1931, the logging phase of the Aleza Lake Forest Experiment Station was cancelled completely due to the depressed conditions of the region's forest industry.

The Depression years of the early thirties saw activity at the station restricted to the maintenance of existing experiments and improvements, with little expansion into new projects. However, 1935 saw the beginning of work at the station by young men under the fledgling Young Men's Forestry Training Plan (YMFTP) with the building of fire breaks, extension of the road and trail system, along with the maintenance and construction of buildings and telephone lines. Thanks to the YMFTP program, such maintenance work continued at the Aleza Lake Forest Experiment Station until 1941. By that year, this program (now called the National Forestry Program of Youth Training) had ended. All activity at the Aleza Lake station ceased shortly thereafter.

In 1949, the station was reopened with the appointment of the late L.A. (Larry) DeGrace as a resident research forester. The renewed activity at the station, with the construction of roads, trails, and buildings, heralded a bright future for the Aleza Lake Forest Experiment Station. For a decade and a half under Larry DeGrace and his successor, Tim Decie, important research

projects were underway, including studies into alternate harvesting methods, scarification trials, forest nursery testing, and regeneration studies. Convinced that there should never be the need to "reinvent the wheel" in the management of the northern interior's spruce - true fir forests, the future of the Aleza Lake Forest Experiment Station seemed assured.

But alas, it was not to be! In 1963 the decision was made to close the station. The finale came on December 11, 1963 when the buildings that could not be relocated were burned to the ground. At the time, I no longer lived and worked in Prince George. But as I recalled the latter 1950's and the enjoyable and productive times which I had spent at the station with men like Tim Decie, Rolf Hellenius, Harry Coates, and Roy Scully, I was pleased that I was not there on that day to witness the Aleza Lake Experiment Station's death throes.

oo0oo

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS
by Dr. B.G. Griffith

Upon graduation from UBC in the spring of 1926 with an honours degree in Botany, I was hired by the B.C. Forest Branch for its Research Division. I was not hired for my knowledge of forestry but for my knowledge of plants and was immediately posted to the newly-established Aleza Lake Forest Experiment Station.

My summer's work consisted mainly of studying white spruce regeneration and establishing an arboretum for the station. Winters were spent in Victoria writing up the results of the summer's work. It was during these winter periods that I collected material for a booklet entitled "A Pocket Guide to the Trees and Shrubs of British Columbia," which was published by the Forest Branch in 1934 under my name.

In the winter of 1929 - 1930, I was stationed in the Forest Branch's District Office in Vancouver in order to make frequent visits to Green Timbers to superintend the clearing of some of the land for the establishment of seedbeds and plantations. In the spring of 1930 I laid out the area for the first plantation there, and consequently was present at the inauguration meeting on March 15, 1930, when the first 120 trees were planted by the dignitaries present. At this ceremony, the Forest Branch was officially represented by Mr. P.Z. Caverhill, Chief Forester; Mr. R.C. Sinclair, District Forester of the Vancouver Forest District; Mr. P.M. Barr, Chief of the Research Division; and Mr. A.E. Pickford, in charge of forest nurseries. I did not personally plant any trees but assisted some of those present to plant theirs.

oo0oo

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

During the past month, letters have been written to public and private sector employers expressing the concern that insufficient attention and action has been given to the preservation of British Columbia's forest history records and assets. Thanks to Director George Brandak, guidelines were prepared to assist companies, agencies, and associations in addressing this deficiency. In addition, the FHABC suggested that the forest sector should consider devoting a portion of annual meetings and symposiums to the furthering of a greater appreciation and understanding of pertinent aspects of forest history.

Directors have selected three recipients for the Association's 1989 Awards of Merit recognizing contributions in the furthering of a greater awareness of British Columbia's forest history. These awards will be presented early in 1990 as occasions present themselves and will be reported on in subsequent newsletters.

With a membership of over four hundred in our association, it was an interesting exercise to review its geographical distribution:

Vancouver Island	28%	Cariboo Forest Region	5%
Vancouver Forest Region (excluding Vancouver Island)	27%	Prince George Forest Region	11%
Kamloops Forest Region	8%	Prince Rupert Forest Region	4%
Nelson Forest Region	12%	Other Canada	3%
		Outside Canada	2%

Although a little tardy, this is the fourth and last 1989 newsletter to be issued. Elsewhere you will find that annual dues (if due) of \$5.00 for 1990 are payable and should be forwarded now in order to maintain your membership. Your membership expiry date is shown on the address label.

W. Young,
President

oo0oo

NEWS ITEMS

David Douglas Ceremony

Why not combine your 1991 holiday to Hawaii with a ceremonial visit to the site of the untimely death of western North America's pioneer botanist David Douglas? Such a ceremony is being planned for November 19, 1991 by the David Douglas Society of Western North America. For information contact Bill Young, 6401 Conconi Place, Victoria, B.C. V8Z 5Z7.

oo0oo

LETTERS

I am soliciting people who have worked tree planting to participate in an oral history of silviculture in B.C. The project encompasses an art show and book based on people's stories and photographs of treeplanting.

