

# British Columbia



## FOREST HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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### FORESTRY IN THE UPPER COLUMBIA AND KOOTENAY

Part two

by Gil Cartwright

Over the years different policies evolved for marketing the cutting rights to Crown timber, the auctioning system being used a great deal and resulting in strong competition at times. The Sloan Royal Commission of 1943 to 1945 resulted in the inauguration of sustained yield policy and the establishment of an annual allowable cut. To accommodate this, the Licensee Priority System was established which the industry interpreted as a "quota" and this in itself became a salable commodity and resulted in numerous sales of smaller operations to larger ones. Thus, the industry changed into fewer and larger enterprises.

Logging equipment and techniques underwent a radical change also, especially in the period following the war. Chainsaws gradually replaced crosscut saws, bulldozers replaced horses, and larger mills converted from steam, gasoline or diesel power units to electricity when hydro power became readily available.

In 1945 the Department of Lands changed to the Department of Lands and Forests and the Forest Branch was re-named the B.C. Forest Service. J.L. (Joe) Johnson became the Ranger at Invermere in 1945 and held this position until 1950. This period was an expansion phase for the Forest Service, with the Forest District being broken down into more and smaller Ranger Districts, and more Rangers and staff being hired to better administer and protect the forest resource. Invermere was eventually divided into three Ranger Districts.



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In 1946 Canal Flats became a separate Ranger District under Ranger C.J. (Charlie) McGuire, and in 1952 Spillimacheen Ranger District was formed with Ranger J.I. (Jack) Snider. This expansion phase also created a building boom in Ranger Station complexes to accommodate the staff delegated to these districts. Most Ranger Stations were equipped with a standard type office/warehouse building and a four-car garage. In more rural locations or where housing was difficult to obtain, a Ranger residence was also supplied. The Canal Flats Ranger Station was built in 1947 and the Invermere one in 1948. Prior to then Ranger staff had worked out of rather inadequate rental accommodations.

Through the years from the 1920's to the middle 1950's lookouts were established on many mountain tops for fire detection, horse trails were constructed throughout most major drainages by Patrolmen or trail crews, and numerous cable crossings were constructed to transport manpower over major rivers. I don't know for certain when the first lookout building was constructed on Mt. Swansea but the annual report for 1924 shows an expenditure for Swansea Lookout and Telephone Line in the amount of \$1593.00. In those days that probably paid for the whole project!

A new lookout building replaced the original around 1950 and the plywood panels and all building materials were taken up the mountain by Dix Anderson with his pack horses. The road that now goes most of the way up was built some years later. Eventually, Canal Flats had four lookouts, Invermere one, and Spillimacheen one. Lookoutmen were hired on seasonally for the five-month summer period, led a lonely life on their mountain tops, but were invaluable to the fire suppression operations.

With more staff and better mobility, the Forest Service could better monitor the industry and manage the forest resource. Scaling methods were improved, better utilization promoted and better fire prevention and suppression action achieved.

Air patrols were started in the late 1940's following lightning storms and covered areas not visible to lookouts. These patrols were gradually increased over the years, used better techniques, and became more effective. They are in common use at the present time.

Helicopters came on the scene in the late 1940's also, and have evolved into the best means of getting fire suppression crews into sites with difficult access. The first helicopter used in Invermere was in 1948 when the first machine owned by Okanagan Helicopters was used in a spraying program to control an infestation of False Hemlock Looper. This machine was flown by Carl Agar who was also the president of the company. The second pilot was Paul Ostrander, a brother of Dr. Al. Ostrander who is resident here.

Air tankers came into use in 1958 and have also evolved into an important force in initial attack on forest fires. The first ones were converted wartime low level attack bombers but aircraft have now been developed specifically for this purpose, and are very effective.

They drop a slurry mixture that coats whatever it hits and retains moisture for a long time, thus slowing fire spread and giving ground crews some borrowed time and a better opportunity for control.

