

British Columbia



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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Bill Young

Early in 1988, Bill Backman asked if I would assume the Presidency of the Forest History Association of B.C. since he was unable to continue in that capacity for personal reasons. Recognizing that Bill had done more than his share in supporting the Association over the years, I agreed to his request.

The annual general meeting is planned for Saturday, June 11 and will be held at the facilities of the Lorax Forestry School on the B.C. Forest Service Green Timbers Nursery property in Surrey. A slate of members will be presented for consideration in the election of a new Executive. Relative to the article on the Green Timbers plantations in this issue of the newsletter, we plan to have a tour of the original ceremonial plantation (121 trees) planted by dignitaries on March 15, 1930.

Since I am prepared to let my name stand for President at the June 1988 annual general meeting, I felt that this would be an opportunity to express my thoughts on the role of the Forest History Association of B.C. in the province. Recognizing that we should embark on only those activities that a limited number of active members can sustain, I propose that the Association become involved with:

- 1) the issuance of a quarterly newsletter,
- 2) the active soliciting (pressuring) of members to submit articles for the newsletter,

- 3) the acceptance of opportunities to speak at public meetings, conventions, and the like on all aspects of British Columbia's forest history (within reason),
- 4) the development of increased activity by the Association in the preparation of pertinent briefs and submissions to the public/private/academic sectors to foster increased awareness of the province's forest history, and
- 5) the acquisition of pertinent historic photographs and other related material to allow the Association to develop forest history displays for exhibit during conventions, meetings, Heritage Week, etc.

In summary, I believe that these modest goals are readily attainable. For those of our members who wish that the Association involve itself with maintaining libraries, archives, and building twenty storey office blocks, I'm sorry to disappoint you.

Bill Young, President

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FOREST HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF B.C. ACTIVITIES AND OTHER NEWS

On March 8, 1988 the President presented the theme address to the UBC Faculty of Forestry 1988 graduating class at the annual Canadian Institute of Forestry ring ceremony in Vancouver. The title of the presentation was: "Forest History and the New Graduate - Worthless or Essential?"

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The President was involved on a land use panel in Prince George on March 9, 1988. The title of his presentation was: "The Prince George Special Sales Area - A History of Controversy."

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The President presented a brief to a committee reviewing the land use options for the provincially-owned Green Timbers property on March 25, 1988 in Victoria. The Forest History Association of B.C. is concerned because the first forest plantations established in B.C. are located there.

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ASSOCIATION OF B.C. PROFESSIONAL FORESTERS ANNUAL MEETING

Along similar lines, a resolution was passed at the recent Annual General Meeting of the Association of British Columbia Professional Foresters, held in Victoria on February 18 & 19, 1988. The resolution was as follows:

"WHEREAS the first man-made forest in British Columbia was established in 1930 and is known as the Green Timbers plantation and

WHEREAS in spite of continued erosion of the plantation for forest nursery development, urban expansion, highways, power lines, etc., much of the original 300 acre plantation remains.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL/BOARD BE DIRECTED TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO: send pertinent letters to the Green Timbers Heritage Society, to the Council of the Municipality of Surrey and to the Minister of Forests and Lands in support of plans to dedicate the original forest plantations as part of the proposed Green Timbers Heritage Forest."

Moved by W. Young, FHABC Member

Seconded by T.G. Wright, FHABC Member

The resolution passed unanimously.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Baikie, Wallace and R. Phillips. 1986. Strathcona: a history of British Columbia's first provincial park. Ptarmigan Press, 1372 Island Highway, Campbell River, B.C. V9W 2E1 137 p. \$20.95

Sopron Alumni U.B.C. 1986. Sopron Chronicle: Hungarian foresters in the western world, 1919-1986. Rakoczi Foundation Inc., Toronto.
Part I - 178 p. and Part II - 204 p. (one volume)
\$30.00 plus \$4.00 handling (\$5.00 to U.S.A.) Available from
I. Szasz, 25618 100th Avenue, R.R. #3, Maple Ridge, B.C. V2C 8X7

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HISTORY OF THE FOREST INDUSTRY - WEST KOOTENAYS

David Thompson explored the Kootenay-Columbia area in 1807-1811, encountering the indigenous Kutenai Indians. Fur trading was the major economic activity of white men for over half a century. The discovery of mineral-rich sites on Kootenay Lake in the 1880's prompted an influx of American men and capital.