I am after stories about the everyday or extraordinary, working conditions, how tree planting has affected peoples lives, or whatever else is peoples' fancy. Maximum 150 words.

I am especially interested in contacting people who worked planting during the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's, as well as women who planted during the war.

Ms. Zoe Lambert
P.O. Box 4
Britannia Beach, B.C.
VON 1J0 phone: 896-2488

oo0oo

THE FLUME AND THE FLYWHEEL
by Bob Breadon

We first saw it as very young kids, when we took our kitchen scraps to feed Mr. Orde's sow and piglets, near Langdale Creek. It was a V-shaped trough, made of 1 x 12" boards, nailed to plank frames at 16 foot intervals, and to a specially-sawn "keel," triangular in section, along the bottom. I remember the keel because it made a flat inside surface just wide enough for a sneakered foot. This flume ran on a steady grade alongside the creek, at times on the ground and at times high on split cedar trestles. It was never far away during our searches for cutthroat trout along the lower creek. Remnants of it were still lodged up on pilings at the creek mouth. Hundreds of thousands of board feet of lumber and timbers were used in its construction.

Some of our elders recalled that a man named Stoltz had built the flume around the turn of the century. Men we never knew toiled to cut shingle bolts out of the big western red cedars on the First Ridge of Mount Elphinstone, above Gibsons Landing. They horse-sledged the bolts to the head of the flume. A low dam on the headwaters of the creek diverted enough water into the flume when needed, to float the bolts to tidewater at the mouth of Langdale Creek. The flume was about 2 1/2 miles long as the crow flies, but much longer and quite crooked on the ground, in order to stay within a maximum grade of perhaps 3 percent.

As we got older and bolder, groups of us ventured inland through the Olsen farm and the second-growth Douglas-fir stands above, using the flume as a somewhat precarious boardwalk above the salmonberry and devil's club thickets. There was no guarantee you wouldn't put a foot through the rotting boards, or ride a whole section of flume to the ground as it collapsed. Naturally the greater the height and the more spectacular the fall, the greater the acclaim of one's companions. We tried to avoid the ignominy of walking safely on the ground, but at times the risks became overwhelming, and we climbed down the nearest red alder tree. There were many wounds to treat and thorns to extract after our trips up the flume.

Decay, windfalls, and our own rough treatment ended the usefulness of the flume as a trail. In our teens, we took the other route up Mount Elphinstone. First we walked up the North Road, past stump-ranches weathering the Great Depression, then through the Gibsons municipal cemetery, and finally the steep, hot climb up the switchback trail to the First Ridge. There we studied the sagging shacks which had housed men and horses, the network of skid trails converging on the head of the flume, and the timber dam (long since breached) which once stored the water until it was time to flush down some shingle bolts.

The leveled camp site ended at a rock bluff, from which we could see the cemetery, the farm clearings, the village of Gibsons, and perhaps one of the Union steamships unloading freight at the Government wharf. And on the brink of the bluff perched the most impressive relic of the Stoltz operation, an ancient and rusted gasoline donkey engine. Remnants of an incline railway dropped steeply from the donkey to the present cemetery site. We surmised that this was a "skip," used to winch sledloads of men or supplies up to the camp. Sled and cables were gone, but charred log cribbing and stringers remained.

The donkey was a "one-lunger." It had only one large cylinder, which fired once in every four engine revolutions, as I learned from a similar gas donkey and skip still in use at the YMCA's Camp Elphinstone in the early 1940's. To keep it turning between these infrequent power strokes, it needed a massive double flywheel. Two steel rims, 7 feet in diameter, were joined by ornate, curving spokes to a central hub. Steel rods connected one rim to the other at intervals around the circumference.

That flywheel, immobilized on the brink of the bluff, offended our group a little more each time we saw it. Boulders which we rolled over the edge made immensely satisfying leaps down over the bluffs and into the timber below. How would the 7 foot wheel look, doing the same thing? To find out, Willie, Jim, Charlie, Donnie, and the rest of us lugged in an assortment of wrenches and sledge hammers. With no small effort, we separated the flywheel from the donkey.

We levered the double wheel to the brink. We stood in awe as it hesitated, then gathered speed, and took a leap of several hundred feet, spinning and muttering in the air. It gained speed and leaped again. The cemetery! What would this juggernaut do to its well-kept graves? The town of Gibsons! The wharf! What had we done?

Sensing that the time for intervention was past, we watched the wheel. It tore into a stand of young Douglas-firs just above the cemetery, with the sound of crashing surf. We lost sight of it, but the crashing continued. Then there was silence. Had it passed through the Douglas-fir stand and onto the cemetery lawns? We couldn't see.

