

British Columbia



Published by the Forest History Association of British Columbia

No. Thirty-one

Victoria, British Columbia

April 1992

THE FOREST HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA -- AN OUTLINE HISTORY --

By John Parminter, Newsletter Editor

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Forest History Association of B.C. and the passing of a milestone of thirty newsletters issued, the editor has taken it upon himself to present this outline history. It will serve both to inform the newer members of the origins and activities of the organisation and act as a brief summary of our first decade.

The following is based on a presentation I gave in October of last year to the "Colloquium on the Uses and Users of Canadian/American Forest and Environmental History." That gathering was held at the University of British Columbia under the auspices of the Forest History Society of Durham, North Carolina.

To begin, then, the Forest History Association of B.C. was formed on March 29, 1982 at an organisational meeting held at the Robson Square Media Centre, in Vancouver. The preliminary arrangements were made by a committee consisting of:



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Bill Young, Chief Forester of the B.C. Forest Service,
Dr. Jack Thirgood, of the Faculty of Forestry at U.B.C.,
Gerry Burch, a forester with B.C. Forest Products,
Clay Perry of the International Woodworkers of America,
and John Parminter, of the B.C. Forest Service.

This first meeting was well-attended and it was agreed that the purpose and objectives of the association would be "to promote awareness of, appreciation for and preservation of the forest history of British Columbia."

The consensus of the charter members present was that the association should assume a promotional and co-ordinating role, and not collect archival material. Rather, the association should encourage the assembly, cataloguing and deposition of such material in the appropriate local, provincial or federal archival facilities.

An annual general meeting (possibly in conjunction with a fieldtrip) was agreed upon, plus the thrice-yearly publication of a newsletter. After formal creation of the British Columbia Forest History Association, an executive consisting of a President, Vice-President and members-at-large was elected. From the members-at-large a Secretary, Treasurer and Newsletter Editor would be appointed by the executive.

The British Columbia Forest History Newsletter actually predates the association. At a meeting organised by the Forest History Society, then of Santa Cruz, California, and held at the University of British Columbia on April 27, 1981, I agreed to edit and publish a forest history newsletter. I was gently coerced into this role by Ron Fahl, then editor of the **Journal of Forest History** (published by the Forest History Society) and Dr. Jack Thirgood of the Faculty of Forestry at UBC (who himself had edited a land reclamation newsletter for some time).

The mailing list for the first issue of the newsletter, published in December of 1981, was largely provided by George Brandak, Curator of Manuscripts in the Special Collections Division of the UBC Library. The list was based on the mailing carried out for the Forest History Society meeting of April 27, 1981.

With the appearance of the second issue of the newsletter in June of 1982, it became the official organ of the Forest History Association of B.C. The purposes of the newsletter are to provide a means of communication to and from the membership and others, to keep interested parties informed and up to date regarding the activities of the executive and members of the

Forest History Association of B.C., to publish items of historical interest, to publicise upcoming functions and to popularise the realm of forest history in the province.

At the first executive meeting, held on May 10, 1982, a change in name from the "British Columbia Forest History Association" to the "Forest History Association of British Columbia" was approved. This became necessary as permission from the Provincial Secretary was required before any company or association beginning with the words "British Columbia" could be registered. The use of "Forest History" at the start of the name was simpler as this required only the permission of the provincial Chief Forester. Since he was one of the founding fathers of the association, we had no trouble in getting his endorsement.

The purposes of the association were also formalised at this executive meeting. These are:

"To act as a co-ordinating agency in the collection of historical records pertaining to the conservation, management and use of the forests of British Columbia. To stimulate interest by individuals and groups in the collection and use of such information.

To co-operate with individuals and organisations in the collection, cataloguing, storage and preservation of forest history records.

To encourage the publication of material relating to the various facets of B.C.'s forest history and to undertake such other matters which relate to the forest history of the province.

To publish a newsletter for the membership and for distribution to libraries, archives and other institutions."

