



Published by the Forest History Association of British Columbia

No. 96 Victoria, British Columbia

August 2014

<http://fhabc.org>.

Editor's Comments

As editor, I apologize for the absence of Newsletters for some time. When Barb Coupe asked to be temporarily relieved of her responsibilities as editor while she worked on her Master's Degree at UNBC, I assumed the job but I had no clear idea of what I was getting into. I now take my hat off to both John Parminter and Barb Coupe for the fantastic job they both have done over the years in producing the Newsletter. They made it look easy. Looks can be deceptive! However, I now think I'm over the biggest hurdle and an issue is on its way.



2014 Annual Meeting

We have scheduled our 2014 Annual Meeting for Saturday, September 20 at the Forest Discovery Centre in Duncan. Details are as follows:

Friday, September 19, 2014:

An Ice Breaker will be held in the evening at the Best Western Hotel across the highway from the Forest Discovery Centre.

Saturday, September 20 2014:

10:00AM FHABC annual meeting - Forest Discovery Centre in Duncan

12:00 noon Catered lunch at the Forest Discovery Centre

1:00 PM Tour of the Lake Cowichan Municipal Forest. Guide will be Darrell Frank, Municipal Forester.

6:00-7:00 Informal get together at hotel

7:00 Dinner and Guest Speaker – Best Western Hotel

Dinner will be buffet style - cost \$30.00

Guest speaker-will be local Lake Cowichan author and writer Tom Paterson, who presently writes three weekly historical columns for local papers, is working on three new books for release next year and manages a publishing company. He is also campaigning to have the Kinsol Trestle restored. Tom is particularly interested in the men and women who built their country from scratch. We can all look forward to an interesting and entertaining evening.

Sunday, September 21 Check out and return home

Everyone is welcome. Feel free to attend the Annual Meeting, take in the tour, or join us for dinner and listen to the Guest speaker. It is an opportunity to meet old friends or make new ones. Please advise Stan Chester of your attendance(stanchester@shaw.ca) so that we can advise the hotel of the number of meals required.

Hotel

Best Western Cowichan Valley Inn
6474 Transcanada Highway
Duncan, BC

800-927-6199
250-748-2722

At the Senior rate, a room with two queen sized beds is \$126.11.

We have a block of rooms reserved under “Forest History Association”. These will be held for us until September, 5, 2014. There are a number of other meetings in the Duncan area on this weekend and a number of other motels are already full or close to it. So if you plan to stay the night, please reserve your room soon.



The Golden Spruce

Most of us are familiar with the Golden Spruce which grew on the Queen Charlotte Islands, either because we are familiar with the Haida stories about the tree, we have visited the tree site in person, we have followed the scientific literature or we have read the book The Golden Spruce by John Vaillant. The unique colour of its foliage has long been recognized by and fascinated and puzzled the scientific community.

The following article by Jim Kinghorn, who spent a long career in Victoria as a forester and entomologist with the Canadian Forest Service, relates Jim's story of collecting cuttings from the tree and his efforts to graft them on to Sitka Spruce root stock. Jim describes the success of his efforts, offers some possible explanations of what happened and expresses hope that someone will continue the work he has carried on during the past 50 years.

Who will accept the torch?

A Serpentine Tale

by
Jim Kinghorn

We were on the Queen Charlotte Islands in May 1964 on an insect survey, staying at the MacMillan-Bloedell Camp south of Port Clements. Ed Harvey and I had set out to get some cuttings from the unusual Golden Spruce growing on the north bank of the Yakoun River. We did not have a boat or any other way of crossing the river. The road to the logging camp stayed on the south side of the river for about a mile before crossing it. We thought it would be easy to hike from the north end of the bridge and follow the river down to the tree. But what we did not realize was that the Yakoun River valley bottom was geologically very old and flowed through the flat bottom land endlessly in a serpentine fashion. Ed wanted to get cuttings from the Golden Spruce for Ed Lohbrunner, a Victoria horticulturist who collected rare plants. I was also interested in propagating the golden beauty.

As usual, what we expected to be an easy walk, was not. We set out after supper, about 6 pm, from the logging camp carrying rucksacks and climbing gear we had borrowed from the high rigger in the camp. Before long we were confronted with a patch of windfall strewn across our path so that we had to carefully pick our way through lest we fall. After slowly winding our way through the windfall, we started down river and it proved to be a slow journey as the winding river was twice as long as expected. As we kept going around bends, one after another, we became anxious, knowing that we had to get back through the windfall area before dark, which was about 11pm that May evening.