We scrambled down the wheel's well-marked swath through the young trees. To our immense relief, these had eventually absorbed the wheel's energy and brought it to a halt. It sat, festooned with debris, not far from the upper edge of the Gibsons cemetery.

That was 48 years ago. Lower Langdale Creek and its flume are now obscured by a paved ferry terminal. About 20 years ago, I retraced the Elphinstone hike with my own boys. The cemetery was unchanged. The surrounding Douglas-firs had grown large. Two of them, hideously deformed, appeared on the slope above us. Still choked in their embrace was the flywheel!

oo0oo

REVIEW
by W. Young

Arthur Galisky's autobiography begins with his early life growing up on an Alberta homestead - a time of mixed memories. In 1938, Arthur and Jean Galisky moved to Giscome, the sawmill town east of Prince George on the CNR line. Despite the fact that Jean had an aunt in Giscome, the transition from Alberta to a small sawmill community in northern British Columbia was not an easy one.

Arthur worked at logging and in the sawmill at Giscome while Jean faced the real challenges of making a home and raising a family in the community. In fact, I found some of the more interesting parts of the book were about family life in Giscome during the latter 1930's and early 1940's.

At the end of the war, Jean and Arthur left Giscome to branch out on their own. Soon Arthur was involved in logging in the Prince George area and later became the owner of a small sawmill. In addition to raising a family, Jean was often called on to assume the role of camp cook. During this immediate post-war period, many familiar names of northern interior forest industry pioneers are mentioned, including the Ongmans, Elwood Wilson, Roy Spurr, and Norman Sweder.

In 1954, the Galiskys built a home adjacent to the Ranger Station at Hixon, B.C. and Arthur logged in that area. The year 1962 saw them on the move again, this time to Williams Lake. Arthur incorporated a new company, Prairie Creek Logging Ltd., and began logging for Jacobsen Brothers of Williams Lake. In 1974 the Galiskys left the logging industry for their well-deserved retirement.

In reading this story of the Galiskys and their mobile life in the forest industry throughout the northern interior, I was particularly struck with the courage and fortitude of Jean Galisky. With her husband often away from home for extended periods, and faced with a series of seemingly endless moves from one community and home to another, Jean successfully raised a family in a home-like atmosphere - the true heroine of "Days Gone By."

Galisky, Arlene. 1988. Days gone by - the autobiography of Arthur Galisky as told to A.L. Galisky. Prince George Printers Ltd., Prince George, B.C. iv + 145 p. \$11.95

oo0oo

THE BIRTH OF ONE B.C. FOREST COMPANY
Adapted from CFPF's "Focus" - January, 1989

Canadian Pacific Forest Products Ltd.'s history on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island began in 1940 when Germany invaded Denmark. The Europa, a Danish ship belonging to the East Asiatic Co., was in Canadian waters at the time. Seized by the Canadian government, she was allowed to keep her Danish crew but now sailed under the Canadian flag. In 1942 she was torpedoed and sank. The Canadian government compensated East Asiatic to the tune of \$2 million on condition that the money be invested in Canada. East Asiatic bought timber on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island. It was the start of their involvement in the B.C. forest industry.

In 1945, when the Gibson brothers built a sawmill in Tahsis, East Asiatic became their lumber marketers. The sawmill burned to the ground in 1948 and was rebuilt the following year as a joint venture between the Gibsons and East Asiatic. Four years later, East Asiatic bought out the Gibsons and renamed the mill the Tahsis Company.

In the mid-1950's, the company began to consider the building of a pulp mill at Gold River. While initial engineering studies began in 1959, Tahsis also began the search for a partner with experience in pulp production. The search ended in 1965 when CIP agreed to a 50% partnership in Tahsis.

Construction of the pulp mill began immediately and the mill was up and running in June 1967. The partnership lasted until 1981. At that time, CIP was purchased by Canadian Pacific Limited of Montreal and East Asiatic decided it was time to bow out. It sold its share of Tahsis Company to CIP.

Since then, CIP merged Tahsis Company with Pacific Forest Products, its other Vancouver Island forest products subsidiary. CP in turn merged its two forest products subsidiaries, CIP and Great Lakes Forest Products, in 1988 to create Canadian Pacific Forest Products Limited.

oo0oo

This newsletter is the official organ of the Forest History Association of British Columbia and is distributed at no charge to members of the Association, libraries, and to certain institutions. Items on forest history topics, descriptions of current projects, requests for information, book reviews, letters, comments, and suggestions are welcome. Please address all correspondence including changes of address to the Editor: John Parminter, # 1 - 949 Pemberton Road, Victoria, B.C. V8S 3R5.

Membership in the Association is \$5.00 yearly. The date of your membership expiry is shown on your mailing label. Membership renewal forms will be sent to you when your renewal date is reached. Should you wish to obtain further information please write to the Treasurer: Edo Nyland, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, B.C. V8L 4E8. or the President, Bill Young, 6401 Conconi Place, Victoria, B.C. V8Z 5Z7.