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**RED MORRISON – ANOTHER VIEW**

Part one of two

by Donald M. Ream, Jr.

Having first read of "Red" Morrison in the British Columbia section of the late Ralph Andrews' book "Glory Days of Logging," I paused to consider this man, having read of his first known employment in the province as winter camp watchman at the "Dirty Face Jones" camp at Elk Bay. It was asserted that Red had tamed a menagerie there. To me, this required a discipline all its own to do so. Was there more to know of him through the years? Yes, there is.

Red Morrison was born on October 24, 1885 at Carrolton, Cowlitz County in Washington Territory. His birth was first recorded in the United States Census of 1890 at Centralia, Lewis County, Washington. Unfortunately the United States Census for 1890 was totally destroyed by fire. It is noted that Carrolton is now called Carrols. His mother was Theodosia Simpson and his father was Marshall Morrison, born in 1837 and died in 1911 or 1912. Red's mother married three times and the children were: Minnie, Martha, Clara, Harriet, Jessie, Will, Maud, Hugh, Helen, Earl and Pearl. One died in infancy.

Recycled paper



“Red” was named Earl Gaston Morrison and was the youngest in a family which had three sets of twins! Red mentioned only a brother Hugh and in later years Red thought he had gone to Argentina. Brother Will was drowned or so his cause of death was reported. However, Will’s son, after he grew up, had his father’s body exhumed and it was then discovered that there was a bullet hole in the skull. The rumours that the son had heard were confirmed. Red’s father was a horse logger and his father’s side of the family were from Grant County, Wisconsin – in the southwest corner of that state. From a newspaper article written by Robert E. Swanson it appears that Red went to work at the age of 13 in about 1898 for a horse logging outfit near his home.

Remember this was in Washington State, which was admitted to the Union in 1889 with a total population of 357,232 compared to when it was a Territory with a population of 75,116 in 1880. Bob Swanson indicated that Red believed in kindness to the horses, mixed with understanding of the same towards humans. It seems as if Red’s education was at the grade school level and not much of that according to Red’s daughter, Helen Bell of Vancouver. She indicated that Red’s wife taught him to read and write. In the rural or forested areas of America in the latter 1800s one-room schoolhouses were the norm rather than the exception.

Bob Swanson stated that Red was promoted to driving the line horse, which rode on a flat car with the logging crew when returning to camp for the night. During his early years of working in the timber around Carrolton, Red saved a bit of money because he wanted a new suit. A good bit of his weekly wages, if not all, was paid over to his mother. This was customary in those times. His mother requested the money that had been saved for the new suit, saying to Red that “he looked better in overalls.”

Red left the Carrolton community in 1902 and headed for British Columbia. Thus the only official existing record of him with respect to the United States Government is the United States Census for the year 1900. As noted in “Glory Days of Logging,” Red’s first recorded employment in B.C. was at the Jones camp at Elk Bay. The book states that Red held court to a menagerie of Indian dogs, deer and a tame cougar. Now there might have been a tame cougar kitten, but no one with knowledge of Red recalls this or Red having indicated that it was so.

Red went, along with others, to what is called Old Jedway (in contrast to the present site of Jedway) on South Moresby Island in the Queen Charlotte Islands, in 1908. He logged for the Seaford Mill there. The British Columbia provincial archives has no documentation of Red Morrison being at Old Jedway, nor are there any records pertaining to the Seaford Mill there, the former resulting from Red’s relatively short employment there.

Sometime before Red married in 1911, he and another young fellow decided to travel about the country and so they rode the rails on freight trains. Being street smart, or perhaps more accurately “rail smart,” as they had money to travel, they sent their money ahead because they were afraid of being rolled. They had blankets and slept outside at night. One morning Red was awakened by his travelling partner, who was very quietly saying “Don’t move, there’s a rattlesnake on your chest!”