The 1950's and 1960's were times of change in industry methods as well as in forest management. Most of the main valley stands of timber had been logged and new methods and equipment were necessary for different species and different topography in the mountain drainages. Most of the larger operators changed their operations from portable mills and camps in the bush to trucking their logs to stationary mills. Wilder Bros. built a planer mill at Radium in 1951 and continued to supply it with lumber from a portable mill in the Kootenay valley until 1962 when they constructed a large sawmill adjacent to the planer. Jim Stone and Dick Gillis established a planer mill at Brisco in 1950 but ran their portable mill on Steamboat Mountain, Templeton Creek and Bugaboo Creek from 1948 to 1962 when they built a stationary mill beside the planer and continued in operation until 1970.

Larger bulldozers and other road building equipment was required as better roads had to be developed for hauling heavy loads of long logs. Steeper slopes were encountered and longer skidding distances. Equipment manufacturers experimented and finally designed agile, rubber-tired skidders that were much faster than track-type machines. Modern trucks could transport logs as long as 70' and equipment at large stationary mills could utilize these more efficiently.

In many areas clearcut logging, rather than selective logging, was made necessary by the nature of the tree species involved. Spruce trees are shallow-rooted and rely on each other for wind protection. If some of the stand is removed, the rest usually blows down. Lodgepole pine grows in even-aged stands so all are ready for harvesting at the same time.

The change in cutting methods required the Forest Service to design cutblocks and land treatments to ensure forest regeneration. Where possible, adjoining timber stands were relied upon to seed cutovers but, where these were too large, seedlings had to be planted. In this way, reforestation projects commenced in this district and, currently, many thousands of seedlings are planted every year.

C.R. (Ray) Tippie was Ranger at Invermere in 1951 and 1952. H.V. (Vern) Hopkins held this position from 1953 to 1960. Gil Cartwright became Ranger at Canal Flats in 1953 and in 1956 R.J.C. (Dick) Reaney took over as Ranger at Spillimacheen. He, in turn, was replaced by Ranger C.N. (Cal) Bellmond in 1963 then G.R. (Ron) Webster in 1966. Ranger L.G. (Les) Taft was in charge at Invermere from 1961 to 1971, then Gil Cartwright took over from 1972 to 1979, during which time H.D. (Dunc) Hamilton was Ranger at Canal Flats. The Spillimacheen Ranger District reverted to part of the Invermere Ranger District again in 1974.

Through the years, utilization of the forest resource had gradually improved but there was nevertheless a good deal of waste material generated by logging and milling practices. In 1966 the Close

Utilization Policy was implemented in B.C. This required industry to leave lower stumps and use all logs to a top diameter of four inches. This, and soon afterward a market for pulp chips from waste material, greatly improved the industry's utilization of the forest resource. With pulp chips, plywood, shakes and shingles being manufactured in addition to lumber, the B.C. Log Scale procedure in force since 1895 became obsolete and was replaced with cubic scale measure so that timber was charged for according to the actual volume of solid wood.

Industry ownership and plant changes continued throughout this period. Crestbrook Forest Industries became the largest forestry operation in the Kootenays, having amalgamated with or purchased a number of other operations. Cranbrook Sawmills had obtained the Alton operation at Parson some years earlier, and when Crestbrook purchased this operation in 1956, it obtained the Spillimacheen Tree Farm License which is a large and valuable forest area.

In 1965 the Revelstoke Sawmill Company purchased the Wilder Mill at Radium and shortly after that, the Moore Mill at Edgewater, and the Ronacher Mill at Athalmer. Operations were centralized at Radium and the other mills were closed. Recently this operation was purchased by Slocan Forest Products.

In 1968 Crestbrook Forest Industries built the pulp mill at Skookumchuck. Waste wood from the lumber manufacturing mills in the valley was more than sufficient to supply this mill with its requirements for raw material and most of the larger mills were quick to install chipping facilities for their waste material so as to take advantage of this market and thereby increase plant efficiency.

The Stone & Gillis operation was purchased by Ken and George Lautrup in 1970 and operated as Brisco Sawmills until it was destroyed by fire in 1983. George now operates a wood preserving plant on this site.

