

British Columbia



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GROWING UP IN THE INTERIOR
Part One of Two
by Dave Wallinger

By about 1947, it had been determined that reforestation on the Coast was well in hand. Planting of the Bloedel Fire between Campbell River and Courtenay was almost complete, and a third Forest Service nursery had been developed at Duncan to provide seedlings for planting large clearcut areas in the upper Cowichan River Valley. The Forest Service decided to undertake a reforestation program in the East Kootenay as a means of gaining wider planting experience and, at the same time, restocking some of the large areas of the southern Interior's ponderosa pine – Douglas-fir types. Most of these had been logged in the 1920s and 1930s, badly burned by slash and wildfires, and were being used as open range.

During the fall of 1948, several experimental seedbeds were prepared behind the Elko Ranger Station and in the spring of 1949, the first ponderosa pine seed was sown. At the same time, a more permanent nursery site had been selected and was being developed near Wycliffe, 10 miles northwest of Cranbrook.



Recycled paper

In the spring of 1950, the one-year-old seedlings from Elko were transplanted at Wycliffe where they were grown to a larger size. That fall, 28,000 two-year-old trees were planted back on the Elko site. This became the first plantation in the Interior. It still thrives today despite the ravages of porcupines and damage from the severe polar outbreak of November 11, 1954 when the temperature fell almost 50° F overnight.

From 1950 to about 1960, small plantations were established in various places in the lower Kootenay Valley in order to test survival and growth of various stock types on different soils, and to compare planting seasons as well as different planting methods. Some of the pine seed for these early plantations was from northern Montana (USFS) and some was purchased from private collections of Salmon Arm and Merritt provenances.

I became a part of this program when I was hired on as a summer assistant in 1953. My introduction to tree planting was as a member of a crew working out of a trailer camp near Newgate, not far from the U.S. border. Pine seedlings were being planted using the same mattock which had been used on the Coast for many years. The ground was covered by compacted sod resulting from years of cattle grazing and, to prepare a planting spot, a one-foot square of this sod had to be scalped (screefed) before the planting hole could be dug. It was hard work to get in 500 trees in eight hours. Tree spacing was six by six feet, and no deviation was permitted – by order of the Chief Forester! (After he retired, we were able to convince his successor that 8-foot spacing could plant more acres at less cost, with better results.)

Trees were trucked to the planting site in open-ended bales – usually of 5,000 seedlings. At the nursery, lifters bundled the trees in 50s and packed the bundles root-to-root with wet peat moss in an open-sided frame lined with waxed butcher paper and burlap. When enough trees had been packed, the bale was cinched up using a special tool, and strapped with a metal band around cedar slats. The bales measured about three feet long by eighteen to twenty inches in diameter, and weighed 50 - 60 pounds. Seedlings were lifted and shipped from the nursery to the planting projects according to a prearranged schedule, or on demand.

On arrival at the planting site, the trees were heeled-in in a shady and well-protected location to await planting. As they were doled out, each planter counted the trees he was issued to provide a check against the number on the nursery shipping invoice. In 1953, planters were paid 47 cents per hour and crew foremen 56 cents per hour for a 48-hour week. Project supervisors had to make up the payroll bi-weekly from the time slips turned in by the crew foremen, and by calculating gross wages, deductions for board, commissary, taxes and UIC. Only when the big paysheet balanced were the cheques made out. All this was done by hand with the help of only a manual adding machine. UIC stamps had to be purchased at the Post Office in town, and placed in each workers' book as evidence of credits earned.

On suitable areas, a planting machine was also being used. This planter, which had been adapted from a celery planter, was drawn by a small crawler tractor. It had a footed double-ploughshare, which could be raised or lowered for depth control, and which opened up a continuous furrow into which the seedlings were placed by the operator (who sat above). Behind the operator's seat was a set of twin packing wheels, angled so as to close the furrow.

This machine could plant 7,500 to 10,000 trees per day, depending on in-line spacing and ground conditions. However, the machine was limited to areas of rock-free soils and to sideslopes of less than 15 percent. Because it was attached to the Cat by a three-point hitch, it was lifted and swung around at the end of the planting line - this came as a surprise to the operator if he had his head down!

In 1954, I was hired permanently by Reforestation Division, and that fall was given my first assignment, a 40-man planting project at Elko. The next spring, I undertook another project west of the old Kimberley airport, which involved working out of a trailer camp. Planting was carried out in both spring and fall, and summers were taken up with survival studies, regeneration surveys and scouting likely areas for future planting. We also did some cone harvesting in the fall – mostly pine from squirrel caches, some Douglas-fir from standing trees, and spruce from logging shows.