At an executive meeting in November of 1982, three levels of activity for the association were outlined. Level One consisted of volunteer labour, a mimeographed newsletter, oral history taping sessions, individual research efforts and individual essay contests. Level Two would consist of part-time paid staff, a quarterly printed newsletter, oral history taping sessions, financial assistance for research and encouragement of essay contests. Level Three would involve full-time paid staff, a quality magazine, an oral history tape library, funding of research and association-sponsored essay contests.

On December 14, 1982 the Manuscript Advisory Committee submitted its report to the President of the association. This committee was formed at the suggestion of Reuben Ware of the Provincial Archives of B.C. He was chairman, the other members being George

Brandak of UBC, Jim Ross of Simon Fraser University, Michael Halleran of the Ministry of Forests and Bill Backman, Vice-President of the association.

The committee's report endorsed the approach that the association should rely on established archives and encourage local museums and archives to ensure that their facilities meet professional archival standards. Individuals and organisations with historical material requiring attention should contact the committee for advice regarding the proper care or disposition of such material. Other recommendations included fostering communication between the province's archival institutions and instituting an oral history program.

It is not my intent, nor is it feasible in the context of this newsletter, to provide a detailed history of our first decade. However, the circumstances of the association's formation, the initial thoughts of the membership and the executive as well as the declared objectives and purposes deserve attention as they determine the association's involvement in forest history endeavours.

Some members of the association are prominent in the forest industry, the B.C. Forest Service, museums and archives. It could be argued that their accomplishments in the field of forest history would have been carried out regardless of the existence of the association. Nevertheless, the association provides an overall framework and some guiding principles and objectives which have been agreed upon by the forest history community. The elected executive speaks on behalf of the membership and thus has close to four hundred voices.

Since its formation, the association has been involved in a range of activities. In relation to our stated objectives and purposes they can be categorised into sections.

Firstly, as a co-ordinating and co-operative agency furthering forest history:

An oral history methods workshop was organised and held at UBC on January 21, 1983. Seventeen people from forest companies and their affiliated organisations, the Truck Loggers Association, the International Woodworkers of America and the provincial government attended. Another such workshop was held on October 29, 1991 with Pete Steen of the Forest History Society and Peter Murphy of the Forest History Association of B.C. giving excellent presentations on oral history methods.

The executive of the Forest History Association of B.C. have written to individual companies, industrial organisations and government agencies urging that they conserve their historical records, conduct research into their own history and preserve historic properties and sites. Making some of this material available to forest history researchers has also been an issue.

The association has dealt with a number of enquiries over the years from people who have documents and/or photographs which they would like to donate to the appropriate agency. We have also received correspondence from researchers in B.C., elsewhere in Canada and from other parts of the world who are seeking particular information. Often these requests are passed on to us by forest companies, consulting firms, libraries and individuals.

The Forest History Association of B.C. lobbied the Municipality of Surrey and the provincial government regarding the Green Timbers property. This site contains the province's first plantation (dating from March of 1930), the first production forest nursery, the Forest Service Training School buildings and an excellent arboretum. The association served on an advisory board which formulated the current land use program for Green Timbers and ensured its preservation.

The President and other members of the executive, as well as some of the members, have spoken at meetings, symposia and conferences on forest history topics. We have also had displays at such meetings promoting both the association and forest history in general.

A number of members are active in local forest museums, in restoring woods machinery and sawmills and developing forest history interpretive programs.

Secondly, in encouragement of publication of forest history material:

Since 1988 the association has issued awards of merit to those individuals, companies or other organisations which have especially furthered the cause of forest history in the province. Several awards have been issued annually since then, largely in recognition of published works dealing with corporate and local forest histories.

The executive has written letters of support for historians applying for funding from government sources. The association has also contributed towards the publication of forest history material through cost-sharing agreements.

Articles are sometimes sent to members of the executive by the editors of referred journals. If we have, or know of someone with, the expertise to conduct a review of the paper in question it is carried out. Conversely, our past-president, Bill Young, had an article published in the **Forestry Chronicle**, which is a national forestry journal, on the history of the Green Timbers plantation.

Finally, publication of an association newsletter:

A total of thirty newsletters have been published since December of 1981. Articles submitted by the members are featured, along with interviews, book reviews, lists of new publications, as well as notices of meetings and works in progress.

