

# British Columbia



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## THE YOUNG MEN'S FORESTRY TRAINING PLAN by Harry Forse

The great depression of the 1930's gave very little cheer or hope. But in its gloomy and turbulent wake there arose champions of a new trend in positive thinking and action which put many nations on the road to economic and spiritual recovery. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's dynamic personality and penchant for organization put into motion the New Deal, and its inevitable spinoff organization - the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Almost overnight 2,600 CCC camps sprang up across the USA and 250,000 destitute young men found work in land improvement projects. British Columbia displayed commendable alacrity in adopting a similar program -- the Young Men's Forestry Training Plan. The Department of Labour, tired of doling out "relief" money without accruing any concrete benefits, sought ways to develop some positive results from such expenditures, and turned to the Forest Branch for alternative work project proposals.

This was akin to commissioning Colonel Sanders to draft a security plan for the henhouse. The Forest Branch had been starved for funds for so long that not only were new improvements almost unheard of, but maintenance funds were no more than a trickle. In fact, money was in such short supply that a directive issued once stated that no forest fire should be fought unless it could be extinguished for \$25 or less.

So in 1935 the Forest Branch developed a program which would provide employment for 500 young men between the ages of 18 and 25. Their eligibility for the \$1.75 per day wage was determined by the Department of Labour. To develop and coordinate the program K.C. (Ken) McCannel and C.D. (Charley) Schultz were seconded from the ranks of the Forest Branch staff.

Throughout the five Forest Districts small, and easily serviced, camps were set up to house the crews which would construct and maintain fire and lookout access trails as well as build patrol cabins and bridges. Camps were also located at the Green Timbers, Cowichan Lake, and Aleza Lake Forest Experiment Stations. Another was at the UBC Demonstration Forest. These latter four camps served as clearing centres where enrollees were assessed before being relocated as replacements in the more remote forest development areas.

Apart from the 10- or 15-man improvement crews, a number of young men were appointed locally as Ranger Assistants, acting as clerks, dispatchers, and compassmen, among others. Where possible, Forest Officers and other qualified officials conducted lectures on forestry subjects and first aid. F. Malcolm Knapp of UBC was engaged to conduct a series of forestry lectures, which he gave at those camps which were accessible by his trusty Maxwell touring car.

The program was regarded as experimental through the summers of 1935 and 1936. Its success as a training program, as well as the relief measure, influenced the Dominion government to adopt similar measures across Canada. The entire movement became known as the "Youth Forestry Training Plan." In 1937 accounting procedures for the program were clarified when a Dominion-Provincial agreement outlined the terms of cost-sharing between the two levels of government. The bottom line was that the province paid for about 60% of the cost. This arrangement continued until 1940 when war activities extinguished the movement.

The names of all those associated with the program in a field capacity do not come readily to mind. Among a few who made their marks as notable contributors to the rehabilitation movement were Jack Long, leader of trail and improvement crews in the Burns Lake area; Ted Whiting, a Greenwood native who supervised several trail crews in the Kettle and Granby valleys; Don Mackenzie, who supplied Tom Wells of the Green Timbers Forest Experiment Station with young and willing hands for nursery maintenance chores; Bob Boyd and Wally (Diamond Hitch) Hughes, who together undertook the remote and demanding Tweedsmuir Park pack trail project.

The movement increased in size and complexity from 500 enrollees in 1935 to 860 in 1939. With the outbreak of war only those 17 or 18 years old were employed in 1940, and enrollment dropped to 186. While the wage of \$1.75 per day (with \$0.75 deducted for transportation and board) gave no one a substantial stake at the end of the season, the program provided enough basic forestry training to fit most of the young men for woods or sawmill jobs. A number extended their interests in forestry work by adopting forestry as a career and worked into permanent positions with the Forest Branch.

### Epilogue

One of the trail-building projects displaying more than the usual traits of human interest and historical significance was the Tweedsmuir Park effort. On May 21st, 1938 an Order-in-Council created this park and the provincial government invited Governor-General Tweedsmuir to tour the area. There was no improved access to the southern and most spectacular section of the park, so in the early summer of that year Bob Boyd and Wally Hughes led a 20-man crew into the Bella Coola valley to start trail construction.