Our planting of ponderosa pine on these old logged sites did not sit well with the ranching community. They considered the open range Crown land as theirs by right of possession and feared that, as the trees got larger and the canopy tightened, the needle drop would choke out the grass. The rancher paid a few cents per head to graze his cattle on these lands all summer, often with little or no control over their distribution, so some areas were overgrazed. This “ranching” was more of a lifestyle because most of the ranchers worked in local mills or at other jobs. They fought the planting program politically, and even directly, by going out on some evenings to pull out the trees which had been planted during that day. Eventually, the Forest Service and the cattlemen negotiated an agreement whereby the area planted each year would be limited and the cattlemen, for their part, would keep their stock out of the newly planted areas for three years.

During the winter of 1955-56, our small, permanent crew carried out a research spacing trial (E.P. 435) on immature ponderosa pine. With lots of young pine in the area, this type of work seemed to be a good way to keep a small crew together over winter so the spacing project was expanded. An area of some 5,000 acres was set aside and the ranchers were asked to take part to make it into a proper forestry - livestock demonstration area. Eventually, some 3,000 acres were thinned and several hundred acres improved for grazing by cultivation, brushing and seeding.

The commitment to plant less pine, and our interest in growing other species, was welcomed by the grazing community and the Wycliffe Nursery (now the East Kootenay Nursery), began to grow more Douglas-fir, spruce and some larch. In addition to providing planting stock for the Kootenay area, the nursery had made some sizable shipments to Manning Park for planting in the 1948 burn, and to large Research Division planting trials near Bolean Lake. In the fall of 1956, I hauled a load of Douglas-fir and spruce seedlings to Prince George. These were heeled-in over winter and planted out the next spring in several areas. The largest of these plantations was in the Fy Fire, not far from what is now the Forest Service Seed Orchard west of the Fraser River at Red Rock.

For several years, experimental planting of local and exotic species had been carried out in the Prince George Forest District, using seedlings grown in the small nursery at the Aleza Lake Experiment Station. As well, Columbia Cellulose Company had been operating a small nursery at Terrace to provide planting stock for operational planting trials on TFL 1. In 1958, a limited number of nursery beds were established by the Reforestation Division at the Hixon and Telkwa ranger stations in order to further investigate growing techniques in these more demanding climatic conditions. This “look-see” program was continued over the next few years with small seedling and transplant nurseries set up in Okanagan Mission, Kettle Valley and Creston. These “mini-nurseries” were maintained by Ranger staff.

We continued planting by mattock with baled trees up to about 1960 when the burlap bales were largely replaced by seedlings being packed in sealed multi-wall, waxed bags and placed in waxed boxes. At the planting site, trees could be kept in these boxes, providing they were shaded and protected (there were many incidents with inquisitive bears!). This was part of a major effort to improve the overall planting system as well as the survival and growth of the trees. In the early plantations, the survival of ponderosa pine was widely variable and averaged only about 35 percent. It depended on many things, including the quality of the stock, handling and planting, weather during the first growing season, and the amount of browsing and trampling from game and livestock.

In 1958, we commenced a series of site-preparation trials with the cooperation of the Nelson District Research Officer. Throughout the Kootenay Valley, and the Boundary area, test plantations were established in which several different machines and methods were used to eliminate the sod and competing grasses, and to make the job of planting easier. The results of these trials many years later showed consistent survival rates in the high 80s and better growth as well as reduced overall planting cost.

Results from the early plantings of Douglas-fir and spruce at higher elevations were promising, and sowings of these species were increased. This was very timely because about 1960, a significant shift in the responsibility for Interior reforestation was taking place. The Interior districts, up to this time, had enjoyed the benefits of the Silviculture Fund which was established to improve silvicultural systems. This fund was financed by a special stumpage assessment and was used to pay for the marking and preparation of timber sale areas which were to be logged by some type of partial cutting diameter limit cut/leave strips, seed-tree, seed-blocks or other method. The District “Marking Crews” had been doing this work for a number of years and they were well organized with supervision, equipment and transport.

It was decided to discontinue the Silviculture Fund program and in order to keep the marking crews organization intact they were to take over the planting and cone collection programs in the Interior. Up to this time, reforestation had been the responsibility of Reforestation Division in Victoria, which would continue to retain control over basic programs (tree seed processing, nursery operations, and the development of new systems for reforestation). In the Nelson Forest District, I already had the cooperation of the marking crews for planting during break-up season and for fall cone collections, so the changeover was easy. To my mind, bringing the districts into the action was a logical move, and it wasn’t long before they were all involved.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY SEEKING INFORMATION

The Riondel & Area Historical Society is looking for photographs of pre-1950 forestry operations on the east shore of Kootenay Lake in the communities of Pilot Bay, Riondel, Kootenay Bay, Gray Creek and Crawford Bay. Of interest is material pertaining to logging, sawmilling, log transportation by flume and by tug and boom, firefighting, the work of early forest rangers, fire wardens, etc. Of course the names of people in the photographs, as well as the date and location would be very beneficial.

