Upcoming Events

2020

April 19 Friends of the BC Archives, Victoria, will host a free talk by R. Brian McDaniel “Ocean Falls: After the Whistle”

May 7-9 Heritage BC Conference: The Culture of Heritage: Place and Space in Chilliwack.

All summer: Logging sports at various locations; details in the June issue.

June 5-7 British Columbia Historical Federation Conference in Surrey, BC “Back to the Future: Celebrating Heritage in the 21st century”

Late Sep FHABC AGM Weekend Prince George BC

Next Issue: June 2020

- More of the Burch and International series
  - something from our directors—they never miss an issue
  - a book report—submissions encouraged
  - Your Story? Contact us at newsletter.editor@fhabc.org

WebLinks: if you are reading the online versions of our newsletters in your browser, don’t forget that you can click the underlined text to go to relevant info on the web.

Skid Roads in North Vancouver.

From Eric Andersen: “North Vancouver forest management consultants ENFOR (Mike Greig and Richard Kyle) are fans and supporters of Forest History. Check out their page on “Skid Roads in North Vancouver”, the result of some curiosity and research into the past of their consulting office neighbourhood.

Every forest industry company website should have such a page, and please link to us!!

Reconstructing the Historical Forests of British Columbia: One Map at a Time

by Claire Williams and Ira Sutherland. Ira is pursuing a Phd in Forestry at UBC, researching “Ecosystem services recovery in an era of novel forest disturbances”. Claire is a Forestry Archivist at UBC’s Rare Books and Special Collections Library, and a FHABC Director.

Many have wondered: what would the forests of British Columbia have been like a hundred years ago? Imaginations begin to swirl, perhaps, conveying images of contiguous old-growth forests along a pristine coast or a mosaic of forest stands with differing ages throughout a frequently-burned interior.

But, today, the importance of answering this question matters beyond curiosity and nostalgia. Understanding the historical forest conditions of BC can be used to contextualize challenges facing foresters and society today. For instance, following the mountain pine beetle epidemic, researchers have identified that mature stands of interior lodgepole pine (Pinus contorta) were less common in the interior before a century of fire suppression had begun. In the absence of fire, interior pine stands became older and denser, providing a contiguous cover of old pines, which make the perfect host for mountain pine beetle to reproduce. Had the forests of interior BC not changed from their historical conditions, the mountain pine beetle outbreak would have not been so rapid and severe, eventually impacting 18 million ha of BC forests. Although these landscape changes are recognized by those mindful of BC’s forest history, they have rarely been mapped and measured across BC’s diverse terrain.

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From the President

By Richard Dominy

Welcome to another great loaded issue of the newsletter!

I am happy to have a cover article written by Ira and Claire, two of our new young members. Claire is also on our FHABC board.

We attended both the AGMs of the Truck Loggers Association and the Association of BC Forest Professionals in the last two months; summaries of these are included on Page 2.

Book and Media report this edition are quite extensive; have a look on page 3.

Introduction and a big welcome to Sarah Giesbrecht - a new board member and archivist at UNBC. See Page 7.

See a significant viewpoint about Forest management & silviculture in the 1950’s from Gerry Burch on Page 12.

Congratulations and a big thank you to Board-member Claire Williams, an archivist at UBC, for recommending that we register our publication. We now have our own International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) – see details on page 16.

Here is a link to our membership form that you are requested to print off and send with your membership, details on Page 3.

Upcoming events are listed on Page 16.

Have a great spring. The next edition will host a free talk by R. Brian McDaniel “Ocean Falls: After the Whistle”

Issue #105
Mar 2020

look for #106 June 2020

Ideas deadline April 15

Website: fhabc.org

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Back-issue Link

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Two outreaches: TLA & ABCFP conventions

Inputs by David Brownstein, Eric Andersen, and Kat Spencer, edited by Dave Florence.

Several dedicated officers of FHABC continued the practice of presenting the organization well at two important meetings during January and February. A flurry of emails before each event assured smooth administration.

The first event was the annual Truck Loggers Association TLA Convention & Trade show held at the Bayshore Hotel in Vancouver BC Jan 16-18.

David Brownstein reported that “Kat Spencer paved the way for us to get non-profit donated table space in the hallway that was later upgraded to a high traffic area booth because of booth cancellations caused by the Lower Mainland snowstorm. On the down side, the weather also prevented Eric Andersen from bringing some poster-board displays that he built. We had hoped to sell copies of the TLA history book, as a way of facilitating our entry into their event. However, in the end that didn’t happen—they are all sold out with no plans yet to print additional copies.