Scheduled transportation between Vancouver and Bella Coola was by Union Steamship only and the government, still suffering from an acute attack of "tightening of the purse strings," issued the crew with travel vouchers for steerage accommodation on the old Camosun. Bob Boyd, in his usual display of brow-beating Irish diplomacy, eventually persuaded the Purser to allow the crew to spread their sleeping bags in one of the upper decks' lounges, and an uneasy peace prevailed.

The primary objective of this crew was to develop a packhorse trail up the north escarpment of the Bella Coola valley to the plateau leading into the Rainbow Valley. The local gurus stolidly maintained that the escarpment was unassailable but the Boyd - Hughes persistence located a feasible access route which left the Bella Coola valley road six km east of Stuiie Lodge. The resulting trail provided good packhorse access up to Deception Pass, thence a gradual descent into the valley hemmed in by the Rainbow Mountains on the west and the Mackenzie Range on the east. From there the trail traversed Alexander Mackenzie's route until it ended at the Tanya Lakes. The total was about 70 km of packtrail.

Toward the end of August, Lord Tweedsmuir, with headquarters at Burns Lake, was able to view some of the northern regions of "his" park. But even then his health was declining. He made a brave effort to visit the Rainbow Valley area but got no farther from Bella Coola than Stuiie Lodge, where his illness forced him to abandon the inspection trip. He returned to Ottawa where he died a short time later.

The cancellation of the Governor-General's trip was a great disappointment to those involved in the preparations for his visit. Apart from the 20-man trail crew, a 40-horse packtrain with attendant wranglers had come in from the Chilcotin to transport the vice-regal party, and it had to be a sad group which abandoned the project.

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### 1990 Annual Meeting

Mark Saturday June 9, 1990 on your calendar as the Annual General Meeting of the Forest History Association of B.C. The meeting will be held on the Lower Mainland and more particulars will be in the next issue of the newsletter.

#### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By now I assume that all members have forwarded their 1990 dues to the Treasurer and are fully-paid active members for another year. Remember to look at your address label to note your membership expiry date.

In early March, and on behalf of the FHABC, I presented a paper to a Forestry - Wildlife Symposium in Prince George. The paper was entitled "Integrated Resource Management in British Columbia - an historical perspective."

I would like to see more of our members taking a more active part in furthering a greater public understanding of the province's forest history. In addition to the more formal presentation route, other opportunities are always available. These can include pertinent displays during National Forest Week, Heritage Week, and forestry conventions, to name a few.

Finally, your Editor will always welcome articles and news items involving B.C.'s forest history for future issues of the newsletter.

W. Young,  
President

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#### NEWS ITEMS

##### Green Timbers Sixtieth Anniversary

A ceremony commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Green Timbers plantation took place on March 15, 1990. Several hundred people participated while a pertinent cairn was unveiled and a ceremonial tree planting took place. Many descendents of the original tree planters (of March 15, 1930) were in attendance and took part in the ceremony.

Along with the B.C. Forest Service and the Green Timbers Heritage Society, the Forest History Association of B.C. was a co-sponsor and host on this historic day.

##### Awards of Merit

Three recipients were selected to receive the FHABC Awards of Merit for 1989. This award is presented annually to individuals, agencies, companies, or societies who, in the opinion of the Executive, have made a major contribution in furthering a greater awareness and appreciation of B.C.'s forest history.

The 1989 awards were presented to the Alberni Valley Museum, the Green Timbers Heritage Society, and the Truck Loggers Association of B.C.

THE 1930's AND THE YFTP - A BURNS LAKE PERSPECTIVE  
by Jack Long

Although the forests had been B.C.'s number one industry since the days of the first settlers, to the general public in the 1920's and 1930's a Forest Officer was little more than a fighter of forest fires. That was the part of his function which was most obvious. It is true that up until that time, chiefly due to lack of funding, the practice of forestry in B.C. amounted, for the most part, to fire protection and management of timber sales. Without more funds and a much larger staff, little progress could be made toward changing the situation.

