$4.00

ISSN 0045-2963

Volume 22, No. 4
Fall 1989

British Columbia Historical News

Journal of the B.C. Historical Federation

Memories of the 1930's

MEMBER SOCIETIES

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Member Societies and their secretaries are responsible for seeing that the correct address for their society is up-to-date. Please send any change to both the Treasurer and the Editor at the addresses inside the back cover. The Annual Return as at October 31st should include telephone numbers for contact.

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Second Class registration number 4447

Published fall, winter, spring, and summer by the British Columbia Historical Federation, P.O. Box 35326, Station E, Vancouver, B.C. V6M 4G5. A Charitable Society recognized under the Income Tax Act.

Subscriptions: Institutional, $16.00 per year; Individual (non-members), $8.00.

Financially assisted by the Government of British Columbia through the British Columbia Heritage Trust.

Back issues of the **British Columbia Historical News** are available in microform from Micromedia Ltd., 158 Pearl St., Toronto, Ontario M5H 1L3 - Micromedia also publishes the **Canadian Magazine Index** and the **Canadian Business Index**.

Indexed in the **Canadian Periodical Index**.

British Columbia Historical News Volume 22, No. 4 • Fall, 1989

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Editorial

This Look at the 1930's has been a pleasure to compile. Contributions on a diversity of scenarios should give readers a glimpse of our province during those years. There is nostalgia tempered with some uncomfortable facts; the theme, however, shows that citizens cheerfully coped with every challenge - and there are no regrets.

The Spring 1990 issue is to be "The Okanagan Special" while Winter and Summer issues continue to be a potpourri of B.C. history. Possible future themes are "Because of the War" and "Our Ethnic Mosaic". "Because of the War" can encompass war brides, shifts of population, war work, women in industry, communities that became armed services bases, and many other direct and indirect changes caused by the several wars since British Columbia became an entity.

Those of you with collections of interesting information are challenged to share that information with readers of the **Historical News**. Write an article on your favorite bit of B.C. history and mail it in to the Editor.

Naomi Miller

Cover Credit:

This photo was taken by E.A. Harris of Vancouver, describing it as, "Model T on a B.C. Interior road . . typical of the 1930's. This picture was taken in the summer of 1932 when driving to the Okanagan. The road here leads on to Merritt and the lake in the distance is Nicola Lake."

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Contents

Manuscripts and correspondence for the editor are to be sent to PO. Box 105, Wasa, B.C. V0B 2K0
Correspondence regarding subscriptions are to be directed to the subscription secretary (see inside back cover)

Employment and Unemployment

A Diary of the 30s

by A.G. Builder

It was early in April, 1932, when I returned to Canada on the S.S. Montcalm and it was anything but a prosaic crossing, as the Atlantic was truly awful and the sea so rough that we passengers were seldom allowed on deck. Half way across the Atlantic we were told that the ship had been obliged to change course and we were sailing to the rescue of an SOS call of distress. In due time we reached the stricken vessel; it was by then almost dusk and the ships searchlights were playing on the water. We watched the crew launching the lifeboat with some difficulty and slowly row their way to the sinking vessel. After an hour or so struggle they were able to take on board the crew of the boat - they were Norwegians, about twelve of them and a dog - and all were transported safely to our liner and taken to Halifax.

It was my intention to go to Toronto and it was with no easy feeling that I set out for that city. My total "wealth" was $15.00 or so, and I could not hope to survive long on that pittance. I knew that a job of àny kind was next to impossible, but what could one do in such circumstances? One thing seemed as good "or bad" as another; it was equally severe everywhere in Canada and all one could do was to look at the whole situation with a certain amount of amusement. A sense of humour is often a saving grace. The Canadian government seemed apathetic in their attitude to the situation and did little to help matters. Canada in those days lagged far behind most Western nations in social legislation, and sensible relief programmes as were instituted by the Roosevelt administration in the U.S.A. were not initiated. It seemed to many of us that we were in for a long period of stagnation.

I found a cheap place to live, but a week saw my dwindling funds exhausted and I was obliged to leave with no prospects at all, and leave my belongings behind for future collection. It was late in April now and I had no recourse but to take to the highway and keep going - just where it did not seem to matter! I hiked all over the Niagara peninsula during the next few weeks with many others in the same situation. We went to the town police station at night where the law compelled them to give us a cell for the night and a meal ticket in the morning for our breakfast; the rest of the day we went hungry. At the odd times we got a few hours work and just went from place to place. No one was allowed to spend two consecutive nights in the same town police station; it soon became a nightmare existence.

After several weeks of this odd sort of life my feet became sore from blisters and badly worn out shoes and I decided to go back to Toronto. As soon as I reached that city I went to the Anglican Cathedral and saw one of the canons and told him my story, and that I wished to return to Western Canada where I was better known. I asked him if he could find me a little job to enable me to make this journey. He not only gave me a job cleaning up the Cathedral grounds, but found me a hostel for my room and board and bought me a pair of shoes! At the completion of my work he gave me $10.00 for the trip to Vancouver. That same day I arranged with the C.P.R. to collect my trunk and ship it to the Pacific coast - that cost me $5.00 and with the other $5.00 I boarded the nightly seaboard freight train to Vancouver. I remained on this train all the way - it took five days to complete the journey and I hardly slept at all. When we stopped at divisional points I went to the stores to buy food for the trip, but it was quite an ordeal. I was very tired indeed when we finally reached Vancouver and I went to old friends for a few days to recuperate.

I soon discovered that conditions were no better in British Columbia than they were in Eastern Canada, and was convinced that a job was probably easier to get in the rural areas rather than in the cities. I made my mind up to go to the prairies and work on the harvesting of the grain crops as that season was fast approaching. So it became a matter of riding the freight trains again. I made for southern Saskatchewan and once there quickly got work on a farm. Harvesting could be great fun in the days before the combine harvester was invented. A gang consisted of six bundle teams, two field pitchers and a man on the grain separator. It was very hard work, at least twelve hours per day in the field, besides looking after one's team of two horses. Before the threshing the grain had to be stooked. This process took about two weeks and the threshing about six weeks, as the farmer for whom I worked did some custom work on the adjacent farms. But the regular meals were a great delight to those of us who experienced considerable hunger in the months before and we did full justice to the excellent quality supplied to us. The women on each successive farm on which we worked seemed to vie with one another on the quality of food served. I probably ate more in one meal than I would eat in a week nowadays. When the work was completed I had

saved $150.00 and prepared to return to the Pacific coast for the winter months, where I could eke out these funds until the following spring.

I returned to Vancouver by freight train and during the journey I met one of the most remarkable men that has been my good fortune to encounter. He was obviously English, good looking and with a splendid physique. Conversation, so easy in such circumstances, was soon established, and he told me that his name was Ulrich Mignon, an odd name for an Englishman, but it suited him well - one could not imagine him being called Percy or Claude or something so tame! He was an interesting talker and appeared to have a working knowledge of most subjects - from ballet to ballistics. He was good natured, and witty and had a Rabelaisian sense of humour. Some time later I discovered that he had an Oxford University degree and had been a Pilot Officer in the R.A.F. The only subject that he did not discuss with me were his present circumstances and his reason for being in Canada at that time.

After several days of travel, in which we found one another's company delightful and were beginning to know one another reasonably well, we thought that it would be a suitable arrangement if we found quarters together and share our worldly possessions - such as they were! He had never been to the Pacific coast before but I knew it quite well and had many friends in Vancouver. On arrival in that city we headed for an apartment block where I had stayed before. It was called the Victorian Apartments and was situated on Seymour Street. It was, in fact , a veritable Victorian monstrosity. It consisted of three flights of housekeeping rooms and on the vestibules on each floor there was a row of hard leather chairs each with its own spitoon beside it. These revolting receptacles were still in vogue in all the second-rate hotels and rooming houses in those days and now, fortunately, like the chamber pot, merely collectors items.

We were to spend about a year and a half together and I enjoyed most of it. He had many interests and was widely read and I am forever grateful to him for implanting in me some measure of his love for the arts and sciences. He wrote well, and some of his pieces were accepted by the Vancouver papers; he was also very talented at illustrative poster work and some of it was taken by the advertising media. Our social life was quite fun too, as although we only had occasional odd jobs our lady friends had steady employment and we were asked out to various social events. There seemed no reason to feel parasitic about it, as I am sure that we provided as much of the fun as did our hosts. Eventually, he met a man of some influence in the business world and he was offered a good job with the Standard Oil Company in their Vancouver office. On the strength of this piece of good fortune he decided to be married. I often visited their apartment and it remained a pleasant relationship with both him and his wife Erica. During the next few years and after I departed from the city I heard from mutual friends that he no longer had this job and that his marriage was a failure. This somewhat saddened me. Some time later, during the early years of the war and I was in the Canadian army, I heard he had become a Squadron Leader in the RCAF and remained in Canada for the duration of the war. One of his extra activities during the latter years of the war was being the editor of the official RCAF news sheet and also its cartoonist, in which he created his famous character Sergeant Satherwaite (or some such name). I had almost lost touch with him now, and it was some time later that a mutual friend wrote to me and told me that after the war was over he worked for some years with Manpower and had married again, successfully, but had recently died at an early age of 58. I had always wondered why this man with all that potential, a striking appearance and personality and remarkable intelligence had never attained the heights to which he could and should have risen. I suppose there must have been missing some of the ingredients which make for success - perhaps it was lack of ambition. Nevertheless, when thinking of the people whom I have met over the years, this man stands out like a bright light; it was a great experience to have known him - and great fun, too.

It was early in the spring of 1934 when Ulrich married and I was on my own again with very little money but managed to get a few small jobs to keep the pot boiling - painting the houses of two of my more affluent friends, for the princely sum of twenty-five cents an hour; but that at the very least kept me going, so the search for something better went on.

There is an eccentric streak in most of us mortals when we aspire to become something for which we may not be particularly gifted by nature to perform, and in which there is no logical reason for success. For example, the comedian who would be a Hamlet, the indifferent dancer who aspires to be a ballerina. In my particular case the need for a crowning achievement in life was based on economic matters rather than aesthetic ambitions. It was the Spring of 1934, when the great depression was at its lowest point and most of us felt like second-class citizens and wished to climb out of the morass. Every day we searched to advertisements in the daily paper for jobs. One day, to my amazement I saw an ad. from a vacuum cleaner company who imported the new Swedish Electrolux machine and needed salesmen. The ad. stated that anyone who was interested could apply at their office in Granville Street at 11:00 a.m. the following morning. On arrival there I found at least twenty other applicants at the rendezvous, equally threadbare and seedy looking who, like me had probably breakfasted on porridge and coffee - a mere fifteen cents in those days.

The office door soon opened and we all entered to be greeted by an unctu-

ous looking individual who seemed to be the office manager. The interviews were en bloc; then followed a recital of our names, addresses and telephone numbers. All of us were in fact hired, regardless of experience, for after all the company had little to lose - apart from some loss of their time - as the job carried no basic salary, merely commission on sales. We were instructed to come the following day for a demonstration of the machine and its various tools; the day after for a talk on the arts (and grafts) of salesmanship and on the third day we were to sally forth with one of the experienced salesmen already in their employ.

On arrival on the third day I was surprised to see that a piano had been installed, and after a brief pep talk we were obliged to gather around this instrument and join in a few suitable ditties, such as "Onward Christian Soldiers". All this, I presume, was intended to bring us to a pitch of fervour, like a revivalist meeting. The object being to seize a vacuum cleaner under one arm, a sales book under the other, and march out full of electronic enthusiasm! The whole business seemed to me completely vacuous and utterly ridiculous, but perhaps this was the modus operandi of the selling game at this period.

My particular instructor for the day was evidently a very experienced man at the selling trade. We went to New Westminster and in the course of the day visited five dental establishments. The only reason I could think of for his penchant for dentists was that he might be paying off old bills. During the day four cleaners were sold which meant a commission of $30.00 per machine for this salesman-genius who, with such a display of selling artistry, buoyed up my own hopes for such unexpected riches! I might add that my recompense for the day was a slice of apple pie and a cup of coffee at lunchtime, for although he lived in that city I was not invited to his house.

The following day I was to be on my own in Vancouver, so in the evening I made a list of doctors - thinking that they must be at least as good prospects as were the dentists - and possibly of a higher status in the professions. A few telephone calls were made and the third call secured an interview for the following morning with a doctor's wife at their home where I would demonstrate the machine. That evening I carefully vacuumed my room, sufficiently to know that there was some debris in the bag (which is a common trick in this trade).