In addition to Newsletters and application forms, the display included a laptop running with 1930s/40s National Film Board footage of Island logging.

Booth staffers talked up archival donations, the newsletter and Facebook group, which interested many of the visitors.

David attended on Thursday and Friday, and Claire came down to help staff the Friday afternoon slot.

David estimated that over the entire event, our small booth reached out to around 30 or 40 people. We managed to recruit one new member, from Lizzie Bay Logging Ltd in Pemberton.

Our second event was the annual Association of BC Forest Professionals ABCFP 2020 convention held in Nanaimo Feb 5-7.

The Inductee Luncheon is a lunch and ceremony held to celebrate the enrolled and transferring member’s achievement of completing the registration process.

As reported last year, Director Kat Spencer again presented the FHABC annual valedictory book awards to the selected ABCFP RPF and RFT inductees of 2019. Recipients were Erin Poulsen RPF and Stephanie Help RFT.

The books presented were STORIES OF A WEST COAST LOGGER, by Robert Alan Williams and TOM WRIGHT - RECOLLECTIONS OF A PIONEER, by John Parminter.

Kat reported that “many connections were made at the Friday booth. New members joined and many inductees were intrigued by the fantastic display and stated the history of forestry was a draw for them to join the profession.

The focus of conversations and Kat’s address at the inductees luncheon was to help attendees understand how their experiences and knowledge can help the Forest History Association fill in the gaps of information from early history to modern practices.

A report by Eric Andersen about a visit while nearby to the Nanaimo Community Archives appears on page 16.

Congratulations and thank you to our dedicated board members for taking the time to do these outreaches for us.

In any case, I think it’s time that the logging sector be given more autonomy, responsibility and broader authority to run its own affairs. I also think it needs to be insulated from the highs and lows of corporate thinking – particularly from fish-eyed controllers seeking to reduce inventories to impractical and dangerous levels – there are some huge monuments to such tampering.

I think too, although I can’t find anyone to agree with me, that labour negotiations in logging should be divorced completely from the mills. For too long the woods have been the battleground in the struggle between the unions and the corporations, with the logger coming out on the short end, particularly with respect to his stability of employment and his earning level.

I’m pretty sure that if any or all of these changes are made a big step will have been made to improve the lot and the image of the logger.”

Percy, George E. “[Obituary]”, November 2019


Improving the Logger’s Image”, The Forestry Chronicle April 1980

“President’s Address”, Pacific Logging Congress, Vancouver B.C., 1978
George E. Percy on the Logger’s Need for Autonomy
By Eric Andersen, who is a Director, former Newsletter editor, active article contributor, lead on the Facebook Group BC Forest History, and Squamish district councillor

George Edward Percy (January 30, 1918 – November 13, 2019) was, as his family has described him, “a builder of businesses ... and more. He wore responsibilities comfortably, was a respected leader, and a trusted advisor – sought out by many. A deep thinker and concisely communicator, there was never any doubt about where he stood.

George Percy was great communicator for the logging industry. His observations and advice delivered in various speeches and articles now several decades ago are worthwhile to revisit and consider.

Son of G.D. Percy, Merrill & Ring Lumber Co. camp superintendent at Duncan Bay and then at Squamish, he started in the industry in the early 1930s as a teenager. He left Squamish in 1940 for Campbell River, where he was to start a family. After stints at Elk River Timber and other Vancouver Island camps he became camp superintendent for Alaska Pine from 1945 at Jones Lake and then at Jordan River. He was appointed head of log production at Alaska Pine’s head office in 1951.

George Percy left Alaska Pine in 1956 to form his own contracting company. By the late 1970s the Percy Logging group was one of the largest operators on the coast, with operations at Knight Inlet, Powell Lake and elsewhere.

In recounting the start and the early course of his career in the industry, he would claim it gave him insight.

One is sure of and that is whether we have representatives for management and labour or not, logger must talk to logger about logging problems and the sooner mill men and mill problems are put out of our picture the better.

What needs to be understood, he observed, was the significant, basic, fundamental fact that in the case of the mills the machines set the pace for the men and in the woods the men set the pace of the machines – a hell of a big difference.