On and on we travelled, with nothing showing at each turn. "Ed" I finally said "If the tree isn't around the next bend, we will have to turn back". Thankfully, at the bend we saw the Golden Spruce standing in all its glory. It was bigger than I thought it would be. It was over four feet in diameter with no branches until about thirty feet above the ground. We quickly realized that the climbing gear was useless for us even if we had time to tackle the formidable task. Then we saw tree branches on the ground. They probably had been shot down in an earlier attempt to collect material and partially broken off or hung up in the tree and then blown down by the wind. They might have been shot at by Wally Pearson, a forester from Alliford Bay at the request of Oscar Sziklai, a silviculture professor at UBC who was constantly on the lookout for genetic oddities in trees. So we cut samples and put them in our rucksacks and high-tailed out of there. We just managed to get through the windfall before darkness settled in.

I kept the branches I'd collected and as soon as I got home, grafted some cuttings to Sitka Spruce that we had in the greenhouse in the Victoria Burnside Lab.. The provenance of the rootstock was not known except that they were Sitka Spruce. I made veneer graphs on about a dozen seedlings and then took them home to be tended next to my wife's vegetable garden where I knew they would get good care and watering. Gradually over the next few years all but one failed.

This one graft I took back to the Burnside Greenhouse where I thought it would get good care, but no luck. After two years I brought it home again, all the while maintaining the one green branch of the original root stock. By this time it was the late 60's. The graft remained alive but had a tendency to lose most of it's leaves as each season progressed. It was years before enough leaves remained to do anything further towards propagating. To this day, if the graft foliage is not protected by shade, some of the leaves turn a yellowish green and many drop off.'

Retaining the green foliage of the root stock would keep the tree alive, so after 48 years, my contribution has been to save the Golden Spruce from dying. The total size of the plant is only four feet high and no branch has turned upward assuming apical dominance, so it ended up looking like a shrub, not a tree

My hope is that someone will undertake this paltry but living specimen and strike further grafts from it and then with the new material, the puzzle of how to achieve apical dominance may be solved. The job will be challenging and it may not be possible that the horizontal branches will achieve apical dominance, like other specimens as documented in the book, The Golden Spruce by John Vaillant. At least this Golden Spruce may be kept alive with care.

Flying over the Golden Spruce by helicopter in the fall of 1964, I got the pilot to pause over it, so that I could really look at the tree. I could see many grey twigs on the top of the live branches, which I could also observe on my tree. I am not sure if this trait has been reported elsewhere. The original Golden Spruce had golden needles on the upper branches, which were the ones viewed from across the river where most people observed it. However, approximately the bottom thirty feet had NO branches, and the next 20 feet of the foliage was GREEN. When viewed from across the Yakoun River, this bottom part of the tree was blocked from view by the forest.

Therefore, I am presenting the theory that a single cell mutation could have occurred to give the golden foliage in the upper part of the tree. Furthermore, the tendency for the new golden foliage to drop off was evident on the original Golden Spruce. From the top view, there were all kinds of bare, but not necessarily dead branches. When foliage on exposed parts of a tree are not staying alive or turning yellowish, it is a sign that the golden part is very fragile and slow growing.

Unfortunately, I do not think that anyone did a stem analysis of the downed trunk that would show if it was much older than originally believed. A stem analysis would perhaps show rapid growth for 50-100 years, and then show slow growth for a very long time after that. It may be possible to study growth patterns from preserved wood from the stump even now or from the remaining stump.

Finally, I would like to add these thoughts after observing the original Golden Spruce and my cutting of it. The golden colour of the original tree was spectacular, not just a chlorotic variation, but that even in the original tree, it tended to lose its spectacular golden colour as each season progressed. I am sure there must be some local people who could attest to that. As the golden needles dropped, the tree was kept alive by some of the shaded under-foliage turning green. Therefore, as a consequence, any cultivar of the original tree will not produce a beautiful or commercial reproduction of the original.

It is my hope that people will take care of my Golden Spruce and I wish them luck. Any chance of reproducing the original is going to be challenging and may not be successful with the hoped for results.

The twisted river must have caused the tortured mind that lead to the falling of the Golden Spruce. It was a heinous act that served no useful purpose. Even the Golden Beauty, by its very characteristics, continues to thwart attempts to reproduce it.



