

British Columbia



FOREST HISTORY NEWSLETTER

Published by the Forest History Association of British Columbia

No. Thirty-five

Victoria, British Columbia

March 1993

CRUISING THE KITIMAT VALLEY IN 1948 by Dick Vivian

As anyone acquainted with inventory cruising knows, it can be at times a rather challenging, although largely routine, activity interspersed with the occasional unforgettable incident. In this regard the Kitimat cruise was no exception.

None of us had expected to work in snow during the month of May. Nevertheless, we did. The Kitimat Valley was then uninhabited so its reputation for heavy snowfall had not become widely publicized. Deep accumulations of wet compacted snow were encountered under the open-grown Sitka spruce and true fir stands adjacent to the river. It was certainly appreciated that these accumulations overlaid a dense groundcover of huckleberry and devil's club while at the same time providing a hard surface upon which one could walk unimpeded.

Unfortunately one often broke through the top crust to end up waist-deep in wet snow. The effort required to struggle back onto the surface soon left one cold, wet and weary. Within a matter of days most of the crew were hobbling around condemning various manufacturers for poorly-fitting boots. It would be some years later, while working in similar conditions with a cruiser of long experience, that I would learn that such discomfort was not unusual when working in snow. This was attributable to the effect of the cold on the tendons extending over one's heels. Fortunately the snow soon disappeared and the crew moved further into the valley.



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At this point we were to discover the difference in lifestyles between inventory cruising and commercial or industrial cruising. One day, while pushing through the underbrush and staggering under the weight of our packs, we stumbled upon a well cleared man-made trail. The reaction of we individuals who felt fortunate enough to find merely a bear or deer trail to follow was one of disbelief. Since it was headed in a direction we could use, it would have been illogical not to follow the well groomed trail.

In time this provided further insights in the form of an abandoned commercial cruisers camp. There we found the pole frame for a large tent, beds and tables constructed of redcedar shakes, a large pile of sawn and split wood and a cache of food, obviously surplus. The last included an unopened 4-pound tin of strawberry jam. Our experience with camping to that point was such that a surplus of anything was quite incomprehensible. We could only conclude that the working conditions of the departed occupants must have been Utopian. It also dispelled any illusions we may have had regarding our presence in an unmapped wilderness.

About mid-season a particular incident established just how naive I could be if provided with a suitable opportunity. To reach the final few cruise strips allocated to us the cruiser and I were required to cross a tributary of the Kitimat River. Since someone in their wisdom had called it the Little Wedeene, we foresaw no difficulty. Although some 60 feet wide, its cold clear waters appeared to be neither too deep nor too swiftly flowing.

We concluded that with a sturdy staff to brace ourselves, it would be possible to wade across with our packs on. The intent being to lean into the current using the staffs and work our way across, crab-like, to the far bank. As we struggled across, the water became progressively deeper and the current ever so swifter. Soon the water was roiling up above our waists, making it barely possible to retain a footing.

Being either the more prudent or the less dedicated, I concluded it was just not going to work. Looking about to inform the cruiser of my intention to abandon the enterprise, I was amazed to see him being carried towards the far bank, where he clutched a clump of willows. I thought to myself, a bit aghast, that this must be the way to do it in the Forest Service. So, discarding the staff and running like mad for the far bank while being carried downstream by the current, I too reached shore and found something to cling to.

After being reunited with the cruiser I learned that it was neither his intention, nor accepted Forest Service practice, to cross swiftly flowing streams in that fashion. Although it was still early in the day we decided to make camp, dry our clothes and salvage our tobacco and cigarette papers. As Shakespeare said "all's well that ends well" but the experience instilled in us a sense of caution which we heeded thereafter.

A PIONEER PASSES

Dr. Joseph Garner Falconer, the oldest surviving veteran of the Ministry's research program, passed away on March 2, 1993, seven months short of his 100th birthday.

A Manitoba native, his varied career encompassed teaching school, homesteading and operating several small businesses which involved water delivery, construction, freighting and farming. In 1922 Joe entered the Faculty of Applied Science at UBC to study forest engineering. Graduating in 1926, at the age of 32, he worked for the B.C. Forest Branch's Research Division at the Aleza Lake Experiment Station, near Prince George. At that time a comprehensive forest inventory was underway to enable development of a sustained yield forest management operation.

After returning to Manitoba and working for two years with the Dominion Forest Service, Joe left to pursue further studies at Yale University. He obtained his Master of Forestry degree in the spring of 1929, at which time Joseph Falconer came back to B.C. and joined the Forest Surveys Division on the Yahk Provincial Forest survey crew.

Further graduate studies at Yale, as well as fieldwork in Ontario, produced a Ph.D. in the spring of 1932. Dr. Falconer worked for the U.S. Forest Service and Rutgers University during this time but returned to Canada after graduating. As forestry jobs were scarce during the Depression, he returned to teaching high school, this time in Swallowell, Alberta.