At 10:00 the next morning I arrived at the doctor's home - it was an elegant establishment - and I was greeted affably by the lady, and after the usual polite conversation I got down to business. There can hardly be a woman in the western world of today who at some time in her life has not undergone a demonstration of this kind, so I decided to proceed by the book. At first a section of carpet is selected - approximately eight feet square; the machine must be adjusted accordingly and the patch assiduously worked over for at least five minutes. Then the various tools are used for the crannies of the chairs, etc. The next procedure is to put a large section of newspaper on the vacuumed carpet, remove the dust bag and carefully shake the contents (which in most cases is about the equivalent of a child's sand pail at the beach). At this moment a quick look at the lady filled me with pity and some degree of shame; doubtless she thought that I must consider her a slut, so I quickly reassured her that it was nothing unusual as no other cleaner on the market at that time was capable of such efficiency. This mollified her to some degree and I thought that this was the psychological moment to finalize a sale, but according to the book the full power of the machine must be demonstrated. So a section of parquet floor is selected, the machine adjusted, a little polish applied and the patch vigorously polished until one's face could be seen in it. I certainly considered that a sale was imminent at this stage and suggested that the pile of debris lift on the newspaper had better be removed. The machine switch was pushed on, and then, horror of horrors, I realised that I had forgotten to change the hose from the blow-out position to the take-in end.

There are moments in life when one wishes to expire on the spot (a most convenient place is a doctor's establishment), or to eat dust as it were, but I had to face the fact that every speck of that was either back again on the drapes and in every corner of that elegant room! Red in the face, and stammering my apologies to the lady - who by now was almost in a state of apoplexy - I suggested that she immediately telephone her cleaning lady and that my company would pay her in full (like hell they would). Fortunately, the telephone was in another room, so as soon as she disappeared I seized my equipment, tore out of the front door, raced downtown, deposited my machine and handed in my resignation. Fortunately for me all telephones were busy that morning for no complaints had been received in the interim. However, dishonoured, subdued and deeply mortified I realised that my forte in life was not that of a salesman but rather of a garbage collector or even a street cleaner, and the charms of salesmanship faded into an idle dream!

Shortly after this soul shaking event I decided to leave the city and go to the Okanagan Valley where I hoped to get some work in the orchards during the summer and autumn. Little was I to know that it would be twelve years before I returned to Vancouver, but much water was to pass under the bridges of our lives during this time. I went to Penticton and Oliver during the season and was able to keep myself in funds in a modest way.

It was at Penticton that I met Harry Spencer Chapman for the first time. He was close to forty then and had recently had a share in his father's cattle ranch but had given this up to work on his own; but work was scarce when we met. It was after the fruit season and even if work

could be found the pay was quite inadequate for anything but the most meagre living. With the Christmas Season fast approaching prospects of much merriment looked very poor indeed. Harry was married and had a baby daughter. We took an instant liking to one another - which remained until his death in 1965. We were both English, of similar backgrounds, but without much formal education. He was a man of vast resources, he was good natured and highly intelligent, had a wonderful sense of humour and ready wit. He was in fact an amazing combination of brains and manual dexterity. He could and did perform most trades as an artisan and from 1940 until his death lived at Union Bay and Courtenay on Vancouver Island. During this period he designed and built over thirty houses, literally with his own hands.

Both of us being out of jobs, we racked our brains for some way to make a little money for Christmas. One of us, I cannot remember which, thought of the Christmas tree and decoration business, viz., holly, mistletoe, cedar boughs and Christmas trees. Harry had the use of a large truck, from his father's ranch, I think, so we decided to go into the woods and gather cedar boughs and trees. We had solicited and obtained orders for two large trees, a twenty footer for the biggest store in town and a ten footer for the Anglican Church.

We set off for the woods several days before Christmas and after a couple of hours drive arrived at the spot Harry had in mind. There was an old cabin still intact, with an ancient stove which we could use for such elementary cooking necessary for a stay of two days.

We went to work at once, filling the truck with cedar boughs and by the following afternoon we had loaded many small trees, tied the load with ropes and set off for home on the lookout for the two tall trees - the 'big' money in fact! It did not take long to obtain a suitable tree for the church, but the twenty footer was not to be found. On the way back we decided to pass through the Indian Reserve, which was forbidden territory for the white man, and there were dire penalties for anyone who had the temerity to cut down a tree. Almost at once we saw a spruce suitable for our purpose. Reserve or no reserve, Harry stopped the truck with a bang, seized an axe, and before I could blink my eyes the tree was on its way to the ground. Unfortunately, at that moment, two swarthy Indians appeared out of nowhere, gesticulating wildly and obviously cursing us with a mixture of English and their own tongue and with considerable venom! I was more than glad that the days of the tomahawk had passed by; I also thought of a possible Christmas spent behind bars at the Penticton lock-up!

However, as I have indicated, Harry was a resourceful man. What he said to those two Indians I never knew, but in no time at all they were filled with the Christmas spirit (not the liquid kind). Not only did they agree to our taking the tree but actually helped us to tie it on the load, then waved us off with cheerful grins. I rated this performance of Harry's a work of real art and thought that he would have made an excellent diplomat. This part of our assignment over we proceeded home, parking the truck in Harry's back yard.

I must mention that before we left for the woods I had ordered a consignment of holly and mistletoe from the wholesalers in Vancouver - this to be delivered by train to Penticton. So the following morning we collected the goods and while Harry was delivering the orders and the rest of the load I went in to every shop in town that sold shoes and accumulated a vast supply of shoe boxes. A sprig or two of holly and mistletoe were placed in each box and on Christmas Eve we set up a stall on the main street - without interference from the police - and proceeded to sell each box for twenty-five cents apiece. In the end we found that we had garnered about $120.00, a vast sum in those days! That was $60.00 each which provided a large turkey, a bottle of whiskey ($3.50 then), thus a worthy reward for a little enterprise.

During the previous summer I had worked for a month or so in Oliver, B.C. for an ex naval officer, Clarence King; he owned an orchard there and lived there with his family. He was a remarkable man, serving the British mercantile marine until the outbreak of World War I when he became a skipper of one of the "Q" boats which were successful in beating the "U" boat menace in the Atlantic. For these services he was awarded two decorations. In the Second World War he served with the Canadian Navy - although by now he had reached the age of 51. He again had a splendid record in the anti-submarine campaign and received decorations from both the Canadian and United States governments.

He had been in the district for about five years and had planted out his twenty acres with fruit trees. As everybody knows it takes several years of growth before fruit trees become a paying proposition, so in order to live and support his family he grew ground crops - tomatoes, cantaloupes, cucumbers, etc. In fact, such crops were grown by all orchardists in the early years of the southern Okanagan fruit industry and were, in fact, its mainstay. The King family became my very good friends. Clarence died in 1965 and his wife, Olive, who lived to 92 years of age died a year or two ago.

While I was with the King's that summer Clarence suggested to me that I might consider working on a crop sharing basis the following year, as he had other irons in the fire. The proposition was that he would till the soil and supply the equipment and I would raise the plants from seed in the greenhouses, plant out the crop and do the harvesting. It seemed a reasonable proposition to me and settled the problem of how to live in the coming year.

So it was in February, 1935 that I joined the Kings in Oliver and lived

with the family until they moved to a new house later in the year. For the first two months I did the preliminary work in the greenhouses - sowing seed and transplanting when necessary; it was also very important to maintain the stoves in the greenhouses to withstand frost, so this meant a vigil at night, too. Early in May the ground was warm enough to commence planting out into the ground - these crops are grown between the rows of fruit trees. In all I raised 19,000 plants, viz; tomatoes, cantaloupes, cucumbers and cabbages and all had to be constantly irrigated and cultivated and I never seemed to stop work. In fact, as I recollect, I worked at least twelve hours per day, seven days a week, including Sundays and holidays. I had very little money to spend and my diet was most meagre, but the thought of a good crop and money to spend buoyed my hopes and kept me cheerful. It developed into a bad season - a late crop because everything was late in maturing and late crops meant poor prices. In fact, the crops were so late that the prairie market was lost to the Niagara growers, who happened to be early that year. Our local packing and marketing facility was not able to cope with the situation. I have a poignant recollection of picking forty large boxes of semi-ripe tomatoes one day which were never picked up by the packing house as the market was dead. These very quickly perished in the hot Okanagan sun. As soon as the season was over Clarence and I discovered that our profit was only about $300.00 each instead of the $1,500.00 that we had hoped for. Such calamities hurt.

As the season wore on and it became evident to me that the financial rewards would not be great I applied for a job with the Northern Mining Syndicate who operated a gold mine at Osoyoos, and was just a few miles away from the King property and almost on the Canada/USA border. I was advised that a job would be available and that I could start work there when my growing season was over. It was with considerable elation that I heard this news, it was the fall of 1935, and the depression was already of six years duration. As far as I was concerned it was possible that my troubles might be over.

It would be impossible for anyone who had not experienced many years of such conditions to understand what it is like, or what it can do to a person. It must be remembered that during the long years of hardship there was no adequate system of relief as there is today, no unemployment pay or proper relief programmes, such as were instituted by the Roosevelt administration in the U.S.A. After the first year or so the B.C. Government did institute a meagre form of assistance, as I recall it was 35-cents a day for food and $1.45 a week towards rent!.

It is an unpleasant situation when, for the first time, you realise that you do not have any money for food and shelter. These facts are hard to bear; hunger for a limited period does very little harm, but being without shelter at night is a frightening experience and lowers the morale very quickly. During the past year I was homeless on many occasions, sleeping in police stations, railway cars, parked cars on the highways, haystacks, barns and sundry other places - at least safe from the vagaries of the weather. But the hardest thing to endure in this situation is the simple fact that you are no longer a normal person, with a normal person's perspective, leading a normal life, but rather an outcast from society, contributing nothing to life in general and having at times to ask people for food; this is a personal humiliation and difficult to become reconciled to. Fortunately, for me, I am an optimist by nature and remained convinced that thing would come all right in the end (as they have), and I think that my sense of humour helped me to get through those times - for, after all is said and done, almost all tragic events have their comic relief from time to time and make life endurable.

It was in after years that I came to realise that in spite of all the frustrations and hardships the experience of it all did me good. It taught me the value of work as a stabliser of life, both to the body and the human psyche; and in the real sense the experience gave me physical and mental endurance - qualities that I would need as the years passed by.

There is a school of thought today which pontificates that hard work is not necessary for mankind and that any kind of mechanical invention for the alleviation of human effort is a good thing. I do not agree. From the personal point of view I can say that I rather enjoyed work and accepted it usually as a challenge, whether the work was merely manual or using one's brain. For man has been a working animal since he first evolved and his body and mind are attuned to the ethics of it. What will happen to man when it is a completely push button world, one hesitates to think. It cannot be a Roman holiday forever, and the vast majority of mankind are not and probably never will be capable of a contemplative life.

Another enormous asset gained during those depression years was the real friends I made, a few of whom are still living and who I see from time to time. I remember particularly Robina Martin and Janet Gibson, two Canadian ladies both of whom had secretarial posts in the British Embassy in Tokyo, and both of them back in Vancouver on furlough in the winter of 1932. These two good friends often fed Ulrich and myself and gave us the run of their houses. Alas, they both died some years ago.

It was, therefore, late in September, 1935 that I commenced working at this mining property. It was only a small concern employing about fifty men; we lived in cabins on the property and had our meals in the cookhouse. My first job was in the lowest category of the mining i.e. mucking, which is simply going in to the mine after the miners have blasted the rock and shovelling it into mine cars for dispatch to the

crushing mill. It was hard, physical work but that was not a new experience for me. After a month or two on this work I was sent to one of the diamond drillers as his helper; this was much more interesting working and slightly higher pay, too. After a few months the driller left the employ of the company and I, having become reasonably efficient at the work, was given the job. This, of course, meant even higher wages (by the standard of those days). I was on this work for close to two years and from time to time I was 'lent' by the mining company to two of the other gold properties in the area who required some exploration done. This made the work even more interesting. Early in 1937 a large sodium cyanide plant was completed on the mine property: this was to extract the maximum gold from the ore. I was then transferred to work in this mill as an operator and spent a few weeks learning the work from an expert in gold milling. There was no hard work involved in this; merely keeping the plant going smoothly and making various tests throughout one's shift. We were obliged to work seven days a week all round the clock, and apart from the long change from day shift to midnight shift had no time off at all! The company did not hire a spare operator. I recall working one Christmas Day, in fact I was obliged to put in sixteen hours as the man that should have relieved me had succumbed to an early Christmas celebration! However, after the difficult times of some previous years none of us minded this strenuous life very much.

Moreover, it was a pleasant locality in which to live and we managed to lead an enjoyable social life in the limited time at our disposal. There was a badminton club for winter and excellent tennis club for the summer months. I joined a debating society which met once a month; we also played bridge and danced when these things offered themselves. I also bought my first car ever in 1937, a Chevrolet coupe - much better built than today's offerings. But as the days of 1938 and 1939 passed by it became increasingly obvious that we were in for another war and it was the subject of much speculation as to when it would be upon us. I, as an ex-militia officer, had no doubt what I would do when it came. I remember coming off shift at midnight on September 4, 1939, and listening to a radio broadcast from England telling us that England had declared war on Germany. Also listening to this programme with me was a German employee - a very rabid fascist. Ours were very mixed emotions.

There was no sleep for me that night as I began to formulate plans for my immediate future. I had made up my mind, of course, to join up as soon as possible and having bought a new car a few months before I decided that I would drive right across the country and join my old battalion - now the Princess Louise Fusiliers - in Halifax, Nova Scotia. (The machine gun corps had long been disbanded). I resigned from my job that same day, settled my limited affairs, said goodbye to most of my friends and set off on this lengthy journey with about $100.00 in my pocket - all my worldly wealth!

