



Published by the Forest History Association of British Columbia

No. Forty-eight

Victoria, British Columbia

October 1996

**MILLTOWN TO MILL LAKE: THE TRETWEY BROTHERS
AND THE ABBOTSFORD LUMBER COMPANY**

by MSA Museum

Old-fashioned logging methods were labour intensive, taking many times the length of time similar operations do today. This provided the rationale for the construction of the Abbotsford Lumber Company mill on Mill Lake, then known as Abbotsford Lake or occasionally, Matsqui Lake, depending on the desire of the mapmaker for accuracy. The lake was technically located in the then District of Matsqui, but was usually referred to as Abbotsford Lake for its proximity to the Village of Abbotsford.

Not only was the five-acre lake centrally located in the area to be logged, it allowed for the sorting of logs for the specific milling operations. The logs were hauled by train on the company's private rail lines by two narrow-gauge Climax locomotives, affectionately called the "dinky loci," and dumped into the lake when the train crossed the trestle. The remains of the trestle are visible today, rising above the surface of the water at the west end of Mill Lake.

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The first mill located on the shore of Mill Lake was a small operation owned by Professor Charles Hill-Tout, a noted anthropologist, who supplemented his income with a contract to cut railway ties. The next owners were Cook, Craig, & Johnson who did little to increase the mill's productivity besides selling it to the Trethewey brothers. The Abbotsford Lumber Company was bought by the brothers in 1903, with Joseph Ogle Trethewey as its principal shareholder and Richard Arthur Trethewey as its President. At that time, the high ground of the Fraser Valley was covered by stands of conifer forests. In fact, one of the reasons why the Village of Abbotsford was established where it is was due to a forest fire that provided a natural clearing in the dense forest.

The company built a system of rail lines throughout the community to bring logs in with a line that ran along the present day Mill Lake Road to Robertson Avenue and then to Hazel Street to connect with the CPR in Abbotsford to take the finished products out. Shingles and lumber were marketed across Canada. Timbers produced at the mill were even used in the construction of the Welland Canal, in Ontario.

The mill site was known locally as "Milltown" due to the sprawl of the mill buildings, company housing and general store. The company built several boarding houses, one each for the white, Sikh and Japanese single men, as well as cottages for families of each ethnic group. The mill employed a large number of Sikh workers and it is understood that they donated some of the lumber used in the construction of the old Sikh Temple on South Fraser Way. The Sikh Temple was built in 1911 and is the second oldest in Canada. After their shift, the men would carry loads of lumber from the mill's stock yards up the hill to the temple. Most former Sikh employees of the mill remember the Tretheweys as fair employers who treated all their employees well, even if wages paid to the non-white employees were slightly lower than those paid to white workers. A sad commentary on what "fair" stood for in the 1930s is found in an advertisement which informed the community that all the "Hindoo" workers had been laid off so that the mill could continue to provide white men with work.

The mill machinery operated on steam. As the mill ran twenty-four hours a day for the most part, dumped all its tailings and sawdust into the lake and was permanently veiled in a haze of smoke, no doubt Milltown was a singularly unpleasant place to live. Luckily for the rest of the community, Milltown was well outside of town at that time.

In 1919 the Abbotsford Lumber Company became the Abbotsford Lumber, Mining, and Development Company, with Joseph Trethewey as President and Richard Trethewey as Manager. The mill was at its zenith in the 1920s and produced 20 million feet of lumber and between 15 and 20 million shingles annually. It was the single largest employer in town and among the largest employers in the province. As the mill prospered, the town prospered and when the mill grew, the town grew. Development and growth in support services paralleled the influx of loggers and labourers. On mill payday the banks, restaurants and especially hotels stayed open late to cash in.

In 1929 the company became the Abbotsford Lumber Company again, with J. Edgar Trethewey, Joseph's son, as President. During the 1930s the Great Depression caused work shortages at the mill when the market for its products slumped. By 1931, all of the surrounding area had been logged and in 1934 the Tretheweys shut the mill down and began dismantling the plant and selling the locies and other salvageable metal for scrap. A local myth tells of an engine, derailed on the trestle and sunk in the lake, but copies of the bills of sale for both locies dispel this popular story.