Membership Renewals.

Because of the lack of Newsletters in recent time, many of us have allowed our memberships to expire. Please check your membership expiry date on your mailing label and if expired, please renew. To aid in this we are enclosing membership renewal forms for your convenience and use. If you have any questions, please get in touch with me. Stan.



Canadian Forest History Preservation Project:

The Canadian Forest History Preservation project is the result of a collaboration between NiCHE (The Network in Canadian History and the Environments) The Canadian Forest Service and The Forest History Society. The shared goal is to facilitate donations of “at risk” forest history primary sources into Canadian archives. To that end, we undertook a national survey of archives, the results of which you can read in the report posted on line at <http://www.niche-canada.org/node/10535>

As a followup to the first project, David Brownstein from UBC has been facilitating donations to local archives of material from local foresters. To date, he has found homes for files, maps, etc. donated by Doug Rickson, Dick Herring and three people in Victoria. He is also working with Western Forest Products and the Campbell River Museum to receive many files which they have in storage.

Hopefully, as these donations become better known, more foresters and engineers will begin to realize the maps, files and other information they have stored in the basement have potential value. Give David a call and discuss your material with him (604-827-4455) All it takes is five minutes and a telephone call

FHABC Annual General Meeting, 2013

The 2013 Annual General Meeting of the Forest History Association was held in Kamloops, BC on September 21, 2013. The meeting started at 10:15 AM with 14 members and guests present.

After opening remarks, introductions and confirmation of a quorum, reports were given by Stan Chester (President's Report, Newsletter Report,) and Art Walker (Treasurer's Report). In summary, the Association is in good financial condition, Stan, as Newsletter Editor, apologized for the delay in issuing the Newsletter but stated that during the year we were active in the following areas:

1. The Aleza Lake oral history project is underway and transcripts will be finished some time in 2014. The completed material will be stored at UNBC special collections and posted on our web site.

2. Our new website is up and running. While all members and the general public have access to the site, only John Parminter and David Brownstein can edit the site.

3. Mike Apsey reported that the BCFS Centenary coffee table book is still being worked on with a hoped for completion date some time in 2014.

4. Allan Orr Ewing book. We printed 140 copies and they are being sold at \$20 a copy. We are satisfied with sales to date.

5. Gold Photographs. We have ordered 15 copies from the Karat Museum in Lake Cowichan. These new prints are a welcome addition to our display screen.

6. The CIF Forestry Chronicle is publishing an issue on forest history. Stan Chester has submitted an article on our behalf.

7. Canadian Forest History Society. The Society represents the four provincial groups in Canada and gives a national perspective to Canadian forest history. We meet via a conference call every three months.

The meeting adjourned at 11:57.AM

After lunch Allan and Francis Vyse conducted a tour of the grass lands and dry belt Douglas fir areas northeast of Kamloops in the Isobel Lake area. Their knowledge of the area and ecological types was an ecological lesson for all of us and now we will look at these areas with a fresh and different set of eyes.

After dinner, Carman Smith, gave us a very interesting history of their company, Gilbert Smith Forest Products, and the history of logging and the forest industry in the the upper Thompson River Valley. The Smiths, and their company, have played a significant role in the forest industry for many years. Cedar is "their business" and, at present, the mill is very busy and the future looks bright.

Books

1. Benwell, G.L 2012,.25/100th A quarter Century in the B.C. Forest Service, 1955-1980. Self published.

2. Parent, Millton. 2006. Caulk boot River Dance: Working the Columbia, Canada's Wildest Log Drive. Arrow Lake Historical Society. Nakusp, B.C.

This book, replete with photographs, captures those caulkboot days as well as the era of tug boats and log booms.

3. B.C. Centenary Committee. Centenary Book

The final touches (page design, placement of photographs, etc.)are being worked on now and the Committee hopes it will be published in the fall. It should make a good gift for under the tree.



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 temporary editor Stan Chester, 5686 Keith Road, West Vancouver, B.C. V7W 2N5.. E-mail: stanchester@shaw.ca.

Membership in the association is \$15 yearly, or \$40 for three years. Please send dues to the Treasurer: Art Walker, 564 Oliver Street, Victoria BC V8S 4W3 Phone: (250) 598-4455 E-mail: jaws564@telus.net

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