But securing funds was not the complete answer to the problem. Unless a ready supply of efficient personnel was available, the work could not be carried out satisfactorily. One approach to providing more trained people was the inauguration in 1935 of the Young Men's Forestry Training Plan (YMFTP). This program was financed by the Department of Labour (who also selected the men) but administration became the responsibility of the Forest Branch. The plan had three main objectives: to provide work for unemployed young men; to make possible the carrying out of much-needed work; and to give basic training in forestry-related work to many young men. In 1937 the Dominion government gave financial backing to the plan, at which time it became a national program called the Youth Forestry Training Plan (YFTP).

Quite a large number of those enrolled in the plan secured permanent jobs with the Forest Branch, and some of these became in later years senior officers in that organization. Others, due to their experience and training in the YFTP camps, were able to obtain work in the forest industry. It should be noted that most of these fellows were from the Vancouver area, had no previous work experience, and were ill-prepared for the rough life ahead of them. This involved sleeping in tents and doing hard manual labour. But there were few who did not enjoy the experience -- some enrolled as boys and came out as men in a matter of months.

In the first year of the program approximately 500 were enrolled. Of these, 100 were placed at Ranger Stations as Ranger Assistants. They were given good basic training in all types of ranger work, and were effective in releasing the Assistant Rangers and other permanent staff from much of the routine work around the stations. Many of these Ranger Assistants returned the following year, so their previous experience was of even more value to the Rangers. Some were able to write and pass the Assistant Ranger examinations. Others, influenced by their experience in the YFTP, continued their education and acquired university degrees in forestry.

In the spring of 1935 I was offered the job of Assistant Ranger at Burns Lake, under Ranger Walter Wilson. I could not have chosen a better man to work for -- I spent considerable time in the field helping with cruising, logging inspections, protection work, and was encouraged to learn all phases of the office routine. One of the memorable experiences that summer was the opportunity to work with the renowned John Collins on a forest inventory of the Burns Lake hinterland.

The job ended in October and I went home to hack ties for the winter. My experience that summer was probably a good example of that received by most of the Ranger Assistants in various districts throughout the province.

The following spring I became foreman of a project to establish a lookout on Boer Mountain, five miles south of Burns Lake. My wages jumped from \$45 to \$85 per month, plus my board. The crew of sixteen (and a cook) consisted of three local fellows, with the others being from the coast. We established camp near Kaeger Lake, using an old abandoned log building for the cookhouse -- providing room for the kitchen, dining space, and living quarters for the cook. The roof had fallen in, but the walls and flooring were in good shape, so all that was required was to roof it in with canvas tarps. But an even bigger task was to rid the place of the smell of bushrats!

By mid-September we had almost completed our assignment for that year. On September 12th we received a foot of snow, for which our tent-camp living accommodations were ill-prepared. The fellows from the coast imagined that winter had arrived in those northern woods and were quite happy to head south. I carried on with the three local men for another few weeks until we, too, packed up for the winter.

In early May of 1937 I was called back to work for the Forest Branch. Since the weather was hot and dry, Ranger Wilson thought that Boer Lookout should be manned. As I was marking time until the arrival of a trail crew, he asked me to fill in until a permanent lookoutman could be hired. Dick O'Hara, the Assistant Ranger, was a ham radio operator and he put a set in the lookout to permit communication with the Ranger Station. This, I would think, was one of the first times the Forest Branch used radios for this purpose. (If truth be told, the only fire I spotted was near Decker Lake, an hour after quitting time at the station. So much for my communications - I had to hike five miles into town to report the smoke!).

Once my crew arrived, we again set up camp at Kaeger Lake. This time we had permission to use the Omineca Ski Club's cabin as our cookhouse. Not only were the accommodations better, but we also had access to swimming and fishing, which were about the only recreation activities available to the crew.

Our major project for 1937 was to build a phone line from the lookout to the station. The line was strung from trees, with the occasional use of poles. When the line was completed we began construction of a road to provide vehicular access to as close as possible to the lookout.

