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**FORESTRY IN THE CHILLIWACK DISTRICT
by J.A. MAHOOD
(date unknown)**

I came to the Chilliwack Valley in 1902 on a visit to my grandparents, who had homesteaded near the present site of the Abbotsford airport. Farming among stumps four and five feet in diameter was difficult and unrewarding. The debris from logging had to be cleared off, brush removed, and grass sown for cattle feed. Getting the ground broken for crops was back-breaking, frustrating work that few people today remember. Being Irish, my grandparents knew how to raise potatoes and pigs. Without this skill the people would not have survived to clear the land.

As a young man I went to the Yukon in the late stages of the Gold Rush days. In 1910 I married Miss Patterson, a Glasgow girl visiting Burnaby. This proved to be the most beneficial decision of my life. After soldiering in 1914-1918, I returned to the Fraser Valley as a forest ranger for the B.C. Forest Service.



Recycled paper

In those days the Chilliwack Ranger District started just south of Lytton, extended to New Westminster, and included all the land from the U.S. border to the headwaters of the Pitt, Stave, Harrison and other drainages flowing into the Fraser River. This vast area was virtually undeveloped and unknown as to its forest resources. Before 1920 there was almost no forestry activity east of Hope. Westward, along the C.P.R. line, near Ruby Creek, Harrison Mills, and the Mission area there were some small sawmills cutting mainly railway ties.

Logging was mainly by horse and just to supply local demand in the course of land clearing. In the Rosedale area and along the sloughs to New Westminster, long before 1921, oxen had been used to skid logs to the river to supply sawmills downriver. I remember many old skidroads with cross stringers of logs that loggers had to paint with grease to get their skidding done.

In those days stumps were cut ten or twelve feet above the ground so that the flared butts would not dig into the ground in the skidding process. There were no power saws and the fallers had to balance on springboards to chop their undercuts and pull their long handsaws back and forth.

It was a grand sight to see two big "Swedes" stripped to the waist moving muscles in rhythm to fall a big tree. Men worked together, in pairs, in those days. Also, there were not many fat men. They worked too hard.

In the 1920s, operators on Harrison Lake began to open up railway logging shows. P.B. Anderson went into Green Point and ultimately had many miles of railway in that area. South of Cultus Lake the Campbell River Timber Company, that operated from White Rock, logged Columbia Valley using a logging railway and moved the logs to their mill near White Rock via the American side.

Near Abbotsford, the Abbotsford Timber and Trading Company, which had been developed by the pioneer Trethewey family, was winding up a railway show that covered a large area south and west of Abbotsford. The Pretty family were active near Harrison Mills and shortly after Chehalis began a railway show. It is still an active area, with trucks of Canadian Forest Products, Ltd., hauling logs out of the hills west of Harrison.

In the late 1920s the famous Green Timbers area west of Fry's Corner was logged by the M.B. King Company. This was one of the last pieces of timber on the flatlands south of the Fraser in the area from Rosedale (in the east) to New Westminster (in the west). In those days, all over the valley homesteaders were clearing land for agriculture and as rapidly as loggers completed a show the ranchers moved in. In the Langley area, chicken ranches replaced the forest. Near Chilliwack, formerly forested land near the natural farming areas was taken over for cattle grazing.

As a forest ranger, a great deal of my work was administering the *Homestead Act*. There were scores of small sawmills scattered throughout the valley that bought logs from the ranchers that cleared off the land that the big railway logging shows did not reach. Without a market for sawlogs the ranchers would not have had a cash income. Horse-drawn wagons moving the logs on crude dirt roads, mud up to the axles, were a steady event. In the twenties and early thirties, trucks, the forerunners of modern truck logging began operating. The early truck loggers used fore-and-aft plank roads – they were common in the Rosedale area up on Promontory Mountain.

Orion Bowman ran a sawmill at the foot of Promontory Road well before 1910. He provided a market for the ranchers' logs and cut lumber for them. Without this mill a lot of farms would never have been cleared. His sons, including Oliver Bowman, and a daughter carry on the business and I understand they have a fine modern mill. It is one of the oldest continually operating sawmills in the province.