As no cleanup other than salvage was undertaken, the shoreline was littered with debris and derelict buildings and the lake was full of saturated and sunken logs. Take any body of water,

especially when enhanced by the attraction of tumble-down buildings and the potential of treasure in the form of cast-off mill tools, and you have a natural attraction for local children. Recognizing both the draw and the danger, the Abbotsford Lions Club and the District of Matsqui undertook a cleanup of the former mill site and the reclamation of Mill Lake as a community recreation area in the late 1940s. A wharf and boardwalk were built, sectioning off part of the lake to protect bathers from powerboats. Hundreds of local children took their swimming lessons here and the annual Lions Water Carnival (and the antics of "Codfish Carson") succeeded in capturing the community's affection. In 1958, on property purchased on the hill above the lake, a new concrete swimming pool, wading pool and playground were built and the Centennial/Mill Lake Park recreation area as we know it came to be.

The legacy of the Abbotsford Lumber Company did not die however. In 1950, Bill Trethewey went to California to pursue an idea for a new product. He bought a franchise to manufacture sashless windows and began production in a new Abbotsford location. In the 1950s the Abbotsford Lumber Company was still a large source of employment in the Lower Mainland.

In the 1970s one of the families that built on property at Mill Lake set a small flock of domestic ducks, geese and a pair of black swans free on the lake. As they interbred with the wild birds that passed through on their seasonal migrations, fed as a popular pastime by area residents, their numbers grew until they had become such a problem that the municipality was forced to take action. A bylaw was passed prohibiting feeding the ducks but when this had little impact, "settling" or shaking the eggs in the spring to kill the developing ducklings was implemented. Berry cannons in the spring discourage visits by migratory flocks, thus keeping the parkland free of "duck muck."

Bullfrogs had once been plentiful in the lake to the delight of area boys. One resident reminisces about filling a five-gallon pail with frogs to dump at the feet of unsuspecting girls. The bullfrogs were up to two feet in length and the sheer numbers of tadpoles turned the water black. The ducks and pollution from storm drains that empty into the lake have had an impact and the bullfrogs are gone.

While wildlife in the lake has suffered, water lilies have flourished. Organic matter in the form of decaying sawdust provides the perfect environment, and with the banning of powerboats that held their progress in check, lilies now choke the lake. The most enjoyable story of the origin of the lilies tells of a Japanese woman who accompanied her husband when he immigrated here and found work at the mill. Homesick and unhappy in the noisy, grimy environment in which she found herself, she wrote sad letters home. When family members followed her to Abbotsford, they brought with them a cutting from a lily that grew in the pond by the family home in Japan, in hopes that, when planted, it would grow and flower and provide a comforting link to her homeland.

The legacy of the mill is still evident on the lakeshore today. Visible in the shallow water near the wharf are planks, the remnants of one of the mill buildings. The ground on the north shore over which the paved walk passes looks like peat but is sawdust, accumulated over the four decades during which the mill operated. Invisible to the passerby in the deeper water of the lake is the tangle of logs that prevents gauging the lake's true depth.

It is hard to believe that Mill Lake was once a clear blue lake in the heart of a thick forest. Although the changes the lake has undergone in the past hundred years may be considered negative in the context of today's environmentally-conscious perspective, the growth and development of the community of Abbotsford would not have progressed as it did without the impact of the Abbotsford Lumber Company and the contribution of its principal, Joseph Trethewey and his brothers.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD

Our 1996 annual general meeting was held at the Trethewey House Heritage Site at 2313 Ware Street, Abbotsford, on June 22. After the business meeting the members toured the house and grounds and were shown a slide presentation about the local logging and sawmilling history and the involvement of the Trethewey family in those enterprises. After lunch on-site and the conclusion of the formal meetings, many members took a self-guided walking tour of Mill Lake and vicinity, adjacent to Trethewey House.

The narrative for the slide show formed the basis for the lead article in this newsletter and was graciously provided by the staff of the MSA Museum. The house has been meticulously restored and if you missed the AGM and you're in the area it's well worth a visit. Winter hours are 1:00 - 5:00 PM, Monday to Friday, closed on Holidays. Summer hours (July and August) are Monday to Wednesday 1:00 - 5:00 PM, Thursday to Sunday 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM and Holidays 1:00 - 5:00 PM. The museum office and archives are open year round from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM and 1:00 - 5:00 PM.

Although we lacked an official nominating committee, there are a number of Executive officers whose terms did not expire this year so we still meet the legal requirements as outlined in the Society Act.