During the time that Red and his friend were traveling in Montana they each broke out in boils all over their bodies. They were very sick. A lady who ran a rooming house took them in and took care of them until they were well. In the book "Jack's Shack," written by the late Jack Crosson, he tells of his experience with a Devil's Club plant on Vancouver Island that caused painful, swollen sores. It may be that Red and his friend had a similar encounter in Montana.

Sometime, thought to have been before his marriage in 1911, Red and two other friends went to hand log somewhere in the vicinity of Minstrel Island. They had a very small shack, a rowboat, a stove and a winch. After a while they got into an argument and broke up. One took the rowboat, one took the stove, the third got the winch and that ended that.

Red went to Old Jedway, on the west side of Harriet Harbour in 1908. Red told his family that the timber there was too large for the mill to handle and often they had to blast the logs, splitting them so the mill could cut them. This hand logging and the Seaford Mill is said to have been the first commercial timber and milling operation in the Queen Charlotte Islands. Incidentally, in 1908 there existed a very large carved stump. It appears not to have been a totem pole made by the Haida people but quite possibly by the hand loggers. A picture is on page 176 of Kathleen Dalzell's "The Queen Charlotte Islands" (published in 1973) where it is indicated that "recent visitors to the place have found the stump still standing now shrouded in trees."

Red was married to Elizabeth Lamb Morrison on November 20, 1911 in Vancouver and he was then working at Bradner in the Fraser Valley. Elizabeth was born at Ellon, Scotland (near Aberdeen) on November 17, 1882. She was a petite Scotswoman with reddish hair. They had four children: William, born December 6, 1912, who married Audry \_\_\_\_; Walter, born August 11, 1913, who married Wilma \_\_\_\_; Helen, born in 1917, who married Stan Bell; and Donald, born March 19, 1919, who married Jean Hopkins in 1946.

It cannot be said exactly when Red Morrison and his family moved to East Wellington on Vancouver Island. Wrigley's B.C. Directory for 1918 lists the New Ladysmith Lumber Company, Ltd. with John W. Coburn as President and Managing Director. The company specialized in rough and dressed fir, cedar lumber, lath, sash and doors and shingles, with some emphasis on being the "Manufacturers of the Celebrated Ladysmith Cedar Shingles." Three mills existed in the Coburn operations: Nanaimo, Ladysmith and East Wellington. As of 1918 the population of East Wellington was 200. The foreman of the mill there is listed as Ah Tom, a Chinese.

Bob Swanson was a lad of about 14 when he got a job as a whistle punk when Red Morrison was Woods Foreman for the Coburn camp at East Wellington. The circumstances of his "whistle punkin" job were that the local school was dismissed and closed due to the deadly influenza epidemic throughout Canada, the United States and the world. Bob Swanson recalled some events and occurrences because Red Morrison rented a house from Bob's father, James Augustus Swanson, a sculptor and builder. Mr. Swanson owned some 70 acres and 10 were referred to as the "chicken ranch." These were the premises that the Morrisons leased.

The house was very close to the logging railroad track and so Mr. Swanson had covered it with sheet tin to prevent sparks from a passing locomotive from setting it on fire. It became known as the "tin house." Bob Swanson recalled that his family had a little sulky and he gave rides around the area to Red's boys. Red was well thought of as a good logger, a "good guy." Bob described Red's appearance as having dark red hair and blue eyes. If he wore glasses it was for reading. He smoked some and had a slight hump-like stoop. In later years he was somewhat heavy set.

As woods boss at East Wellington he wore a yellowish-red Mackinaw coat. He never discussed politics. Religion was not a strong forte, although there was a Methodist community church attended by some 50 people located next to the school. Red's wife and boys might have been members of the congregation.

As Bob Swanson commented, as woods boss Red was a demi-God to the young people of East Wellington. Bob also told of the time when he whistle punked for Red. It was lunch time and the steam donkey, a Washington Iron Works 10 x 12, was quietly steaming. Bob decided that donkey needed a bit of attention and so he picked up the oil can and commenced to lubricate the various gears, bearings and the like. Around the corner out of nowhere appeared Red, who saw his whistle punk oiling the donkey. Red exploded. He told Bob Swanson to put down that oil can and never to oil his donkey. He admonished him further and told him that if he ever caught him oiling the donkey again he was going to "take that G.D. oil can" and perform an unusual proctological event with it upon Bob's posterior.

