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Newsletter seeking editor! Please get in touch to guest edit our June issue. Or, if you would like to assume the position on a more permanent basis. info@fhabc.org

Oral-History Fundraising. Thank you to our donors for your generous support. Readers will recall that the Forest History Association of BC appealed for funds in December, to digitize forest industry oral-histories on cassette tapes, presently stored at UBC Rare Books and Special Collections. We are thrilled that eleven donors contributed a total of \$1520.00, enough money to digitize another 62 tapes. A big thank-you to **Lehel Porpaczy, David Flater, Art Walker, Peter Ackhurst, Robert J. Reid, Gerry Burch, William Dumont, Robert Beard, John Hammons, Gary Tattrie and one anonymous donor.** Encouraged by this success, we now aim to digitize the entire collection, another 140 tapes. Completing the set will cost us \$2400. Can you help us get there?

Donations: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/forest-history-association-of-british-columbia/>

Thank you for your tax-deductible support, and we hope to see you at the next listening party! Archival audio and images from our first Bruce Devitt listening party can now be found on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fd0wV35HLak>

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Viv Williams Oral-History Listening-Party.

Watch your inbox for the **May date** once confirmed! You are cordially invited to join our second Zoom Listening Party: Featuring Gerry Burch and Arnold McCombs in conversation with the late Viv Williams. Courtesy of generous support from the Truck Loggers Association and several of our members (see page 1), the FHABC has recently digitized select interview cassettes, and created a "best of" edit, now bolstered by archival images. We will listen to excerpts from the 1990s recordings, followed by a moderated discussion.

In his 1998 interview, GERRY BURCH introduces VIVIAN THOMAS “VIV” WILLIAMS as “one of the more famous contract loggers on the coast of B.C.”

During a long career spanning five decades, Viv Williams worked in West Vancouver, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, Haida Gwaii, the mid coast and Fraser Canyon areas. Viv was renowned as a machinery man, an innovator (not least in use of aircraft), for his dedication to safety in logging, contributions to industry associations and committees, and to loggers sports and Junior Forest Wardens programs.

GERRY BURCH grew up in Moyie and Trail, BC. His studies were interrupted by conscription into the navy in 1942, when he served as a sub-lieutenant on HMCS Eyebright. In 1945, he was demobilized and returned to his studies at UBC. He spent his university summers working for British Columbia Forest Products Ltd., which became his employer for most of his career. Burch was appointed BCFP Chief Forester in 1968, and Vice President of Timberlands and Forestry in 1976. After retirement from BCFP in 1988, Burch remained active as a consultant for Stewart & Ewing Ltd., and as an adjunct faculty member at UBC in the faculty of forestry. Gerry is the author of several books and articles on forest history topics, including his autobiography, *Still Counting the Rings* (2006). He was director of the book project, *The Working Forest of British Columbia* (1995).

ARNOLD McCOMBS started “blowing whistles” on his father Buster McCombs’ logging show in the late 1940s. Grandfather Art McCoombs was a pioneer logger in the Fraser and Squamish valleys. Arnold earned a degree in Forest Engineering at UBC while working summers for his father’s Eagle Creek Logging. He followed this with an MBA and a career including various roles in the forest industry in BC, eastern Canada and abroad. A keen interest in forest history led to collaborations with Wilfred W. Chittenden in two books, *The Harrison-Chehalis Challenge* (1988) and *The Fraser Valley Challenge* (1990).



Viv Williams bundling timber for Pacific Mills, Queen Charlotte Islands, 1951. Photographer: Don Coltman. City of Vancouver Archives: CVA 586-14507.

Small-Scale Sawmilling in 1920s Coastal BC

Allen Hopwood

In 1920s British Columbia, there were 313 "sawmills" producing at least one million board feet of lumber.¹ Collectively, these mills produced 1.443 billion board feet of lumber of which 62.5% was Douglas-fir and 10% was redcedar. The Douglas-fir lumber sold for an average of \$38.16 per thousand board feet.

In 1920, the average worker (of which there were 11,645) earned \$1,124 in wages for 176 days of work,² an average of \$6.39 per day. Superintendents and managers in these mills earned an average of \$3,166 in salary. Other salaried personnel (clerks, stenographers, etc.) earned an average of \$1,472.

Through 1922, sawmillers worked nine hours per day from Monday to Friday and five hours on Saturday. In 1920, when an independent MLA put forward a bill to limit the workday to eight hours (at the same per-hour wage), BC's sawmillers protested that it would "cripple their operations." The MLA said, "The lumber industry in this Province stands unique as a slave-driving industry." The eight-hour work day did not come into effect until 1925.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century a typical, "smaller" Coastal sawmill selling to markets outside BC consisted of a headrig, an edger, a trim saw, a planer and a kiln. One or more steam engines supplied power.³

Steam power was introduced to sawmilling in the late 1800s. A mill's scrap was used to fuel the boiler(s). Efficiency was greatly increased but capital cost was, too. A steam engine for a sawmill was built along the same principles as steam engines used in locomotives and "logging donkeys", except that the steam-driven piston(s) would turn a shaft or shafts which powered the mill's saws and winch(es).

Typically, an engineer/fireman would feed water and fuel to the steam engine(s) and keep the boiler at working pressure.

In the 1920s, small Coastal BC sawmills usually utilized circular saws in their headrigs. Circular steel saw blades had been used since the late 1700s to cut logs into planks or cants. In the 1870s, the

¹ The source for these statistics (Dominion Bureau of Statistics) grouped sawmills, shingle mills, veneer plants and lathe mills into the category of "sawmills." No breakdown was provided. Some of these mills would have manufactured more than one product. The BC Government reported 341 mills sawing lumber.