Impetuosity has always been a characteristic of mine and it has, at times, caused me difficulties. If I had considered all the hazards of such a journey it is most unlikely that I would have made it. In the first place it is close to 4,000 miles to Nova Scotia and I had no idea of what it would cost or clear picture of the route that I would take, and with only $100.00 I could land myself in trouble. I had only driven a few thousand miles in my life and never in traffic of any substance. In rural British Columbia in those days sometimes one could drive for miles without seeing another car. A trip across the continent entailed passing through many of the larger cities, and this alone would have been sufficiently discouraging to dissuade me from making the trip. However, on September 9th, 1939, I set off into the state of Washington east of Spokane, with the route Chicago, Detroit, Toronto, Montreal, the New England states and Nova Scotia in mind. It must be remembered there was no through route from west to east in Canada in these days. After the first night on the road I arrived in the town of Missoula, Montana about lunchtime and went to a cafe to have some food, looking through the advertisements for interest. In the local paper I noted that a lady was looking for transportation to St. Pauls, Minnesota and would be glad to pay any motorist a share of the expenses. I immediately telephoned to her and arranged to collect her and her luggage in an hour or two. On arriving at the door she eyed me with a certain amount of suspicion - probably wondering if either her purse or her virtue were safe in my company. I told her that I was on my way to join the Canadian army and that I would charge her $10.00 for the trip. This was reasonable enough as it was about 1500 miles; she was glad to accept my offer and off we went.

It was a two day drive to the city and entailed staying for the night at a hotel. She told me that she was going to St. Pauls to stay with a brother; on arrival I was welcomed, too, and given a bed for the night. The next morning I set off out of Minnesota and into the Dakotas, then south into Illinois - fortunately I was able to by-pass Chicago which I had dreaded because of the traffic problem. The roads that I had travelled to date had been good and the traffic by no means dense; now and then I encountered a flock of sheep or herd of cattle on the highway. I then made my way into Michigan and to Detroit where I knew that I must find the tunnel that took one to Windsor, Ontario. This proved easier than expected and I went on to Toronto and stayed with some old friends for the night. Just outside the city the next morning en route to Montreal I picked up a young hitchhiker, he turned out to be a university student anxious to get to Montreal. He paid for some gas and took a spell at driving - this was a

great help to me. Also, being a resident of that city he was aware of all the best routes going east, so after a meal he drove me to a convenient place for me to set off. I was now on the last stage of my journey, through the New England states, then New Brunswick and finally Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The journey turned out to be 4,400 miles, it had taken ten days and only cost me about $60.00 from my own pocket. Gasoline while driving in the States was only 18-cents per gallon, meals were from 30-cents up and a respectable hotel room cost a mere $1.00 a night. I hesitate to think what a trip of this nature would cost today! I still had about $50.00 in my wallet and I had made it!

So this was the end of an era as far as I was concerned, the future was uncertain (if one survived it) but life was vastly exciting.

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A.G. (Gerry) Builder came to Canada in 1923. He crossed the Atlantic 25 times before settling in to retirement in Victoria. This gentleman enroled for a Senior's Writing course when he was 77 - This was part of his autobiography that he wrote while taking the course ten years ago.

Trackers in the Wilderness

by Carle Jones

Simon Peter Gunanoot, a Hazelton Indian, became quite famous when he successfully eluded all Law Enforcement Officers for thirteen years as they hunted him in the rugged Skeena Country of North Western B.C. following the murder of two whitemen at Hazelton in 1906.

I never knew Simon Gunanoot, but I did know his younger brother Dave, and this story will allude to an almost meeting we had in 1938.

When Dave and other Indian families left their traplines in the Bowser Lake and Meziaden Country, they would come out over the Bear Pass to American Creek and camp there while they sent a runner into Stewart to make a deal with some truckers to haul them into town, where they would meet Mr. Goldbloom, a fur buyer from Prince Rupert.

These meetings could take place at any time of the year, but this one occurred late in the Spring of 1938, after the heaviest snow had gone.

My partner and I had a Model "A" Ford, stake body truck and we would often haul them. Men, Women, Kids and Dogs of all sizes. All except the Chief carried packs, some of those Squaws could carry prodigious loads, even quite small children carried packs. Fox Terriers carried little packs, and big Malemutes could carry over fifty pounds.

We liked Dave Gunanoot, he had as we said, "Never Come In" and hadn't been spoiled too much by our so called Civilization. His wife was a pleasant looking woman who had enough Mission training to read and write a little and could do simple sums. They had two or three children.

On this occasion they had finished their trading and we had hauled them back up to American Creek where they had loaded their packs and struck off for their traplines.

A couple of days later an inspector of the B.C. Provincial Police came in on the boat and told the local Policeman, who was new on the job, that he wanted to talk to Dave Gunanoot. The local policeman knew that Ray and I had some contact with the Indians, so they asked us to take them to meet Dave. They wouldn't state their business, and we were a little worried of the consequences if they were not diplomatic when they did meet him. He didn't trust white men, particularly Policemen.

We told them where we had left Dave and the other families, so they hired us to help overtake the Indians who couldn't be far along on their trip back to their traplines.

So with four saddlehorses and three or four packhorses loaded with tent, camping gear and horsefeed, we headed out.

The second morning we hadn't gone far when we came on the scene of a recent camp, warm ashes, etc., and assured our policemen that it had been Dave's overnight camp.

Later that day, as we made our way through the difficult country we overtook an Indian woman carrying a heavy load. She had got behind the main party when she stopped to have a baby. The child was born dead so she buried it, and taken up her pack and carried on.

Knowing she was one of Dave's band, we rearranged our packs and put her and her load on a horse. The Police were very pleased to have made this contact. When we made camp that evening we hung a horse-blanket over one corner of the tent to make a private sleeping place for her. She didn't have much English, and we didn't have any Indian, but she knew us and asked why the Police were here. By this time, through talking to the young policeman, we knew that the Inspector wanted to discuss any knowledge

Dave might have of a fur theft over in the Fort St. James area, some weeks before. We told her what we knew, but learned nothing from her.

That night she slipped away, but was back the next morning. She liked riding that horse and getting her load carried. She told Ray that Dave didn't want to talk to the Police and that he knew nothing of the fur theft. We believed her.

We carried on and each day we would come on the signs of a recent camp.

Then as the grub was running low, the decision was made to abandon the chase. We left the Indian woman to carry her pack and headed for home.

The police were disappointed, but high in their praise of our ability as trackers. They didn't realize that the Indians were simply following us each day, and then moving ahead at night to make their camp, stepping aside in the morning to let us pass. Our slow pace through the rough country enabled them to keep up. They always knew where the Police were with no chance of a surprise meeting.

In 1975, I visited Stewart and learned that Dave, now widowed, was living in the town. I walked up and rapped on his door. As he saw me standing there he said, "Hello Carle, come on in", as casually as if I was just passing on my way for the mail.

We enjoyed a cup of coffee and a slice of freshly baked bread in his spotless little cabin. He was about eighty years old then, but had gone into Meziaden the fall before and got his annual Moose for the winter meat.

We spent an interesting hour reminiscing. We chuckled as we remembered that we did not tip the Police as to what was going on for two reasons: First, we were obeying orders. Second, jobs were not too plentiful and this was a short job worth $5.00 plus board per day for each of us. Also, the boss got $4.00 per day for each horse!

We were not about to make suggestions to the Police on that trip where we built our reputation as Trackers in the Wilderness.

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Carle Jones made his debut as a historical writer with his "Packers and Packhorses of Stewart" in the Winter '89 NEWS. This gentleman resides in Creston where he is busy directing the operation and expansion of the Creston Museum. Carle recruited a volunteer to animate many of the displays in the Creston Valley Museum (open since 1982.).

British Columbia Historical Federation

Writing Competition 1989

The British Columbia Historical Federation invites submission of books or articles for the seventh annual Competition for Writers of B.C. History.

Any book dealing with any facet of British Columbia history, published in 1989, is eligible. The work may be a community history, a biography, glimpses of the past. Names, dates and places with relevant maps or pictures turn a story into "history".

The judges are looking for fresh presentations of historical information with appropriate illustrations, careful proof reading, and adequate index, table of contents and bibliography. Winners will be chosen in the following categories:

1) Best history book by an individual writer.
(Lieutenant-Governor's Medal for Historical Writing).

2) Best History as prepared by a group (Eg. **Bunch Grass to Barbed Wire** was published by Rose Hill Farmers Institute).

3) Best History for Junior Readers.

Awards are given where entries warrant. i.e. a lone entry in group 2 or 3 will not automatically be given a prize.

Winners receive a monetary award, a Certificate of Merit, considerable publicity, and an invitation to the Annual B.C. Historical Federation Conference to be held in Grand Forks in May 1990. Deadline for entering 1989 books is January 31, 1990, BUT submissions are requested as soon as possible after publication. Those submitting books should include name, address, telephone number, selling price of the book, and an address from where the book may be ordered if a reader has to shop by mail.

Mail to: B.C. Historical Writing Competition • P.O. Box 933 • Nanaimo, B.C. • V9R 5N2

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There will also be an award for Best Article published in the **British Columbia Historical News**. This prize is reserved for amateur historians and / or undergraduate or graduate students.

Articles should be no more than 2,500 words, substantiated with footnotes if possible, accompanied by photographs if available, and typed double spaced. (Photos will be returned.) Deadlines for quarterly issues are February 15, May 15, August 15, and November 15. Please send articles direct to:

The Editor, B.C. Historical News, P.O. Box 105, Wasa, B.C. V0B 2K0

A Wardens Life in Kootenay National Park

by Josephine Cobb

In 1937 my husband of nearly a year, Leonard Cobb and I were living in Radium Hot Springs, B.C. up above what is now the big parking lot housing campers and trailers visiting the Pool today. Len worked at the Government Garage as a mechanic, and, seasonally a truck driver. We were housed in two tents set up five hundred yards from the Garage. One tent was for kitchen and utility work; the other a bed sitting-room. It had a board floor and boards for four feet up sides and end over which a tent was fastened. A piece of canvas called a "fly" made a second roof, keeping snow off the tent in winter and making the place cooler in the summer. We were quite comfortable and warm there, as long as we tended the airtight heater. If too much wood was put in at one time it had a tendency to overheat and blow the lid up and down in an alarming fashion.

Len applied for the job and was accepted. Late April saw us moving our few belongings five miles up the road from the Park Gate. Kay's Cabin was a frame building with a kitchen, living room with fireplace, and two bedrooms. There was a sink in the kitchen and cold running water from a tap, piped from Sinclair Creek. A rain barrel outside caught precious soft water. An outhouse was partially hidden among the trees. Laundry was done in a galvanized tub with woman power (me) rubbing clothes on a corrugated glass washboard. A larger tub served us for the Saturday night bath, whether we needed it or not. (This function was never neglected.) Water was heated in a large galvanized copper-bottomed boiler which sat on the kitchen stove along with the ever cheerful kettle. The cabin was an improvement over our tent home.

Kay's Cabin, as it was in 1937 - when we just occupied it. All trace of it is gone now.

The position of Warden at Kay's Cabin was advertised that spring by the Federal Civil Service on a notice in the Radium Hot Springs office.

The duties of a warden were varied. There was fire patrol, trail maintenance, bear control and keeping the telephone line open. The telephone line stretched from the Radium office to the last warden's cabin near the Alberta border. The wire hung in long loops between trees on which insulators were fastened. A high wind would often down the phone line; a tree might fall across it, or some weight would drop the line into the snow where current grounded wire could not serve the receivers along the way. Further into the Park the avalanches which came down with a thaw would bury the line for the width of the slide. Fire pumps must be kept ready to start at a moments notice. This was no small feat as they were tricky little two-cylinder motors. Len had a good grasp of things mechanical, but if he was puzzled he'd stay with it till he had mastered the problem. Those fire pumps ran efficiently when needed. A sharp eye was kept out for lightning strikes, and side roads were patrolled to make sure that visitors had put out all campfires. The area for our fire patrol that summer was from McLeod Meadows to the Gate. Berries were in short supply in the bush so consequently there were a great many bears about. At night we would step out on the back porch with a flashlight: as we swung the beam around our clearing we would count six or seven pairs of eyes belonging to the visiting bears. Those bears foraging for food at the hotels near the Hot Springs were giving some places a lot of trouble. It was Len's job to go down and shoot the persistent troublemakers. Tranquilizing was not known in those days, and there was no money for staff, conveyances, or catch-em alive traps to transport bears away from habitation. One night in the C.P.R. Camp above Blakeley's Hotel,

in the dark, with a five cell flashlight trained along the sights of a twelve-gauge shotgun, he killed, he thought, a black bear that had been smashing all the little jello desserts which were laid out in preparation for a bus tour. It turned out to be a grizzly, a more dangerous customer than a black bear.

Len had several trips out to McLeod Meadow where bears were upsetting the tourists. In one instance he had to look for a bear that made off with a cake that two ladies were trying to bake in a cracker box on one of the stoves in the shelters. The improvised oven was a larger tin over the cracker tin. Oh, the joys of being a warden.