In his President’s Address to the 1978 Pacific Logging Congress, George Percy spoke on structural changes he had witnessed, “In my opinion, logging has been left too as much of a subsidiary to the total industry, considering its true importance and the nature of its problems. Over the last decade or two, most of the woods oriented people have disappeared from the top management echelon of the timber industry and have been replaced by men of other backgrounds. This has left a vacuum in the understanding of logging needs and, in some cases, a lack of interest which sooner or later will have to be corrected. ... Decisions which affect logging must be made for logging’s sake, and the ebbs and flows of funding in the logging sector must be guided in the best...

More Book and Media Reports
Todd Kristensen posted a link to a two-part series called Pitch and Timber: A History of Human Relationships with Trees in Alberta, hosted by Retroactive, Exploring Alberta’s Past.

Claire Williams, FHABC Director, posted an interesting story about the Powell River Company Pipe Band, later to become the MacMillan, Bloedel, and Powell River Pipe Band, which she read while entering the archival descriptions for the MacMillan Bloedel and Powell River Company sous-fonds in the UBC Rare Books database.


Membership: New or lapsed member? $20.00 annually, or three years for $50.00.

To join, renew or correspondence: Forest History Association of B.C.
427 Walker Avenue
Ladysmith, BC V9L 1V7
Print a membership form from the website, or provide equivalent information on paper, mail, and contact information has not changed.

To join, or renew by email & e-transfer: Email: info@fhabc.org Website: fhabc.org
We require your email address for delivery of the newsletter, notice of meetings, etc.; and we recommend you provide a phone number for short-contact notice.

BC Society Act regulations require that you also provide us with your complete mailing address, including postal code.

Printed Newsletters
We invite members who want a printed version of the newsletter to make their own arrangements. Some prefer the 8.5”x11” version on a home printer; some prefer to take the tabloid 11”x17” version to Staples or other sources of tabloid printing and make it booklet-style. Some choose black and white, some print it in colour. The choice is yours.

FHABC Newsletter team:
Editor: Dave Florence
Reviews: David Morgan , John Parminter, Mike Meagher; Terry Simmons, Eric Andersen, Richard Dominy, David Brownstein
Issue #105 article contributors: Claire Williams and Ira Sutherland; Bob McFarlane; Gerry Burch, Sarah Greensbrecht, Eric Andersen, Kat Spencer, Dave Florence, David Brownstein, Richard Dominy
Submissions?: Yes, Please! email us at newsletter.editor@fhabc.org

2019/20 FHABC Officers:
President, Richard Dominy
Vice Pres., Terry Simmons
Secretary, Mike Meagher
Treasurer, TBA (Pres. acting)

Webmaster:
David Brownstein

Six Directors at large:
Richard Dominy
Sarah Greensbrecht
Katherine Spencer
David Morgan
Dave Florence

Book and Media Reports
... selected from our Facebook Group Page
Group member Daniel Marshall shared a book report from The Ormsby Review, "Basketry from the Ozette Village Archaeological Site", which had been in the southernmost territory of the Nootka (Nuu-chah-nulth) people of the west coast of Vancouver Island.

FHABC director Sarah Greensbrecht shared a link to a 13-minute silent Corten Neronovitch Logging and Sawmills film showing logging practices in the Prince George area in the 1950s.

FHABC director Eric Andersen shared several links:
- a comprehensive collection of railroad operations photos (Canadian Forest Products’ Nimkisk Valley) from Vancouver Island photographer and railway enthusiast Greg Kemnur.
- an Ormsby Book review on The Last Whistle: Hillecrest Lumber Company Ltd., 1917-2018 by Cecil Ashley
- material about the passing of "logger-statesman George Percy" (Jan. 30, 1918- Nov. 13, 2019) which will be expanded in a newsletter article
- a link to “The Dickens Forestry Collection, which has approximately 3400 images of forestry practices from the Pacific Northwest, with a focus on the Prince George area.

... More Book and Media Reports to the left...
Interest to reconstruct BC’s historical forests has prompted a major effort underway at the University of British Columbia to compile and digitize the historical forest inventories of BC from 1918 to 2018. This work is part of the PhD project of Ira Sutherland, supervised by Dr. Jeanine Rhemtulla in the UBC Faculty of Forestry.