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

Terry Honer	John Parminter	Jack Robinson
Edo Nyland	Clay Perry	

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

Geoff Bate	Allan Klenman	Bill McLachlan
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The reappointment of George Brandak for a two-year term, expiring August 31, 1998 was made at the AGM and at a subsequent Executive meeting Ralph Schmidt agreed to be reappointed for the same term.

Geoff Bate, the Acting President, was acclaimed as the President, with Edo Nyland continuing as Treasurer and John Parminter as Newsletter Editor.

The tentative location for next year's AGM is Chemainus. Finalization of that locale depends on finding suitable facilities for our meeting.



BRITISH COLUMBIA PROVINCIAL FORESTS

by F.D. Mulholland

The principle of public ownership of forest land may be regarded as established by legislation, and to date 5% of our productive Crown forest has been definitely dedicated to perpetual timber production in "Provincial Forest Reserves" – 6,492 square miles – eight reserves in the Southern Interior District covering 5,515 square miles, one in the Kamloops District of 907 square miles, two in the Vancouver District of 59 square miles, and a small area of ten square miles for research purposes in the Fort George District. In addition, a reserve of 1,950 square miles in the Prince Rupert District, and two reserves totaling 104 square miles on two islands in the Vancouver District, have been examined, reported upon and recommended for immediate creation. Other areas, including two more in the southern interior have been suggested for reserve in the immediate future.

It is estimated that about 149 thousand square miles, or 42% of the land surface of the province, is productive forest land, of which only 19 thousand square miles have been permanently alienated (excluding lands which may be disposed of by recent legislation in aid of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway). There are, therefore, still in the public domain 130,000 square miles capable of producing timber of commercial value. Probably the Crown-granted lands include the most productive forest sites. If these lands can be made to produce on the average 20,000 FBM per acre on a 100 year rotation they will yield annually a volume equivalent to our present annual cut of 2 ½ billion feet in perpetuity. This yield could not be obtained without considerable attention to the logged-off lands. Perhaps it requires an optimist to expect its realization. Yet there is no reason why these private forests should not forever continue to provide a large part of our annual cut, and several large owners have already turned their attention to the matter of reforestation.

On the average, the site quality of the Crown land is lower than that of the privately held forest. A greater area is required to produce the same timber volume. It is natural to expect that the heavier and more accessible stands, mainly privately held, will continue to be cut first, and, therefore, that the increasing cut from private lands may soon be greater than their yield even if reforestation is successfully accomplished.

The annual demand on the Crown forest land increases with the total annual cut. The latter has increased 150% in ten years, from one billion board feet in 1914 to two and a half billion in 1924. Crown timber sales increased in the same period 800%, from 37 million to over 300 million.

With increased demand, the time will come when the last of the private timber will be in sight and there will be a greatly accelerated, if not sudden, demand for Crown timber. Most of the latter is at present immature and we know little about its rate of growth and other factors which will render it possible to draw up an effective forest policy which can deal with future demand on a sustained yield basis.

(excerpted from Fred Mulholland's presentation to the District Forester's conference in 1926. He was in charge of forest surveys and in 1937 authored the second summary of our provincial forest inventory entitled "The forest resources of British Columbia." It was published by the British Columbia Forest Service, Department of Lands.)



EX-FOREST SERVICE VESSEL SQUADRON RENDEZVOUS REPORT

This year's Canada Day weekend vessel rendezvous was held at the Telegraph Harbour Marina on Thetis Island. After concluding the annual business meeting the socializing began. Owners inspected each other's boats and got caught up on discoveries made and improvements carried out. A highlight was the premiere of the video made of last year's highly successful rendezvous at the Vancouver Maritime Museum.

The video, entitled *Against the Tide*, is a 16-minute documentary video which combines old and new footage to tell the stories of the people who once worked on the boats of the B.C. Forest Service. The rangers, mechanics, shipwrights and their families who attended the 1995 rendezvous at the Vancouver Maritime Museum tell tales which give us a glimpse of a bygone era in B.C.'s coastal history.