Bob Swanson said that the last time he saw Red was at Nanaimo in 1939. Prior to that he had spoken to Red on the phone but if he wrote to Red there wouldn't be a reply. He followed Red a bit through the *Forest and Mill* newspaper. Bob Swanson later worked for Red as a donkey engineer, notwithstanding the oil can incident. Bob had earned his ticket. The donkeys used by the New Ladysmith Lumber Company, Ltd. were the 10 x 12 Washington and a 9 ½ by 11 compound. Red was for the company on the one hand and on the other for his men and his own authority and position. Bob said he got his donkey puncher job because he ran the machine faster than Harry Todd, the primary puncher, and you had to produce.

The B.C. Voters List for the general election of 1920, New Castle Polling Division, lists Elizabeth L. Morrison, housewife, along with James Swanson, retired gentleman, and Mary Agnes Swanson, housewife. Red Morrison does not appear in the list, even as Earl Gaston Morrison. This same voters list also includes Christian Meyland, logger, and his wife Sophie L.H. Meyland. Sometime during the period of 1919 to 1920 Red Morrison left his employment with the New Ladysmith Lumber Company, Ltd. and was replaced by Chris Meyland. The latter came from Victoria as the new woods boss. Bob Swanson did not know why Red left the company.



**PALDI REUNION SLATED FOR JULY 19**

A reunion of the residents, former residents and friends of Paldi, B.C. will take place on Sunday, July 19, 1998 at the B.C. Forest Museum just north of Duncan, from Noon until 5:00 PM. Admission will be \$4 for adults, \$3 for seniors, \$2 for children 13 years and under, and free for 5 years and under. Bring a picnic lunch or purchase one from the concession stand at the museum.

For information contact one of the following:

Joan Mayo  
R.R. # 2, Paldi Road  
Duncan, BC V9L 1N9  
250-746-4362

Linda Watkin (James)  
R.R. # 4, 3160 Drinkwater Road  
Duncan, BC V9L 5Z1  
250-748-8563

Bindo Dillon (Sundher)  
2720 Mt. Stephen Crescent  
Victoria, BC V8T 3L8  
250-385-5118

Ken Yip  
# 6 – 1071 Valewood Trail  
Victoria, BC V8X 5G5  
250-658-1244

Bea James (Dalip)  
6128 Marsh Road  
Duncan, BC V9L 4G6  
250-746-6607

Please provide a contact name, address and phone number and state how many people from each family will be attending. The address list will be on the bulletin board at the museum for those who want this information. If anyone has pictures that can be displayed please bring them along too.



## **GEORGE BURNS PASSES**

by Allan Klenman

The chain saw axe was invented by a faller named George Burns at the Franklin River Division of Bloedel, Stewart and Welch around 1936. This axe was described in the August 1994 issue of this newsletter. Although I was never able to interview George in person, I learned of his passing in Vancouver in January, at the age of 82. He had been in ill health for some years. Good falling and sawing in your new forest, George – your axe will always be remembered on the west coast of North America.



## **NEW PUBLICATIONS**

Devitt, Bruce and J. Pratt. 1998. Forest practice, policy and the profession: in celebration of the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters' fiftieth anniversary. Association of BC Professional Foresters, Vancouver, B.C. 35 p.

Graf, Constance and C. Graf. 1998. Reflections on the Kootenay – Wardner, B.C. 1897-1997. 560 p. (contains information on the Crow's Nest Pass Lumber Company, Crestbrook Timber Ltd., and the Graf Bros. Lumber Co., among others). Available from Chris Graf at # 307 – 475 Howe Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2B3. Phone 604-681-4402, Fax 604-681-1562, e-mail cgraf@ecstall.com. Price: \$56 plus shipping.

