

British Columbia



Published by the Forest History Association of British Columbia

No. Nineteen Victoria, British Columbia April, 1989

"MAC AND MAC" - B.C.'s PIONEER HARDWARE

By Allan Klenman

When we think of forests we used to think of axes! When a faller went to work, he usually had his own axe. Indeed, many would not let their axe out of their sight. There are stories of fallers stowing their prized axes under their bunk at night, while they slept.

Actually, the axe was always safe anyway, as most faller's wouldn't touch another's axe - it wouldn't be correct for his swing, and the heft, balance, and shape of the cutting bit would be wrong as well.

So we find the fallers through the years going to the dealer who carried all the best makes - Sager, Walters, Welland Vale, and Smart's - to name Canada's top four. Mac and Mac had their own special brands, too - Sunset and Gorilla. As well, they offered Brades' "Cockatoo" from Birmingham and Kelly's "Flint Edge" from the U.S.A.

The company really started in Victoria when Alfred Fellows opened a shop in 1859. Later, E.G. Prior, (an engineer from England) became an employee and in 1883 he purchased all shares from the retiring Fellows. The company was renamed E.G. Prior & Co., Ltd. and with Prior's excellent business sense it grew into the largest hardware company on Vancouver Island. Prior was also active in politics, firstly as an MLA. In 1888 he was sent to Ottawa as the Member of Parliament for Victoria.

When the CPR came to Vancouver in 1886, two enterprising young men were on it. R.P. McLennan from Pictou, Nova Scotia and E.J. McFeely of Lindsay, Ontario opened a store with a branch in New Westminster, under the name of McLennan and McFeely Ltd. Here again, being hard workers and fully knowledgeable in the building trades, their business grew rapidly and solidly.

Over the years, the two giants of the hardware trade boasted continuous prosperity. The mushrooming forest industry, fishing fleets, mining enterprises, and construction trades supported phenomenal growth. However, due to changes in share ownership through the years, it was decided in 1927 to amalgamate the two firms under the name familiar to us now - McLennan, McFeely & Prior Ltd.

Branches in Victoria, Nanaimo, Vancouver, New Westminster, and Kamloops continued to supply the forest industry with every type of equipment. When it came to axes, you could choose from the products of over 20 manufacturers. But again, times changed and an owner from a new generation decided to sell out to a Winnipeg-based corporation - Acklands, Ltd. - in 1974.

The writer's interest is mostly in axes. From that point of view, Mac & Mac was the largest retailer, including to the general public and the logging side. One could generally find the best products of Canada, the U.S.A., and England. Satisfaction was guaranteed during the 115 years that "Mac & Mac" served B.C.

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REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

This is a request for historical loggers sports information in an effort to preserve the history of the sport in B.C.

For as long as men and women have been living and working in the forests of B.C. there have been competitions for the right to be called "Champion" or "Bull of the Woods." Events such as log rolling, tree climbing, hand bucking, and chopping have been, and still are, very popular at fairs and on holiday weekends.

Much the same as any sport, photos have been taken, articles published, and results recorded. This is the type of information which I am collecting, as well as personal recollections of experiences during competitions or of conversations with competitors and officials. Brochures and documents are also of interest.

It is through people such as yourselves that history will be preserved for the future. If you have an item or information relating to loggers sports past or present, please get in touch with me, Glenn Erickson, at Box 534, Nelson, B.C. V1L 5R3, or phone 825-9306. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated.

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BOOK REVIEW
by Dave Wallinger

Early in the new year I had the good fortune of picking up a book entitled "Ties to Water - the History of Bull River in the East Kootenay." This absorbing chronicle of mining, hydroelectric development, and logging of the Bull River drainage was written by a long-term East Kootenay rancher and guide-outfitter Verdun Casselman. The Bull, one of the last major tributaries of the Kootenay River system above the 49th parallel, enters the Kootenay at the north end of Lake Kooconusa, formed by the Libby Dam pondage.