The association has maintained a liaison with the Forest History Society and publicised its activities. An article which appeared in the **Journal of Forest History** was reprinted in the newsletter and publicity has been given to Forest History Society meetings.

In summary, the Forest History Association of British Columbia characterises a forest history group operating at the grassroots level. The majority of our members are currently employed by, or have retired from, the forest industry and affiliated organisations. Another large component were, or are, involved in forest administration at the provincial or federal level. A significant number of other members have a connection to forest history through a professional or personal basis.

Many members are content to know that the association is carrying out its mandate and enjoy reading or contributing to the association's newsletter. A smaller number of members participate at the executive level or otherwise engage in forest history undertakings. This is a fact of life and one that both the members and the executive recognise.

The Forest History Association of British Columbia is not widely known but is well-known within the provincial forestry community. While our accomplishments to date have not met our initially high ideals, we have been involved in a wide range of activities and issues, raised awareness and furthered the interests of forest history.

It has not been without trials and tribulations. The association nearly ran out of steam in the mid-1980's but was revived by the energetic Bill Young. The executive, and some of our members, have been held back by a lack of funding, especially in the field of oral history work.

At the moment, our bank balance is healthy and this may permit us to become more active in the oral history field and carry out other research activities. We are already contributing funds towards the publication of some forest histories.

We will likely remain at the Level One scenario which was identified early on in our history. At this juncture I feel the association has found its niche and will continue to efficiently allocate its energies in the appropriate directions.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1992 Annual General Meeting of the Forest History Association of B.C. will be held on Saturday, June 13th on the Lower Mainland. Mark the date on your calendar! The next newsletter will give details.

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VANDERHOOF FOREST DISTRICT (and RANGER STATION)
AND FORT FRASER RANGER STATION REUNION

We are planning on celebrating 72 years of history (1920 - 1992) on May 15th, 16th and 17th, 1992.

The following events have been scheduled:

Friday, May 15th:

Registration and Social.

Saturday, May 16th:

Open House at the Vanderhoof Forest District office and field tours of the district.
Wine and Cheese and fashion show in the afternoon.
Banquet and Dance in the evening.

Sunday, May 17th

Golf Tournament and Sports Day.
Family BBQ in the evening.

Should you require further information or wish to attend the event, please call or drop a line to:

Bonnie A. Elliot
c/o Ministry of Forests
P.O. Box 190
Vanderhoof, B.C.
V0J 3A0

Phone 567-6363 or fax 567-6370.

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NEWS ITEM

FHABC member Dr. Peter Murphy of Edmonton, Alberta was elected to the position of Vice-President of the Forest History Society of Durham, North Carolina in the fall of 1991. He is also Second Vice-President of the Canadian Institute of Forestry.

ANNUAL AWARDS OF MERIT

The FHABC presents annual awards to those whom the Executive consider have made a significant contribution to furthering a greater public appreciation of B.C.'s forest history. Three such awards have been made for 1991:

1) W.W. Chittenden and A. McCoombs

Messrs. Chittenden and McCoombs are two veterans of the logging industry in the Harrison Lake area. They are co-authors of two logging history books: "The Harrison - Chehalis Challenge" and "The Fraser Valley Challenge."

2) Englewood Logging Division, Canadian Forest Products Ltd.

The Englewood Logging Division has been recognised for their untiring work on the restoration of Steam Locomotive No. 113 (an Alco: 2-8-2). Officially retired in 1976 after several years as a standby, No. 113 is now operational thanks to the division.

3) Allan Klenman

Allan Klenman is a dedicated collector of axes of all kinds and an expert on their manufacture and use. His book "Axe makers of North America" is full of fascinating details on the subject.

These awards will be presented by members of the FHABC executive at appropriate times in the coming weeks.

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

Membership in the Association is \$7.00 yearly, or \$30 for five years. Should you wish to join or obtain further information please write to the Treasurer: Mr. Edo Nyland, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, B.C. V8L 4E8. The Acting President, Mr. Bill Young, can be reached at 6401 Conconi Place, Victoria, B.C. V8Z 5Z7.