² In 1920, there were 304 possible working days in a year.

³ For a more-complete and fully-illustrated description of a 1920s sawmill go to sturgeonsmill.com website, from which I have borrowed heavily. Or visit the McLean Mill at Port Alberni.

limitation to log diameter was largely eliminated with the introduction of the double circular saw which had one blade on top of the other.⁴ These blades would usually be 110-115 cm in diameter.

An edger consists of several circular blades mounted on a main shaft. The blades are capable of sliding laterally along the shaft while the machine is running. The spaces between the blades are adjusted for each rough slab of lumber so that it can be cut into multiple widths depending on the size and quality of each slab and on the preferred dimensions of the lumber produced.

A trim saw (circular) cut the lumber to specified lengths.

Green boards have varying moisture content. This variation causes boards to warp and/or split and makes it difficult to build stable structures. Drying is required to reach a moisture equilibrium suitable for final use. Air-dried boards in unheated buildings will usually reach an equilibrium of about 12-14% "bound" water. A rule of thumb is to wait a year for every inch of thickness to reach this equilibrium which is suitable for general construction. For furniture-making, moisture level should be 7-9%. Using a heated building (kiln or oven) achieves equilibrium much sooner, reducing the time from sawing to marketing.

A planer has one or more blades which smooth the rough surface of boards and shave them to precise thickness.

For sawmills adjacent to saltwater (often in river estuaries⁵), booms of logs would be tied up beside the mill and the logs pulled up a "jack ladder" (hoist) into the mill.

For Inland mills not adjacent to water, there were two approaches to storing logs at a sawmill's site.

Logs would be off-loaded from a railcar or logging truck by a "landing man" operating a winch. He would look the logs over for embedded dirt or rocks (and, if necessary, wash them off with a high-pressure fire hose powered by a steam engine). The landing man would also hook a heavy chain or cable onto the logs so that the bull-wheel (a large winch) could pull them into the mill and up to the headrig.

⁴ The band saw was introduced in the 1880s, allowing the sawing of logs of nearly unlimited size, but they are more expensive and complicated than circular saws.

⁵ Logs (or anything made of untreated wood) situated in saltwater are subject to attack by teredo worms (naval shipworm, a species of saltwater clam) who bore tunnels lined with calcareous material which the worms extrude. The quality and quantity of lumber from attacked logs are greatly reduced. Teredos native to the Pacific Ocean do not tolerate low levels of salinity, so log storage in river estuaries reduces damage.



Figure 1: Log Pond & Jack Ladder – McLean Sawmill. Dan Seaberg, used with kind permission.

A preferable method involved a log pond. Mills supplied by railroad were built adjacent to natural ponds when possible, or log ponds were constructed by damming a small stream. Again, a jack ladder would be employed to get logs into the mill. Figure 1, above, shows the log pond and jack ladder at the McLean Mill in Port Alberni. Storage in water simplified the movement of logs from storage into the mill. Water storage also minimized fire risk, washed away dirt which would dull saws, and reduced the natural drying out and splitting of logs.

The headrig (or head) sawyer stood behind the saws and controlled the levers that moved the carriage back and forth and the bull-wheel which also turned the logs on the wheeled carriage, mounted on rails. The sawyer controlled the milling decisions on the first two turns of the log.⁶

⁶ The headrig sawyer assessed and cut each log so as to maximize the quantity and quality of lumber recovered. Old-growth timber often has defects, deformities and large knots whose impacts on lumber output can be minimized by a skilled sawyer.



Figure 2: Double Circular Saws 1920s, Mendocino Coast Model Railroad & Historical Society.

The second person who worked around the headrig was the block-setter. He clamped the logs onto the carriage and in some cases rode the carriage as the logs were fed through the main saws.⁷ After the head sawyer squared the first two edges of the log, the block-setter took over and controlled the rest of the cutting decisions. He had to align the log to cut the desired board width while cutting around defects, and make sure that the log was always perfectly vertical on the final cut, to minimize waste. The pictures show the carriage and blocks.

⁷ I saw such headrig in operation in a remote Sudanese village. The block-setter riding the carriage was within 60 cm of the turning blades. He put a gunny sack over his head to protect from flying sawdust and chips. The noise was earsplitting and the danger is easily imagined.

