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THE GIANT FIEFDOM
by Tony Robinson

16th May 1865

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly

Gentlemen - I have the honour to acquaint you that very early in this year the balance in the Colonial Treasury was reduced to so small an amount that I was under the necessity of making an arrangement with the Bank of British North America consented on the 7th January, 1865, to allow the Treasurer to overdraw on the public account to the amount of \$10,000, the Government being chargeable with interest on the daily overdraft at the rate of one per cent per month.

On the 11th January, 1865, the Bank agreed to extend the credit by \$10,170, in order to enable the Government to advance that sum to meet the liabilities of the City of Victoria - an advance which has met with the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly.

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I had hoped that the incoming revenue would materially lessen, if not entirely replace, the amount borrowed from the Bank under these arrangements, but on the 13th instant the receipts not being sufficient to enable me to pay off any portion of the amount of \$20,170 then borrowed, and in view of the necessity of immediately remitting to England £2,000 to meet the amount payable on the 15th July 1865, on account of interest and sinking fund of the Vancouver Island Road and Harbour Loan and of making provision for the current expenditure for the Colony a further credit of \$20,000 was obtained from the Bank.

At the present time a sum of \$39,794 is due by the Colony to the Bank.

I have the honour to be,
Gentlemen

Your most obedient servant,
A.E. Kennedy,
Governor

(From the "British Colonist," May 18, 1865)

The Land Ordinance of 1865

The Europeans who came here brought their own laws and customs, and ignoring the native population, established the first Colonial government on Vancouver Island in 1849, with Victoria as the capital. In 1858, the mainland became the colony of British Columbia, governed at first from Fort Langley, then New Westminster. Gold soon replaced furs as the mainstay of the economy, with major discoveries on the Fraser River and in the Cariboo. Although only minor strikes were made on Vancouver Island, it benefited from the activity on the mainland because Victoria was the largest centre in the area, and most of the mining traffic passed through it.

But by 1865, the Island economy was in recession. The miners who had gone to California for the winter were not returning in their usual numbers, immigration had slowed to a trickle and land sales were lagging. Long-time governor James Douglas had retired the year before, and he continued to live in his own house, which had served as his official mansion. Newly-arrived Governor Arthur Edward Kennedy was therefore homeless. He shortly became embroiled in a battle with the elected members of the Legislative Assembly over his purchase of Carey Castle. This Victoria landmark was not only one of the most expensive pieces of real estate in the city, but it was also in need of extensive repairs.

Kennedy, moreover, had grandiose ideas of the kind of administration the colony should have, even though Vancouver Island at the time had only 7,500 taxpaying whites. It was left to the Assembly, whose cherished authority it was to vote supply, to devise ways and means to pay the bills. They were forced to consider all manner of new levies, including an income tax, and duties on a wide range of imports such as opium.

The prospect of higher taxes did not sit well with the colonists, and they knew who to blame. Old John Tod, a retired Hudson's Bay Company trader, expressed a growing feeling about the Governor:

"...the most selfish, obstinately self-willed man I ever met with."

"...a man of the most despotic character - he will do nothing for the good of the country, and many of the people are leaving the colony in disgust."

The search for more revenues likely caused the Assembly members to take their first really serious look at the Island's forest resources. At the time, the only way to obtain timber was to buy the land it stood on outright at four shillings, two pence an acre (roughly a dollar), or pre-empt it. A pre-emption worked like this: for a registration fee of eight shillings, an applicant could stake out a parcel of land not exceeding 160 acres. In return for making improvements on it to its approximate value, he would be given first opportunity to purchase it at the going price when it was surveyed. Few bought or pre-empted land just to get the timber, however, and in fact, these opportunities were designed for settlers rather than the forest industry.

To provide an alternative, and with a view to increasing taxable economic activity, the Assembly proposed a Land Ordinance allowing for the temporary alienation of land, so that the timber could be cut and removed. The land would then revert back to the "Crown," or government. The enabling provision read: "Leases of an extent of unoccupied Crown lands may be granted by the Governor to any person, persons or corporation duly authorized in that behalf for the purpose of cutting spars, timber or lumber, and actually engaged in those pursuits subject to such rent, terms and provisions as shall seem expedient to the Governor."