Transportation, primarily railways and steamships, was desperately needed to process and market the mineral resource. The Canadian Pacific Railway, completed in 1885, provided links from Revelstoke and Golden via the Columbia River.

In the early 1890's, the two competing railways, the CPR and Great Northern (U.S.), extended lines into the Kootenay Lake region, CPR coming from Robson in the west and the Crowsnest Pass in the east. The Crowsnest route opened up the rich East Kootenay coal deposits, which further aided mining and smelting operations. Development of hydroelectric power at Bonnington was the final major breakthrough for the mining industry.

Timber production in the West Kootenay never matched that of the East Kootenay, which had its first mills in the 1860's. The need for railway ties was the first major market for West Kootenay timber; a good man with an axe could cut 50 per day. With the growth of the mining industry and a rise in population, the demand for lumber, though local, was significant. Before coal became available from the East Kootenay, the steamships were wood-powered and consumed phenomenal numbers of four-foot fuel logs.

Mills at Kaslo and Nelson processed American timber for a decade or so in the early 1900's. Logs were driven down the Kootenay River from the American side as well as from the Canadian East Kootenay. Protectionist measures on both sides of the border put an end to this.

In the booming 1920's, the Kootenay timber industry relied heavily on foreign sales. The Great Depression, therefore, hit the industry hard. It was not until World War II that wartime orders ended the slump. At about this time, bulldozers, trucks, and gas-powered saws began to enter the woods. An awareness emerged, of the forest as a finite resource. In the 1940's, B.C., Montana, and Idaho all began sustained yield regulation of their forest industries.

This article is to be published as a factsheet on the West Kootenays by the Association of British Columbia Professional Foresters.

A good collection of photographs has been assembled but more written material is required on the history of forestry - the industry and Forest Service in the West Kootenays. Anyone who could provide advice or assistance is requested to contact

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THE GREEN TIMBERS PLANTATIONS - A BRITISH COLUMBIA HERITAGE

The beginning of the province's reforestation and forest nursery programs was in 1927. In that year, a small experimental forest nursery was established on Shelbourne Street on the northern outskirts of Victoria. This forest nursery would later play a major role in the establishment of the Green Timbers nursery and the adjacent Green Timbers plantations.

We should remember that, in 1927, there was little background or experience to draw on in working with British Columbia tree species, whether in forest nursery practices, or in reforestation.

From this small beginning on Shelbourne Street, the decision was made (in 1928) to establish a large production nursery somewhere on Vancouver Island or on the lower mainland. A large number of potential sites was examined during the year and the Annual Report for 1928 stated that the selection of an appropriate site would be made "in the future." Today, we know that the site selected for the first production forest nursery in B.C. was Green Timbers.

Meanwhile, thirty seed beds of Douglas-fir and Sitka spruce were sown in the Victoria forest nursery in 1928. These would soon become the first trees to be planted in the Green Timbers plantations. I'm sure that I need not mention the great significance of this reforestation project - the first to be undertaken in the province of British Columbia. Most importantly, the plantations (at least most of them) are still there and should be conserved as part of British Columbia's forest heritage. But more of that later.

The year 1929 saw a reservation placed over the Green Timbers area. The purpose was to start development of the province's first production forest nursery and, most importantly, to initiate experimental work in reforestation. The reference in the 1929 Forest Service Annual Report to "experimental work in reforestation" is significant in that the early Green Timbers plantations were largely developed with this long-term objective in mind. Incidentally, the year 1929 also saw plans being developed to establish an arboretum of native and exotic tree species at the Green Timbers site - plans that came to fruition.

During 1929, additional seed beds were established at the Victoria nursery. Now, some 150,000 seedlings were growing in that nursery including Douglas-fir, Sitka spruce, western redcedar, western hemlock, grand fir, western white pine, sugar pine, Monterey pine, Port Orford cedar, and eucalyptus. Again, almost all of the seedlings being grown in the Victoria nursery were destined to be transplanted to the developing Green Timbers nursery and ultimately, to become part of the Green Timbers plantation.

In 1930, a major increase in the Victoria nursery production took place. Some 800,000 seedlings were now growing, the vast majority being Douglas-fir and Sitka spruce.

Meanwhile, development work began in earnest at the Green Timbers nursery site in 1930. Approximately six acres had been cleared and prepared as nursery seed beds by the end of the year.