A milestone in this project has recently been completed: the team from the UBC Faculty of Forestry in collaboration with the UBC Library have digitized an entire forest cover map series for 1958, which depicts the extent of 121-year-old areas and immature forests present in BC as of 1958. This collection of 149 maps were made through the Forest Inventory Area Reference Program created through the Forest Inventory Area Reference Program.”

The large areas of yellow colour in the 1957 map (coded “not satisfactorily re-stocked” (NSR) areas) can be seen as having matured somewhat in the google maps on the previous page (figure 1). Figure 2 is one of the digitized maps showing a percentage of the Forest Fuels Management Division (FFMD) forest coverage map. The large areas of yellow in the 1957 map (coded “not satisfactorily re-stocked” (NSR) areas) can be seen as having matured somewhat in the google maps on the previous page (figure 1). Figure 2 is one of the digitized maps showing a percentage of the Forest Fuels Management Division (FFMD) forest coverage map.

The 1958 map is now available online through the Forest Inventory Area Reference Program. The maps of the 1950s series are now digitized and made available to download on the UBC digital repository, Open Collections at https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/ffsd.

### About the Project

#### Beginnings

The first challenge in this compilation effort was to identify available province-wide historical forest inventories. A key moment was in June of 2019 when Ira Sutherland and Dr. Jeanine Rhemtulla visited the UBC’s Rare Books and Special Collections to look at the MacMillan Bloedel fonds. There they were met by Evan Thomberry, Geographic Information Systems Librarian, Sally Taylor, Interim Head of Woodward Library, and Claire Williams, Forestry Archivist.

After opening and perusing several boxes of the extensive collection, a set of maps originating from the B.C. Provincial Forest Inventory Program in the 1950s was agreed to be the gold ticket item. MacMillan Bloedel had kept the maps on reference as part of the corporate library and archives, which they donated, along with their historic records to UBC’s Rare Books and Special Collections in the late 1980s.

The next challenge was then to make these dusty maps widely available to the public. A plan was hatched to scan, create item-level metadata, and georeference each of the 149 maps in the Interim Forest Cover Series. The process of geo-georeferencing takes an ordinary digital map and locates it in geographic information space so that it can be further processed and analyzed alongside other spatial data.

The map envelopes, which reported the timber volume within each map sheet area, would also be scanned, thus conserving the Inventory Programs 1958 estimate of BC’s standing timber. Many readers of this newsletter will be familiar with the BC Provincial Forest Inventory Program (and anyone who is not might read the wonderful accounts made available through FHABC’s website https://fhabc.org/documents/BC3S-inventory-history-part-2.pdf. Now, many years of work that went into that program have been preserved and given a second (digital) life, where researchers of the future may

(Continued from page 1) Forest History Maps

(Continued from page 12) “gerry” both private lands, and on this new tenure: TFL’s. But, this latter tenure required support from the government in the way of incentives to convince industry to adopt forestry projects. The government responded favorably by establishing of a system whereby approved costs could be offset against the stumpage rates for the adjacent TFL cutting permits in the ensuing year.

Meanwhile, foresters were comparing the various management regimes to determine which programs were acceptable to the Forest Service, which ones would have a favorable impact on the AAC, and which ones would be practical to carry out, in view of the reduced rotations being adopted by some companies, and with new forest products (plywood) being developed that might include increased prices for logs with clearer wood.

With all of these decisions on their mind, B.C. foresters were slowly adopting new forest cover management regimes, as follows:

---Pre-commercial thinning (or spacing) ---the target number of stems to be left after spacing varied by company, but it was between 300 to 450 stems per acre ---it was determined that for efficiency, and in most cases, this practice should be carried out only when stand diameters were small enough to be cut with an axe, or machete, and not necessarily by the use of power saws. Thus, the first commercial thinning project. And, although the fact that such logs were defect free, and well suited to a sawmill designed for small logs, the age-old complaint of wide rings per inch was raised by many as a reason for either lower log values, or arguments against this practice.

Field foresters also felt that much of the material produced should be considered outside of the AAC because the harvested understory trees would probably have died before the rotation age was reached, and therefore, their volume would not be in the inventory. Because of the reduction in harvest age, particularly on the coast, very little commercial thinning is being carried out in B.C. managed forests today. Because of the trend towards the utilization of trees 12 to 12.5 feet in diameter, I still think this is a viable management practice for our second-growth stands, as is being done in stands adjacent to communities to fire-proof them.