Any information on local sawmills such as the Davis Sayward sawmill that operated at Pilot Bay at the turn of the last century, Burden & Watson's Crawford Bay mill, or Wirzig's mill at Gray Creek would be especially appreciated.

Please contact the Riondel & Area Historical Society, Box 201, Riondel, BC V0B 1E0. Or call Susan Hulland at 250-227-9387. Her e-mail address is shulland@direct.ca

FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY TO SET UP CANADIAN OFFICE*

The Canada Committee of the Forest History Society, essentially comprising the Canadian Board members, developed an Action Plan for fostering forest history activities in Canada. The mission of the plan is to raise the profile of forest history in Canada through public education, historical research and archival preservation.

Approved at the FHS Board meeting which took place in Victoria on October 13, 2001, the plan aims to establish an office of the FHS in Ottawa, to be operated as a registered Canadian society. An FHS manager will be hired and share office space, phone and fax facilities with the Canadian Institute of Forestry. One of the main objectives is to build a network of contacts across the country to better identify needs for preserving historical materials and to search out opportunities for archiving and other historical activities.

The network would try to build on existing organizations such as CIF/IFC, RPF/ing.f. associations, Forest History Association of B.C., Societe historique du Canada/Canadian Historical Association (SHC/CHA), trade associations, archival associations, educational institutions and interested individuals.

The Canadian 'Chapter' will function as an FHS committee, strengthening the Canadian component and putting together a Canadian Forest History Strategic Development Plan that will consider such aspects as memberships and partnerships, forest history preservation, stories, articles and publications, research and scholarship. Canadian memberships and corporate memberships will add support for the Canadian operation. The intent of the Canadian 'Chapter' is that it will be a recognized Canadian charitable association.

*For a full report, see *The Forestry Chronicle*, November/December 2001 issue, page 960.



EX-FOREST SERVICE VESSEL SQUADRON NEWS

Excerpted from "The Anchor Watch" – Newsletter # 22

Last year's Ex-Forest Service Vessel Squadron Rendezvous was held from August 4 to 6 inclusive at Newcastle Island Marine Provincial Park, off Nanaimo. Boats in attendance were *Alpine Fir II*, *Forest Ranger II*, *Kwaietek*, *Poplar III* and *Silver Fir*. Constant winds in the Strait of Georgia prevented a number of smaller vessels from attending, as did prior engagements for several vessel owners. However, a number of owners made the trip without their vessels to partake in the annual festivities.

Everyone took great interest in a number of photographs provided by Tommy Edwards, who worked on the boats for many years at the Forest Service Maintenance Depot in Vancouver. The photographs are of the vessels while they were still in service and will be added to the Squadron's album.

At the Squadron's annual meeting, business discussed included their Endorsing Partner Membership in the Vancouver Maritime Museum, which holds the Squadron's archives, and financial matters. Robin Lakenes, of *Western Yew* has taken a keen interest in the history of the vessels and spent many hours in the provincial archives in Victoria. She is considered to be the Squadron's Historian/Archivist.

The *Western Yew* has a fascinating history. Built in 1946 by G.H. Oliver in North Vancouver, this 46-footer started out as a private yacht called the *Forynt*. The B.C. Forest Service purchased and renamed her in 1952. A sistership built by G.H. Oliver had been purchased in 1949 and renamed *Alpine Fir II*.

Western Yew operated from Pender Harbour for part of her working career and was auctioned off along with 11 other Forest Service vessels in 1984. The first private owner was Gordon McGowan, of Victoria. He sold her two years later to Howard Eddy and his wife, Kim Campbell, the newly-elected MLA for Point Grey. They lived aboard the *Western Yew* in Victoria, went on summer cruises and spent the occasional weekend exploring the Gulf Islands.

Howard and Kim parted company but Howard owned the boat until 1998, in spite of the fact that he had moved to Montreal and the *Western Yew* remained out west. The next owners, Marke Simmons and Carol Bird of Sidney, carried out a massive refit and then sold the boat to Robin and Louie Lakenes in 2000. They live aboard the *Western Yew* at Brinnon, Washington – on the Hood Canal.