The third and final season of my involvement with the Boer Mountain project saw completion of the road -- all time-consuming, pick-and-shovel work. We were fortunate in encountering little rock and only small timber, so that stumps could be removed by hand. Since the last quarter mile was too steep for road construction, the trail had to suffice. On completion of this project I was called to a Forest Development Project at Medicine Bowls Park near Courtenay. I have been on Vancouver Island ever since.

Such projects continued during the summer of 1939, but with the coming of the war the program was discontinued. Certainly the story of the Youth Forestry Training Plan of the 1930's in B.C. has yet to be told.

A few excerpts from the Annual Reports of the Forest Branch will indicate the value placed on these YFTP projects:

- 1935 - "The experiment was a complete success in every respect and proved to be a valuable work program."
- 1936 - "A second year's experience in this type of work serves to confirm earlier impressions regarding the value of this programme. The great social value in the rehabilitation of the men is particularly apparent."
- 1937 - "...this programme has proved itself a valuable means of developing character, initiative, and self reliance in the young men enrolled and of accomplishing essential forest development and protection work which it might otherwise be impossible to undertake."
- 1938 - "The value of Ranger Assistant services to the Rangers was proven beyond a doubt this season."

In view of such commendations and of today's ever-increasing problems in forestry and the environment, as well as the employment situation and the social needs of our young people, it amazes me that a similar program has not been instituted in the province.

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#### EAGLE LAKE LOGGING RAILWAY

I am undertaking some research on the Eagle Lake Logging Railway for a future newsletter article. This railway operated out of Giscome, B.C. from 1925 to 1929 or 1930. It just may be the only logging railway that ever operated in the north-central or northern portion of the province.

I'd appreciate hearing from anyone who may have some knowledge of this railway.

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B.C. MARINE  
by Alan Klenman

The pioneer and famous old forge known as B.C. Marine was started as the B.C. Marine Railway Co. by the Bullen family in Victoria in 1892. The Victoria branch built many ships, including the CPR's Princess Beatrice (1903), Princess Royal (1907), Nanoose (1908), and the most famous of all -- the grand old Princess Maquinna (1912).

In 1898 a Vancouver branch was established at the north end of Victoria Drive. Mr. George Bushby was supervisor of this branch. He was a grandson of Sir James Douglas, and Bushby Street in Victoria is named after him.

This new super-equipped facility had a 250' marine railway with a capacity of 1,700 tons deadweight. There were also machine, boiler, carpenter, blacksmith, and coppersmith shops. They boasted 10 and 7 ton floating derricks, the largest steam hammer in the province, a 4,000 lb. Bertram steam hammer, a 2,000 lb. Nazel air hammer, and a 300 lb. Bertram steam hammer. The adjacent Vancouver Forge was under the same ownership and made this facility the most versatile on the west coast. Between these shops they manufactured products for the logging trade, used and found all over western Canada.

Some of the items the Vancouver shop made, displaying the well-recognized oval stamp, were a full line of sledge hammers, wedges, shackles, and even broad axes. There was literally nothing this shop and its talented men couldn't make. Most of the deep-sea passenger liners of the Pacific were maintained and repaired here to the end.

In 1914 the Vancouver company was purchased by Bushby and other employees. The Victoria shop was sold to Yarrows Ship Yard. In 1918 Bushby retired and Innes Hopkins, J.K. McKenzie, and C.J. Isted became the owners, changing the name to B.C. Marine Engineering and Shipbuilding Co. Some of the ships built there were the Union Steamships' Capilano (1920) and the Lady Kindersley in 1921. She was for the Hudson's Bay Company's Arctic service.

Much later, 1963 was important for the building of the huge 65' tug Georgia Straits, and two others for Straits Towing. This led to the purchase of the company by Straits Towing, who used it for maintenance of their fleet of tugs and barges. In 1970 River Towing Co. took over Straits Towing and the new name was Rivtow Straits Towing Ltd. The yard and forge was at its biggest during this period, with up to 200 hands employed.

This historic B.C. company was closed in February of 1986 and many great memories are held by those pioneers who worked here or used their tools in the forest. If you happen to own one of their broad axes, hold on to it! It is the only factory axe ever made in B.C. and a great souvenir of a great old company - 90 years of service to the shipping, logging, and fishing industries of B.C.