Following the Pearse Royal Commission in 1975, there was a new Ministry of Forests Act in 1978 and a complete reorganization of the Forest Service implemented in 1979. The former Canal Flats Ranger District was added to the area administered from Invermere. This administrative area corresponds very closely with the original Invermere Ranger District of prior to 1946. All area and administrative titles were changed and this became the Invermere Forest District with J.F.J. (Jack) Bailey as District Manager. After his retirement in March of 1983, he was followed by Larry Atherton in the fall of 1984, John Little from May 1986 to July 1987, and Serg Pereverzoff in October of 1987. Don Hendren was Acting District Manager to cover the gaps between these appointments, a total of about eighteen months.

Although this has been a brief historical overview of the forest industry and administration, it does not begin to cover the numerous mills and logging operations which were part of the period.

## Forestry Shorties.....



### Bernard Churchill and the Ladysmith Railway Museum

"In 1921, I was 13 years old and had just completed my first year as a farmhand near Tessier, Saskatchewan. I had come from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, on a harvest excursion train."

"I came to B.C. the next year. After my first job in logging as a whistle punk, I worked up and down the coast 'til 1925. I started with the Comox Logging and Railway Company that year, and stayed on until I retired in 1973. I became a logging railway engineer when I was 21. My 'ticket' number is 500."

"So, I've had a great life and a long love affair with logging and railroading on Vancouver Island. It was in 1985 when Pete McGovern, Spike Carson, myself, and a few other steam fans started talking about preserving some of our proud history right here at Ladysmith. We formed our non-profit 'Ladysmith Railway Historical Society' that year to preserve 'the golden age of railroading' for the benefit of young and old, residents and visitors alike."

"Our society is a place to chase our dreams and to actually work on some real good equipment. For the past couple of years, for example, we've been refurbishing our old Number 11 Baldwin 2-8-2. This 'youngster' was built in 1923, the year after I came to B.C.!"

"We have bells, whistles, and many other items on display in our museum quarters upstairs in the machine shop. Allan Klenman has a fine sampling of his famous axe collection here too."

"Perhaps one of our most unique pieces is the famous 'humdergen' used to push logs off the flatcars, down an incline, and into the water for booming along the Ladysmith waterfront. The humdergen is an ingenious rig built on a Shay steam engine chassis."

"We've nearly 100 members now. A lot of us spend many hours at our 'home,' the old machine shop and yard complex of Comox Logging, later Crown Forest Industries. We have a nice selection of engines, cars, and other equipment for everyone to enjoy. Our dreams include operation of a steam train -- or two -- in the near future. So, if you've never seen a steam engine being restored, a 1929 Plymouth diesel, old 8427 -- our historic diesel-electric log train engine (which still shunts around the yard) then come to Ladysmith! Our volunteers will be here to greet you."

FORESTRY SHORTIE # 5

I've dropped in to the Ladysmith Railway Museum twice now. Each visit was a glorious excursion into Vancouver Island logging lore. You can actually feel Island history here too -- grease, oil, and all kinds of smells from the past.

The museum is located near the VIA Rail (E&N) Station at Ladysmith, just off the Trans-Canada Highway. This place is a "must see" for all FHABC members.

Bob DeBoo  
March 1991

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REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Columbia River Lumber Co. and Owner Mr. J. Carlin

I would greatly appreciate information, photographs, and other evidence about either the Columbia River Lumber Co. or of its owner, Mr. J. Carlin. My mother's name was Mildred Carlin and the above-named owner was her uncle.

I am trying to assemble the early forest history of both Mr. Carlin and his company in the Shuswap, Columbia and Kootenay regions of B.C. Any information, documents, or photographs, please forward to:

Dr. Peter J. Dooling  
Associate Professor  
Department of Forest Resources Management  
Faculty of Forestry, U.B.C.  
# 283 - 2357 Main Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1W5                      Work phone: 228-3540

All materials provided to me will be returned upon request.

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1991 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING!!

The 1991 Annual General Meeting of the Forest History Association of B.C. will be held on Saturday June 15, 1991 at the Cowichan Lake Research Station. The program will begin at 12:00 noon in order to allow mainlanders to travel over on the 9:00 AM ferry.