The Bull was first prospected in the 1860's as a spinoff of the Wildhorse Creek gold rush and mining activity, mainly placer, and this has continued at various levels of intensity up to the present. Harnessing the river for power was undertaken in 1904, the same year in which hydro-generated electricity was introduced to Vancouver. The Aberfeldie generating station, built over 60 years ago, still produces electricity for East Kootenay homes.

While these two facets of the area's history are highly interesting and entertaining, it is the more extensive story of the tie-hacking, logging, river-driving, and milling which will capture the forest history buff's attention. In 1910 the Bull River watershed was designated a CPR Tie Reserve and for the next 20 years supplied ties and lumber for track and trestles on the East Kootenay leg of the Kettle Valley line and for the Fort Steele to Golden connector to the mainline.

In relating the timber harvesting history of the Bull, Casselman devotes separate chapters to each aspect of the operation. He describes in detail the working life of the tie-hack, the tools he used, how he maintained them, his productivity and his daily life in the small remote winter camps. The chapter on logging covers not only the making of logs but also how they were moved by sleighs, chutes, flumes, and Swedish drays to streamside in preparation for the river drive. Watering the logs and getting them to the mill is a story in itself since all the wood had to pass through a narrow rock canyon. One log jam was estimated at a million and a half board feet and took almost 30 tons of dynamite to break up.

The CPR concluded operation in the Bull River in 1928 and relinquished the Tie Reserve in 1930 but those years were full of action and excitement. A number of the early tie-hacks, loggers, and rivermen are still alive and were able to provide much colour and veracity to Casselman's writing. There is more to the story, of course, including vivid descriptions of major forest fires, the filming of two California movies, logging railways, and the social life and entertainment of the day.

There are characters as well. Gunnar Almie as the local Paul Bunyan, and his record of 130 ties in one day is verified by two living witnesses. Of special interest is a note that Ernie (E.C.) Manning, later Chief Forester of B.C., cruised timber up the Bull in 1912.

The logging, tie-making, and river driving that Casselman describes for the Bull River are perhaps not too different than that which took place in other parts of the interior. However, I have not yet seen a book which brings it all together as well as this book of Casselman's. His thoroughly researched writing is backed up by over 300 photographs.

Having worked, hunted, and fished up the Bull extensively in the 1950's, and having seen remnants of cabins, flumes, and bridges, this book has special interest for me. I commend it as a valuable addition to the library of our forest heritage.

Casselman, Verdun. 1988. Ties to Water. Kootenay Kwik Print, Cranbrook, B.C. 273 p.

Copies may be obtained from Mr. Casselman - c/o P.O. Box 78,
Fort Steele, B.C. V0B 1N0

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ARCHIVAL NEWS

The Elk River Timber Company Ltd. was a major presence in the Campbell River area for many years. Incorporated in 1929, it in fact had its beginning as the International Timber Co. operating in the region from 1909. ERT was a railroad show until 1953, establishing camps at increasing distances from the river mouth as activity moved further inland. Selling its logs on the open market, the company owned extensive areas of land, both in the Nootka and Comox ranger districts and within municipal boundaries, where it also was landlord to various tenants. Scott Paper Co. was controlling shareholder with two-thirds ownership, the other third being held by Crown Zellerbach. In April 1980 Elk River Timber was sold to British Columbia Forest Products Ltd., which has since become part of the company Fletcher Challenge Canada Ltd.

Cataloguing has now been completed on a collection of Elk River Timber Co. business records held by the Campbell River Museum & Archives. Although some of the material dates back to the 1940's, the bulk of the collection documents in detail the daily operations of the company from 1974 to early 1980. With care taken to maintain their original order, the 30 metres of records have been placed in acid-free file folders and storage boxes with a 21 page inventory detailing the boxes' contents.

Researchers will find the ERT collection reflects industrial, social, and community trends within a specific time frame. The files bear witness to changing government regulations, labour issues, environmental concerns, local interests, and regional development as well as providing detailed production records that include weather and market conditions.

This important collection was donated to the archives by the B.C. Forest Products on the recommendation of Elk River Timber's general manager, Bill Chambers. The cataloguing was accomplished through funding assistance from the Canadian Council of Archives.