In summary, all of these practices that could enhance the AAC’s in area-based tenures in B.C. are generally not being adopted by the licences because no incentives are provided by the government today!
Forest Management and Silvicultural Planning in 1950's!

By Gerry Burch

Fascinating insights of forest management by an industry leader. Third of a four-part series of writing by Gerry Burch, whose bio can be found in the UBC Library Gerry Burch fond.

Very little forestry planning concerning the management of forest stands in B.C. occurred until the new tenure-Forest Management Licences (now, Tree Farm Licences) was adopted in the early ‘50’s.

This tenure brought about the hiring of foresters in the companies, and demanded the submission of Management Plans, including the preparation of an allowable cut for the new areas. This was the start of forest planning, for which most foresters were ill-prepared. The main ingredients of the AAC formula - volume of mature timber, condition of logged lands, and the growth increment of the second growth lands to the AAC was becoming almost equal to the old-growth contribution, and that management of these lands could be instrumental in increasing the AAC. BUT, only in those TFL’s with sufficient mature stands to last until the second-growth reached rotation age. But, what should be done?

After numerous trips to the managed forests (all on private lands) in the USA, where companies were already harvesting younger stands, and were practicing some management practices on their holdings, B.C. foresters began to examine practices that could be adopted in Canada such as pre-commercial thinning, commercial thinning, pruning, fertilization, and finally, use of genetics. Some experiments were being tried in B.C. on.

No attention was placed on any management practice for the logged areas (immature stands), except to ensure sufficient stocking per acre. And even here, it involved much debate to obtain permission to vary the previous Forest Service edict that all planting should be at “6 feet by 6 feet spacing”.

So, it was a surprise that around the 1970’s and on, foresters began recognizing that the contribution of second-growth lands to the AAC was becoming almost equal to the old-growth contribution, and that management of these lands could be instrumental in increasing the AAC. BUT, only in those TFL’s with sufficient mature stands to last until the second-growth reached rotation age. But, what should be done?

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pleasurable spicy and savory meal of my entire life—a very hot, certified organic chicken/rice curry.

But chicken curry for breakfast!!

As we had drowned our motorized transport, and did not feel up to paddling 50+km back to Kaptapol, we hired a sampan water taxi at the local ranger station, and creaked our way back to base. There we learned that the storm-flood-hurricane (17 inches of rain overnight) had come close to taking out the new spillway at the dam. This in turn could have released the gigantic new lake to wreak untold damage along the Karnafuli River below and in Chittagong, a city of millions at the mouth of the river.

Not only we tired BC foresters were lucky to be alive on that day.

Forest Management and Silvicultural Planning in 1950’s!

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draw upon the forests and inventory work of the past.

**Digitization**

Following approval from the Digitization Centre at UBC two students, Frances Chen, a Master’s student in Archives at the Information School at UBC and Kevin Hu, a Master’s student in the department of Geography, were hired in August 2019 to help with the creation of the metadata and the scanning of the physical maps. By the end of 2019 the maps had each been scanned and metadata created thanks to Frances and Kevin’s hard work, as well as the efforts of Rob Stribravy, Laura Ferris, Larissa Ringham, and Eriam Vining at the Digitization Centre. The maps went up online for all to access earlier this month, and already have 193 views online for all to access.

**Volunteers**

For many of the experienced volunteers, Evan Thornberry went ahead to create a digital index of the map collection, which is now available online so that viewers can quickly point to and retrieve any map of interest. Viewers may access the index here: https://ubc-lib-geo.github.io/spatial-indexes/. Ira, the maps were all georeferenced with Ira, the maps were all georeferenced! Evan Thornberry went up with an idea to crowd-fund GIS software prior to this project; trial by fire was begun, and after a few late nights and the work of a very dedicated volunteers, as well as Kevin Hu, who remained working with Ira, the maps were all georeferenced! Once the maps were georeferenced Evan Thornberry went ahead to create a digital index of the map collection, which is now available online so that viewers can quickly point to and retrieve any map of interest. Viewers may access the index here: https://ubc-lib-geo.github.io/spatial-indexes/.