Records of the Ordinance debate which took place in the old "Bird Cages," the first parliament buildings, are not even to be found in the newspapers of the day. Chances are that many of the members did speak, judging by the characters given them by historians. They probably didn't realize the significance of what they were doing when they proposed the Ordinance; in fact, they were collectively of a conservative, free-enterprise mind, which at the time was focused on the financial problems of the Governor. But that simple bit of legislation led to the creation of a giant Fiefdom in which, even today, the Government of British Columbia owns 95 percent of the land the trees grow on. This is the pin on which the forest policy of British Columbia is hinged. We do not mean to minimize the importance of private forest land, for it is considerable, but the debate is mostly about Crown land, and we will concentrate on that.

In 1866, Vancouver Island and British Columbia were amalgamated, the mainland providing the name and the Island the capital. The united colony attained full representative government when it joined Canada in 1871 as a province, and forestry was confirmed as a provincial matter at that time by the British North America Act. Through all these changes, the Ordinance continued in force. And from the time it was approved, a course was set for British Columbia that would be different from most other successful, democratic forestry jurisdictions. In countries such as Sweden, Finland and the United States, the public owns less than 30 percent of the land base, on average. As time went on, it became confirmed that only her Imperial Majesty and her servants were fit to administer the vast forests of the province. Industry would be supplied with logs from a variety of tenures, but the land, other than the small amount that has fallen into private hands, most of it before the advent of the twentieth century, would remain in Crown ownership.



NEW PUBLICATIONS

Bakewell, Jack. 1995. TNT B.C. TNT Publishing, Vancouver, B.C. 196 p. (in bookstores or send a cheque or money order for \$23.45 (includes shipping) to the publisher at # 401 - 639 West 14th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1P7. Phone (604) 874-2345, Fax (604) 875-8345)

Bowen, Lynne. 1995. Those lake people - stories of Cowichan Lake. Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver, B.C. xiii + 217 p.

McKnight, George A. 1995. Sawlogs on steel rails - a story of the 45 years of railway operations in the logging camps of the Port Alberni area. Port Alberni Seniors History Committee, Port Alberni, B.C. xxviii + 387 p.

Robinson, A.B. 1996. Witch hunt in the B.C. woods. Sagebrush Book Publishers, Kamloops, B.C. 208 p.

The lead article in this issue is an extract from FHABC member Tony Robinson's book. In it he examines the history of B.C.'s forest policy, forest ecology, forest management practices and attitudes towards forestry. Hardcover, with 89 photographs. A limited press run of 1,000 copies was produced. To order send a cheque for \$39.40 (includes GST and shipping) to Sagebrush Book Publishing, # 69 - 2022 Pacific Way, Kamloops, B.C. V1S 1T1. Phone (604) 374-9279, Fax (604) 374-9224.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

This year's annual general meeting will be held in the Fraser Valley, continuing our tradition of alternating between Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. The location will be Trethewey House Heritage Site on Ware Street in Abbotsford and the date Saturday, June 22. More information will be included in the next newsletter.

Trethewey House was built in 1920 by the Abbotsford Lumber Company for local timber merchant J.O. Trethewey, using lumber from his family's sawmill located on nearby Mill Lake. The house is in the Arts and Crafts style and has been restored to 1925. It was designated a heritage site in 1983 and is operated by the M.S.A Museum Society.



MUSEUM NEWS

Forest Renewal B.C. will provide \$2.5 million, through the City of Port Alberni, towards the restoration of the historic McLean Mill as a major educational and tourist attraction. Once restoration of the mill is complete in 1999 it is anticipated that 45 direct and indirect jobs will be created. The site will feature forestry interpretive programs and demonstrate the operation of the steam-powered mill and other equipment. The mill will operate year-round and produce specialty lumber.

Owned and operated by the R.B. McLean Lumber Company from 1926 to 1965, the millsite consists of 35 buildings, a millpond, a railway siding and a collection of heavy equipment. The Forest History Association is a contributing partner in the mill's restoration.