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Forestry Shorties.....



Jim Dunlop - The Lone Ranger

"Boy, was my first week as Ranger for the B.C. Forest Service at Lower Post ever a baptism of fire! I arrived there in August of 1972 as the only permanent staff member at the station in this small community (at Mile 620 of the Alaska Highway) near the Yukon border. I guess there were about 76 people there then, including myself. That year there were neither support staff nor a seasonal fire crew on duty. Just me."

"I had hardly found my desk, bed, and the bathroom when I got word of a fire at Dean Creek, about 210 miles by air to the south. With the help of a map and the local pilot, I jumped in a plane and headed off to meet with a B.C. Railway construction crew to fight the fire. Fortunately, all went well and we beat it by the afternoon. After making up the payroll, it was back into the plane and 210 more miles back to Lower Post."

"But on the way back I had a call from the Yukon Forest Service office at Watson Lake. I was advised of a fire over near Atlin, about 200 miles to the west. It was my job to fly there immediately after we refueled at Watson Lake, organize a native crew, and get them started on fighting the fire. I did all of this, but I remember saying to myself as we got underway - 'Holy Smokes! Will I be able to survive this job?' After getting them organized and doing the paper work, it was back into the plane and another 200 mile ride back to Lower Post. On my first two fires on that job, on one day, I travelled over 800 miles - about the highway distance from Fort St. John to Vancouver."

"The next spring the Forest Service stationed an initial attack crew of 12 first-year university students at Lower Post, under my supervision. I remember them as gung-ho but real city boys who had never before left the Lower Mainland. It was on their first fire that they met Evelyn, a local character known to enjoy a drink or ten. She was both friendly and aggressive. Anyway, the boys hitched on the Bean pumper trailer and jumped in their truck to go snuff out the fire, about a mile away. But before they could get moving, Evelyn - who just loved lots of action - jumped on the hood and shouted 'Giddy-up, let's go.' The guys tried to reason with her and get her off the truck, but when one of them would get close, she would kick him. I saw all of this from the window. While they were all standing around trying to figure out what to do, and Evelyn continued to whoop and holler, I went out to give a hand and get them on their way. As soon as I got close to Evelyn, she kicked me too! That's when I told the guys to get in the truck, drive slowly, and go to the fire. And the last thing I saw was this proud but deflated crew slowly proceeding down the road with Evelyn attached to the hood yelling 'Giddy-up, let's go.' But the real kicker was the sight of my own dog trotting along behind."

"I spent a total of seven years at Lower Post. That time will always be very special in my memory because I had the opportunity to really get into my work there. The winters were long and cold, and field work was out of the question. It was the only period in my life when I had enough time to really do all the planning everyone always talks about. Some days I wish I was back in Lower Post - but not very many."

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN
by Bill Young

Membership in your association continues to grow with the result that the current figure now exceeds 275. Even moderate projections can see this figure increasing by year-end.

Increased membership and activity in any organization immediately results in the question being asked - "where do we go from here?" I have always contended that plans and goals enunciated for the Forest History Association of B.C. must recognize the modest budget and the limited active involvement of the members and, thus, must be practical and attainable.

In this regard, I believe that the Forest History Association of B.C. has generally achieved the first three goals set for itself for 1988:

- 1) to produce a regular quarterly newsletter,
- 2) to take an increasingly pro-active stance on matters pertaining to preserving and promoting an increased awareness of British Columbia's forest history, and
- 3) to increase the membership base.

What about 1989? In addition to building on the accomplishments of 1988, we plan to:

- 1) increase the print quality of the newsletter, and possibly also the format. The final decision will be made in mid-1989 and will depend upon greater input from members of newsletter material, and
- 2) promotion of forest history displays as a component of the 1989 National Forest Week programs throughout the province.

Future plans may include the sponsorship of a symposium on B.C. forest history, involvement with aural history research, and the like.