Before the 1920s, near Stave Lake, the shingle men had a method of logging that is now but a memory. They built a flume to carry shingle bolts from the steep ground down to shingle mills on the flatlands. These structures were engineered to wind down the contours and carry water that floated the bolts. The hard work to build the trestles that supported the flume was expensive and difficult to engineer. In the modern era I don't think there are any men left that could build such flumes and not many fellows who would be willing to lift shingle bolts into a flume by hand.

Incidentally, the power saw was not yet invented and handsaws were used to cut the logs and wedges to split out the bolts. Chinese and Japanese workmen were used in the hills, and people used to joke that they never sent a payroll into the woods, just bags of rice.

One of the big shows of the railway logging era was the Abernethy-Lougheed Company near Haney. Their log dump was at Kanaka Creek where it joins the Fraser River. The railway went north to what is now the Malcolm F. Knapp Research Forest of the University of British Columbia. The company finished its operations in Haney in 1928 and moved up the Coast, only to go out of business during the Depression of the 1930s.

That Depression set back all of the logging industry and for nearly five years almost nothing was done in the valley. The wheels began to roll again in about 1935 when B & K Logging opened up the Vedder River show. They built a railway that used the Vedder Canal dike and crossed the river at Vedder Crossing, then went up the south side of the Chilliwack/Vedder River nearly to Chilliwack Lake. Was a tough show in mountains and sidehills, but the bottom land turned out some of the best Douglas-fir peeler logs ever harvested.

Paul Jorgenson was the engineer that designed that railway location and the bridges. Albert Wells, one of the old-time loggers, was superintendent. In 1938, the year of the big fires, the Campbell River fire got all of the newspaper attention, but a much bigger and more costly fire raged up the Chilliwack River. It nearly wiped out the B & K operation and they withdrew from the valley to log the Vedder Mountain and Cultus Lake areas.

People will remember the big railway trestle that crossed the Cultus Lake road at Vedder Crossing. This was one of the last railway trestles ever built in B.C.

Also in the thirties, the Silver-Skagit operation flourished. This was one of the first really large truck logging shows. It was organized to clear out the areas in Canada to be flooded for the hydro development on the U.S. side of the border. The logs from the American side were moved to the Fraser River, west of Hope, over a high quality truck road. Huge specially designed trucks, with 20,000 board foot payloads, worked around the clock. Many of the methods, pioneered at great expense on that show, were transferred into practice that has evolved into the modern, efficient truck logging of today.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s Harrison Lake became a centre of operations and Earl Brett, the Clark brothers, and one or two other Chilliwack men developed logging operations on Harrison Lake.

I remember flying in with Earl Brett in one of those early open cockpit machines he operated. Coming around a hillside we hit an air pocket that bounced a camera case out of the aircraft. It caught on the rudder and jammed the steering. Earl side slipped down the hill and manoeuvred to a hazardous landing on the lake. I had to swim to the tail and pull off the offending strap so we could take off again. Earl not only pioneered logging but flying as well.

During the war years (World War II), all through the valley ranchers and loggers were busy getting out birch, cottonwood, and Douglas-fir suitable for plywood manufacture. This material, particularly the birch, was used in the manufacture of Mosquito bombers, one of the planes that helped to win the war.

All through my time in the Forest Service, fire control was a big part of the job. In the land clearing days, the settlers had the fires going steadily, and they used to flare up. Some of that land around Abbotsford was burned so many times, year after year, that I wondered if we could ever get people educated to be careful with fire. Then there were the big fires south of Hope near what is now Manning Park. These fires were caused by lightning – by the time men got to them the fires were out of control.

All my life I fought fires, and somehow or other we controlled them with hand tools, guards, and backfires. Nowadays the bulldozer builds the guards, roads are everywhere, and aircraft are used to drop retardant. Fire control is so much easier now that we do not have these big fires anymore.

I retired from the Forest Service in 1950 and since that time forestry has changed. Logging is no longer cut-and-get-out. Foresters schedule the harvest to have cut equal growth. Chilliwack centres the Dewdney Public Sustained Yield Unit. The allowable annual cut is about 60,600 thousand cubic feet. This can go on forever, provided reforestation follows logging.

This sustained yield unit has over one million acres. I am told that each 250 acres under forest management provides work for three people directly and indirectly. This means that the one million acres of public forest in the trade area of Chilliwack provides about 12,000 jobs. These, in turn, provide purchasing power that helps support the storekeepers, garages, carpenters, and all the people who work in our society.