Len used a government Model A light delivery truck for those trips the first summer. He serviced it and was glad that it had lots of power. On one outing we came across a small lake within the country that was within Len's Patrol area. After he had reported its whereabouts the superintendent had Len and Frank Foyston carry some trout fingerlings into the lake in cans of water strapped to their backs. There was no trail. They travelled in hot weather over windfalls and rough country to get to it. Those transplants grew into large trout eventually. Years later we were surprised and pleased to learn that the tarn we first saw had been given the name "Cobb Lake"

A warden's cabin had to be a self-sufficient unit. We kept a rifle, axe, pick and shovel close at hand. White gas for one lamp and coal oil for the other had to be stored in a safe place. Cans of gas and tins of oil had to be kept filled and ready for emergencies involving truck travel. A good pile of stovewood was a **must**. A large load of slabs was hauled from E. Trethewy's mill at Firland below Radium. When these were dumped in the yard at Kay's Cabin we started to cut them with a Swede saw. However, Len rescued an old gas powered saw from Government discards, got it going, and cut up the wood for the kitchen stove and front room heater much more quickly than anticipated.

When fall came we prepared a carefully considered order for groceries to last during the months when the Radium-Banff road would be closed. Len got most of the staples from Ray Ball's store in Windermere. Groceries came in large amounts; flour by the 100 lb. sack (or 50 lb. at the smallest); sugar in 50 lb. sacks; milk by the case, 48 cans to the case; tea, coffee, and cocoa; raisins, baking powder, soda, dry yeast cakes, vanilla, salt; matches; butter in a 50 lb. box at 25¢ per lb.; raspberry, and strawberry jam, and peanut butter in 4 lb. tins; bacon in 6 or 7 lb. slabs; dried prunes, apricots or apples which came in 20 lb. boxes, each for $2.00; rice and beans in large sacks; whole-wheat flour and molasses; Canadian bulk cheese; and sowbelly pork for frying or cooking with beans. We made our own cookies, cake, bread and candy. Breadmaking was a long drawn-out process with slow rising yeast in each batch which would be covered with blankets and coats to keep it out of all drafts during the day. Our winter order of groceries filled the back of the Model A truck and cost about $30.00. To supplement those supplies Len went to Edgewater where he purchased a side of beef at 9¢ per lb. from Eric Smith, plus 50 or 100 lb. sackfulls of carrots, potatoes, turnips, and onions. These were stored in a cold room, created under the kitchen floor.

In preparation for winter patrols outlying cabins had to be checked, cleaned, stocked with dry food (in tins to protect it from mice) and firewood. Some of these cabins were windowless remains of a homesteaders shack. The Kootenay River Valley had attracted, and lost, about a dozen homesteaders before the area was claimed as a National Park. Some cabins had to have a small stove taken in for heating during emergency winter stopovers. Pack rats and their nests had to be ousted as far as possible. A warden patrolling for illegal trappers or downed telephone lines had to have shelter after walking or snowshoeing 8 to 10 miles. These duties, as all others, were recorded in the warden's diary; this daily report had to be turned in at the Gateway office at the end of each month.

Len rigged a snowplow blade on the Model A Ford and was able to keep the five miles of road open to Radium Hot Springs. Economy, however, dictated that we go to town only once a month, unless on government business or in an emergency. The social life as observed by the warden's family in 1937 was limited. Our Atwater Kent radio, powered by two big "B" batteries and a smaller "C" cell, entertained us - when the reception was right. Half hour comic programs such as Fibber McGee and Molly, Jack Benny, and Amos 'n Andy were much appreciated. That winter the World Boxing Championship was being fought by Joe Louis and Max Schmelling. Some friends came up from Radium to listen with us, but before they were all properly seated Max Schmelling knocked out Joe Louis in the second round. Rather an anticlimax to the evening! Traffic passing Kay's Cabin was very light during the off season, so anyone who came along was invited to join us for a meal and socialize a bit.

Winter patrols were conducted on snowshoes or skis. Nothing startling happened that winter, and as spring 1938 appeared Len and a helper were sent to clear trails and sideroads of windfalls. Early in the summer a new cabin was built at Nixon Creek, just off the highway. This project was supervised by Oswald Young, warden at Kootenay Crossing, with Len Cobb and Stanley Wolfenden assisting him. The sturdy cabin, built of logs cut in the area, was much needed to serve as an overnight stopping place for winter patrollers. Late in the season Oswald Young unexpectedly left the Kootenay Crossing Station.

Len and I were instructed to move to Kootenay Crossing for the winter. There was to be no replacement at Kay's Cabin so Len faced patrols from Vermillion Crossing to the

Gate, a distance of 38 miles with Sinclair Summit being a proven obstacle on the roadway.

Len & Jo outside Kootenay Crossing Cabin - 1938

We were installed in the Kootenay Crossing cabin, with six months supply of groceries, by the end of October. The cabin was similar to Kay's Cabin, but without a fireplace. There was a garage which held a Chev. truck for the warden's use (when road conditions permitted.). There was the telephone , and intermittent radio reception. We had a Springer spaniel and a cat for company. The nearest, and only neighbours were Charles and Annie Crook who lived five miles south of Kootenay Crossing. Their home was a combination gas station and dwelling, with a few log cabins built on the other side of the highway for renting to summer tourists. This small business was situated on 160 acres of freehold land that the owner had homesteaded in 1911.

The Warden at Kootenay Crossing had to patrol a different area every day that travel was possible. Occasionally Crook's son, Ray, would go out with him, and sometimes I would accompany them. Every month end he skied or snowshoed the 25 miles out to the office in Radium Hot Springs. His most hectic assignment came just before New Year's Day when a big slide came down near Vermilion Crossing burying the telephone line and cutting off communication to Bert Rutherford, the warden at Marble Canyon. Len snowshoed up, reconnected the telephone, and snowshoed home again for New Year's Eve. Twenty-two miles on heavy wet snow to help a fellow warden join the civilized world for a brief telephone chat as 1939 dawned in the Rockies.

Len Cobb at Wardle Creek cabin - 1938 - on the way to Vermilion Crossing from Kootenay Crossing. (Note the height of the snow.)

The Crook family were very hospitable to us. Mrs. Crook's baked brown beans and brown bread tasted like manna from the gods, especially to snowshoers who had been out for hours in the crisp sunshine. Best of all was the companionship. Charlie would sing and play the banjo, Len played the mouth organ, and Dinty, our dog, put on his show for us. These neighbours brightened up the winter for us. Roads became passable on the valley floor but it was not until the 2nd day of May 1939 that we travelled in the Chev. truck over a slushy Sinclair summit to Radium Hot Springs. It was six months since I had left there for Kootenay Crossing.

We returned to Kay's Cabin for the summer. Len carried out his duties as warden of the station. In September he tendered his resignation to Ottawa; it was acknowledged with regret by the Department of National Parks. We left Kootenay National Park at the end of October to undertake new challenges, but rich in memories and cautiously optimistic about changing occupation in a community a few miles away.

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Len Cobb became a miner, first at Bralorne, then at Kimberley. His doctor advised him to avoid further underground work for health reasons. The next ten years saw him working seasonally for the Forest Service out of Canal Flats, alternately with operating his trapline near White Swan Lake (25 miles east of Canal Flats). From 1950 to 1957 their home was at the end of a trail. Then a road was pushed into that country providing access to a lot of timber. In 1960 they moved back to Brisco where they owned a small acreage, and in 1977 they moved to Invermere.

The writer further says, "I accompanied Len wherever we had to go to find work. We had no children. Len was at home with his environment, capable and content with his lot. He was a good companion, full of fun. The life was interesting and challenging. I entertain no regrets."

Josephine Cobb, now a widow, lives in Invermere where she is a member of the Windermere District Historical Society.

NOMINATIONS

Canadian Historical Association

Certificates of Merit for Regional History

The Regional History Committee of the Canadian Historical Association invites nominations for its "CERTIFICATE OF MERIT" Awards. Two awards are given annually for each of five Canadian regions, including British Columbia and the Yukon: (1) an award for publications and videos that make a significant contribution to regional history and that will serve as a model for others; and (2) an award to individuals for work over a lifetime or to organizations for contributions over an extended period of time.

Nominations accompanied by as much supporting documentation as possible should be sent no later than 30 November 1989 to Robert A.J. McDonald, Department of History, University of British Columbia,

Memories of Motoring in the 1930's

by Ernest A. Harris

Over the years the motor-car, for better or worse, has become an integral part of our way of living. For me the 1930s are recalled by memories of the three automobiles (all of them used cars) that I owned during that notorious decade. For a vast number of people who suffered privation because of mass unemployment those years were indeed the *'dirty thirties.'* Social assistance was minimal and unemployment insurance and medicare did not exist.

My family was far from wealthy but in 1930 I was fortunate to have a job. In September of that year I was appointed to the teaching staff of Mackenzie School in Vancouver at a salary of $1200 per annum. I was then 22 years old, and had 3 1/2 years of experience - a year and a half at Boulder, a tiny Doukhobor settlement south of Nelson, and two years (1928-30) at Englewood, a saw-mill company-town on Vancouver Island, near Alert Bay. Both were ungraded one-room schools. To reach Boulder I went via the Kettle Valley Railway that trestled and tunnelled its way through the rugged Coquihalla valley into the southern interior, and to Englewood travelled by Union Steamships whose red-funneled fleet of steamers served the B.C. coast for many years before sailing into history. In Vancouver I could live at home and travel by street-car to and from work daily - but only by a very round-about route.

In those days the B.C. Electric street-car lines radiated from the down-town area like the spokes of a wheel - each spoke serving a different suburban community. My home was in Marpole, served by the bouncy Oak Street tram, and Mackenzie School, about four miles to the north-east, was close to the Fraser Street car-line. To get there it was necessary to travel into the city and then out again with two transfer points - almost an hour's journey. Obviously a more direct mode of transportation, other than walking (which I did occasionally), would be desirable.

A solution came about during the first week of school when I was introduced to a car salesman who had just sold a new car to a fellow teacher. He said he had the very thing for me in the slightly stream-lined shape (compared to its upright predecessors) of a 1926 Model T Ford - a touring car with a canvas top, priced at $145. After a short ride and kicking the tires a few times, it seemed to be a good deal but I had to admit I had never driven a car. The young salesman said that was no problem - he would give me a lesson but I would have to get a driver's license, which at that time was more or less a matter of form. To the question: "Had I driven an automobile?" I replied, "Not in B.C." ("or anywhere else" I should have added but didn't). Nothing more was said so I paid $1.00 and was given a license to drive.

My salesman instructor drove from the Motor License Office (then located in the old court house on Georgia St.) to Stanley park where I took the wheel and learned the rudiments of driving a Model-T-much of it done with one's feet. There were three pedals at the base of the steering column - on the left the clutch, pushed down for low gear, let out for high, and held mid-way for neutral. On the right was the brake and between these two pedals was a smaller one for reverse. Someone told me in an extreme emergency one should come down hard on all three but I don't recall ever having to do that.

The gas throttle control was a hand-operated lever just below the steering wheel (in my Model-T one couldn't "Step on the gas") and a similar lever on the opposite side regulated the spark. The car had a self-starter but if it failed to work because of a weak battery there was always the crank handle hanging out-front and it was used on more than a few occasions. The dashboard had only two features - a slot for the key and an ammeter that indicated how the battery was - or wasn't - re-charging. There was no speedometer but you could estimate the speed to some extent by how the engine chattered and the car rattled. There was a manually operated wind-shield wiper and ventilation was not much restricted by the flapping side-curtains.

I soon established a satisfactory rapport with my Model-T and travelled by direct route to and from school without mishap - except for once going in the ditch along 49th Avenue one foggy late afternoon. In September 1930 Mackenzie School, formerly housed in a frame structure on Fraser Street, re-assembled in a brand new building at 39th and Windsor. This event was apparently considered to be important enough to have the school officially opened by the premier of the province, Dr. S.F.Tolmie. The premier was a large amiable man enticed from federal politics to lead and unite a divided provincial Conservative Party to victory in 1928. This electoral success was severely challenged by the stock-market crash in 1929 and the uncertainties that followed. Three years after the school-opening the Tolmie government, unable to cope with the harsh problems of the Depression, was annihilated at the next election.

Mackenzie School had a fine school spirit with an emphasis on sports fostered by the principal, Tommy Woodcock, whose entire teaching career of more than forty years was spent at this school. I was no sports

expert but became at least a nominal coach. My faithful Model-T transported a multitude of kids to inter-school games - an entire junior soccer or baseball team was often crammed aboard. If the car sometimes balked at starting there was always an enthusiastic crew ready to give it a push. Of course the Model-T was also used for family outings and Sunday drives as well as personal errands. However the biggest test for the automobile and for my driving ability came at the beginning of the summer holidays in 1931 when I decided to drive to Horsefly in the Cariboo where my sister, Kay, was also a teacher.

With the completion of the railways the historic Cariboo Road, built by the Royal Engineers in the 1860s, had fallen into disuse and become impassable. However by 1926 it had been re-built and declared open for automobile traffic with a new suspension bridge at Alexandria in the Fraser canyon area. Five years later in 1931 it was still an adventure road, scenic but winding and unpaved - a narrow shelf hacked out of the mountain side.

