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**THE *B.C. FORESTER*: HER LIFE AND TIMES**

by Ralph Schmidt

At the dawn of the forest industry in British Columbia, and for several decades thereafter, most of the annual cut of timber came from the Vancouver Forest District. This was considered a matter of some importance and merited the allocation of a headquarters boat to that district. The boat would be outfitted for a variety of duties, including the hosting of VIPs connected with forestry.

Evidently the *B.C. Forester* was the second vessel to obtain this position in Vancouver. She went into service in 1924, and the following statement appeared in the annual report of the Department of Lands:

“The ‘B.C. Forester’ was built as a headquarters boat to replace the ‘R.J. Skinner’ which had been in commission for the past 15 years.”

The *R.J. Skinner* was sold, renamed the *Anne Sophie*, and destroyed by fire in 1932.

The hull of the *B.C. Forester* (57 feet or 17.3 m long) was built in 1923 and the engine installed at the BCFS marine station at Thurston Bay on Sonora Island. A formal launching took place on January 24, 1924 and was witnessed by all those attending a rangers conference held at the station.

The *B.C. Forester* was then taken to Vancouver, where all additional work was performed. The job was completed in March of 1924 and a trial run made to Victoria. The editor of *Root and Branch*, an early Forest Service newsletter, had the pleasure of making this inaugural voyage and he wrote a lengthy article for the newsletter (February 1924). Here are a few excerpts:

“Today (Tuesday, March 4th) we had an opportunity of inspecting the good ship ‘B.C. Forester,’ the latest and largest vessel of our fleet, and we place ourselves on record as being of the opinion that she is a good job, and a credit alike to the brain which conceived her and the hands that built her.

She is a sturdily-built craft and her accommodation is excellent. Without being luxurious, she is thoroughly habitable, and her living quarters will present a very pleasing appearance when the painting and interior trim has been completed. A noticeable feature is the generous headroom in the Charthouse, Engine room and Main Cabin. In the Fore Cabin and Galley the headroom is a trifle more restricted, but is still ample.

Broadly speaking, we liked the look of the ‘B.C. Forester.’ From what can be seen of her structural timbers, such as the decks, deck carlins, knees and so forth, she is stoutly built, and the vibration when the engine is running is only trifling. She answers her helm with a readiness which is almost disconcerting, and we noticed that she displayed no tendency to roll in the wash from the ‘S.S. Solduc.’”

As the years went by, the *B.C. Forester* was called upon to provide a very broad spectrum of services. For example, in April of 1931, Professor Knapp and his UBC forestry students were taken aboard for a field trip to the pulp mill at Woodfibre. The next spring, Ken McCannel, 2 i/c of the Surveys Division of the BCFS, used the *B.C. Forester* in connection with an operational reforestation project on West Thurlow Island.

The most persistent demand for expanded use of the *B.C. Forester* came from the Surveys Division. A seaworthy craft was required to accommodate coastal field parties. The Surveys Division did make use of this vessel in 1932 (Loughborough survey), 1933 (Jervis Inlet - Howe Sound survey), 1934 (Toba survey) and 1935 (Kingcome survey).

By 1935 it had become apparent that the Surveys Division did indeed require the continued use of a boat to accommodate field crews. Two events soon followed. The launch *P.Z. Caverhill* was purchased for use as a headquarters boat based in Vancouver. The *B.C. Forester* was lengthened, refurbished and provided with a new engine in preparation for use by forest survey field crews.

This work did not proceed as fast as scheduled, and the *B.C. Forester* was not ready for use when needed by the Seymour forest survey in 1936. Instead, a smaller private vessel, the *Elfine*, was chartered to fill in until the *B.C. Forester* was ready. The *Elfine* was too small to accommodate the entire crew and, as a result, fly camps were the order of the day until the *B.C. Forester* made its second debut.

In 1941 the *B.C. Forester* was again assigned to the Vancouver Forest District as a headquarters boat as the result of a marine accident. The following quote is from the BCFS newsletter of July 15, 1941:

“On Friday March 7th, while proceeding from Vancouver to Howe Sound the Vancouver District launch ‘P.Z. Caverhill’ was struck by the C.P.R. coast steamship ‘Princess Charlotte.’ The damage was so extensive that it was decided not to repair the launch. The machinery and equipment were salvaged and the hull was sold.”