The year 1930 was a significant one in that two-year old seedlings growing in the Victoria nursery were used to plant the initial 65 acres of the Green Timbers plantation. These trees were planted at a density of 1,000 stems per acre and are part of the plantation that can still be seen today. It is interesting to note that the newly-planted seedlings suffered from severe browsing by rabbits in 1930 - a cyclical problem that continues to plague parts of the province's reforestation program today. However, an examination of the new plantation after the 1930 growing season produced the following comment in a report: "the (Green Timbers) site is well suited to reforestation of Douglas-fir and Sitka spruce."

During 1931, 700,000 tree seedlings growing at the Shelbourne Street nursery in Victoria were transplanted to the new Green Timbers facility, where another eight acres of nursery seed beds had been prepared.

The year 1931 also saw an additional seventeen acres added to the existing Green Timbers plantation established the year before.

While the Green Timbers plantation had the distinct honour of being the first production reforestation project in British Columbia, the year 1931 saw plantations being established elsewhere on the lower coast.

During 1932, the last seed beds were sown at the Victoria nursery with the intention of transplanting the seedlings grown there to the Green Timbers nursery. The Victoria facility was now destined to be permanently closed and Green Timbers would soon become the sole forest nursery in British Columbia.

Meanwhile, the expansion of the Green Timbers nursery continued throughout 1932 and 500,000 seedlings were shipped from this facility to reforestation projects on Vancouver Island and the lower mainland. Included in these were seedlings destined for the Green Timbers plantations. By the end of 1932, some 200,000 seedlings had been planted as part of the Green Timbers plantations.

The Great Depression was in high gear by 1933 and little expansion of the Green Timbers plantations occurred in that year. However, the plantations established in 1930, 1931, and 1932 were examined in detail for survival and growth performance. Detailed records were initiated in order that the history of the Green Timbers plantations could be followed with a view to improving reforestation and stand-tending practices. This 1932 examination recorded that the survival and growth of the plantations were very satisfactory. However, it was again reported that rabbit damage to the new seedlings continued to be a problem.

The year 1934 saw renewed activity with some 83 acres planted and added to the Green Timbers plantations, which, by the end of 1934 consisted of 285,000 planted seedlings growing on 259 acres.

Due to the depression and the lack of funds, reforestation activities were severely curtailed during 1935. In fact, only 20 acres were planted in the entire province during 1935 - all being an expansion of the Green Timbers plantations. Thus, the extent of these plantations at the end of 1935 had risen to some 308,000 seedlings on a total of 279 acres.

During 1936, the project was again increased modestly and now was composed of 347,000 planted seedlings growing on some 297 acres. Only 10,000 trees were added to the Green Timbers plantations during 1937. Interestingly, these trees were the only ones planted in all of British Columbia in 1937 - a product of the "depression years" financial policies.

The years that saw the establishment of the Green Timbers plantations had now generally drawn to a close. Certainly, the development of the Green Timbers nursery facility continued until it reached its goal to produce 6,000,000 seedlings annually. In 1938, it was announced that a second production forest nursery would be established in the province, this one was to be located near Campbell River on Vancouver Island.

Excerpts from a February 16, 1988 speech by W. Young,
of the Forest History Association of B.C.

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This newsletter is the official organ of the Forest History Association of British Columbia and is distributed thrice yearly at no charge to members of the Association, libraries, and to certain institutions. Items on forest history topics, descriptions of current projects, requests for information, book reviews, letters, comments, and suggestions are welcome. Please address all correspondence including changes of address to the Editor: John Parminter, c/o Protection Branch, Ministry of Forests and Lands, 1450 Government Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 3E7.

Membership in the Association is \$5.00 yearly. Should you wish to join or obtain further information please write to the Treasurer: Mr. Edo Nyland, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, B.C. V8L 4E8

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MEMBERSHIP/SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

The continued absence of this newsletter once again resulted from a lack of news and articles, or at least a lack of their communication to the editor. However, we were not dead, just sleeping. It appears that enough material will be forthcoming to produce the normal run of three newsletters in 1988 and perhaps four. **But please feel free to submit items anyway!**

The mailing label shows the date of your FHABC membership expiry. Most have been changed to expire at the end of 1988, or beyond, and some are free (Fr). We are still on a calendar year basis and all memberships have been extended due to the absence of newsletters over the past year. **Your membership is still valid and you need not send any money.**