The 2002 Rendezvous will be hosted by Cove Yachts at Maple Bay, east of Duncan. The dates are August 3 to 5, inclusive. For more information about the activities of the squadron, please contact Doug Mitchell at 599 Norris Road, Sidney BC V8L 5M8. Phone (250) 656-2959. E-mail: dsmitchell@shaw.ca



JOHN PARMINTER RECEIVES ABCPF AWARD

John Parminter received the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters' Distinguished Forester Award on February 28, 2002 at the ABCPF's 54th Forestry Conference and Annual Meeting in Nanaimo. The award is presented to registered professional foresters who have "provided outstanding service to the forestry profession and furthered the Association's principles." Parminter is the 29th recipient of the award.

In presenting the award, Mike Larock, outgoing Association President, said "Mr. Parminter has combined his keen interest in forest history and his careful analytical skills to document the roles fire has played in the forests of British Columbia. His belief in the importance of examining the past to prepare for the future is the thread that connects his work in forest history and forest ecology."

In accepting the award, John Parminter paid tribute to the other co-founders of the Forest History Association of B.C. – the late Jack Thirgood, Gerry Burch, Bill Young, George Brandak and Clay Perry – as well as the various Executive and general members who have and are doing so much to preserve B.C.'s forest history and heritage. Indeed, the existence of this very newsletter stems from a 1981 meeting between Jack Thirgood, John Parminter and Ronald Fahl, who was then with the Forest History Society. The newsletter predates the official formation of the Forest History Association of B.C.

The Distinguished Forester Award was first introduced in 1970 and is the ABCPF's highest honour. Past recipients of the award have included such well-known foresters as the late Malcolm Knapp, Bill Young, Dr. Peter Pearse and Ike Barber.



NEW PUBLICATIONS

Parsons, Gerri. 2001. Sawdust in my gotches – a story of a city girl turned sawmiller. Trafford Publishing, Victoria, B.C. Catalogue # 01-0169. ISBN 1-55212-769-9. CDN \$29.95, USD \$20.95 316 p. <http://www.trafford.com/robots/01-0169.html>

"Gerri Parsons was born and raised in the big city of Buffalo, New York. She met a Canadian soldier in May of 1943 and after not seeing him for four and a half years married him in 1948. At that time Charlie owned a small sawmill so Gerri's life of working in a sawmill began two days after they were married. They have raised five children, have 18 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Gerri and Charlie have lived all their married life in Powell River, BC. Together they were involved in many community groups and joined CUSO after selling their mill. The CUSO experience in Papua, New Guinea was one of the highlights of her life."

Reed, Les. 2001. Two centuries of softwood lumber war between Canada and the United States. Prepared for the Free Trade Lumber Council, Montreal, P.Q. 78 p. Available as a PDF file from <http://www.ftlc.org>

“Softwood lumber has been the single most important irritant in trade relations between the two countries since the early 1800’s. Why is this so? What accounts for the longevity and bitterness of the dispute? It has never been more timely to look for answers to these questions. Close involvement in the controversy over several decades has prompted the author to search for insights in a fresh direction, based on the conviction that historical perspective may hold the key. Surprisingly, a thoughtful chronology of The Lumber War has not been attempted before in any depth. Nor has the current dispute been framed in its obvious context.”

Siebert, Myrtle. 2001. From fjord to floathouse, one family’s journey from the farmlands of Norway to the coast of British Columbia. Catalogue # 01-0464. ISBN 1-55369-062-1. CDN \$25.00, USD \$16.50 239 p. <http://www.trafford.com/robots/01-0464.html>

“In 1898 Vancouver, the flip of a coin sends his partner to the Klondike gold rush and leaves young Norwegian immigrant, Andy Forberg, to carve a living from trees found along the waterways of the remote coast of British Columbia. One hundred years later a granddaughter, driven by a need to explore her family heritage, experiences a heart-warming welcome at the farm he left so long ago. ‘From fjord to Floathouse’ is the saga of hardy pioneers living in snug floating homes and sustained by surrounding sea and forest. Their chosen life meant communication and transportation by water only, with semi-weekly shipments of mail and staple supplies (anything they could not shoot, catch, or pick).”



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: John Parminter, # 3 – 130 Niagara Street, Victoria, BC V8V 1E9. Phone (250) 384-5642 home or (250) 356-6810 office. E-mail: jvparminter@telus.net

Membership in the association is \$10 yearly, or \$45 for five years. Please send dues to the Treasurer: Edo Nyland, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, BC V8L 4E8. Phone (250) 656-9276. E-mail: edonon@islandnet.com

The President: Stan Chester, can be reached at 5686 Keith Road, West Vancouver, BC V7W 2N5. Phone (604) 921-9880. E-mail: stanchester@shaw.ca

(The FHABC turned 20 on March 29, 2002 – so Happy Birthday to us!)