On July 1, 1931, with a companion named Joe, Model-T and I set out on our safari. Almost 2 1/2 days later, after a journey of ups and downs, ins and outs, and slips and slides we reached our destination at Horsefly. In the '30s the Cariboo was still frontier country with wide-open spaces, cattle ranches, snake fences, and log houses. Modern towns like Cache Creek and 100-Mile House with their 4-star motels (an unknown word then) were nothing more than a few log-buildings. Horsefly too was a log-cabin village - the City Hotel and the general store were the only frame buildings. The school-house was neatly built of peeled logs and the hospitable Corner House, where my sister boarded, consisted of several log houses that seemed to have come together to form one comunal dwelling. It is regrettable that so many of these relics of pioneer days have disappeared due to fires, neglect, and the passage of time.

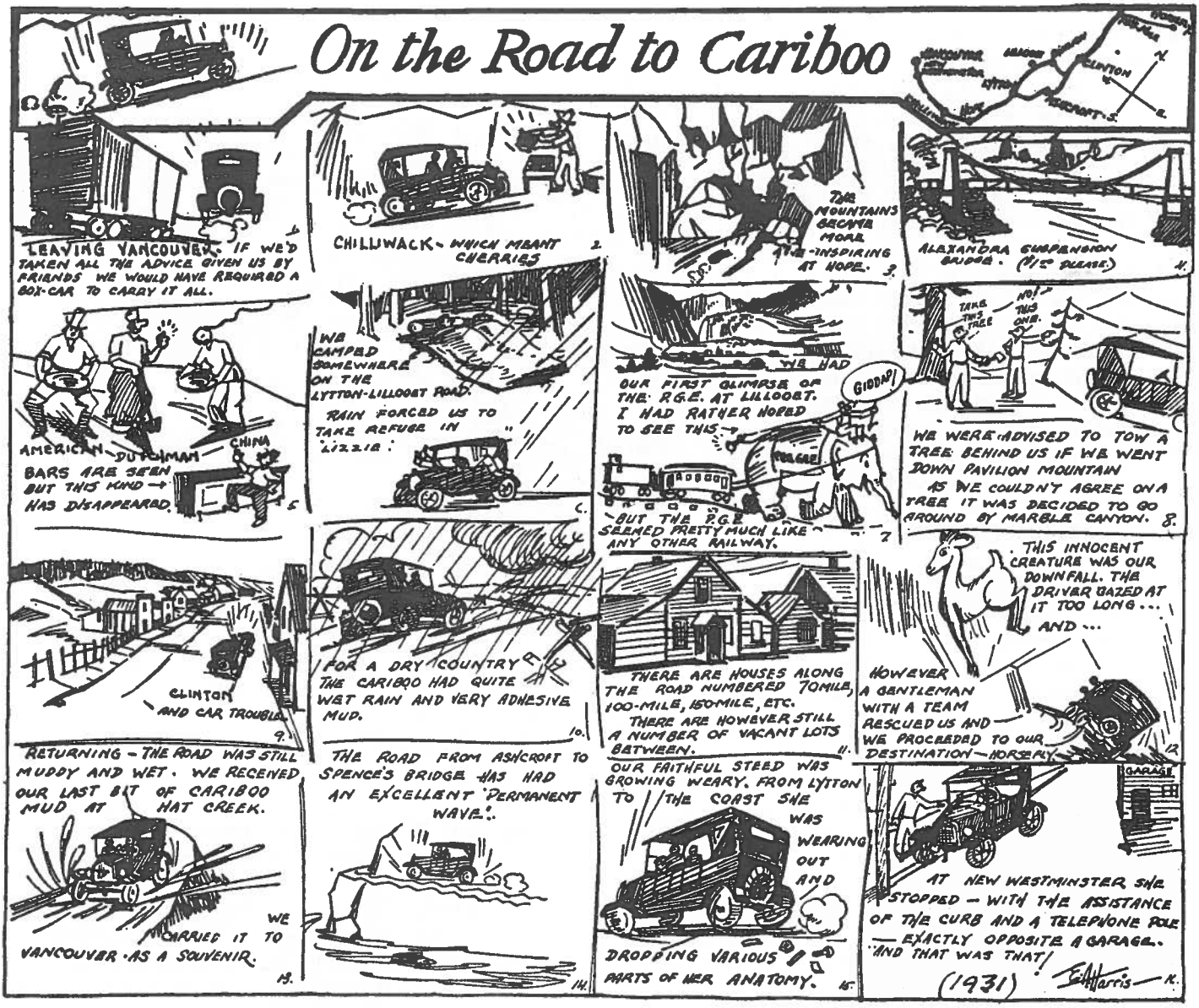
The return trip, with sister Kay aboard, saw us slide down the muddy northern part of the road and rattle along the drier section from Ashcroft to Lytton. When we reached the lower Fraser, nearing journey's end, Model-T was showing increasing signs of weariness. As we rattled into New Westminster, at dusk on the second day, the car lights refused to go on and, worse still, the brake-bands had burned out - fortunately close to a garage. We returned home on the inter-urban tram that used to run from New Westminster to Vancouver via Marpole. Next day we rescued Model-T which, mechanically restored and washed clean of Cariboo mud, was ready to ramble again. I also drew a cartoon commentary of our journey which the Vancouver PROVINCE later published in their Sunday Magazine section-(Oct. 11, '31).

When school re-opened for the fall term the Mackenzie staff-member who had been on leave of absence returned and I was assigned to Carleton School, where I was to remain for the rest of the decade. Carleton, located at Kingsway and Joyce Road in the Collingwood area, was a couple of miles farther east than Mackenzie but this made little difference to my restored Model-T. This school too had an excellent reputation due in no small part to the principal, Alex. Martin, who had been appointed to that position in 1905 and who retired in 1942. Over the years he had seen a school with only two classrooms grow to twenty-four divisions housed in an 8-room frame structure built in 1908 and a 16-room brick building completed in 1912. The original 2-room school was retained and used when required. (It is still in use).

My first year at Carleton was an agreeable one, in spite of the menace of the depression. The Model-T continued its transportation function satisfactorily until the end of the term in June. During the 1932 summer holiday we made another venture into the interior and this time it was *'On to Okanagan.'* There I spent several weeks with old friends, the Fred Day family, who lived on a farm near Kelowna.

Fred Day had a dairy farm and on his 80 acres grew corn and alfalfa as well as crops of tomatoes, onions, cabbages - and cucumbers. Sometimes he would take a day off and we would go fishing, usually in his rugged old Star car. However I once did drive my Model-T to Beaver Lake over a rough steep so-called road that challenged its horse-power to the limit going up and put a strain on the brakes coming down - with some Kamloops trout. I learned a little about farm life by helping with the haying and one frustrating experience picking cucumbers - frustrating because the price was so low they were just dumped. Fred's dairy assured him of a monthly pay cheque but many fruit-growers were cash poor. Unlike the drought stricken prairie dust-bowl the irrigated Okanagan valley was productive but in the '30s transportation and storage costs eliminated any profits for the fruit-growers, making them victims of the Depression too. In protest they threatened to let the apple crop fall unpicked with the cry *"a cent a pound or on the ground"*.

1932 and 1933 were perhaps the worst years of the Depression. Cut were the order of the day - salaries, supplies, services - even the school telephones were disconnected to save a few dollars. Collingwood was mainly a working class district and many families were hard hit by the lean times but they were resilient people and tried to make the best of things. The Carleton PTA did useful work in several ways, one of them being the supplying of milk to kids in need. The school nurse did extensive social service work in the community and some of the principal's time was taken up issuing chits for children's shoe repairs. Although times were



tough school functioned normally with many after-school activities for pupils and teachers.

An extra-mural activity pursued by many teachers was the attainment of a BA degree by degrees. This meant attending lectures at UBC from 4 to 6 p.m. twice a week during the regular term, followed by six weeks at the Summer Session. After several years one could amass enough credits to graduate. It was about twelve miles from Carleton to UBC and my Model-T usually transported several others beside myself. Later they became owners of late-model cars but at that time they were glad to get a lift in my old tin Lizzie, which also transported me to evening classes at the B.C. College of Arts on Georgia Street. This school was established by F.H. Varley and Jock Macdonald in 1933 but their innovative effort succumbed to the Depression two years later. Model-T also conveyed me and friends to Friday night badminton sessions at various locations in the city, ranging from school gymnasiums, church halls, and - one season - the chilly vastness of one of the old Exhibition buildings at Hastings Park.

All this usage was having a wearing-out effect on my aging auto. The dependable Marpole garageman, who liked Model-T's, and had done his best to keep mine mobile, indicated that expensive repairs were needed and I would be well advised to get another car. He happened to know of one that an old lady had not even driven on Sundays but, for several years, had just kept it in her garage. A good buy, he said.

A day or so later my garage-man brought the automobile out for inspection. It proved to be a solidly built solidly black vehicle that could have led a parade of antique cars with dignity. We went for a test run but even though the car rode well enough and the motor chugged confidently I had to tell him it wasn't for me.

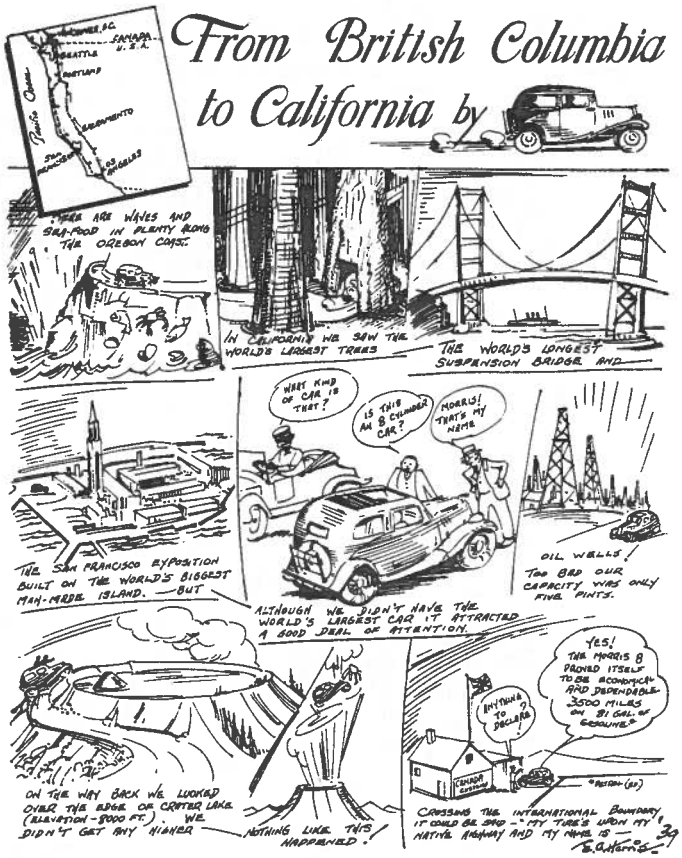
Soon after this I selected from a Georgia Street used-car lot a 1928 Chevrolet coach priced at $250. I closed the deal with $25 off for my

faithful but worn-out Model-T. My garage-man admitted it was a good-looking car and though he found nothing mechanically amiss opined that some defect would soon show up. This 1928 Chev. was only two years younger than my 1926 Ford but it did have important differences - more horse-power, standard gear-shift, a speedometer, an automatic windshield wiper, and being a closed car better shelter from wind and rain. On the left rear mud-guard a small red triangle indicated the car had hydraulic brakes. From 1934 until 1938 the '28 Chev. served satisfactorily without too much grief. It made two summer trips to the Okanagan and in 1934 did a tour of Vancouver Island from Victoria to Menzies Bay - the end of the road then.

By 1938 I was obliged to dispose of my Chevrolet because of, not metal fatigue, but wooden fatigue. The body was built on a wooden frame which over the years had rotted badly. In spite of attempts at reinforcement it became very difficult to open and close the two heavy doors and so it was necessary for me to acquire my third and last used car of the decade.

This time I made a big change to a small car - a 1936 made in England Morris 8. At $600, it cost almost twice the other two combined but I think I liked it because it was different, a bit sporty *(mechanically related to the MG)*, and economical. It also had a sliding *'sunshine roof.'* The car performed well in city driving but did require more gear shifting. Nevertheless it made it to the top of Grouse Mountain on the now abandoned road that zig-zagged to the original chalet. In the summer of '38 I again visited my friends in Kelowna but the Morris 8's longest journey occurred in 1939 when, with two companions, I drove to California.

In 1939, despite economic problems and Nazi/Fascist aggression, the United States staged two world Fairs - one in New York and the other in San Francisco. Our objective was the latter city when we drove



south in mid-August. Unlike B.C. it was pavement all the way. When President Franklin Roosevelt was first elected in 1932 part of his fight against the Depression was a massive program of public works. This was made evident by the many new bridges we crossed as we travelled the scenic coastal highway, Route 101.