In 1942 the *B.C. Forester* was briefly used by Forest Surveys on the Sayward survey. However, she was primarily used as a headquarters boat until the *Syrene* was purchased by the Vancouver Forest District on August 18, 1942.

During 1943 and 1944 the *B.C. Forester* was not used by Forest Surveys because field crews were not available due to the war. The vessel may have been used extensively by the military. According to Jack Rhodes, retired from Inventory Branch, the *B.C. Forester* was used out of Prince Rupert by the RCAF in 1943.

Over most of the next three decades the *B.C. Forester* saw plenty of service for inventory crews. However, she also provided short-term transport and accommodation for field personnel in the Research, Reforestation and Engineering divisions.

In July of 1972 she was sold. However, the B.C. Forest Service specified that the sale was contingent upon the name *B.C. Forester* no longer being used. She is now called the *Kwaietek* and her home port is Vancouver. After 71 years of use she is still a proud, well-maintained and seaworthy craft.



### **FHABC PUBLICATION IN PREPARATION**

Your editor has assembled a bibliography of published sources of forest history information for British Columbia. These are primarily books, conference proceedings and university theses. The list is up-to-date to the greatest extent possible and has received outside review to ensure accuracy and completeness. Since the cost of producing copies for every member would be prohibitive, this bibliography will be distributed only to those who specifically request it. However, copies will automatically go to those libraries, museums and archives on our mailing list. The final publication will be about 20 pages in length.

It will be of interest to some of our members and of special utility for those actively engaged in research projects of their own. So that we may determine the appropriate number of copies to print, please advise me if you would like one. Drop me a postcard, letter or leave a phone message by November 30th and after the publication is received from the printers it will be sent to you. To help offset the costs of printing there may be a nominal charge for its production and mailing. This will be added to your next annual dues payment to keep things simple.

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD

Our 1995 annual meeting was held at the Sooke Region Museum on Saturday, June 17. The business meeting was followed by a sit-down catered lunch. Fortunately the rainshowers didn't last long and we were under cover. An FHABC Award of Merit was presented to Victoria author Peter Murray for his book "Home from the hill - three gentleman adventurers" (biographies of Warburton Pike, M. Allerdale Grainger and Clive Phillipps-Wolley) published in 1994 by Horsdal + Schubart Publishers, Ltd., of Victoria.

Jack Fleetwood's book of logging poetry "On the F Line" (described and excerpted in newsletter number 38) received its official launch and Jack favoured us with both a reading and book signing.

The Sooke Region Museum hosted us for the rest of the afternoon. We toured the museum, its grounds and outdoor exhibits and went to the Sooke Band Reserve to view several dugout canoes, including the largest on the B.C. coast, which is kept at a local marina. Our thanks to the museum staff for an enjoyable day.

The following officers are on the Executive:

Reappointed in 1994 for a two-year term, expiring August 31, 1996 are:

Bill Backman	Bob DeBoo
George Brandak	

New directors, appointed in 1994 for a two-year term, expiring August 31, 1996:

Keith McClain	John Murray	Ralph Schmidt
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The resignation of Don Doidge was accepted with regret.

Reappointed in 1995 for a two year term, expiring August 31, 1997:

Terry Honer	John Parminter	Jack Robinson
Edo Nyland	Clay Perry	

New directors, appointed in 1995 for a two-year term, expiring August 31, 1997:

Geoff Bate	Allan Klenman	Bill McLachlan
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For the Executive Committee:

Bob DeBoo, President	Edo Nyland, Treasurer
Bill Backman, Past President	John Parminter, Newsletter Editor

## EX-FOREST SERVICE VESSEL SQUADRON RENDEZVOUS REPORT

On the Canada Day long weekend the annual rendezvous of the ex-Forest Service Vessel Squadron was held at the Vancouver Maritime Museum. This year's rendezvous was sponsored jointly by the Forest History Association of B.C., the Ex-Forest Service Vessel Squadron, the Vancouver Maritime Museum and the B.C. Ministry of Forests, who assisted with generous financial support.