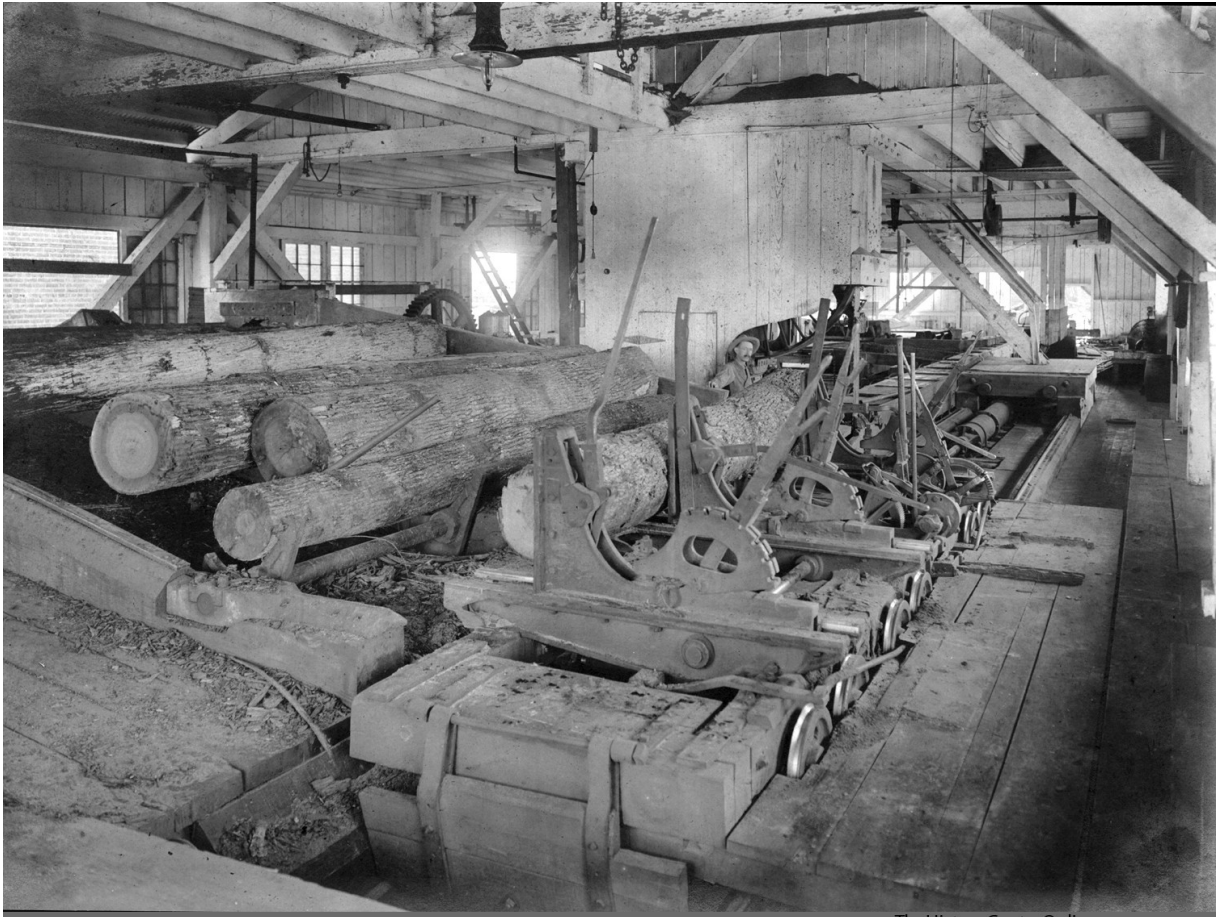


Figure 3: Sawmill Log Carriage 1920s, American Lumberman Magazine.



Figure 4: Sawmill Log Carriage 1920s, Facebook.



Figure 5: Block-Setter 1920s, [Lenore Edman](#), Flickr

An off-bearer picked up each slab as it was cut away from the log. He decided whether to move a slab as a finished piece of lumber out the end of the mill or transfer it to the edger.

The edger-man had to assess each slab that came his way and decide what dimensions could be made out of it. He set the distances between the edger's blades accordingly, as the machine was running (see Figure 6).

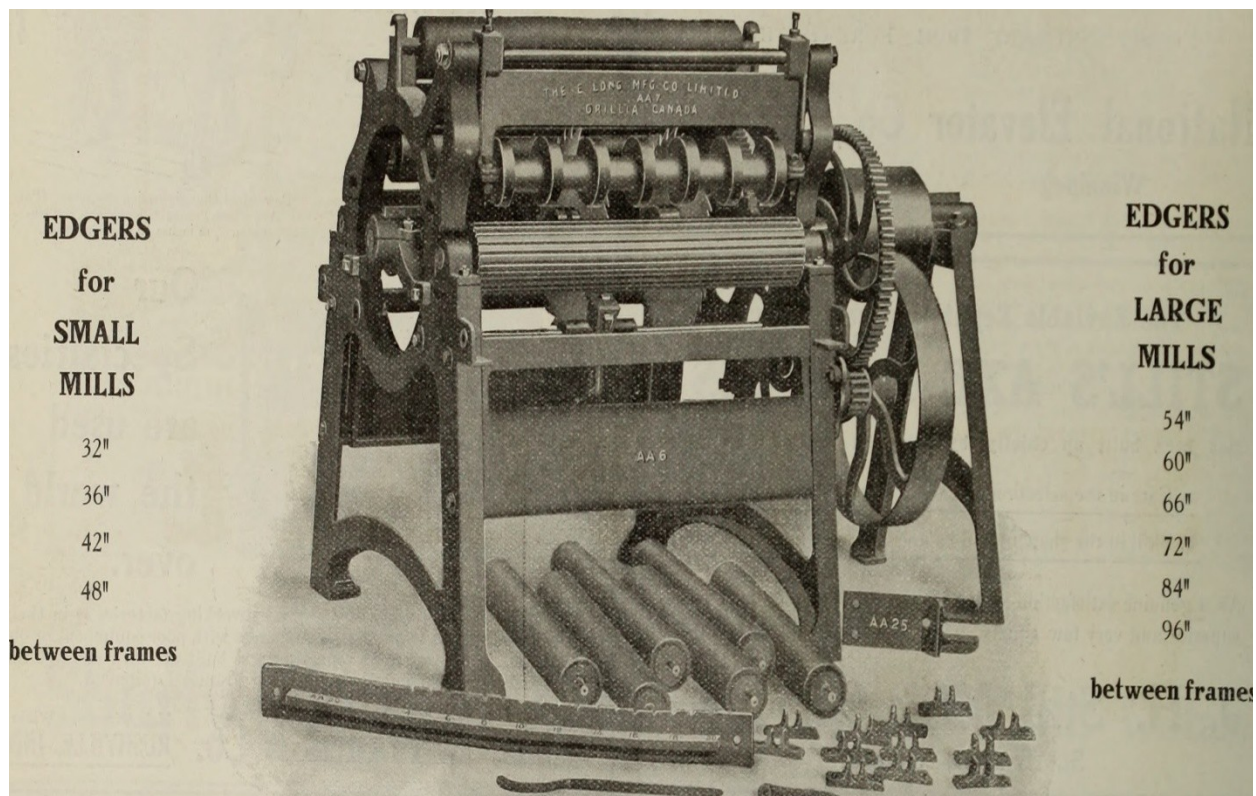


Figure 6: Edger 1912. *Canadian Forest Industries Magazine*

The edger off-bearers transferred the lumber, as it came off the edger, to the trim-saw.