San Francisco has many points of interest but in 1939 the Fair was the chief attraction. It was dominated by a huge goddess figure called Pacifica - somewhat ironic in a world on the brink of war. Of course we visited the B.C. exhibit which featured several large murals painted by three young Vancouver Art School graduates - Fisher, Goranson, and Hughes, who later achieved distinction as War Artists with the Canadian forces.

After a few days in San Francisco we drove on to Los Angeles taking in the well-known tourist attractions - but not Disneyland, which was still in the future. Our Morris 8 was an object of interest to Californians and there were usually comments and questions wherever we stopped. The return trip was made along inland Route 99 in hot sunshine through Bakersfield, Fresno, and Sacramento. In Oregon we visited Crater Lake and then it was north to Canada and home again by August 31. Next day came the news that Hitler had invaded Poland and World War II had begun. The final months of the 1930s marked the start of another world conflict that would, during the 1940s, bring more death and destruction than ever before in human history.

Dividing the stream of history into 10-year sections has no special significance other than recording the sequence of events but some decades do have more adverse ones than others. The Thirties had a dark side due to the economic slump and preparations for war but there were bright spots too - positive efforts to solve social problems, considerable intellectual stimulation, as well as,

in spite of everything, a lot of fun. Those of us who personally experienced the 1930s can say, with the Chinese, *"we lived in interesting times."*

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Ernest Harris is now retired and living in Vancouver. He has written a book on the history of Port Essington which will be published early in 1990.

EXPLANATORY NOTES re CARTOONS

"ON THE ROAD TO CARIBOO"
- was published (Oct. 11, 1931) under a headline: 'Where the Flying Splashes Play"

Panel 1 - ADVICE: Better than any of the advice given was the loan by a thoughtful friend of a set of chains - without which we would never have made it along the muddy slippery road north of Clinton.

Panel 4 - Alexandra Suspension Bridge - $1.00. This toll was collected just beyond Spuzzum near the bridge approach.

Panel 7 - 'PeeGee' White Elephant - the B.C. government was burdened with the unfinished debt-ridden Pacific Great Eastern* Railway (now B.C. Rail) which many people (especially cartoonists) regarded as a white elephant.

***Also**
'Please Go Easy' • 'Prince George Eventually' and others.

Panel 8 - "Tow a tree" would be a real drag - but would ease the strain on the brakes - especially a Model-"T's

"FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA TO CALIFORNIA BY (Morris 8)
- This was never published although the editor of Morris Motors Magazine intimated he could have used it if it had not been for looming war restrictions.

* * * * * * * * *

Model T (July 1, 1931) on the Fraser Canyon road somewhere between Boston Bar and Lytton.

SIXTH B.C. STUDIES CONFERENCE

2-3 November 1990

The sixth B.C. Studies Conference will be held at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver from 2 - 3 November 1990. Proposals for conference papers are now invited.

Purpose

The Studies Conference is interdisciplinary with an historical focus. The organizers invite proposals for paper that will enhance an understanding of any aspect of British Columbia's past, current and future development.

Format

Approximately ten sessions will be held at the conference. Most sessions are made up of two papers on a related subject followed by a commentator's critical assessment. A "Victorian dinner" is also planned.

Deadline

Suggestions for conference papers will be considered as they are received; the deadline for proposal submissions is 15 December 1989. Enquiries and paper proposals should be directed to Robert A.J. McDonald, Department of History, University of British Columbia, Vancouver V6T 1W5; Jean Barman, Department of Social and Educational Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver V6T 1W5; Peter Baskerville, Department of History, University of Victoria, Victoria V8W 2Y2; or Robin Fisher, Department of History, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia V5A 1S6.

BEDBUG REMEDY

The recipe below was from the page of an early pharmacist's notebook, and is printed courtesy of Jack Scott of Cranbrook. J. Fred Scott was born in Winnepeg in 1877. He opened his first drugstore in 1902 in Indian Head, Saskatchewan. This he sold in 1914 and moved to Victoria. Then from 1917-1920 he worked in Vancouver for the Cunningham Drugstore organization. His next move was to Cranbrook, B.C. where he purchased the Cranbrook Drug and Book Company from Mr. Atchison. Fred Scott was twice president of the Pharmaceutical Association of B.C., and twice president of the Dominion Pharmaceutical Association. Son Jack joined his father in 1950 and took over the family business in 1965. Scott's store was absorbed by Shoppers Drug Mart in 1988. Jack treasures his father's notebook, and copied the page with the for fumigating a room.

Bedbug Remedy - June 1931

Potassium Iodide mirch U.S.P.X., granular
Sulfuric Acid
Grind or crush Potassium Iodide. Put in granite or chinaware container, and add acid. Have room sealed as close as possible & leave for 36 or 48 hours.
BOTH ARE POISON, so be careful & keep away from fumes.

The Comox Nurses Strike of 1939

by JoAnn Whittaker

On October 31, 1938, the Advisory Committee on labour conditions in hospitals completed its report containing recommendations about the regulations of working conditions for student and graduate nurses in B.C. hospitals. These minimum recommendations were based on an on-site investigation of forty-nine hospitals conducted by the Committee. The working conditions and salaries were terrible. It would be expected that this report should have resulted in immediate action by the government. Pattullo's Liberal government, elected in 1933, had legislated the 48-hour week in all major industries and increased the minimum wage.[1] The minister responsible for health and welfare was the Provincial Secretary, Dr. G.M. Weir.

Dr. Weir had, in 1931, written a sympathetic report on Nursing Education in Canada. In 1935, he aided the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia (RNABC) to pass a new *"Registered Nurses Act"*. The RNABC was the professional body responsible for licensing graduate nurses. That is, it set the standards necessary to practice nursing. Registration, however, was mandatory only in the seven hospitals with schools of nursing. To obtain these standards, this organization had been accustomed to dealing with government politicians and bureaucrats.[2] However, dealing with these same persons regarding the matter of working conditions for nurses in hospitals was a new issue with which the RNABC had to cope. Previous contacts had been about professional standards. This new issue conflicted with the Association's perception about the proper conduct of nurses and their very real needs for better working conditions. This dilemma is best illustrated by the RNABC's response to the Advisory Committee's report and the Comox nurses "strike".

Graduate nursing evolved from private duty to hospital work in the 1920s and 1930s. Most hospital nursing was done by student nurses in training but by 1938, approximately one-half of the registered nurses in B.C. were employed in hospitals.[3] It was the opposition Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) that raised the issue of nurses' working conditions. Graduate nurses did not come under any government regulations legislating their working conditions, hours of work or wages. In 1935 E.E. Winch (CCF Burnaby) tried to amend the *"Hospital Act"* to regulate them. Dr. Weir rejected this amendment but Winch tried to amend it again on November 19, 1937. He withdrew the bill after Dr. Weir explained that the nurses should be regulated by the Board of Industrial Relations (BIR), not the Hospital Act. Weir stated the BIR had been studying the problem for two years.[4] This was not the case. In reality, he had only appointed an advisory committee on labour conditions in hospitals in October 1937.

Weir acted in conjunction with the Minister of Labour, George Pearson. They set up a committee consisting of Miss M.H. Walters, Superintendent of Nurses at Essondale, Percy Ward, inspector of hospitals, and Fraudena Eaton, (better known as Mrs. Rex Eaton) of the BIR. Their terms of reference included investigating and reporting upon wages, hours of work, conditions of work, and other labour conditions prevailing in hospitals; recommending reasonable minimum standards of wages, hours of work and working conditions for the different classes of hospital employees which might be set by Order of the government; and enquiring into the extent to which the recommendations of the Committee, if implemented, would increase the operating costs of the hospital. It was important that hospitals not be burdened financially by the imposition of labour regulations. Weir instructed the committee to conduct its investigations without publicity and to report without publicity to both Pearson and himself by January 1, 1938.[5]

The completed report was delivered to them on November 2, 1938. It was not made public nor did the nurses of B.C. see its contents. The committee's findings corroborated Winch's fears. The nurses hours of work varied from 86 to 130 hours in two weeks of day shift with the majority of hospitals surveyed in excess of 100 hours. Many institutions claimed that their nurses worked an eight-hour day. This was a split shift and was only accomplished if the ward was not too busy. Time off varied from no time off duty to one day per week. One hospital allowed two one-half days per week. Night duty usually lasted four to five weeks, occurring every three to four months and consisting of 96 to 168 hours worked in a two week period. In the majority of hospitals this was in excess of 133 hours. Most hospitals did not allow time off during a tour of night duty. Some allowed one-half night per week. In order to have this, the day nurse stayed on duty until the night nurse came on at 11:00 pm or 12:00 am to relieve her. She, in turn, was expected to return to work the next day at her regular time of 7:00 am. Salaries ranged from $30.00 to $60.00 per month and maintenance (room,

board and laundry) in the majority of hospitals. The majority also granted vacations of three to four weeks per annum. Nine hospitals allowed no vacations at all.[6]

Weir and Pearson did not reveal these findings nor did they divulge the committee's recommendations. Hospitals would expect provincial government financial assistance if indeed it legislated working conditions that increased their costs. The report recommended improved working conditions for graduate nurses.

The report recommended an eight-hour day, six day week or ninety-six hours over two weeks; one day off every week or two days off in a two week period; split shift to not extend beyond a twelve hour period; and salaries to be a minimum of $40.00 every consecutive two week period of full time work (i.e. 80 hours or more every two weeks) and laundry of uniforms should be provided.[7] Canadian nursing leaders advocated an eight-hour day for nurses but wished to enact regulations through *"professional channels"*. In B.C., the RNABC favoured *"moral suasion."*[8] This attitude was hardly conducive to the improvement of the working graduate nurses' lot and upset Eaton.

A frustrated Fraudena Eaton reported that she saw no evidence of aggressive agitation for reform. *"Training, temperament and circumstances of her work make the general duty nurse a poor advocate for her interests."* The needs of the nurses and the additional expense of the eight-hour day conflicted with the needs of the hospitals for equipment, supplies and buildings. The nurses were aware of this but seemed unaware that their sacrifice was not being repeated by other hospital employees who enjoyed much better working conditions.[9]

The BIR issued Order 52, the *"Female Minimum Wage Act,"* on February 14, 1938 regulating the working conditions of other female hospital workers and excluding graduate nurses. These regulations enforced an eight-hour day and a forty-eight hour week. The split shift was to be confined to twelve hours from the start of the shift and one full day, twenty-four hours, off per week was to be granted. Laundry of uniforms was to be provided. It was the responsibility of the Council of the RNABC, with the assistance of hospital inspector Ward, to *"encourage"* better hours of work in B.C. hospitals for nurses.[10] This approach was unsuccessful as was evidenced by the Comox nurses *"strike"*.

Obviously, trouble had been brewing in Comox. In December 1937, after the withdrawal of Winch's bill, a nurse from Comox wrote a letter to the editor of the Vancouver **Daily Province.** In it, the author stated that nurses were still overworked. Further, she questioned the role of the Advisory Committee and its activities over the past two years.[11] It is evident that Weir's secrecy was misleading nurses. The Committee had been at work for only two months at the appearance of this letter. In April 1939, matters erupted at Comox.

On April 12, 1939, the entire nursing staff at the St. Joseph's Hospital, Comox, walked off the job. The public perceived that the nurses were on strike.[12] The reality was a breakdown in relations between the nursing staff and the hospital management over the issue of working conditions.

The working conditions at the hospital were terrible. Nurses were required to *"live in"*. Their day shift hours were from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. with a two hour break, at the discretion of the management and if there was time, in mid-afternoon. They had one half day off per week and one full day off each month. Night shift was one full month with no time off. Then, at the end of their night duty, they had one sleeping day off plus their monthly one day off. Wages were $90.00 per month minus $30.00 for room and board and $0.90 for provincial income tax. There was no overtime pay, holiday pay or sick pay. The nurses paid their own laundry costs. The food was terrible, and in fact, probably triggered the job action. The nurse that this author interviewed stated that perhaps the other conditions could have been more tolerable but for the food.

The nurses, graduates and undergraduates, decided to improve their lot or resign. They consulted with the Chief of Staff, Dr. Straith, who encouraged them, and with a lawyer. Subsequently, they drafted a letter to the Sister Superior demanding an eight-hour day, one whole day off per week, laundry to be paid by the hospital and sick and holiday pay. They concluded the letter with an ultimatum. If the hospital management was unable to comply the Sister Superior could consider the letter as thirty days notice of resignation. Silence ensued. Finally, on the thirtieth day, the Sister approached the nurses as they sat in the dining room. She had tears in her eyes. The hospital was unable to meet their demands as they needed the money to pay for the new wing. She requested that they resubmit their resignations dated as of that day so that she could find a new staff to replace them. The nurses refused. They were ordered to take their belongings and leave. They all found accommodation in the homes of local residents and settled down to wait. Colin Cameron, CCF Member of Parliament for Comox, interested himself in their case. He attempted to meet with the hospital board to no avail. He called a public meeting that was attended by a *"good sized"* crowd. At first, the Mayor and aldermen were very hostile but after they heard the details of the nurses' working conditions, they agreed that changes had to be made.[13] Colin Cameron attempted to also present the nurses' case to the annual convention of the RNABC then in session in Vancouver. He was refused permission and only met with the Association president and the Registrar, Helen Randal.[14]

The irony of this situation is the address of the President of the RNABC at that opening session. Miss Duffield urged her members to

seek better working conditions. At the same time, Helen Randal hinted that the actions of the nurses at Comox jeopardized their registration. She opined that the nine women should have contacted the authorities. The question here is what authorities? They had contacted the hospital management. The RNABC had no jurisdiction over the conditions of work of the graduate nurses.