As I look around I marvel at all the second-growth forests, including plantations that cover the forest lands I have seen logged in more than eighty years. I worked at Parksville in 1918 and on the highway from Alberni, looking over the Parksville flatlands there was a sea of snags and slash. It was all reseeded and now there is a fine young forest that is ready for logging again.

Behind Mission, up the Sylvester Road and on Sumas Mountain there are now forests better than the old. I remember Sumas Mountain in the 1920s when much of it was clearcut and fire-blackened. At that time I despaired of ever seeing forests there again. I am happy to say how wrong I was.

After watching this valley develop I think that the people have one treasure they must never destroy. That is the forest. Happily, British Columbia has one of the best forest management systems in the world. The land is owned by the public and they benefit by the income that goes to the government, the jobs that provide the economy and standard of living. It is no idle comment that about 50 cents out of every dollar transferred from person to person, even in Chilliwack, stems from the public forest.

There are people who call themselves conservationists, who would like to take public lands out of sustained yield forest production. These people may talk about the need for recreation. There are acres and acres of recreation lands available and just because lands are used for forestry does not mean that they cannot also be used to provide recreation, wildlife, and fish. Our greatest resource is our productive land and if I learned anything in my lifetime it was that we must farm our forests. That we are doing this makes me proud to have worked my lifetime for the Forest Service.



The Mahood family was to have a profound effect upon my life. It was headed by James (Jim), who was the forest ranger with headquarters in Chilliwack. With his Scottish wife, Bessie, he had five children: Isabel, Ian, Brian, and twins Ernest (Ernie) and Ray.

Jim Mahood was my initial contact in forestry, when I learned in early 1935 that there were two job opportunities in forestry available that summer, for forest ranger assistants. It was Jim who arranged for me to have an interview shortly afterwards with Mr. Joe Smith, the forestry supervisor. I met him in his car in front of the barber shop in Sardis for that initial interview. The one observation he made that remained forever with me was: "I don't know your politics and I don't want to know, though this job is with the government, it is apolitical!" I was to remember that word of caution in the years ahead!

I often accompanied Jim Mahood on his rounds; he confided in me and became almost a father figure to me. He taught me many things about forestry and the B.C. Forest Service that would stand me in good stead later.

Jim was employed by the federal forest service in the days before 1930 when the federal government had jurisdiction over the Railway Belt, a band of land through British Columbia which extended a distance of ten miles on both sides of the Canadian Pacific Railway, that had been granted to the federal government by the province in return for construction of the railway. After 1930, when the Railway Belt was returned to the jurisdiction of the province, Jim became a provincial forest ranger with headquarters in Chilliwack. He thus had a wealth of experience and was probably one of the most respected forest rangers in the province. I was indeed fortunate to have him as a teacher!

I was to work as a forest ranger assistant in Chilliwack for three summers: 1935, 1936 and 1937.

From the reminiscences of Jack Ker



Gerald Smedley Andrews, 1903 - 2005

Gerald Smedley Andrews, born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, passed away peacefully in Victoria, B.C. on December 5, 2005. His passing culminates a long life rich in accomplishment and service. Highlights include teaching at Big Bar Creek and Kelly Lake, B.C. (1922-1926), obtaining a forestry degree from the University of Toronto (1930), working as Party Chief with the Surveys Division of the B.C. Forest Service (1930-1939), post-graduate studies in aerial photogrammetry at Oxford, England and Dresden, Germany (1932-1934); mapping the Normandy Coast in advance of the D Day invasion for which he was awarded an MBE and on return to B.C., laying the foundation for a mapping service second to none in the world, as Surveyor General and Director of Surveys and Mapping (1951-1968).

Upon retirement he undertook several short term projects: one for the Federal Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the other for CIDA teaching airphoto interpretation to graduate engineers at the University of Paraiba, Brazil. He was active in the B.C. Historical Society, and wrote prodigiously on matters related to history and surveying. His first book was "Métis Outpost" a tale of youthful years at Kelly Lake, and 2 adventurous packhorse trips through the Rocky Mountains before the advent of roads. He travelled extensively in his modified Ford van at home and abroad, spending many memorable summers at his cabin in Atlin. Later in life he received recognition for his achievements with an Honorary Doctorate in Engineering from the University of Victoria, 1988; The Order of British Columbia, 1990 and the Order of Canada, 1991.