The trim-saw-man and one or two other crew members looked at the freshly-sawn boards and decided what lengths to cut them based on knots and other defects. Up-grading was achieved by cutting out the lumber's defects lengthwise, making lumber at least 2.44m long plus multiples of 0.61m thereafter. For example, a 4.88m long piece of lumber could remain at full length if it had no imperfections and was the correct length, or it could be trimmed to length if it had no imperfections but was an odd length, or be trimmed to 4.27, 3.66, 3.05 or 2.44 m lengths depending upon where the flaws in the lumber were. Scraps were fed to the fire box(es) below the mill (along with sawdust) to fuel the boiler(s).

The rough, green lumber exited the mill, by hand, on rollers or on moving chains (the "Green Chain"), for sorting into grades and stacking. Working on the Green Chain was an entry-level job requiring great physical exertion. Figure 7 shows the Green Chain of the historic McLean Mill in Port Alberni. If a mill had a kiln and/or planer (pictured here), the lumber got further up-grading and finishing.



Figure 7: Green Chain at McLean Mill, Dan Seaberg. Image used with kind permission.

Circular saw blades were very expensive and highly subject to damage by overheating or dirt/stones embedded in logs. Regular filing was required; a skilled sawfiler was worth his weight in gold because a dull or unevenly-filed sawblade would produce crooked and uneven-sized boards. The saw filer⁸ would "set" (angle) and sharpen the teeth of the blade and "hammer" it, whereby the blade would be deformed with a hammer and anvil to counteract the forces of over-heating and cutting.

A mill such as described here would employ about 25, including yard-men and office staff, plus others if a kiln or planer was attached.

⁸ In Africa he is called "the saw doctor", reflecting respect and singular skill.



Figure 8: Planer 1920s. Mendocino Coast Model Railroad & Historical Society

Obviously, 1920s sawmills were highly dangerous because personal protective equipment for sawmillers was minimal. Sawmillers had to put up with the constant noise and apply brute strength to move lumber through and out of a mill. Each step of the milling process required skill, strength, alertness, and judgement. Profitability seems to have hinged on the employment of some Asians who worked for lower wages. The mural in Figure 9 (next page) shows a Chinese "Bull Gang" moving timbers by hand through a sawmill's lumber yard. This mural was painted by Ernest Marza and is on display at the Chemainus Library.



Figure 9: Chinese "Bull Gang" Moving Lumber at the Chemainus Sawmill, A. Hopwood from a Chemainus Mural by Ernest Marza.

Newly Digitized

Co-founding FHABC member John Parminter has created a meticulous digitization of Whitford and Craig's 1918 *The Forests of British Columbia*. OCR-ed for fast searching, this book is now available for download from our webpage.

www.fhabc.org/documents/Whitford-and-Craig-1918-courtesy-of-FHABC.pdf

An Ode To Field Foresters

By Gerry Burch, RPF (ret) and Bruce Devitt, RPF (ret)

BACKGROUND

The history of logging in BC is well documented but the history of reforestation and tending the next crop in the field is sadly lacking. By the middle of the twentieth century, and after the 1880s start of forest harvesting and development of the Province, there were two World Wars, a global flu pandemic, and a world-wide recession before BC could finally embark on a serious program of sustained forest development using qualified professional foresters. Basic knowledge, experience and trained personnel, as well as funding, were also limiting factors. Furthermore, there were no industry foresters in the field given this responsibility. During this formative period the reforestation of cut-over and fire areas was left to nature.

This ODE focuses on the early foresters, both industry and government employees, who, through their dedication, enthusiasm, ingenuity, and imagination, overcame much resistance to change and helped bring about the application of scientific sustained-yield forestry to British Columbia. The thrifty second-growth forests they helped create are a valuable and visible legacy to the Province. These early foresters made a significant contribution to our Province: they are truly "Unsung Heroes".

For perspective, the total area planted by the BC Forest Service to 1939 was approximately 1320 acres⁹ and that was mostly experimental. Fortunately, at the end of the Second World War, a 1945 Royal Commission Report on Forestry, the “Sloan Commission, was released,¹⁰ which contained recommendations on tenure reform, and on the dire need for the Government to pay attention to the large acreage of bare land, following logging and natural disasters, such as forest fires, wind storms, insects, etc. At that time it was felt that 400,000 acres on the Coast of the 1 million denuded acres required planting.¹¹



Figure 1: Bruce Devitt viewing E&N Crown-Granted Land logging, Lake Cowichan 1958. Photo by Mike Meagher.

Although Governments in the following ten years adopted Sloan’s recommendations, implementation of action in the field was not evident. Sloan in 1956 concluded for the Coast that 20,000 acres (including fire losses) each year were being added to the then existing 1,723,168 acres of not satisfactorily restocked (NSR) land. He stated in his second report -- "It does not seem unrealistic to insist that the Forest Service come to a reasonable degree of fulfilling sustained-yield forest-management objectives on Crown lands with the primary obligation requiring the new Forest Management Licensees to assure regeneration of cut-over forest land within the licence area."¹²

⁹ BC Forest Branch Annual Report 1938.