Mayo, Joan. 1998(?). Paldi remembered – 50 years in the life of a Vancouver Island logging town. 130 p. \$25 from the B.C. Forest Museum at Duncan, the Lake Cowichan museum and Ulla's Bookshop in Duncan.



## **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Information is sought regarding the Ryan Hibberson Timber Company, which operated in the Seymour Valley, North Vancouver, between 1920 and 1936. Maps showing the extent of their operations would be especially valuable.

Please contact Sean Blackman  
# 305 – 2065 West 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V6J 1P8

Phone 604-731-6785

## PAINTINGS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

Artist Lou Englehart (1915-1989) painted more than 200 beehive burners after a 1970 announcement that they would be converted or dismantled. As per the artist's wishes, 200 of these original signed oil paintings were donated to the Lions Society of B.C. to benefit children with disabilities.

These paintings are available for purchase and the proceeds will go directly to help B.C. children with disabilities. For information and a free catalogue please contact Wendy Campbell at 604-873-1865 or 1-800-818-GIVE.



## BOOK REVIEW: "SAWLOGS ON STEEL RAILS"

by Patrick O. Hind

One of the most interesting occasions for a historian is to be asked to review the work of another, especially if it is in a field of mutual interest.

Long before the coming of the white man to what we know today as the province of British Columbia, the first settlers on this land realized the great potential of our abundant growth of timber. They used it in many ways – clothing, tools as well as for their homes and everyday lives.

Gradually as the land was settled by white men a far greater potential was seen for the timber which covered this land from valley to mountain top. Accordingly, man devised methods by which he could harvest this carpet of green gold.

At first the means were primitive to say the least but it was also a time when the iron horse was advancing across the North American continent. As the steel rails advanced upon the land it was obvious to those who were harvesting the timber that here was a means that could be built cheaply and would effectively allow them to carry their goods to the many mills that were being built to cut the abundant timber. As a result, thousands of miles of logging railways were built in both British Columbia and Washington state.

Vancouver Island in particular was to see hundreds of miles of logging railway built, much of it being laid, taken up and then put down again as the timber was harvested. One region that saw extensive logging by rail was the valleys adjacent to Port Alberni, where companies such as the Weist Logging Company; Bbedel, Stewart and Welch; Alberni Pacific Lumber Company and MacMillan Bloedel operated. Each was distinctive and played a major role in harvesting of the region's "green gold."

But it was not just the companies that were involved, it was those who worked with those companies. The locomotive engineers, firemen, brakemen, high riggers, donkey punchers and the many others who were part of this period in time.

George McKnight, in his book *Sawlogs on Steel Rails*, has managed to capture a period in history when steam was King and it seemed that logging by rail would be here forever. In 416 pages and 191 pictures he has managed to portray the very heart of railway logging in the Alberni Valley. This is a book that is a must for everyone who is interested in the days of railway logging. Shay and Climax locomotives as well as the elusive Heisler are all mentioned. Wrecks, and yes there were some, and inclines, with one of over 50%, are all there. The trials of early logging, when loggers did not realize that ballast had to be used to have a stable track.

For 45 years the sounds of steam railway logging echoed in the valleys around Port Alberni. Millions of board feet of timber were brought out of the woods by rail. George McKnight has brought to life an era that is sadly gone. He has recorded those from the past, their stories will live forever. Stories of disconnect trucks, mechanical brakes that had to be applied manually by men risking their lives on loads of swaying logs.

*Sawlogs on Steel Rails* is a book for model railroaders too and there are many who build miniature logging railways. It is an excellent documentation of an era that is sadly gone but not forgotten.

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.

This review originally appeared in *Tall Timber – Short Lines*, a magazine published by the Pacific Coast Logging Historical & Technical Society, 4928 North Frace Street, Tacoma, Washington 98407-1318, USA. Reprinted with permission.



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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, Saanichton, B.C. V8M 1N2. Phone (250) 652-5360 or fax (250) 652-5358. E-mail: gbate@bc.sympatico.ca.