



Published by the Forest History Association of British Columbia

No. Thirty-eight

Victoria, British Columbia

December 1993

THE QUINSAM NURSERY

by Jack Long

In the winter of 1937 - 1938 I was working at Forestry Development Project Camp No. 4 at Elk Falls Park, near Campbell River. In February of 1938 we received 50,000 seedlings from Green Timbers Nursery to be planted in the vicinity of the park. I was involved in this little project and it was my first involvement in reforestation. Sad to say, those trees were burned in the infamous Campbell River fire of July and August of 1938.

Perhaps the only good thing to come out of that big fire was the shot in the arm it gave to the province's struggling reforestation program. Until that time, if I remember correctly, only about 3,000 acres had been planted in B.C. The 1938 fire covered some 74,500 acres and it was realized that much of the area would require planting.

The Green Timbers Nursery had a production capacity of around one million trees. In spite of increasing the annual production to six million, as was done in the spring of 1939, it was evident that this would still not take care of all the proposed planting. Another nursery was needed and there was no better location than at Campbell River, close to the burn.

An area of 14 acres on a bench above the Quinsam River, about two miles southwest of Campbell River, was chosen for the new nursery site. This was Indian Reserve land so a 20-year lease was arranged with the Department of Indian Affairs. The area was known as Quinsam Prairies. In earlier times it was used as a summer camping ground by the Cape Mudge Band, from Quadra Island.



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Their choice of this site was possibly to take advantage of the summer run of steelhead in the Quinsam River. Another factor may have been the blue camas (*Camassia quamash*) that grew prolifically in that area. The camas bulbs were an important food item for the natives. I wonder if they cultivated it.

Fire had destroyed the original forest, leaving only a few very large old growth Douglas-firs. On much of the area second growth never got established due, no doubt, to the presence of a very luxuriant growth of bracken. Some of these I measured at over eight feet in height.

The topsoil was loamy, well supplied with organic matter, thanks to the bracken. However, it was shallow -- at the most 18 inches -- and was underlain by an impervious clay. If the soil had been deeper and better-drained it would have provided us with an ideal nursery site. At times the lack of drainage did cause problems, but the Quinsam Nursery produced good nursery stock in spite of these difficulties.

In the winter of 1938 a small Forestry Development Project camp was established on the site and clearing commenced. This camp closed at the end of April. Later that spring a Youth Forestry Training Plan camp, under the foremanship of Freeman King, continued the work. As might be expected, Freeman ran the project like a Boy Scout camp.

Most of the clearing work entailed getting rid of the bracken roots, truck load after truck load. That summer the underground irrigation system was installed and a water reservoir built. Davie Davidson, who was then a teenager, did the engineering on the reservoir. Apparently he had some experience in construction work and did a good job. The tank was 20' by 40' by 6'. This provided us with plenty of water for irrigation, as long as we could keep it filled. We also had the first swimming pool in the Campbell River area!

In the winter of 1938 - 1939 I was in charge of a Forestry Development Project camp at Medicine Bowls Park, near Courtenay. In early March, Fin McKinnon, who was then head of the Economics Division, came to see me and offered me the nursery job at Campbell River. After giving it considerable thought I agreed to take it on, even though I had never grown a tree before. I have never regretted that decision.

Soon after I left for Green Timbers, only to find when I got there that Fred Webber, the foreman of the 100-man camp, had been called back to his district in Nelson and I had to take over from him. However, this only lasted for about six weeks until the camp closed. In the meantime I was trying to absorb as much about nursery practice as I could. Tom Wells was very helpful. For the next six months I kept one eye on Green Timbers and the other on Quinsam, going up to Campbell River about twice a month to check on things there.

Early in 1940 Nick Antonelli and I left for Campbell River. Nick had worked at Green Timbers almost from its beginning so I really appreciated having him with me. He remained at Quinsam Nursery until his retirement some 20 years later. During those years he was tutor and father confessor to several more somewhat inexperienced superintendents.

We sowed the first seedbeds for production of four million trees that spring. Our first concern was the water supply because although the water was pumped only 500' from the Quinsam River, the lift was 80'. Under these conditions our two-horsepower pump didn't produce much water. We managed to keep the reservoir filled by running the little pump continuously. We attached a larger fuel tank and ran a bypass from the discharge side of the pump into the cooling reservoir so it wouldn't boil dry. It ran for hour after hour with little attention other than occasional refueling. The next year we were given an eight-horsepower air-cooled unit.

We had few problems in the nursery itself. It was nice to see a good crop of trees coming along. There was no tractor or other powered equipment and no electricity. Nor was a tractor supplied during the five years I was there. Everything had to be done manually except when a field needed ploughing and then I hired a farmer with a team of horses. The loosening of trees when lifting was accomplished with digging forks. In spite of all this, we produced the cheapest trees ever. The same work done today with all our modern equipment would probably cost twenty times as much -- apples and oranges!