¹⁰ 1945 Royal Commission on Forest Resources of BC, Hon. G. .McG. Sloan

¹¹ 1956 Royal Commission on Forest Resources of BC, Hon. G. McG. Sloan.

¹² *ibid.*

A review of a few facts of the BC forest industry, and the state of professional forestry during this period is now required.

Most of the timber harvesting in B.C. prior to the end of the Second World War (1945) was on the Coast. And, most was on two types of tenures, Crown-granted lands (mostly in the E&N Land Grant), or Timber Leaseholds with the B.C. Government. Timber Sales, usually 1-3 year terms, from the BC Government, were also available, but industry only requested them when available Crown timber was needed to “round out” an operation. Of course, this form of tenure -Timber Sales - was common in the Interior where the other forms of tenure were generally not available.

Logging on the Coast was primarily by railroads, involving huge machines to lift, load and move the large logs, huge settings (skyline roads up to 2000 feet), with cold deck settings beyond this. Large and continuous openings were normal and no slash burning was mandatory at this time. Interior operations were usually winter shows with harvesting involving horses, tractors, or small yarders. As much as possible, all logging was on relatively flat land, with lower side hills included where feasible. Utilization was minimal: no Western Hemlock, Abies species, small Western Red Cedar, deciduous or Western White Pine trees were taken on the Coast, and Lodgepole Pine, Abies species, or deciduous species were left behind in the Interior, either standing or fallen. Coast falling involved much waste, including high stumps, long-butting, bucking out breaks; very few cedar slabs were logged. All manufacture was by sawmills, with no barkers or chippers; in fact, much milling in the Interior was done “in the bush”, and involved huge piles of sawdust, bark and edgings, which created large fire hazards.

There was later one notable exception: The MacMillan Bloedel Canadian White Pine Sawmills located on the Fraser River (a merger of Bloedel’s 1926 Dominion Sawmill and MacMillan’s 1935 purchase of CWP). These mills were transformed to mill large top-grade logs of Douglas-fir and Western Red Cedar for special markets needing quality milled lumber but primarily they had a Western White Pine focus because of its special uses and specific top lumber qualities.

All logging on Crown land was controlled by the BC Forest Branch¹³ which became the BC Forest Service in 1945, whose responsibilities involved setting up Timber Sales, scaling, fighting forest fires, and public relations (mainly through the Ranger staff stationed throughout the lower Province (i.e. south of Prince George).

No planting projects were carried out, but some progress was made with the establishment of Forest Research Stations at Aleza Lake near Prince George (1924) and at Lake Cowichan, near Mesachie Lake (1929). In 1926 an experimental nursery was established on Shelbourne Street in Victoria followed by a production nursery in 1930 at Green Timbers in Surrey.¹⁴ The Forest Service staff started experimental plantations using seedlings of varied species from these nurseries at Green Timbers (297 acres) plus a scattering of miscellaneous species on 46 acres and in logged areas: (West Thurlow Island-545 acres) and (Campbell River, Elk Falls, Sayward and Great Central Lake (434

¹³1912 Royal Commission of Inquiry on Timber and Forestry, F. J. Fulton.

¹⁴ Ralph Schmidt and John Parminter, 2006, *An Early History of the Research Branch*, British Columbia FLNRO Research Branch Technical Report 36; W Young, 1988, “The Green Timbers Plantations, a BC Heritage”, Green Timbers Heritage Society talk.

acres).¹⁵ Mainly two-year-old Douglas-fir seedlings were planted at six feet by six feet spacing in these plantations.

Then in 1938, a historic worst Provincial forest fire season occurred. Approximately 105,000 acres of timbered, logged and previously-burnt land was burnt over on the Coast. These burnt areas presented more reforestation challenges. Two industrial fires on Vancouver Island were chosen for planting: the 75,000 acre Campbell River (Bloedel) fire and the 3600 acre “Camp 10” Robertson River Valley fire which was nearby the Cowichan Lake Experiment Station. A second nursery at Campbell River was developed in 1939 to assist with planting these and other 1938 fire loss acres. Most of the plantings in these two conflagrations were established by make-work programs funded by Federal and Provincial legislatures: the Youth Forest Training Plan and by conscientious objectors during the war years.¹⁶ It took nearly two decades to replant the 1938 coastal fire areas and ensuing Crown-land logging. These early initiatives, which saw the development of two Research Stations and two bare-root seedling nurseries, thus provided a much-needed but small nucleus of experience in both nursery and planting programs and research. A further nursery was added in 1943 at Duncan.

ROYAL COMMISSIONS

It has long been accepted that most major recommendations to improve forest policy in BC originated from the three early Royal Commissions. The first Commission created the Forest Act and the Forest Branch. The 1945 Royal Commission Report was released in 1946, which brought about new thinking regarding tenure, employment of professional foresters, need for a Provincial forest inventory, need for reforestation and better planning regarding forest fire prevention, detection, and suppression.

As a result of the above Report, two new and very important actions evolved: a new tenure was enacted - the Forest Management Licence, later to become Tree Farm Licenses (TFL) - and a new forester body was established, the Association of Registered Professional Foresters.

Naturally, there was intense interest in this new tenure: over 25 of which were granted in the ensuing 10 years, mostly on the Coast, and mainly to the larger forest companies who were required to add their adjacent private holdings to the new TFL tenure, and, in many cases, to construct a pulp mill. This tenure also called for the employment of Graduate Foresters, and coincidentally, came at a time when the BCFS was expanding its Surveys Division to begin the surveying of a Provincial forest inventory, which was sadly lacking.