This year's rendezvous was significant since many of the people who built, maintained and/or served on the boats were there to have a reunion of their own, revisit the boats and meet the current owners. The official opening took place on Saturday morning and greetings from the Hon. Andrew Petter, Minister of Forests, were read:

"As we celebrate Canada's birthday, it is fitting to remember the Forest Service boats and the people that played a significant role in the history of British Columbia. Rangers, staff, and their families often lived in isolated stations. They contributed as community members in the communications network for emergencies and kept local residents in touch with the 'outside.' The wide variety of vessels assembled in this gathering provided the capability to maintain those most important lifelines.

I commend the ex-Forest Service Vessel Squadron owners for preserving this part of our heritage by maintaining their boats and boat histories; the Forest History Association of B.C. for its contributions toward capturing the forest history of British Columbia; and to the Maritime Museum, a special thanks for their role in interpreting B.C.'s unique marine history."

Static displays by the Public Affairs Branch of the Forest Service and the FHABC described the boats, the staff who built, maintained and served on them as well as the work done in the field. Mike Coney, author of "Forest Ranger, Ahoy!" gave presentations and the boats were open for viewing in the afternoons - complete with ex-Forest Service staff to relate their experiences to visitors. A buffet and reception was held during the evening of Canada Day.

The boats in attendance were:

<i>Alpine Fir II</i>	<i>Forest Ranger II</i>	<i>Oliver Clark II</i>
<i>Balsam Star</i>	<i>Lillian D</i>	<i>Sea Ox</i>
<i>Cottonwood II</i>	<i>Maple II</i>	<i>Silver Fir</i>
<i>Dean Ranger</i>	<i>Nesika</i>	<i>White Birch II</i>
<i>Eva R</i>	<i>Oak II</i>	<i>Yellow Cedar</i>

The oldest boat in attendance, the *Eva R*, was named after one of the daughters of William Roderick Ross, who was Chief Commissioner of Lands when the Forest Service was created in 1912. It is a credit to her builders (Hinton Electric of Victoria), the Forest Service and the people who have owned the *Eva R* since she went into private hands in 1949 that she is still in fine form.

The rendezvous was a success according to all who attended, including over 1500 members of the public. The event was historical in its own right and a documentary video of it is being prepared by Simon Fraser University.

## WANTED: STEAM SAWMILL FOR EDUCATIONAL DISPLAY

A turn-of-the century sawmill is to be recreated as part of a series of educational exhibits on the forest and forest industry at the Capilano Suspension Bridge and Park in North Vancouver. The park has just completed displays on forest ecology and succession and is planning an exhibit on the early days of the forest industry. A steam sawmill once operated at the site in the early 1900s. The exhibit designers are looking for the "guts" of a sawmill dating from the 1900 - 1910 time period: the lumber deck, moving bed, sawblade assembly, the rollers and belts, wheels and other mechanical workings that drove the line.

If you know where we might find this equipment for sale or collection, please contact Mr. Will Peacock at:

Dataphile Communications  
19621 50A Avenue  
Langley, B.C. V3A 7K9

Phone (604) 530-5210, fax (604) 530-4050 or e-mail [WPEACOCK@UNIX.INFOSERVE.NET](mailto:WPEACOCK@UNIX.INFOSERVE.NET)



## REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Western Forest Products and its predecessor companies have been continuously engaged in forestry operations on the coast of British Columbia since 1857. Peter Paterson, an FHABC member, is compiling a history of these operations and would like to hear from anyone with information, reminiscences or memorabilia connected with predecessor companies such as:

Rayonier, Doman's Lumber & Transport Company, Alaska Pine & Cellulose, Alaska Pine Company, Pioneer Timber, Nippon Soda McNeill Trading, C and A Logging Company, Jones Lake Logging, Western Forest Industries, Lake Logging, Hill Logging, Northern Timber Company, McQuillan Logging Company, Whalen Pulp & Paper Mills, Colonial Lumber & Paper Mills, British Columbia Sulphite Company, Canadian Puget Sound Lumber Company (usually known as CPS), Swanson Bay Wood Pulp & Lumber Mills, Michigan Pacific Lumber Company, Jordan River Lumber Company and the Sayward Mill & Timber Company. There are others and notification of omissions will also be appreciated.