**Maps**

The maps were fully loaded with crew and gear, but progress was good until we reached the point where the river gradient steepened and began climbing. Here, water conditions changed drastically – the current increased and rapids appeared. Late in the day the dugout powered out in narrow rapids, waves swamped us. Down we went, everyone and all the gear – food, tent, sleeping bags, fuel, guns, clothes and with the engine fully under power. As we all fought to stay above the raging waves the heavy hardwood dugout did an end-over-end against a rock, in our midst. Downstream we ended up below a steep, unclimbable cliff, lucky to be alive. The only things we salvaged in the fading daylight were ourselves, a wool blanket, the dugout, including the water-filled motor.

**Weather**

Outside the dugout had been fully loaded with crew and gear, but progress was good until we reached the point where the river gradient steepened and began climbing. Here, water conditions changed drastically – the current increased and rapids appeared. Late in the day the dugout powered out in narrow rapids, waves swamped us. Down we went, everyone and all the gear – food, tent, sleeping bags, fuel, guns, clothes and with the engine fully under power. As we all fought to stay above the raging waves the heavy hardwood dugout did an end-over-end against a rock, in our midst. Downstream we ended up below a steep, unclimbable cliff, lucky to be alive. The only things we salvaged in the fading daylight were ourselves, a wool blanket, the dugout, including the water-filled motor.
Working internationally exposes you to a wide range of experiences and situations not normally experienced domestically. This applies both professionally and with day-to-day events. For some people, food and meals are often a point requiring a major readjustment: with others, local social and economic situations can be stressful. Often, how one relates socially with men, and especially with women, can be troublesome until one learns the local social customs.

However, with all this food it’s food; how to eat and handle is no problem, it’s what I eat. In all my time overseas, I have never had bad food or a meal I didn’t like, in fact I have sampled widely and enjoyed many memorable ones.

My First Taste One year into my initial foreign assignment with Forestall it happened. By then (1962 -

Fettuccini au Canard We had completed two of many days investigating bamboo resources near Luzhou City, Sichuan Province, China for a Sandwell project. For supper this night a colleague and I were eating with clients and associates in a restaurant specializing in hotpot cooking. Restaurant staff quickly brought the dishes, a wide selection of foods for our cooking, and we settled in for a relaxing evening. There is a popular modern China saying “We Chinese eat everything - from airplanes to railway tracks”. And the food selection provided backed up the saying: during the dinner and conversation but having difficulty placing food into the steaming central hotpot and retrieving it with my chopsticks. A particularly difficult item was the fettuccini noodles - soft, rubbery and purplish in the dim restaurant outdoor lighting. With my shaking hands, they kept repeatedly falling off my chopsticks and back into the hotpot. Starting to feel hungry and getting agitated, early on in the dinner I decided to retrieve any of my noodles, cooked or uncooked, any time I had a solid hold. I proceeded this way over the evening and went to bed satisfied by the meal and reasonably snug with my chopstick ability. At breakfast next morning my colleague slyly asked me how I liked duck intestines - cooked or uncooked?

Chips With That, Please On another Sandwell project a colleague and I examined the opportunity for plantations in southern Yunnan, China, bordering Laos and Myanmar (Burma). On the last night of the trip, our client set up a dinner banquet with local businessmen and senior government officials with potential connections to their project. Dinner was located outside the local city centre in a bamboo restaurant, alongside a quiet river and staffed by women from the local matriarchal tribe. They provided a superb meal with a wide variety of small flavourful dishes continually refreshed at the two-week 30 km working-hike through the trackless Kasalong Forest Reserve located in the Chittagong Hill Tracts on the eastern Bangladesh-India border. We used wild elephant trails for both access and navigation.

We encamped beside the Shishak River. Later, a Chakma hunting group, the major local jungle tribe, set up camp nearby. They were just starting their trip and for their evening meal prepared a medium-sized snake caught that day and kept alive in a cane basket. After a short bartering session we exchanged a few Three Camel tailor-made cigarettes for a snake appetizer. Texture-wise it reminded me of chicken. I don’t think I could have taken it as the main dish as it was cooked over a bamboo fire and the smoke had strongly flavoured it.

Although the meat was tender, I thought it tasted the way old, well-worn running shoe smelled!

Australian Bushfires: Wollemi Pines rescue

By Dave Florence, Newsletter Editor

We in BC know the devastation that wildfires fires can bring. So our hearts go out to all those affected by the massive wildfires burning in Australia.

On Jan 31, 2020, the BBC reported “At least 33 people have been killed - including four firefighters, and countless wildlife; and more than 11 million hectares (11 000 sq km or 27.2 million acres) of bush, forest and parks across Australia has burned.”