For the moment, **mark June 10, 1989 on your calendars!** That is the date chosen for the association's 1989 Annual General Meeting. The location will be Port Alberni and planning of the details are underway. Additional announcements will be made in the next newsletter.

The President is the FHABC representative on a small committee to plan a suitable ceremony to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the inaugural forest plantation in B.C. The ceremony will be held on March 15, 1990 - 60 years to the day since the initial commemorative grove was planted at Green Timbers. Watch for further details in future newsletters.

W. Young,
President

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NEWS ITEMS

Invermere Forest History Display

The Windermere District Historical Society has produced a forest history display of the Windermere Valley in the East Kootenays. Completed in February of 1989, the display will be a major focus of the Invermere Museum this year.

Green Timbers

FHABC Director Don McMullan participated in a special public meeting on February 21, 1989 in Surrey. Held during Heritage Week, and sponsored by the Surrey-based Green Timbers Heritage Society, the theme of the meeting was "The Past and Future of Green Timbers."

Awards of Merit

The December 1988 newsletter mentioned that the FHABC had established an "Award of Merit" to be awarded to individuals, companies, associations, government agencies, and so on whom the directors believe have made a significant contribution to an increased awareness of B.C.'s forest history. Two recipients were selected for 1988:

- 1) the Kelsey Bay Division of MacMillan Bloedel Ltd. for the publication "50th Anniversary - Kelsey Bay Division 1937 - 1987."
- 2) the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters for "RPF Roots - An Historical Survey of the Origins of the Association of British Columbia Professional Foresters, 1947 - 1987."

The President presented the Kelsey Bay Award late in 1988 at Campbell River, while the ABCPF award was presented on February 16, 1989 at that group's annual meeting in Penticton.

MLA Contacts

The FHABC has mailed one of its 1989 commemorative postcards (duly autographed by the President) to each of B.C.'s MLA's. In the accompanying letter, the forest heritage values of the Green Timbers property were highlighted. More specifically, we emphasized its potential for enhancing public awareness of the province's forest resource and its renewal programs in that the site is within one hour's drive of almost two-thirds of British Columbians.

David Douglas Ceremony

Western North America's pioneer botanist, David Douglas, was killed in a tragic accident on the island of Hawaii on July 12, 1834. The David Douglas Society of Western North America is planning a trip to, and a ceremony at, the remote site ("The Doctor's Pit") in the fall of 1991. Contact W. Young for more details.

National Forest Week 1989

Many members of the FHABC have been involved with various community programs and displays relative to National Forest Week. This year's National Forest Week is from May 7 to 13th. This year, why not develop a forest history component for your overall community display?

Thanks to "Westland" and the B.C. Wildlife Federation

Your President represented the FHABC as both Theme Speaker and Summation Speaker at a recent resource symposium at Penticton. The symposium was jointly sponsored by the "Westland" television program and the B.C. Wildlife Federation, Okanagan Region.

Since an offer of personal compensation was declined, the sponsors elected to donate \$150 to the FHABC in lieu of a personal honorarium. This welcome contribution will be used to help finance some specific projects being considered by the Directors. Thanks again to "Westland" and the Okanagan Region of the BCWF.

Green Timbers Forest Week

The Mayor of Surrey, His Worship Robert Bose, proclaimed the week of March 12 to 18th as "Green Timbers Forest Week." This was in recognition of:

- 1) the value of our forests and their replenishment,
- 2) the role of Green Timbers as B.C.'s first production forest nursery,
- 3) the establishment of the first inaugural plantation in March of 1930,
- 4) and the March 15, 1989 trek through Green Timbers and the special commemorative meeting to be held there that day.

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This newsletter is the official organ of the Forest History Association of British Columbia and is distributed 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, # 1 - 949 Pemberton Road, Victoria, B.C. V8S 3R5.

Membership in the Association is \$5.00 yearly. Should you wish to join or obtain further information please write to the Treasurer: Edo Nyland, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, B.C. V8L 4E8. The President, Bill Young, can be reached at 6401 Conconi Place, Victoria, B.C. V8Z 5Z7.