The program will include an illustrated presentation on local forest history and an historic field tour. The cost will be \$5.00 per person, which includes lunch. Guests are welcome. Details will be in the next newsletter.

#### AWARDS OF MERIT

The FHABC presents annual Awards of Merit to those who have made a significant contribution to a greater public understanding and appreciation of the province's forest history. Four recipients were chosen to receive the Association's 1990 awards.

##### **Cowichan Woodlands Division, MacMillan Bloedel Ltd.**

Commemorating fifty years of logging at Copper Canyon (1940-1990), including the preparation of a booklet on that history. Award presented by President W. (Bill) Young.

##### **Council of Forest Industries of B.C. (Northern Interior Lumber Sector)**

Commemorating the 50th anniversary of COFI (NILS) and its predecessor, including the publication of a booklet describing the area's forest industry and its people during that period. Award presented by Director J.D. (Doug) Little.

##### **Faculty of Forestry, University of British Columbia**

Preparation of a publication describing the history of the Faculty of Forestry (authored by Dr. J.H.G. Smith). Award presented by Director D.T. (Don) Grant.

##### **Ladysmith Railway Historical Society**

In recognition of the society's on-going projects involving the preservation of logging railway memorabilia including the maintenance and reconstruction of locomotives and rolling stock. Award presented by Director Dr. R.F. (Bob) DeBoo.

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#### NEWS

##### **Green Timbers Advisory Committee**

The first meeting of the Green Timbers Advisory Committee was held at Green Timbers on March 11, 1991. The Forest History Association of B.C. is a member of this committee.

##### **David Douglas Society of Western North America**

The 1991 Annual Meeting and Banquet of the society will be held in Victoria, B.C. on December 4th, 1991. For information contact W. Young at 652-3002.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT  
W. Young

The era of steam-powered logging railroads in B.C. has long since passed. Unlike Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland, little effort has been made to search out and record the history of the logging railroads of the province's interior. This is an area of interest that demands attention and I hope that some of our members will respond and develop some pertinent articles for future issues of the newsletter.

There were over 300 forest companies in B.C. that owned or used logging railroads. To assist the fledgling forest history researchers amongst our readers, I have compiled a list of some of the companies which operated in the interior, along with the general location of these operations.

|                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A.G. Lambert Co.                 | Nelson                            |
| Arrow Lakes Lumber Co.           | Galena Bay                        |
| Billings, J.G. Logging Co.       | Fernie                            |
| Canadian Pacific Railroad        | East Kootenays, various locations |
| Columbia River Lumber Co.        | Golden                            |
| Crows Nest Pass Lumber Co.       | Wardner                           |
| Eagle Lake Spruce Mills Ltd.     | Giscome                           |
| East Kootenay Lumber Co.         | Jaffray                           |
| Eastern B.C. Lumber Co.          | Cedar Valley                      |
| Elk Valley Lumber Co.            | East Kootenays                    |
| Fernie Lumber Co.                | Fernie                            |
| Gibbons Lumber Co.               | Revelstoke                        |
| Hood Lumber Co.                  | Three Valley                      |
| King Lumber Co.                  | Cranbrook                         |
| Lamb-Watson Lumber Co.           | Arrowhead                         |
| Mundy Lumber Co.                 | Three Valley                      |
| Nicola Pine Mills                | Merritt                           |
| North American Land & Lumber Co. | Fernie                            |
| North Star Lumber Co.            | Jaffray                           |
| Otis Staples Lumber Co.          | Wycliffe                          |
| Ross - Saskatoon Lumber Co.      | Waldo                             |
| Standard Lumber Co.              | Cranbrook                         |
| United Grain Growers Ltd.        | Hutton                            |
| White Spruce Lumber Co.          | East Kootenays                    |
| Yale - Columbia Lumber Co.       | Nelson                            |

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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 address all correspondence regarding the newsletter and changes of address to the editor: Mr. John Parminter, # 1 - 949 Pemberton Road, Victoria, B.C. V8S 3R5.