EX-FOREST SERVICE VESSEL SQUADRON NEWS
Excerpted from "The Anchor Watch" – Newsletter # 24

Last year's rendezvous was held at the Vancouver Maritime Museum which very kindly provided moorage in their Heritage Boat Harbour and a room in the museum for our AGM. We are indebted to the museum's executive director, Jim Delgado, for kindly welcoming us back for our third rendezvous there. We also thank Lisa McIntosh, the museum's program director for arranging moorage and having some boats leave the harbour for the weekend to make room for us. Moorage space was tighter than in 2000 because of the presence of the 130+ foot heritage tug *Sea Lion*, which did not vacate its berth. As a result, we had to discourage a few member boats from attending. Squadron vessels attending were: *Dean Ranger*, *Forest Ranger II*, *Kwaietek*, *Nesika*, *Poplar III*, *Silver Fir*, *Sitka Spruce*, *Tamarack*, and *Western Yew*

We were also very privileged to have a special guest vessel join us for the rendezvous. She was the 53-foot *Coast Ranger*, the last remaining B.C. Forest Service ranger launch operating on the coast. It took a while to get approval from government officials for the visit, but Bob Cuthbert and other members of the BCFS office in Prince Rupert, *Coast Ranger's* home base, enthusiastically supported it from the beginning. They even made up a volunteer crew for the vessel's passage down to Vancouver and back. Bob Cuthbert and Matt Lamb-Yorski from *Coast Ranger* enthusiastically joined us in all our activities.

Our weekend activities included a potluck supper on the dock, a group dinner at Bridges waterfront restaurant in False Creek, and ringside seats aboard the top deck of *Sea Lion* for a fantastic Saturday night "Symphony of Fire" fireworks display over English Bay. We had quite a number of visitors to our vessels, including Tommy Edwards, one-time Superintendent of the Forest Service Marine Depot. Robin of *Western Yew* kindly set up a display canopy on the floats with all sorts of information about our squadron. She made squadron banners to fly, provided name tags and party favours. She also provided attending ladies with yellow sun visors bearing a replica of our squadron burgee.

With unanimous approval of the members present, *Coast Ranger* was made an honorary member of the Squadron. Bob Cuthbert & Matt Lamb-Yorski accepted a large squadron burgee on behalf of *Coast Ranger* and extended their appreciation for the very warm welcome they received from members. They were promised a framed certificate of Honorary Membership for *Coast Ranger* (which has since been sent). *Coast Ranger* left at the crack of dawn on Monday for the long passage home. Because of increasing winds and seas, a few boats stayed at the museum an extra day while others moved down to Fishermen's Wharf at False Creek.

Our rendezvous for 2006 will be held Saturday August 5th - Monday August 7th at the Brentwood Bay Lodge Marina.



RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Apsey, Mike. 2006. What's all this got to do with the price of 2x4's? University of Calgary Press, Calgary, Alberta. ISBN 1-55238-188-9. 346 p. \$34.95 + GST

Gordon, Katherine. 2006. Made to measure: a history of land surveying in British Columbia. Sononis Press, Winlaw, B.C. ISBN 1-55039-153-4. 320 p. \$34.95

Klenman, Allan and Larry McPhail. 2006. Axe makers of North America: a collection of axe history and manufacturers. Second Edition. Available from Larry McPhail, 2855 H. Street Road, Blaine, Washington 98230. \$24.95 + \$5.00 shipping (US dollars).

Rajala, Richard A. 2005. Feds, forests, and fire: a century of Canadian forestry innovation. Transformation Series 13, Canada Science and Technology Museum, PO Box 9724, Stn T, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 5A3. ISBN 0-660-18720-5. xi + 116 p. \$20 + GST

Sherwood, Jay. 2004. Surveying northern British Columbia: a photo journal of Frank Swannell. Caitlin Press Inc., Madeira Park, B.C. ISBN 1-894759-05-2. \$29.95



FHABC CHANGE OF ADDRESS

As noted below, our long-time treasurer, Edo Nyland has a new address. Please use it when sending in your membership dues and charitable donations.



This newsletter is the official organ of the Forest History Association of British Columbia. 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, # 102 - 9993 Fourth Street, Sidney BC V8L 2Z6 Phone (250) 656-9276. E-mail: edonon@islandnet.com

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