In 1935, Joe Falconer was once again in B.C. teaching agriculture, at Chilliwack High School. After serving in the RCAF during World War II, his endeavours in this province included the management of a building supply business in Vancouver, operating a planer mill in Williams Lake, as well as teaching in Kamloops. He retired from teaching in 1958 at the age of 65.

Not content to sit on his laurels, Joe went on to become a licensed realtor, specializing in ranch properties in the Kamloops area. His involvement in real estate ended in 1969 when he and his second wife, Etna, moved to Cranbrook and Joe embarked on yet another career, that of a stockbroker. After a transfer to Victoria, Joe continued in the investment business until he retired at the age of 93.

Although his career with the B.C. Forest Service was limited, he was the oldest surviving member of the Research and Inventory programs. He was also among the first of the forest engineering graduates from UBC, as well as one of the first Canadians to obtain a Ph.D. in forestry.

John Parminter,
with background by Ralph Schmidt

1993 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1993 Annual General Meeting of the Forest History Association of B.C. will be held on Saturday, June 12th at the B.C Forest Museum, just north of Duncan. There will be a small charge to cover admission, a conducted tour, a catered lunch and, not in the least, free rides on the steam train.

In order to allow mainland members and guests to catch the 9:00 AM ferry and still be on time, the following schedule and agenda have been adopted:

11:00 - 11:45 AM	Executive meeting
11:45 - 12:30 PM	Annual general meeting
12:30 - 1:30 PM	Lunch
1:30 - 2:00 PM	Guest speaker (TBA)
2:00 -> ?	Tour of museum, train rides, etc.

Included in the next newsletter will be a notice advising members of the facilitation of catering arrangements and executive members to contact. For now, please mark the date on your calendar. Guests are welcome so why not bring a friend?!

1992 AWARD OF MERIT PRESENTED

On March 2, FHABC member and forest historian Ralph Schmidt was presented with the association's Award of Merit for 1992. The ceremony took place in Victoria during a meeting of current B.C. Forest Service research program employees.

While presenting the award, Vice-President Dr. Bob DeBoo outlined the association's aims and objectives, described the purpose of the award and acknowledged Ralph's continuing efforts in the area of forest history research.

Ralph was a long-time employee of the Ministry of Forests. He was Director of the Research Branch from 1978 to 1982, a position he held at the time of his retirement. Since then, Ralph has researched histories of the Cowichan Lake Research Station and the Aleza Lake Experiment Station. The former history was published in June of 1992 and the latter is included with this newsletter. Ralph is currently at work on more comprehensive histories of the Research and Inventory programs.

DAVID DOUGLAS SOCIETY NEWS

The David Douglas Society of Western North America has erected a memorial monument in the Fort Vancouver, Washington - Portland, Oregon area at the World Forestry Center to honour this pioneer botanist. The executive of the society will be looking at potential Canadian sites for its next commemorative project. For further information contact Bill Young at 652-3002.

IN MEMORIAM

The Forest History Association of B.C. lost a long-time member of its executive with the recent passing away of J.D. "Doug" Little. At the time of his death, Doug was a director of the association and one of its most loyal supporters.

Born in Revelstoke, Doug graduated from high school in Grand Forks and then attended UBC - completing his degree in forestry with honours in 1953. After graduation he worked in a number of positions in B.C. before moving to Prince George where he enjoyed a long career with Northwood Pulp and Timber Ltd. In later years, Doug was named a Vice-President of that company.

Always active in organizations pertaining to forestry and forest history, Doug will be missed by the FHABC and its members. To remember him, a scholarship fund is being created in his name. Donations may be sent to Trudy Bryant, Faculty of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies, University of Northern B.C., P.O. Bag 1950, Station A, Prince George, B.C. V2L 5P2.

W. Young

EX-FOREST SERVICE VESSEL SQUADRON NEWS

A number of boats will be taking part in the Vancouver Maritime Parade on June 5th. On the evening before a raft-up will take place at the head of False Creek, near the old Expo 86 site. The squadron will be holding its next reunion at Maple Bay, near Duncan, in early July.

Former BCFS staff who lived and worked on the boats are invited to join in the festivities. Further details will be announced in a future newsletter.

"TimberTimes" NOW PUBLISHING

A new quarterly magazine specializing in the steam era and dedicated to logging modelling at all scales issued its first number in January of 1993.

The 32-page magazine includes plans and model building articles as well as historical photos and thumbnail histories of operations and outfits. The subscription rate is \$20 (USD) per year to foreign addresses, \$14 (USD) within the United States.

Please write to:

P.O. Box 219
Hillsboro
Oregon 97123
U.S.A.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

A researcher has begun a project on the Crooked River Public Working Circle, just north of Prince George. The intention is to prepare a short history of the business and social activities associated with the area.