For the first few months Nick and I lived in the cookhouse of the FDP camp. We were allotted the magnificent sum of \$1200 to build a residence. I have to admit that we overspent this allocation by at least \$100. Bill Brown, a carpenter by trade, was sent from Green Timbers to look after the construction of a four-room cottage. This cottage provided accommodation for several superintendents for the next 30 years and is still being used by a native family. Bill had built the three Cape Cod style buildings (office, garage and workshop) at Green Timbers. He worked there until his retirement many years later.

The first stock was lifted from the Quinsam Nursery in the fall of 1941. Nick lifted the stock one day and I would plant it the next. The area we planted that fall was on the site of the present Campbell River Nursery. As a matter of interest -- when the area was cleared for the nursery, logs were salvaged from this plantation and sent to the sawmill at the Lakeview Corrections Camp. The plantation was about 24 years old.

I should also mention that I had the privilege of replanting the area previously covered by the 50,000 trees destroyed in the 1938 fire. It is strange how destiny can lead one.

I remained at Quinsam until April of 1945, when I transferred to the new nursery at Duncan. Bill Turner took over from me and was there until 1958 when he resigned. Len Platt became the new superintendent and stayed until 1961. Wilf Berg took over but was transferred to Duncan in 1963. Hugo Busch was the last superintendent, overseeing operations at Quinsam Nursery until 1968. The new Campbell River Nursery was operational by then and since the lease had run out, Quinsam was shut down. The original 20-year lease had been renewed for ten more years in 1958.

Through its 30 years, the Quinsam Nursery produced a lot of good stock. It was an important factor in the establishment of the Sayward Forest. Many people who spent most of their working days in reforestation work can be given a lift by remembering the old Chinese saying: "He who plants a tree has not lived in vain."



CHRISTMAS IN FEBRUARY?

Yes, this is the December 1993 issue and it's February of 1994. Why are we late? Quite simply due to a lack of smaller items to publish. For a change we have a number of longer articles in the publishing queue but are in need of smaller items. Let's face it -- those are the easiest to write!

Please get out your notepaper, typewriter or word processor and put some words to paper. The editor would appreciate receiving short reminiscences, news, queries, letters and book reviews of 2 - 3 handwritten or double-spaced typed pages. Don't wait for the long (Scottish) arm of the law!

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Portable mills in the Columbia Valley

A history writer is interested in contacting anyone with knowledge or photos of portable mills (for cutting lumber or railway ties) in the Cranbrook to Golden region of the Columbia Valley. He is willing to share from an extensive image collection, including gas Cat models 30 and 60. Contact:

Mr. Tom Parkin
P.O. Box 629
Nanaimo, B.C.
V9R 5L9

Phone and fax: 758-1245

Forest Service boats on Cowichan Lake

A correspondent writes for assistance in his search for photographs of and information about four Forest Service boats that spent time on Cowichan Lake. They were the *Nerka*, *Chestnut*, *Larch* (ex-*Madrona*) and *White Pine III*. For those who can help, please contact:

Mr. A. Clayson
P.O. Box 1014
Lake Cowichan, B.C.
V0R 2G0



FOR SALE

A copy of "Cutting up the North" by Ken Bernsohn is for sale. Contact:

Mr. Tom Parkin
P.O. Box 629
Nanaimo, B.C.
V9R 5L9

Phone and fax: 758-1245



FOREST HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF B.C. ANNUAL MEETING

The 1994 AGM of the FHABC will be held in Richmond on Wednesday June 29, in conjunction with the North Fraser Harbour Commission. That organization has most kindly accommodated us as the highlight will be a trip on the Fraser River on the *M.V. Abitibi*, a restored tugboat. This tour will last from 11:00 to 3:00, with lunch being served on board the vessel. Please refer to the information sheet enclosed for registration details.



RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Corley-Smith, Peter. 1993. *Bush flying to blind flying*. Sono Nis Press, Victoria, B.C. ISBN 1-55039-044-9. 267 p. Paperback. \$18.95.
- Drushka, Ken, B. Nixon and R. Travers (editors). 1993. *Touch wood - B.C. forests at the crossroads*. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park, B.C. ISBN 1-55017-074-0. 260 p. Paperback. \$16.95.
- Haig-Brown, Roderick. 1942. *Timber - a novel of Pacific Coast loggers*. Reprinted by Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, Oregon - 1993. Introduction by Glen A. Love. ISBN 0-87071-515-1. xxix + 410 p. Paperback. \$21.95.
- Rajala, Richard A. 1993. *The forest as factory: technological change and worker control in the west coast logging industry, 1880 - 1930*. *Labour/Le Travail* 32:73-104. Fall 1993.
- Shelford, Cyril. 1993. *Think wood!* Shelford Publishing, Victoria, B.C. ISBN 0-9697713-4. xi + 190 p. Paperback. \$14.95.
- Shinn, Craig W. 1993. *British Columbia log export policy: historical review and analysis*. USDA Forest Service Research Paper PNW-457. Pacific Northwest Research Station, Portland, Oregon. 52 p.
- Swanson, Robert. 1993. *Whistlepunks and widowmakers - logging stories*. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park, B.C. ISBN 0-55017-090-2. 160 p. Clothbound. \$29.95.
- Thompson, Bill. 1993. *Once upon a stump - times and tales of the Powell River pioneers*. Powell River Heritage Research Association. ISBN 1-55056-266-5. 412 p. Clothbound. \$29.95.
- Trower, Peter. 1993. *Grogan's cafe - a novel of the B.C. woods*. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park, B.C. ISBN 1-55017-071-6. Paperback. \$16.95. 328 p.