To order a copy of the video send a cheque or money order for \$28 (includes shipping costs) to:

Mr. Dale Gamble
3585 West 21st Avenue
Vancouver, B.C.
V6S 1H1

Phone (604) 732-8369



REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Frank Alexander MacDonald

Information about Frank Alexander MacDonald is being sought by his granddaughter. MacDonald is known to have worked in the Clayoquot area in 1909 and was navigator/engineer on a Forest Branch gas launch that was built north of Vancouver. For most of his career he was stationed in the Campbell River area but also worked out of Lund. Trained as a medical doctor, most of his career was in forestry. He authored two articles in the *Forestry Chronicle*:

MacDonald, F.A. 1929. A historical review of forest protection in British Columbia. *Forestry Chronicle* 5(4): 31-35.

MacDonald, F.A. 1932. A new forest fire pump. *Forestry Chronicle* 8(2): 93-95.

and worked with weather instruments as well as fire fighting apparatus. In 1922 he took over from C.S. Cowan as head of the Operations Division of the Forest Branch. In 1923 this unit became the Forest Protection Division, with Cowan once more at the helm. MacDonald headed it again from 1927 until 1932 when C.D. Orchard took over as director.

If you have any information about Frank Alexander MacDonald please contact Patricia Matthias at

R.R. # 7
 Site 13, Comp 108
 Vernon, B.C. V1T 7Z3

Phone (250) 542-2382

E-mail: killiney@bcgrizzly.com

K.G. Wallensteen, sometimes spelled Wallenstein

Information is needed about K.G. Wallensteen, who came to Canada from Sweden around 1912 with university-level training in forestry. He was soon hired as a forest assistant in the Kamloops district and later spent time in the national parks as a "game guardian" in the Castle Mountain area. He also did highway location work, timber cruising and road layout for Harris Lumber and its successor, Federated Co-operatives, when he was into his 70s. His son also became a forester and several grandchildren worked at bush-related jobs.

If you have any information about K.G. Wallensteen please contact

Denis Marshall
 4910 16th Street NE
 Salmon Arm, B.C.
 V1E 1E1

Fax (250) 832-5367



NEW PUBLICATIONS

Dorman, George. 1994. Up in the morning, out on the job: the George Dorman story. Brechin Publishers, Nanaimo, B.C. 192 p.

Hallock, Richard M. 1995. Pick up sticks: a history of the intercoastal lumber trade. Cordillera Publishing Company, Vancouver, B.C. 670 p.



FORTHCOMING FHABC PUBLICATION: UPDATE

The forest history bibliography mentioned in a previous newsletter is now complete. The bibliography originally contained only works that were primarily about forestry but reviewers of the first draft pointed out that many local histories contain forestry-related information. Therefore, the search was expanded and the resulting product is about ten pages longer than before. After a general subject index has been created the work will be printed and distributed to those who requested it, along with those libraries, archives and museums on our mailing list.

HERITAGE NEWS ITEM

Restoration of the B.C. Forest Service vessel *Amabilis II*

Staff at the Nelson Museum are continuing with their restoration of the *Amabilis II*. The boat was constructed in North Vancouver in 1928 by Eriksen Bros. Boatbuilders, a firm which built at least two other boats for the Forest Service.

The *Amabilis II* was shipped to Kootenay Lake to replace an earlier launch, the *Amabilis I* (formerly called *We Three*) which had been wrecked in a storm. The *Amabilis II* was used for fire suppression, scaling and general forestry work in the Kaslo and Lardeau - Duncan areas. It was decommissioned sometime in the early 1950s and renamed the *M.V. Kokanee*.

The main focus for this year's work is the removal, refabrication and replacement of rotten sections of the hull and the preparation of drawings of the ship and its mechanical and electrical systems. The work is being done by Dick Pollard, award-winning boatbuilder, and a crew consisting of Bruce Bate, Micah Dance and Anne Lowrey. The boat has been stabilized on cradles and is under shelter to protect it from the elements.

First phase funding for the restoration has come from the B.C. Heritage Trust and Human Resources Development Canada. Generous donations of material have been received from Slocan Forest Products, Kalesnikoff Lumber, the Harrop Nursery and Dale Anderson and family.

If anyone has knowledge of the *Amabilis II* or its builders, Eriksen Bros. Boatbuilders, please contact Anne Lowrey at

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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. Phone (250) 595-0374 home or (250) 356-6810 office. E-mail: jparminter@galaxy.gov.bc.ca.

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 (250) 656-9276. E-mail: edonon@islandnet.com. The President, Geoff Bate, can be reached at 2278 Cooperidge Drive, Central Saanich, B.C. V8M 1N2. Phone (250) 652-5360 or fax (250) 652-5358.