Personal reminiscences of a business and social nature are solicited and would be greatly appreciated.

Please contact:

R. Lamont Stevens
R.R. # 3
Site 22, Comp. 34
Prince George, B.C.
V2N 2J1

THE McLEAN SAWMILL

The 1989 Annual General Meeting of the FHABC was held in Port Alberni and included a visit to the site of the McLean sawmill, then slated for restoration. In 1990 the mill was declared a National Historic Site because of its significance for the sawmilling industry on the west coast.

The McLean Millsite consists of a steam-driven sawmill built in 1927, auxiliary buildings and a small village. At the peak of production as many as seven families lived and worked there. The schoolhouse covered grades one through eight.

Oral histories from former workers are being collected, documentation of buildings and artifacts continues and stabilization work on the buildings is almost complete.

This update on the progress of restoration was obtained from "Museum Round-up" (issue 174).

W. Young

WEST KOOTENAY FOREST HISTORY PROJECT

The West Kootenay Forest History Project continues its activities. A regional forest history archive is being established where existing records and heritage resources will be identified and documented. In addition, an oral history project is being launched to preserve the early memories of those involved in the resource sectors of the region.

For information contact:

Kootenay Museum Association and Historical Society
402 Anderson Street, Nelson, B.C. V1L 3Y3
(604) 532-9813

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Drushka, Ken. 1992. Working in the woods - a history of logging on the west coast. Harbour Publishing, P.O. Box 219, Madeira Park, B.C. V0N 2H0 ISBN 1-55017-072-4. \$39.95 Cloth.
- Morris, Rob. 1993. Ancient timbers. Pacific Yachting 35(3):28-29,31-34. March 1993. (on the ex-BCFS boats)
- Nixon, Bob (editor). 1992. Touch wood - B.C. forests at the crossroads. Harbour Publishing, P.O. Box 219, Madeira Park, B.C. V0N 2H0 ISBN 1-55017-074-0. \$16.95 Paper.
- Peterson, Jan. 1992. The Albernis. Oolichan Books, Box 10, Lantzville, B.C. V0R 2H0. ISBN 0-889822-119-4. \$34.95. Cloth. ISBN 0-88982-118-6. \$19.95. Paper.
- Tickner, Florence. 1992. Fish hooks and caulk boots. Raincoast Chronicles 14. Harbour Publishing, P.O. Box 219, Madeira Park, B.C. V0N 2H0 ISBN 1-55017-078-3. \$14.95 Paper.

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FROM THE MUSEUMS

Crow's Nest Pass Lumber Company, Ltd.
Wardner, B.C.
April 30, 1904

Wm. Carlin, Esq. -- William Carlin, General Merchant
Fort Steele, B.C.

Dear Sir:

When here a few days ago you mentioned having ordered some peavies and pike poles from some firm East who gets up a good class of these goods. We will require on the drive about 4 doz. peavies & about 2 doz. pike poles, also about 2 doz. extra peavey hooks. These hooks should all be about 11 1/2" from the point where they intersect the handle or socket to the outside shoulder of the hook. Peavies with smaller hooks will be useless for this purpose. If you know of a firm who makes a specialty of this class of material would thank you to order this supply, so that the goods will be here by May 20th., and oblige.

Yours truly,

Manager

John Breckenridge, President
William Carlin, Vice-President
Peter Lund, Managing Director, Sec. and Treas.

Crow's Nest Pass Lumber Company, Ltd.
Wardner, B.C.
October 17, 1904

Wm. Carlin, Esq. -- William Carlin, General Merchant
Fort Steele, B.C.

Dear Sir:

We would thank you to ship us as early as possible about
1000 lbs. cabbage
1 ton potatoes
1000 lbs. of mixed Carrots & Turnips, & a few parsnips if
you have them. Can also use a sack or two of onions, if you can
get them. It will likely take couple of weeks before we get our
car of vegetables in ordered some time ago. As we are entirely
out we would like to have this shipment at-once.

Yours truly,

Crow's Nest Pass Lumber Co., Ltd.

John Breckenridge, President
William Carlin, Vice-President
Peter Lund, Managing Director, Sec. and Treas.

(the above letters are on display in William Carlin's general
store in the historic village of Fort Steele, near Cranbrook.
Certainly well worth the visit if you are in the area.)

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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 submit newsletter material and
send changes of address to the editor: Mr. John Parminter,
1 - 949 Pemberton Road, Victoria, B.C. V8S 3R5. (595-0374)

Membership in the Association is \$7.00 yearly, or \$30 for five
years. Please send dues to the Treasurer: Mr. Edo Nyland, 8793
Forest Park Drive, Sidney, B.C. V8L 4E8. (656-9276)
The President, Mr. Bill Backman, can be reached at 3943 Parkway
Drive, Vancouver, B.C. V6L 3C9. (732-3075)