Please contact:

Peter Paterson  
2915 Trinity Street  
Vancouver, B.C. V5K 1G1

Phone and Fax: (604) 255-6871

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

- Drushka, Ken. 1995. H.R. - a biography of H.R. MacMillan. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park, B.C. 416 p.
- Godwin, George. 1994. The eternal forest. Godwin Books, Vancouver, B.C. Previously published as "The eternal forest under western skies" in 1914 or 1915 by Appleton, New York, New York. Introduction by George Woodcock. xvi + 317 p.  
(fiction, with elements of logging and fire fighting in the plot)
- Norris, Pat W. 1995. Time & tide: a history of Telegraph Cove. Raincoast Chronicles 16. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park, B.C. 86 p.

## HERITAGE NEWS ITEMS

### Western Forest Products Tour

Western Forest Products Ltd. gave FHABC members and friends a tour of their Jordan River Division on August 19. A number of stops were made to look at different aspects of forest management, with a commentary ably provided by tour leader Doug Stables of WFP. Peter Paterson, at work on the company's history, gave a fascinating account of their origins.

### McLean Mill National Historic Site

The R.B. McLean Lumber Company mill near Port Alberni was the location of our 1989 Annual General Meeting and was later designated a national historic site. Upon the advice of the FHABC Executive and subsequent approval at our AGM, a donation was made towards the project to restore the mill and interpret it to the public. In thanking the FHABC for its vote of confidence and gift, John MacFarlane - the general manager of the McLean Mill National Historic Site - offered to show any member through the site and demonstrate the progress made to date.

## FOREST HISTORY - WHAT ABOUT PRESENT KNOWLEDGE?

Two thousand university students in the United States were recently surveyed regarding their knowledge of forests and the environment. Most of them feel that forests are in a serious decline. Nearly two-thirds of the students said that timber harvest exceeds forest growth in the U.S., when in fact growth is ahead of harvest by 37%. Almost 75% agreed with the statement that 40% of current U.S. forests will be lost by the middle of the next century, although the U.S. Forest Service forecasts (based on current trends) indicate that only 2 to 3% of forest land is likely to be converted to other uses and that will primarily be urban expansion. The students consistently underestimated the amount of forest preserved as wilderness and nearly half of them stated that forest harvesting is allowed in wilderness areas. The survey was conducted by Dr. Jim Bowyer of the University of Minnesota.

Adapted from the June 1994 newsletter of the National Council of the Paper Industry for Air and Stream Improvement, Inc., New York, New York.

### NEW JOURNAL FORTHCOMING

The Forest History Society of Durham, North Carolina (with which we have ties due to our common interests and sharing of some members) and the American Society for Environmental History have entered into an agreement to copublish *Environmental History*. This new journal will result from the merging of *Forest & Conservation History*, published by the FHS, and *Environmental History Review*, published by the ASEH. The first issue will appear early in 1996.

This quarterly will be in a newly-designed 6 x 9" format, carry four articles and twenty-five book reviews per issue and have an initial circulation of about 1800. Since *Forest & Conservation History* currently averages thirteen reviews and *Environmental History Review* about fourteen, the ample book review section in the new journal will ensure good coverage of the new literature. The sections on bibliographic and archival news currently in *Forest & Conservation History* will continue and be expanded to cover the full range of environmental history.

The editor will be Hal Rothman and the FHS will provide the managing editor (Alice Poffinberger) and infrastructure. Mark Harvey will be the book review editor. The dues for both organizations have been increased and a \$50 joint membership fee now exists. The Forest History Society's address will be used for *Environmental History*, although both organizations will remain independent with separate membership lists, finances and functions.

The intent of this merger is to take the strengths of both journals and bring them together in a new and better journal. It will be the venue for works in environmental and forest and conservation history. The ASEH consists largely of historians, anthropologists and geographers but the increasing number of natural scientists and social scientists who are joining illustrates the interdisciplinary nature of the field.

For more information contact the Forest History Society at 701 Vickers Avenue, Durham, North Carolina 27701, USA.

(excerpted from postings on the ASEH Internet electronic forum by Cheryl Oakes of the FHS and Hal Rothman of the ASEH, dated October 6 and 5, 1995 respectively)



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 (604) 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 (604) 656-9276. The President, Dr. Bob DeBoo, can be reached at 410 Raynerwood Place, Victoria, B.C. V9C 2B3. Phone (604) 478-7446.