Fortunately, the enrollment at the UBC Forestry Department was also expanding with the influx of war veterans. The only forest school in Canada, west of Toronto, was the UBC Department of Forestry, which had been operating under the Faculty of Engineering at the University of BC since 1921, but had only graduated fewer than ten Foresters per year. Most of these graduates in Forestry obtained employment with the BCFS as inventory cruisers or became camp engineers with the large railroad forest companies on the Coast. Most of their training was, naturally, in engineering, with no (or very little) background in dendrology, soils, allowable-cut calculations, site indices, log grades, reforestation or union and social problems.

So, at last, the future for employment in Forestry looked promising for new forestry graduates.

¹⁵ W Young, 1988, “The Green Timbers Plantations, a BC Heritage,” Green Timbers Heritage Society talk; BC Forest Branch Annual Reports, 1930 – 1944.

¹⁶ BC Forest Branch Annual Reports.

Starting in 1950, about 40 Forestry graduates were available each year for employment in the province. Foresters from many countries also arrived, and further between 1958 and 1961, the Hungarian Sopron faculty at UBC added a further 140 forestry graduates.¹⁷

NEED FOR FIELD FORESTERS

The background of forestry knowledge in the Province at this time was very limited. Little information other than outdated cruises were available for the Forest Service in their study of the Provincial inventory involving the forest volumes present in most valleys in BC. Aerial photos were just becoming available, particularly for the extensive inventories needed by the BCFS. So, training classes for the new inventory crews were organized at various locations in the Province, and subjects such as species identification, use of survey equipment, use of stereoscopes, decay analyses studies, etc. were given.¹⁸

At the same time, the new TFL licensees also realized that the forest inventories of these tenures were outdated, and needed to be updated. All of the above provided new opportunities for Forestry graduates. Within a decade, the TFL licensees realized that this new tenure had some responsibilities that could be only carried out only by a field forester. Therefore, in the mid 1950's, divisional camp or area foresters were being employed by the larger companies owning FML or TFL tenures.

Some field foresters were recruited out of university but most were already employed as cruisers or scalers on existing staff. The only direction provided to these new appointees was the clauses in the FML or TFL contract which stated: -

1. to harvest annually no more than the allowable cut,
2. to restock all logged areas,
3. to rehabilitate NSR (Not Sufficiently Restocked) areas, and
4. to protect the TFL from forest fires, insect and disease attacks.

Further, some doubt existed as to whom they should report, to the company Chief Forester or the local camp superintendent. In the larger camps, the only other university graduate was the logging engineer. And, since these field foresters were often veterans, married, and with children, and if appointed to an isolated camp, such as Woss, Juskatla, Soule, Great Central, Caycuse, Renfrew, Jordan River, etc., they requested a company house, which became a serious "*bone of contention*" with the other senior operating personnel.

However, over time, these Foresters assumed responsibility for many functions with which the Superintendent was not familiar, such as fire prevention, slash burning, planning of cutting permits (including the location of fire breaks), small planting projects on brush- control areas (if seedlings were available from the Government nurseries), and a few trials on spot seeding, chemical control on brush, and development of bullet and container- grown seedlings. It quickly became usual for this new divisional Forester to be the liaison with government officials, such as the local Forest Ranger and the

¹⁷ 1971, *The UBC Forester* - 1921-1971, The UBC Forest Club.

¹⁸ R.L. Schmidt, 1985; John Parminter, update, 2015, *A History of the BC Provincial Inventory Program: Part One 1912-1940* FHABC publication; R.E. Breadon, 1995; John Parminter update, 2017, *A History of the BC Forest Inventory: Part two: 1940-1960*, FHABC publication.

Fisheries Officer. But it soon became apparent the new divisional Forester had never picked a cone, planted a seedling, lit a slash fire, fought a forest fire, carried out a regeneration cruise, or calculated an allowable cut.

There was a distinct lack of field knowledge in nearly all aspects of Professional Forestry fields. In time, some knowledge was obtained from research papers from the U.S. trade journals, or visits to other TFL operations. However, another answer was soon forthcoming, and the resultant actions were worthwhile and gratifying. It involved the establishment of COOPERATIVES in many fields, with representatives from both government (BCFS) and industry (Tree Farm Licensees or "TFLs"), as indicated by the following excellent examples and their successes:

1. Fire Protection Committee

Identified a need for:

- Lighter pumps, lined hose, instantaneous couplings over screw types, "wet water", etc.
- Education sessions for logging crews in fire preparedness, slash burning, fire fighting techniques, etc.
- Water bombers, including action to bring the Martin Mars aircraft to BC.

2. Reforestation Committee

- Urgent need for collecting forest cones from all commercial species in BC
- Increased knowledge of separation of seed from cones, storage of seed until needed and testing of the seed for germination ability.
- Shortage of seed supplies required research needed to protect seed from rodents, for spot seeding, rather than planted seedlings
- Research needed on producing seedlings in containers for easier planting of selected sites among slash
- Production of large seedlings for planting on large acreages of NSR brush sites, along with the proper use of herbicides.
- Resolve problem of deer and elk browsing in plantations.

3. Genetic Committee

- First, was the formation of the Plus Tree Board to locate Coastal Douglas-fir "Plus Trees" and the establishment of annual Plus Tree Weeks. Over 400 "Plus Trees" were located in the first decade of the 1960's by industry and government foresters and staff.
- Second, establish Seed Orchards to generate reliable crops of seed from grafted Plus Tree grafted "seedlings" for planting on appropriate sites in the designated Seed Zone and elevation range.