An email from FHBAC director Terry Simmons and a Facebook post by L isn’t amonded reminded us that one of the many interesting wildfire stories is the rescue of the Wollemi Pines grow in Wollemi National Park, in the Blue Mountains northwest of Sydney, The Guardian Australia reported the story on Jan 15.

“Firefighters have saved the only known natural stand of 200 Wollemi pines, so-called “dinosaur trees” that fossil records show existed up to 200m years ago, from the bushfires … They were thought extinct until discovered 26 years ago … air tankers dropping fire retardant and specialist firefighters being winched in by helicopter to set up an irrigation system in the gorge”

David Brownstein mentioned on Facebook that botanical gardens around the world are helping keep the species alive. UBC Botanical Garden has specimens, such as this one.

Introducing FHBAC Director Sarah Giesbrecht

Sarah is currently working on the Northern BC Forest History Resources: Access & Outreach Project as a Project Archivist at the Northern BC Archives & Special Collections (NBCA). The impact of natural resource deployments on the Northern BC Forest History in Northern BC’s environment, people, economy, and culture is a strong teaching and research focus at UNBC. It is also one of the NBCA’s largest subject areas for acquisition. Through this project, the NBCA hopes to increase access to our forest history resources and promote their use. We also hope to acquire more materials on forestry in Northern BC. The collections that have been made available thus far have been created in our Forest History in Northern BC subject guide. This is the first time I have worked with forestry-related materials and have learned a great deal about forests, forestry, and the history of the BC forest industry since taking on this project.

FHBAC: What have you been working on lately? Aside from processing more of our forestry related materials for access, I am working on outreach initiatives to alert researchers and the community to our collections. I have created a number of subject guides such as the Forest History in Northern BC, mentioned above, posting photographs and information on social media, facilitating presentations and tours of the archives, and other initiatives such as contributing to this Newsletter. I am also planning activities for the FHBAC 2020 AGM in Prince George in the Fall.

FHBAC: What will you be doing next? It is hard to know exactly what I will be doing next. One idea I have is to create an exhibit of some of our materials, specifically, using the collection of “Spruce Dollars” included in one of the fonds that I am currently working on. Those in our collection were created in the late 1930s through to the early 1980s as souvenirs in Prince George and other forest industry towns in Northern BC. I do not know much about them so if any of your readers know more about these “dollars” please contact me.

FHBAC: How can researchers learn more about UNBC forest history? In addition to the Forest History in Northern BC subject guide, researchers can access our web site, archive, and Instagram accounts. Finally, researchers can contact the archives with questions or comments by email at archives@unbc.ca or contact me directly by email at Sarah.Giesbrecht@unbc.ca.

PHOTO CREDITS: This piece was written circa 2014 as part of the International BC Foresters’ series initiated by George Nagel and introduced in Issue #103. More of this series will appear in future issues; we have on file pieces by Conrad Smith, Bob Hyslop, Doug Rickson and another by George Nagle. More are welcome!
Reconstructing the logging of Vancouver neighbourhoods: one handwritten document at a time

By David Brownstein, FHABC Webmaster and principal at Klahanie Research Ltd.

Pick any Vancouver neighbourhood. When was it last forest? So much change in such a short duration! Stanley Park, in all its manicured glory, does little to help today’s urbanite truly understand the pre-1850s people or flora, that previously occupied their current address. At the time of local contact in the 1700s, most of the present-day city was perpetually sodden wetland, periodically inundated prairie, or old-growth. That humanized vegetation was punctuated by dwellers of five permanent Indigenous villages, most of which had been in place for at least 4,000 years.

Thanks to some great networking by director Eric Andersen, and a significant donation by an enthusiastic FHABC member, we are now partnering with the Museum of Vancouver to provide content for a new, permanent, forest history exhibit. “That Which Sustains Us”, a 2,000 square foot exhibition, will open in November of 2020. The curatorial collective includes Dr Sharon Fortney, MOV Curator of Indigenous Collections and Engagement, research from the communities of Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh, and project manager FHABC. The exhibit will explore the convergence of Native and Newcomer knowledge traditions in the Vancouver area, by examining people’s interactions with forests and their wider environment. It will also challenge visitors to consider how they can respond to the climate emergency by exploring opportunities for implementing green infrastructure in the City of Vancouver.