UPDATE ON INTERNET ACCESS TO THE FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY DATABASE

The forest history database described in newsletter # 43 is now accessible by World Wide Web browsers. For Mosaic users, begin at "Starting Points" and choose the "Starting Points Document" from the drop-down menu. That will take you to "Starting Points for Internet Exploration." Then choose "Information by Subject" and then "Forestry." You should then be at the WWW Virtual Library: Forestry. The FHS database is found under "Libraries and bibliographies" and then "Bibliographies." A link called "Search Forest History bibliography" will take you to the database and a screen on which to enter your search parameters.

Netscape users are better off to enter the address manually to access the WWW Virtual Library: Forestry site -

<http://www.metla.fi/info/vlib/Forestry.html>

and of course this can be done in Mosaic as well. Be sure to save that site or the Forest History bibliography in your hotlist or bookmark collection to permit easy access the next time.

While we are on the subject of the World Wide Web, check out our Treasurer's Home Page. It features the fruits of his long labours into the origins of many languages, ancient and modern, complete with translations of inscriptions which until now had defied all efforts.

The address is:

<http://www.islandnet.com/~edonon/homepage.html>



LOGGING RAILWAY VIDEOS

FHABC member Don Ream, Jr. of Indianapolis, Indiana sent along a list of logging videos and sources for same. Those from the west coast which may be of interest to our members are:

Bullwhackers, catskinners and other timberbeasts - harvesting the big timber. The story of west coast logging. 1993.

Steampower Forever Video, P.O. Box 5, Mokelumne, California 95245, USA.
\$30.00.

Canfor's Englewood railway.

Pentrex, P.O. Box 94911, Pasadena, California 91109-4911, USA.

Carmanah forever. 1988.

Western Canada Wilderness Committee, 20 Water Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1A4.
Contains a short clip on historic logging in B.C.

The Feather River and the Hillcrest. 49 minutes.

Sunday River Productions, P.O. Box 565, Concord, Massachusetts 01742, USA.
Includes footage of the Climaxes of the Hillcrest Lumber Company's operations at
Honeymoon Bay, Mesachie Lake and Lake Cowichan.
\$39.95.

Steam whistle logging. 1987. 30 minutes.

Clatsop County Historical Society, 1618 Exchange Street, Astoria, Oregon 97103, USA.
\$32.50.

Steam whistles, sawdust and salt air. 1991.

Cape Perpetua Visitor Center, Northwest Interpretive Association, P.O. Box 274, Yahact,
Oregon 97498, USA.

Operations of the Pacific Spruce Company, Manary Logging Company, C.D. Johnson
Lumber Company, subsidiaries of the Pacific Spruce Corporation.
\$29.95 plus \$2.50 shipping.

When loggers climbed trees. 1991.

Mason County Historical Society, P.O. Box 1366, Shelton, Washington 98584, USA.

Includes:	Pine logging in Minnesota, 1920s	18 ½ minutes
	Age of steam logging, 1910 - 1940s	18 minutes
	Arthur Godfrey at Shelton, 1957	33 minutes
	Hap Johnson in "You Asked for It", 1954	6 minutes
	Hap Johnson in "Spar Tree" (filmed at Caycuse), 1982	15 minutes
	Farewell to Camp Grisdale, 1991	20 ½ minutes

\$30.00.

The availability of these videos cannot be guaranteed, nor can the prices (which are in U.S. dollars). Please contact the sources first if you would like to place an order. These commercial outlets often have catalogues which contain other videos featuring passenger trains and commuter rail systems. If you know of other videos that have logging operations as their subject let us know and we will publish future updates.

FARMERS TO LOGGERS: THE COMOX LOGGING COMPANY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by Richard Somerset Mackie

Between the wars central Vancouver Island was home base of the Comox Logging Company, the logging subsidiary of reputedly the largest lumbering operation in the British Empire - the Canadian Western Lumber Company.

Comox Logging was largely responsible for altering the whole economic character of the region between Campbell River and Cumberland. In 1900 the Comox District was known for its farms and its pastoral quality, but by 1930 it was known mainly for its trees. Logging, not farming or mining, provided the largest source of employment in the district.