4. Inventory Committee

- Great strides were made in basic cruising techniques, such as obtaining topographic maps from new aerial photos and new plotting machines, use of prisms, calculation of volumes by log grades, use of linen-backed mapping paper for more accurate maps, and use of radios for field crews for safety and efficiency.

5. Productivity Committee

- Assembling all growth and yield information from recently-established sample plots.

All of the above Committees were initially set up for Coastal forest conditions and over time have either spread their research and trials to Interior conditions, or have been reconstituted as Provincial Cooperative organizations, as they became operational throughout the Province.

EPILOGUE

Although in 1956, at the time of Sloan's second report, almost 140,000 acres on the coast were planted on burnt and logged areas by government and industry, it was mostly of Douglas-fir, mainly at low-elevation sites and mainly on Vancouver Island.¹⁹ There was a lot more work to be done with the big and growing NSR backlog as the Government off-loaded the reforestation and associated management job to industry with the new tenures. Logging also moved up the hill side, where the logged sites required better and specific seed for Douglas-fir (high elevation) and different tree species mixtures such as Hemlock, Cedar and Balsam.



Figure 2: E&N Hillcrest Logging - BCFS 1959 plantation in 1999.

This story of reforestation beginnings in BC provides a Coastal field Forester perspective. Their challenges involved much trial and error, learning, adapting and improving which continued with

¹⁹ BC Forest Branch Annual Reports, 1930 – 1944; BC Forest Service Annual Reports, 1945- 1956.

increased complexity over the decades that followed.

The reforested second-growth areas created by these Foresters and their crews are a legacy that is being harvested and replanted today. So the story continues and involves many more foresters; more challenges and are other chapters for the reforestation story book - a book that even today continues in its evolution, adaption and growth.²⁰

A. ORIGINAL INDUSTRY DIVISIONAL FORESTERS

From memory, here is a list of some original pioneer Divisional Foresters on TFL's in the Province - "Unsung Heroes All":

Alaska Pine - Dick Vivian, Bill Dumont, John Leasing

BCFP - Bob MacMillan, Web Binion

Canadian Celanese - Mike Stewart, Sid Telford, Pym van Heek

Canadian Forest - Glen Patterson

Crown Zellerbach - Bill McGhee, Darrel McQuillan

Crestbrook - John Murray

M&B - Ike Barber, Stu Crawford, Jake Holm, John Duncan, Doug Best, Alec Harper, David Handley

Northwood - Doug Little

Pacific Logging Company- Mike Crown, Bruce Devitt

Weldwood Empire Logging Division - Dave Thompson.

Tahsis Company - Dick Kosick

Weldwood Ltd. - Ian McQueen

SOPRONERS AND BSF 1957

Michael Meagher June 14, 2007

The FHABC newsletter could use more Sopron stories to capture the importance of their arrival, contribution to BC forestry and their life in Canada, not only from Soproners but also other foresters and FHABC members who may have been their workmates and associates. So, good readers, if you or your contacts have any connection and have a story to share, please start collaborating on future Newsletter submissions before this history is lost.

Comments on the 1957 arrival and subsequent impacts on Forestry in B.C. and abroad of the SOPRON Faculty to the FIFTY-YEAR celebration at UBC on June 14, 2007. Class President Rod Pringle could not attend, so was substituted for by Secretary Dr. Mike Meagher.

Our 1957 BSF Class was in the enviable position of greeting the Sopron foresters on their arrival in Abbotsford after the cross-country trip by train. As well as

Rod Pringle, President of the Forestry Undergraduate Society,

Marc Bell, representing the Alma Mater Society,

Gus Loman, Neil Smythe (here to-day with his wife, Betty) and I were present. Unfortunately, neither Rod nor Marc can attend to-day's event, so I am definitely 3rd class.

²⁰ Gerry Burch 2020, "Forest Management & Silviculture in the 1950's" in FHABC [Newsletter #105](#).

Marc and I travelled out in the snow with Everett Peterson (who is here to-day) and Bill Martin of the 1958 Class. Waiting for their arrival, we asked how to say “Hello” in Hungarian. Bill was more focused, asking how to say “Hello girls”. Bill appeared at a Forestry dance later with an attractive Hungarian girl – daughter of Professor Udvardy, an active link between Sopron and UBC’s faculty .

Our next contact was the day they first visited UBC. I rode the bus out to Abbotsford to provide comment during the trip and recall a question after about half an hour:

“Where is the forest?”

I pointed to the North Shore Mountains and said: “It starts there and goes 600 miles.” MAYBE a little exaggerated.



Sopron School of Forestry group picture on the steps of the Biology building, 1957. Photo: John Davidson. UBC Archives 1.1/778. <https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0019197>

Highlights of the UBC visit are Professor Krajina’s impassioned speech re freedom and communism on the steps of the Biology building, where John Davidson took the photo in the Forester’ annual and on display in the hall to-day. Then on to the welcoming lunch in Brock Hall and attending the volleyball game in War Memorial Gym.

We all remember Rod’s remarks in Hungarian during lunch – especially Rod. He commented on “the sea of uncomprehending faces when I attempted my welcome speech.” But Gus Loman, who could make himself understood in German, thus helping Dean Roller when a Hungarian speaker was not present, recalls students at this table - 5 minutes into Rod’s speech – exclaiming: “My goodness, he speaks Hungarian!” Must have been Rod’s dialect.

Both Gus and Edo Nyland, who also translated from German for the Soproners, are Dutch immigrants who were imprisoned by Japanese forces in Indonesia, thus have a good understanding of the impact of forced displacement and sympathy for the Soproners.