The core of the FHABC contribution will be a series of original maps, or sheets, that will depict the 10,000-year transformation of the Fraser River’s mouth, from ice sheet, to promontory in open water, to inhabited forest and wetland, through logging, into today’s urban space. Our focus will be the logging. Unlike the province-wide project described by Claire and Ira (pages 1 & 4), here there is no existing, standardized set of maps upon which to draw. By definition, almost all of the standard set of maps upon which to project described by Claire and Ira (pages 1 & 4) was drawn. By definition, almost all of the community’s maps, pre-emption (GSIs) is free to download, and supported by a large community of users who produce helpful tutorials, Youtube videos, and discussion fora to commemorate about shared problems. Download it yourself and see what it can do: https://qgis.org/en/site/. Better yet, come to the next Maptime YVR meeting https://www meetup.com/MaptimeYVR.

It is an enormous task to synthesize information from nineteenth-century handwritten correspondence, hand-drawn surveyor’s maps, early photographs, timber leases and the like. The impossibility of creating a perfect, complete set of maps makes it all the more rewarding! We are far from sharing final results, but here are a few select gems from the journey so far...

Burrard Inlet, although highly used by Indigenous communities, remained largely forested. In the years after contact, nobody could have predicted that it would become the future home of a large city. The Inlet appeared to Newcomers as an isolated stretch of coastline of little consequence. For the new arrivals, Vancouver Island offered far more global economic connections. In the 1850s, the closest urban centre to present-day Vancouver was New Westminster, either nine miles away through “almost impassable forest,” or a 30 mile water-borne journey from the Fraser River, around Point Grey. While the Fraser River was the highway that connected Victoria with mining activity in the Interior, to the Newcomers’ eyes, Burrard Inlet was a nearly dead end, unworthy of much attention.

To underscore Burrard Inlet’s Newcomer perceived marginal status, note the hierarchy implied by Figure 1’s title, in which the River appears before the Inlet. This Gold Rush-era survey was produced by Captain G.H. Richards and officers of the HMS Plumper, and updated in 1868. The Moodyville and Hastings sawmills were two arms of globalized capitalism on the Inlet, that would grow to connect local trees with distant Pacific markets. These economic relationships would reorient Newcomers perceptions to become more aligned with those of the Inlet’s original inhabitants. Rather than an insignificant cul-de-sac, just off the Fraser River highway, Burrard Inlet was soon perceived by all as a place to generate wealth, and a commercial centre, in and of itself.

Figure 1. Small portion of North America. West Coast. The Fraser River and Burrard Inlet, 1863. City of Van Arch. AM54.54-9 Map 530

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Figure 2. Behind L.A. Hamilton’s campsite on the south side of False Creek, 1886. City of Vancouver Archives AM54.54-9s Fig 535

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Figure 3. On the Road to the Fisheries, 1895. City of Van Arch. AM54.54-9s Fig P76

This 1880s photo (Fig 2) depicts what we see a skid road over which oxen hauled cut logs to the shore of False Creek. For Vancouver archivist Major Matthews informs us that the scene is looking more or less at the location known to us today as Fourth Ave and Granville Street. Here, next to a ravine, squatting nearby (1867) John Beatty lived with his unnamed Indigenous wife. By the time of this photo, it was the temporary home of CPR Land Commissioner Lauchlan A. Hamilton and his family, who took refuge from the great Vancouver fire, over the horizon on the other side of False Creek. Pictured on and among the felled Douglas firs are, left to right, Hamilton’s sister, Miss Isabelle Hamilton holding his daughter Isobel Hamilton “perhaps Louie”, John Leask, and A.J. Dana.

Figure 4. Clearing stamps in Shaughnessy Heights, 1910. City of Vancouver Archives AM54.54-9s Dia P10

This final image, Fig 4, depicts industrial land clearing after logging, involving a steam-powered donkey-engine and “gin pole,” to pile stumps and other woody debris for burning. Once alight, such piles would burn for days, remaining visible for some distance. Shown is the location to the east of Granville, between Granville and Cambie Streets. Pictured is CPR Civil Engineer H.E.C. Carry and Henry J. Cambie, CPR divisional engineer.

Look forward to further project updates to come. Thank you again to the anonymous FHABC member for funding this work, and we hope to see everybody at the Museum of Vancouver towards the end of 2020.