Comox Logging had its origins in the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway land grant of 1884. Under this grant, the government awarded Robert Dunsmuir a massive tract of land extending from Campbell River to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. In return, Dunsmuir pledged to build an island railway.

Land sales to settlers came to a stop, and Robert Dunsmuir sold parts of the E & N grant to finance railway construction. He died in 1889, but his son James Dunsmuir continued his father's policy of selling large blocks of the E & N grant to interested speculators and capitalists.

In 1889 the Dunsmuirs sold most of the unsettled lowland in the Comox District to the Victoria Lumber and Manufacturing Company. This consisted of 51, 623 acres - about 80 square miles - extending from Quinsam River to Comox Lake, and including most of modern Oyster River, Black Creek and Merville.

The Dunsmuirs also sold about 6, 000 acres of prime timberland to Fraser River Saw Mills, which railed its logs to Comox harbour, boomed them, and towed them to New Westminster to be sawn into lumber.

In 1910, the newly-formed Canadian Western Lumber Company took over the Comox holdings of Fraser River Saw Mills and the Victoria Lumber and Manufacturing Company. This new company owned outright 60, 000 acres of prime timber south of the Quinsam River, and formed a subsidiary - the Comox Logging and Railway Company - to manage its logging operations on the island.

Until its takeover by Crown Zellerbach in 1954, the Comox Logging and Railway Company sent hundreds of millions of board feet of lumber from Vancouver Island to New Westminster. Logs were transported from the woods by rail to a log dump at Royston, where they were boomed for shipment to Fraser Mills.

Among the early employees of the Comox Logging Company was a highly capable surveyor's assistant named Robert (Bob) Filberg, born in Colorado of a Swedish father and an Irish mother. He arrived with a work party in 1909. Filberg's career took off after he married Flossie McCormack, daughter of the vice-president of Canadian Western, and by the 1920s he was in charge of the company's logging operations based at Headquarters, the company's instant town on the Tsolum River.

The history of the Comox Logging Company in these forty years is woven into the history of the Comox Valley and surrounding region. The company employed thousands of men over these decades, and almost everyone in the district had some connection with the company.

Many of the men who worked for Comox Logging came from farms in the district. They were usually sons or grandsons of settlers who had come to the Comox Valley between the 1860s and 1880s with the explicit purpose of farming. They had secured their pre-emptions before Dunsmuir's land grant forced potential settlers to look elsewhere for farmland.

Members of many of the early farming families in the valley joined the company: among the loggers were men named Beech, Berkeley, Cliffe, Crockett, Downey, Grant, Grieve, Harmston, McQuillan, Parkin, Piercy, Pritchard and Radford. These men, and many more recent arrivals, found it more profitable to work in the bush than to stay on their farms. Often their land provided a living for only one son, and in the early decades of this century many younger sons went into the woods aged fifteen or sixteen.

The company prided itself on being a "family company." Men were rarely obtained from hiring agencies in Vancouver. Indeed, loggers elsewhere referred to Comox employees derisively as "farmers."

Among those who worked for the company were Finns and Swedes who arrived in the First World War to replace local men who had left for the Western Front: Soldier Settlers, Empire Settlers, Germans and Mennonites from farms between Black Creek and Little River, and Cumberland miners who lost their jobs when the mines closed.

Injury and mortality rates were high in the bush, but most employees married early (usually to daughters of neighbouring farmers) and produced large families. Logging provided fertile soil for reproduction, and today the descendants of Comox loggers number in the thousands.



Richard Mackie is a historian living in Courtenay. He is writing a history of the Comox Logging Company for the Filberg Lodge and Park Association of Comox. Readers with Comox Logging Company material (anecdotes, letters or photographs) can contact him at 225 Duncan Avenue, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 2M4. Phone (604) 897-1411. His most recent book is *The Wilderness Profound: Victorian life on the Gulf of Georgia*, published in 1995 by Sono Nis Press of Victoria.



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 home or 356-6810 office.

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 Acting President, Geoff Bate, can be reached at 2278 Cooperidge Drive, Central Saanich, B.C. V8M 1N2. Phone (604) 652-5360 or fax 652-5358.