Forestry Shorties.....



"Cat Roads" by Jack Fleetwood 1943

Where once the tracks of the "Sixty Cat"
Gouged deep the sticky clay,
And churned the soil in its Vulcan toil,
The alders grow today.

Where the iron ox. with diet queer,
Has towed its stubborn load,
Minute tree seed, fertile indeed,
Has found the well-turned road.

The seed has blown from God-knows-where,
And found a suited bed
In the soft, damp ground of the "cat" road, crowned
In bench soil, brown and red.

A winding ribbon strung through the woods
One sees the lighter green,
And then one knows, where the alder grows
A great steel bull has been.



After a piece of timbered land had been logged by the crawler tractor (commonly known as a "cat") method, and the soil had been disturbed, after the first rains the dormant alder seed springs to life along the "cat" roads. This is the nurse crop for the conifers, that appear later and are nourished by the alders as they die and form humus.

Jack Fleetwood

The FHABC hopes to publish a collection of Jack Fleetwood's poems. Executive member Terry Honer and I are investigating the possibility and arranging for a co-publisher.

Bob DeBoo

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The following projects need to be undertaken at the B.C. Forest Museum library, at Duncan:

- arrange for binding of 50 issues of *Timberman* -- a rare and fragile magazine,
- research the Library of Congress call numbers for those books which have not yet had numbers assigned (approximately 800 books),
- inventory government publications and research the Library of Congress call numbers for these. Input this information into a computer file, print out labels for the books and the card catalogue. Label the books and create a card file,
- organize magazines in chronological order and box them. Research and assign Library of Congress call numbers,
- following standard procedures, wrap rare and fragile books for long-term storage,
- organize and expand the pamphlet/reference files in existing cabinets,
- purchase or find a metal map storage cabinet and move maps into it,
- number and describe the photograph collection, then create a photograph reference system, and
- assist with membership, information packages, phone calls and mailings.

This list was developed in conjunction with the museum in consideration of some of the tasks which our retired members might be interested in undertaking and certainly would be capable of.

If any members in the Duncan area would like to volunteer some time at the B.C. Forest Museum please contact Christine Brant at the museum -- phone 746-1251.



DAVID DOUGLAS SOCIETY OF WESTERN NORTH AMERICA

The 1993 annual meeting of the society was held in Seattle on December 6, 1993. The guest speaker was W.L. Lang, Ph.D., director of the Center for Columbia River History at Washington State University. His description of the varied impressions of the early explorers was especially interesting.

Among those reviewed were Lewis and Clark (1805 - 1806), David Thompson (1807; 1811 -1812), Alexander Ross (1812 - 1830) and David Douglas (1825 - 1827; 1830 - 1833).

W. Young

THE BCFS -- A HISTORY OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATION by W. Young

The birth of the BCFS took place in 1912 when a Forest Branch was established in the Department of Lands. From the outset, the Forest Branch was modeled after the U.S. Forest Service, with a strong regional emphasis.

1913: the regional organization was in place, with a District Forester in charge of each of eleven forest districts: Cranbrook (J.D. Gilmour), Fort George (H.G. Martin), Hazelton (R.E. Allen), Islands (H.K. Robinson), Kamloops (H.B. Murray), Lillooet (P. LeMare), Nelson (J.R. Martin), Prince Rupert (H.S. Irvine), Tete Jaune Cache (C. MacFayden), Vancouver (G.D. McKay) and Vernon (L.R. Andrews).

1916: the Tete Jaune Forest District is incorporated into adjacent Kamloops and Fort George districts, reducing the total number to ten.

1917: the Hazelton Forest District becomes part of the Prince Rupert Forest District.

1918: the Lillooet Forest District is eliminated, becoming part of the Kamloops Forest District.

1919: at the end of the year, seven forest districts remain after the amalgamation of the Islands and Vancouver forest districts.

1920: the Cariboo Forest District is established.

1925: the Cranbrook, Nelson and Vernon forest districts are amalgamated to become the Southern Interior Forest District, with headquarters at Nelson.

1932: the Cariboo Forest District is eliminated, leaving a total of five.

1933: the Southern Interior Forest District is renamed the Nelson Forest District.

1953: the Fort George Forest District is renamed the Prince George Forest District.

1972: the Cariboo Forest District is reactivated, increasing the total number to six. It will be several years before this district is fully staffed and functioning.



THE FOREST HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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. Phone 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. Phone 656-9276. The President, Dr. Bob DeBoo, can be reached c/o Pacific Forestry Centre, Canadian Forest Service, 506 West Burnside Road, Victoria, B.C. V8Z 1M5. Phone 363-0751.