Yet, Randal was prepared to remove their registration certificates.[15]

She made no contact with the nurses involved. The Association Council indeed had the power to suspend a member, in an unanimous vote, *"for dishonesty, gross incompetency, a habit rendering a nurse unsafe to be entrusted with or unfit for care of the sick, conduct derogatory to the morals or standing of the profession of nursing, or any willful fraud or misrepresentation practiced in procuring such certificate."*[16] There really were no grounds for their dismissal. The nurses in Comox had contacted a lawyer, obtained legal advice and followed it. They had given due notice of resignation. They returned to work on April 18, 1939 with the promise of improved working conditions. They wrote a letter to the RNABC outlining their case but received no reply. In May 1939, the Council sent a letter, drafted by their lawyer, to the nurses involved expressing disapproval of their actions and forwarded a copy to the Sister Superior at Comox.[17] Nevertheless, the Council did not suspend their registration.[18]

These nurses were frustrated and angry. Their demands for better working conditions were identical to those proposed by the Advisory Committee and to those advocated by the RNABC. However, the Association disapproved of job action. It was more important, in 1939, to maintain the professional image than to agitate for improved working conditions. Nurses did not become involved in controversial issues.[19] In fairness, the RNABC was hampered by a lack of knowledge. It had never seen the report of the Advisory Committee.

Randal and the RNABC did not see it until after it was publicly tabled in the provincial legislature in November 1939. The professional ideology of the RNABC conflicted with the very real needs of the working graduate nurses for better conditions. Their needs also conflicted with the hospitals' finances, the responsibility of the government politicians and bureaucrats. In the end, the reactivated committee worked to improve nurses' conditions. The RNABC did not become the collective bargaining agent for its members until 1946.

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Mrs. Whittaker lives in Cobble Hill on Vancouver Island. This article is part of the research she has done to earn her master's degree in history at the University of Victoria.

1. Margaret Ormsby, **British Columbia: A History**, (Macmillan of Canada, 1958; reprinted [with corrections] Vancouver: Evergreen Press, 1971), p. 459
2. Jo Ann Whittaker, "The Search for Legitimacy: Nurses' Registration in British Columbia, 1913-1935," in **Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia.** Edited by Barbara Latham and Roberta Pazdro. (Victoria: Camosun College Press, 1984), p. 321
3. Provincial Archives of British Columbia (hereafter PABC), GR 650 "Report on Working Conditions in B.C. Hospitals," p. 17
4. Vancouver **Daily Province (VDP)**, December 4, 1937, p.3; Victoria **Daily Times (VDT)**, December 4, 1937, p. 17
5. PABC GR496 Box 43 File 17 (GR496/43/17)
6. PABC GR 650
7. **Ibid**
8. Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia (hereafter RNABC) **Minutes** January 28, 1942, January 21, 1943
9. Mrs. Rex Eaton, "A Lay Person Looks in," **Canadian Nurse** 36 (September 1940): 568
10. PABC GR650
11. **VDP** December 14, 1937, p.4
12. **VDT** April 18, 1939, p.2. The story heading was "Comox nurses strike settled."
13. Interview with Jean Guthrie, April 18, 1985, Comox B.C. Unfortunately, Mrs. Guthrie had recently destroyed all her letters and newspaper clippings related to this incident. Therefore, the incident recounted relies upon her memory and newspaper articles.
14. RNABC Minutes April 15, 1939. Jean Guthrie does not remember this.
15. Vancouver **News-Herald** April 17, 1939, p.2
16. B.C. **Statutes** 1935
17. RNABC **Minutes** May 19, 1939
18. Interview, Jean Guthrie
19. **Ibid**, March 24, 1939

Aldyen Irene Hendry Hamber

Aldyen Hamber's life spanned the history of Vancouver. Born in New Westminster, daughter and only child of John and Adeline Hendry, the family moved to Vancouver in 1903. John Hendry was in the lumber manufacturing business and was president of many of their trade organizations. After Aldyen's basic education in Vancouver and Tacoma she studied art and languages in Germany. While in Europe she was presented at Court.

Her husband-to-be, Eric Hamber, was born in Canada and had a career in banking. While posted to Vancouver he took part in many of the social and sporting events and here he met Aldyen. It was not until Eric Hamber was transferred to London and the Hendrys were on one of their periodic visits to Europe in 1912, that the young couple decided to marry. Over the family's protests the couple decided to marry in London rather than wait until their return to Vancouver.

John Hendry, by this time 69 years of age, decided his new son-in-law should join him in business.

Aldyen and Eric Hamber's life, apart from business, were filled with events of philanthropic, sporting and social nature. This culminated in Eric Hamber being appointed Lieutenant Governor in 1936. During their term of office they entertained a wide range of people and their inaugural Christmas party for children became an annual event. Eric Hamber died in 1960, then Aldyen set up the Hamber Foundation and endowed an Eric Hamber Chair of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. The Hamber name also lives on with the Eric Hamber Senior Secondary School in Vancouver, Hamber Island in Indian Arm and Hamber Provincial Park near Golden. The Hendry name is remembered with the John Hendry Park in Vancouver.

Peggy Imredy

Enterprise in the 1930's

by Ilma Dunn

After reading Don Sale's article about *"The Old Cariboo Wagon Road"* in the Historical News, Volume 10, 1984, I decided to write down some of my memories. I was one of the young teachers of the '30's that Don referred to in his article, for I travelled the Cariboo Highway on occasion in Clarence Stevenson's Stage, during the year I taught at Enterprise School.

Enterprise is in the rolling cattle country of the Cariboo, some 20 miles south of Williams Lake. I arrived there via the P.G.E. on the morning of Saturday, September 3, 1932, having left Vancouver on Friday morning via the Union Steamships to Squamish, to begin my second year of teaching in the Cariboo. In the 1930's the P.G.E., which we affectionately called *"Please Go Easy"*, or sometimes in disgust *"Past God's Endurance"*, ran only between Squamish and Quesnel.

I was met by Clem Wright, the Secretary of the School Board, at whose home I was to stay. It was a beautiful, cold, sunny morning, invigorating as only Cariboo Fall days can be, and I remember Clem telling me how unhappy his sister was because the first heavy frost had blackened her beautiful dahlias. Clem had recently lost his wife, and his sister and mother from Vancouver had come to look after his home and his three children. His home was the '37 Mile Stopping Place on the old Cariboo Highway, and it still stands solidly there today, a large two storey log house. Clem had driven the horse drawn Stages in his youth, and his mother had come to the Cariboo as a bride before the turn of the century. They had many stories to tell about the gold rush days and the early settlers, like the one of how her piano had been brought by stage over the rough wagon road, and it arrived safely too. It was not long before I learned why the Cariboo Highway was termed *"All Right"*, for Granny Wright and her four sons at that time owned nearly all the ranches between Lac la Hache and the '37 Mile.

I had my first glimpse of Enterprise School that afternoon, walking the nearly 2 1/2 miles along the Highway to it. My heart sank when I saw its condition, for the door was ajar and little marmots had made it their home over the summer. Piles of their droppings were in the corners, and the place had a terrible smell. I sat down at the low table which passed for the teacher's desk, and cried, for I had left such a nice clean school in the Ten Mile Valley in June. How I wished the Dept. of Education had not closed Ten Mile, but with the graduation of the three Grade 8 pupils, who were not returning to school, the enrollment fell below the required 8, so there was no other alternative for me but to apply for a new school. How thankful I was when I received the appointment to Enterprise. I felt that my prayers had been answered, since, to obtain a Permanent Teaching Certificate, it was required to have two years experience and two good Inspector's Reports, and that was my goal. Schools were hard to come by in the '30s. There were dozens of applications for every vacancy, and I was one of the lucky ones.

No schools in the '30s were the well equipped places of learning that they are today, and Enterprise was one of the poorest. Not only had the marmots made it their home, it was dark and in need of a good cleaning. There was no teacher's desk, no flag pole, and the only bell was a piece of railroad track hanging outside the door, with a metal striker by its side. The interior had at one time been painted white, but the only windows were four on the East side, so the lighting was poor. It was indeed a sad looking little school, that had been neglected, but now it was my job and I would do my best. Clem was very cooperative and it wasn't long before he and his hired help cleaned and repaired the School and raised a flag pole. School Law required that the Union Jack be raised and lowered each school day in the '30s, and School Law must be obeyed. I did not question why there had not been a flag pole before or why the School was allowed to get in such a poor condition, but there was often rancour in School Districts in the '30s. The children were proud of having the pole and happy to have their first picture taken beside it. Then they vied with each other who would help raise the flag each day. Clem also donated a sheep for me to raffle, the proceeds to be used to purchase a proper teacher's desk, a bell, and other requirements.

That Fall a party of hunters from Vancouver made the '37 their headquarters, and they certainly contributed to the cause of the desk. I remember the joking about the poor young teacher who had nothing but a gambling table for her desk, for that is what the low table had been, complete with a top of green felt. It wasn't long before we had enough money raised and the sheep was won by one of the visitors, which was cause for more joking. For $50.00 I had a cabinet maker near Ten Mile School make the desk, and it was delivered on the top of the car of the young man who later became my husband. By the time the Inspector made his first visit that Fall, things in the school were well in order, and the comment on his report made me feel the work had all

been worthwhile. It was - *"Miss Beamish has taken hold of this School in a pleasing way and should succeed in materially raising its standard."* The comment and the report he gave, made me feel exceptionally good for I had greeted him in a very unceremonious manner.

Being right on the Highway, Enterprise School was the target of various salespeople passing on their way to Williams Lake and points north. To get rid of one such salesman that called at the school I took an unwanted subscription to a magazine, and I foolishly gave him a postdated cheque. That caused a furor with my father, since the Royal Bank in New Westminster deducted the amount from his account as mine had insufficient funds. So I was determined not to let the next salesman into the school. The next came, and I held the door closed, until he said, *"I am A.R. Lord from the Dept. of Education."* How ashamed I was, and so I really appreciated the comment and the report he gave. I know he enjoyed the incident too, for he told it to a Normal School Class attended by one of my friends, when he was lecturing about the trials of young teachers in Country Schools.

There were just two surnames on the Register that year, four La Bounty Children and four Wright children. Phyllis Wright, whose home was at the 108 mile, came to stay at the '37 to keep the enrollment up to the required number of 8. So I taught Grades 1, 3, 5, and 7, with Jack Wright being the biggest, and the best helper. He looked after his brother, Doug, and sister Kathleen, and Lila La Bounty, in Grade three, ever the little mother, made sure to take good care of her little brother, Raymond, in grade 1, and we had a happy school with lots of singing and stories. Jack and Doug Wright looked after bringing water each morning from the well, and kept the woodbox full for the upright stove we had in the middle of the school, I looked after making the fire each morning and heated water on the top of the stove in the winter for lunch time cocoa, with lots of fresh cream from the '37 to go with it. Irwin and Herbie La Bounty drove a little two wheeled cart for their family's transportation of three miles, and in the winter it was equipped with runners for the snow. Jack and Doug Wright rode horseback with Kathleen and Phyllis riding behind. I walked along the highway except when the occasional car came along. That is how I met Clarence Stevenson. I don't remember how frequently he made the trip between Ashcroft and Quesnel, but if there was room I was always offered a ride. I was a little reluctant about taking the first ride, but everyone in the Cariboo knew Clarence and his friendly ways. He had many stories to tell his passengers about his early days driving the horse drawn stages to the gold fields. Then when I went to New Westminster for Easter I was a paying passenger from the '37 to Ashcroft, and was met there again on my way back to the Cariboo.

(All eight) Enterprise School children in the winter of '32 - '33.

I really enjoyed walking the 2 1/2 miles along the highway, for there was plenty of wildlife always to be seen. The little marmots popping in and out of their holes were most interesting, and I loved to listen to them whistle to their mates telling that an intruder was around. In the Spring I remember how the saucy little northern bluebirds would hop from post to post of the rail fences that lined the highway, and sing their merry song and often a meadowlark would join the melody. Then in the winter the deer and moose would join with the cattle at their feeding station in the fields and coyotes could be seen slinking around.

I continued to use the iron rail and the striker for a bell especially in the winter time. St. Joseph's Creek ran along the valley not far from the school and it was a wonderful place for the children to skate. That bell could be heard even there above the sound of the screams of their laughter. After all it was a gong, and most unique.

Early in the Fall, Gertrude, Clem's sister, and I became very good friends and I was always treated as one of the family. There was lots of company at the '37 since the Wright family was a large one and those living at a distance were frequent visitors. There was always something interesting going on, and the year I spent at the '37 mile was one of the happiest of my life. It was at Enterprise I learned to play Bridge and 500, though I have never been good at either, and along with the others I went out cross country skiing, but managed to spend a good deal of my time falling down.