The volleyball game was memorable due to the Soproners' support of the UBC team – once we pointed out which team was “ours” - by chanting

“Hoy Ra UBC!, Hoy Ra UBC!, Hoy Ra UBC!”.

Doug Richards edited the UBC Forester annual that year and ensured that coverage of your arrival and UBC visit was included.

Once they left the Powell River camp for the summer and work to earn tuition and living at UBC (AKA huts on the airport lands) cultural adjustment to BC forests and forestry really began.

Earle Hindley summed it nicely:

“We were part of introducing them to:
 distances measured in chains,
 area in acres,
 volume in cubic feet,
 lumber in 2-by-6es (though they really were smaller),
 caulked boots
 fly camping (in the snow)
 steep terrain and
 clearcuts.”

Jack McLellan, who spent his career in BC Forest Service's Inventory Division, worked first with Soproners in a bush camp near Dawson Creek. Though they had a BC Forest Service cook, the menu was “basic bush grub, varying little”. All grew tired of the monotony, but two Soproners found a solution: 5 strips of raw bacon and chopped onions on a bun! Neil Smyth found himself staring in amazement at a Soproner consuming a whole bag of mixed peppers as if they were apples.

But no one mentioned that ultimate North American culinary test of a new arrival – peanut butter!

Bruce Devitt, known to many of you recently as Executive Director of the BC Professional Foresters, and I helped two faculty members, one of whom was Professor Laslo Sebastian, study for their driver's licence while at the BC Forest Service's Mesachie Lake Research Station that 1957 summer. They were enthusiastic players on the camp soccer team in games with residents of the Mesachie Lake mill village, where Moe Sihota's family lived. 1958's soccer team included Oszkar Sziklai, later my Professor, and Gyula Kiss, a colleague in forest genetics and tree breeding.

Cultural adjustments were mostly by the Soproners, especially re language. Jack McLellan and crew were on a forestry launch whose cook had trained in the Navy, leaving his comments heavy with salty terms. After considerable exposure to this culture, a Soproner declared, in accented Canadian:

“Vince, you have a very limited vocabulary.”

But not all the cultural adjustment was by Soproners. You just heard Bob Kennedy assert that he, an immigrant also, “had no trouble with the language.” Not true! WE all know that gnats are annoying, biting flies, so our Class, the first Bob taught, was mystified by references to “gnats” in his wood-technology lectures. Eventually we realized he was referring to “knots” in wood! Yankees from upper New York State really do have a dialect.

In not all cases was a Canadian accent an advantage. Trevor Jeanes, Chief Forester of Tolko, addressed the residents of Brookmere, an abandoned station of the Kettle Valley rail line re water quality data following logging in the local watershed. Trev arranged that samples be taken by a resident and sent separately to a lab in Kamloops. They showed no deleterious effects on the water, which Trev produced and explained to the crowd. They were not impressed. Then Karoly (“Charlie”) Fur of the Kamloops Region office, Operations Supervisor and responsible for overseeing the local Crown Lands, spoke, outlining his background as a European forester, subsequent experience and trust in the report. The crowd was assured – Trev feels due to Charlie’s heavy accent, confirming his credentials as a European forester, which trumped Trev’s Distinguished Forester award by our profession!

New sports caught the attention of some Soproners; Les Safranyik embraced curling, Imre Otvos adopted tennis, but top marks must go to Tony Kozak, but not for tennis. Forestry graduate students rounded up some bodies to play pick-up ice hockey in the late ‘60s – skill not a requirement. Tony’s skills were from figure skating, not hockey, so they were “under development”. First time I had played hockey with a man who took so long to travel from our blue line to the opposite goal. But all our Class mates exposed to Soproners’ soccer skills were impressed.

(None of our class mentioned fencing.)

Some of the ’57 Class (Marc Bell, John Davidson, Dick Smith) studied with Soproners and more worked with them, including Edo Nyland, Chief Forester in the Yukon, Gus Loman, Forest Pathologist and Biochemist, Larry Kennedy, Silviculturist in Edmonton, Leo Valg, Wood Scientist at UBC, and certainly Trev Jeanes, Dick Smith, Bruce Devitt, Neil Smyth, Phil Gilbert and I. Marc Bell remarked that Laslo Orloci was so far ahead of the world in developing mathematical ecology that none of his colleagues could understand him – since proven by Laslo’s status world-wide.

It was commonplace that all adapted quickly to their new situation and worked vigorously to demonstrate their skills and contribute to our society, both on the job and in leisure.

We lived through exciting and challenging times together, best summed up by Dr. Doug Richards, retired Professor of Forestry, Mississippi State University, with wide local and international experience, who wrote:

“... graduates of that program have had a profound influence on forestry research, education and practices in both Canada and the United States. I do believe that these contributions have exceeded by far the most optimistic expectations of those responsible for arranging the move. UBC should be proud of the role it has taken in this endeavour.”

My wife and I visited Budapest last year and learned of the significance of the year 896, when 7 tribes traveled west into current Hungary. So Consul Szablya, the official representative of the Hungarian government, 1060 years later the second western migration has brought us a valuable infusion of Hungarian experience, culture and dedication, for which your country should be thanked.

And Dean Saddler, you might best express this legacy as
“Hoy Ra UBC!, Hoy Ra UBC!, Hoy Ra UBC!”.

Thank you for the chance to attend this event and bring greetings from the BSF Class of 1957.

Look for issue #114 in June 2022 (ideas deadline May 15).

This issue guest edited by David Brownstein.