One winter outing I had was on a cold Saturday in January. The hired man, Bill Dingwall, was taking the children with a load of feed for the range cattle and asked if I'd like to come along. It was fun, and I joined in their gaiety of a winter hayride, but I wasn't dressed for the return ride when the hay and feed had all gone from the sleigh. The result was that I had frost bitten legs. Granny Wright, ever watchful over us all, prescribed a hot drink with gin for me, after rubbing the affected parts with snow. I had never tasted gin before and it really made me giddy, instead of sleepy as she thought. We laughed a lot about my giddiness, but I recovered well from it, and I've never liked the taste of gin since.

One of the Wright daughters,

Alice, Mrs. Bain, belonged to the IODE, and through her, a Vancouver Group of Junior IODE Girls, under the leadership of Mrs. Bishop, adopted Enterprise School. Throughout the year they sent Library Books and on Special Occasions, as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Valentine day, etc., they sent something for each pupil, with exchange of pictures and letters. They were a wonderful help to Enterprise School, and it certainly was an education for the IODE girls in Vancouver. One Saturday evening in 1934 or 35 I opened the Magazine Section of the Vancouver Sun to see an article about the good work of the IODE, and there was a picture of me on horseback in the Cariboo, with the caption telling of how the IODE helped Country Schools. I have the article and the picture with its caption still today in my Scrap Book.

People in the early days have always been known as being very friendly, and those at Enterprise were no exception. I was welcome in all their homes. I remember starting off one Saturday morning in April for the five mile walk to visit Enid and Fred Wright at the '32 mile ranch. They had a lovely log home and a wee daughter who was a great attraction to me, for I've always loved children. I had a nice day's visit with them and a ride home in the evening so Fred could say hello to his mother at the '37. There was Chris and Harry at the '27 mile. Chris had been a young teacher who had come to the Cariboo, and not only fallen in love with the country, but with one of the Wright brothers. She and I had many things in common, so we had some good visits. Then there was the weekend I went home with the La Bounty children in their little sleigh. It was early in March and they had some new baby lambs that Lila wanted to show to me. They had a wee baby girl too, Gladys, and she was a bundle of joy. Later in the Spring I spent another weekend there, so Mr. and Mrs. La Bounty could get away together. That weekend rather cured me of ever wanting a large family to look after, for they had six, with Irwin at 12, being the oldest, and there was a hired man too. I also had a chance to visit with Maggie Hamilton at the 100 mile. Her friend, Jack Foster, was the Telegrapher there, and Lord Cecil had just built his first famous Stopping Place there that year. There was a dance that weekend, and the country dances with their squares, two-steps, and polkas, were always a lot of fun. On the Sunday, Maggie's brother drove me back to the '37 with a group of friends going on to Williams Lake. They sang the whole way. I remember one line that seemed to be repeated over and over, *"and the pig got up and slowly walked away,"* but what the rest of the song was, I've completely forgotten.

Maggie's brother was one of the members of the *"Lac la Hache All Stars"* Hockey Team in the '30's, and another winter outing I well remember was going to Williams Lake with Maggie and Foster to cheer them in a game. The Skating Rink at Williams Lake in the '30's was not the indoor fancy one it is today, but rather an outdoor one, and to watch and cheer for your favourite team then, was almost a hardship. I don't remember which team won, but the memory of the outing is still a happy one that I cherish.

The Country Schools in the Cariboo were not too many miles apart, so quite often I was able to get together with other teachers. The nearest school to the south was Lac la Hache, at the '22 mile, and the nearest to the north was the '50 mile. There was a young Mill Owner at Williams Lake, by the name of Clarence Anderson, who was a friend of all us young teachers. Over the Christmas Holidays he won a turkey, and he planned a way of entertaining all his friends. So on a really cold weekend in January we had a wonderful time at the home of the Crosina's. They were another very well known family of the early days who had established at the '53 mile. Their daughter Lillian ran the store that was known to all up and down the highway, and even today it is a Heritage Stopping Place. Clarence came down to the '37 to get Gertrude and myself, then on to the '50 to pick up Mary Beran, the teacher there, and Ina, whose last name escapes me, the teacher from Rose Lake. The turkey dinner, cooked by Mrs. Crosina, was a fabulous one, with large group of us around the great big table, and the frivolity after it went on to the wee small hours. Ina and I were to share a room over night, and I well remember what a hard time we had getting warm. The living rooms of those old log homes were generally heated by large fire places, and the one at Crosina's home was the largest I'd ever seen, but very little heat

Lac la Hache All Stars in the 30's. Back row at right Maggie Hamilton's brother & next to him Peter Ogden.

got up the stairs to the sleeping area. At the '37 there was a large heater in the living room, the chimney from which ran between my bedroom and the one next to mine, so I was nice and warm. But that night at Crosina's still stays in my memory as the coldest one I've ever spent. Ina and I surely were glad when the morning came, and we could hurry down to the fireplace.

Lac la Hache School and Enterprise joined together for a Picnic and day of fun at the Enterprise School Ground for the May 24th celebrations. It was a huge success and of course attended by the pupils, their parents, and their friends. One race I remember was a Cracker Race, trying to whistle the first line of *"God Save the King"* after eating two soda crackers, an almost impossible feat to accomplish, but one creating lots of laughter. We ended the day with a Baseball Game between the two Schools, but although I remember it was lots of fun, I don't remember which School won.

At the end of June I was asked to supervise the Grade 8 Exams for the district, since I did not have any pupils who were writing them. They were held in Lac la Hache School, and I stayed with the Ogden Family while I did this. Mrs. Ogden was a dear English lady who had married her husband, Peter, while he was overseas in the first World War. She had no knowledge of what she was coming to in the Cariboo, but she was a gracious host, and they had a beautiful home. I really enjoyed the few days I spent with them, and little three year old Peter was a darling, asking me every morning "how many more sleeps are you going to stay?'

I was so pleased to see in 1985 when driving over the Highway, that the Lac la Hache School is now a Heritage Building. I sat down in one of the desks and reminisced about the days in 1932-33. Enterprise School has long since gone and now the new highway doesn't even go anywhere near where it was. In 1951 we stopped by all that was left of it, a pile of logs with only a semblance of a building in them. I am happy too, that the '50 mile School is also a Heritage Building.

I don't remember the dates of the Williams Lake Stampede that year, but they were sometime in June, and even then the greatest attraction for all the cowboys in the district. Gertrude and I each ordered a new dress from the Hudson Bay in Vancouver. We were sent three from which to chose the one we liked best.

Mae Wright's husband, Tommy Downey, was the Credit Manager there and so we had special privileges. I chose a long black satin one for the dances I hoped to have with my special boy friend from the Wingdam Mine, who was coming for the Stampede. The activities of the days, with the cattle roping, branding, and cow punching, are long since forgotten, but the dances in the evenings are still clear in my memory.

Near the end of June I received my second Inspector's Report. It was again a good one, and along with it came my Permanent Certificate, so I had reached my goal. It had been a good year, and one I'll never forget.

No story about Enterprise is complete without telling about the Felker Ghost. Everyone knew about the ghost at the '41 mile. I never saw it, but I certainly saw, many times, the rocking chair that rocked all by itself. The ghost was that of old Mr. Borden Felker, who in life, had claimed he would come back, and every morning he did, lighting the fire in the kitchen stove then sitting down in the rocking chair beside it. Bill Dingwall, our hired man, told us he had seen the ghost when working at the 41, and so we had to believe. How could we not believe when, not only Bill, but many others, had seen the mysterious rocking of the chair, and heard the crackling of the morning fire, and felt the ghostly presence?

These memories have made almost too long a story, but for me, remembering and looking at the old pictures, has been reliving the year at Enterprise and all its happy times. The last time I stopped to see Gertrude she and Bill Dingwall, now her husband, were still living in the original Wright home at the 27 mile, near the Wright Station on the P.G.E. They were spending the winters in Arizona, but the Summers in our beloved Cariboo.

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Ilma Dunn is an enthusiastic member of the Burnaby Historical Society and the B.C. Historical Federation. She makes her home in White Rock.

Old School Building at Lac la Hache. This is where I supervised the Grade 8 Exams for the district in June 1933. (Painted section added Aug. 2/85).

Watch for Christmas programs at local Heritage Sites - Irving House, Fort Steele and elsewhere have special events in season.

A White Collar in the Thirties

by J. A. Green

Articles on the *"Hungry Thirties"* tell of mortgage foreclosures, soup kitchens, hunger marches, relief camps and Bennett buggies. Seldom is anything said of how the ordinary Canadian coped with minimal wages and no apparent hope of improvement.

To-day, the younger generation, knowing only current conditions, just can't comprehend the working conditions that were normal when we seniors were young. At that time the employer was boss - you did as you were told and worked hard. If not you received a slip in your pay packet stating *"Your services are no longer required"* and that was it. There was no notice, no explanation and no recourse, and no frills like unemployment insurance. This is the story of one Canadian's start in the business world.

In 1937 I had graduated from Victoria High School and completed the two years of study then available at Victoria College *(Craigdarroch)*. After making various applications I was *"accepted"* for work at the Royal Bank of Canada, Courtenay, B.C.

On arrival in Courtenay the bank manager handed me a book of rules and explained the facts of life to me. I was to dress neatly and wear a jacket and tie at all times when the branch was open for business. The affairs of the bank and its customers were to be held in the strictest confidence. I must enhance the reputation of the bank by good behavior and taking an active part in local organizations. Until certain salary levels were attained car ownership and marriage were strictly forbidden. Studying a correspondence course was compulsory and continuing employment was dependent on satisfactory performance.

Though the usual starting salary was $400 per year I was paid $100 more than that because I was away from home and having to pay for room and board. A salary of $500 per year works out to $41.66 per month, and as I was paying $37.50 per month for room and board, and $5.00 for the correspondence course, my cash position was a bit negative.

Another of the bank's rules was that no employee should take a second job. After all, it might appear that the bank was underpaying its staff.

Usually we worked from 8:30 to 4:30 on week-days, and 8:30 to 1:00 on Saturdays. It was while I was in Courtenay that the banks started closing on Saturday mornings. There were dire predictions that stores would be robbed of cash held over on week-ends but these did not prove true.

The only technical equipment that the bank provided was, for a staff of five, one typewriter, one ancient Burroughs adding machine which did not subtract, a book of interest tables and a couple of elderly revolvers. The bank did not trust machine records, and at interest dates the long lists of amounts credited as interest had to be added "in the head" and signed that the totals had been checked and found correct. Savings interest was 1 1/2 per cent per year on the minimum quarterly balances, if my memory serves me right, but we on staff were privileged to receive 3 per cent. Of course, as we were all broke, that was purely a psychological benefit. The two interest calculation dates each year were among the times that we worked far in to the evenings.

Vacation allowance was two weeks each year, in the first few years, but if one took vacation in the winter an extra week was allowed. Medical and dental plans were unknown.

The junior clerk was general dog's-body for the bank. He washed and filled inkwells, and changed pen nibs and blotters. He saw that the counter was properly stocked with stationery and he washed and polished the manager's car. He learnt to post and balance savings ledgers, and walked around town delivering and collecting drafts. These had been forwarded by other banks and were like promissory notes for merchants to pay on time for goods received. At that time a small store might pay $5.00 on a $200.00 account to stall it off for another month. At the sub-branch which was opened at Union Bay one or two days each week the junior would get experience as a teller.

The teller was kept in a cage. This not only had steel mesh on all four sides but over the top as well, and a door that automatically locked whenever it was closed. In a one-teller office the teller got no lunch break, he tried to eat his sandwiches in between customers. On a busy day he might have no chance to eat until 3:00 by which time he would probably have lost his appetite. Giving good service to customers was paramount - staff convenience was not important.

If the teller's cash was short at the end of a day the shortage was deducted from his pay, but overages went to the bank. If the ledgers did not balance, or necessary work not completed, the staff worked at night or on week-ends to clear it up. There was no overtime pay or compensating time off.

At the end of the year our annual raises came through. Most of us got $100.00 or $8.33 per month. Small as it was it really helped one's financial position.

Despite the lack of money the staff enjoyed life. The teller had a car and we hiked on the Forbidden Plateau and went swimming at Comox Spit. We fished in the river,

played tennis on the municipal courts and bowled on the bowling green adjacent to the courts. Long games of poker were held in the staff quarters over the Canadian Bank of Commerce with 1¢ raises and a 25¢ loss limit after which the loser could play free to try and win back a stake. On Saturday nights we listened to Hockey Night in Canada on the radio, sponsored by the Imperial Oil with commentary by Foster Hewett.

Any girl that had the use of her father's car was worth her weight in gold. I was fortunate to meet an attractive newspaper reporter who got in to shows and dances free. That really helped the budget.

None of us drank much though getting alcohol was no problem. The B.C. Provincial Police constable who boarded with us used to confiscate a lot of liquor when breaking up loggers' parties that got noisy. He had to turn in the unopened bottles but brought the rest home. The trouble was that to carry it easily he would pour it all in together to make full bottles, and we ended up with interesting mixtures of gin, rum, rye or anything else that happened to be around.

Of course I did my own washing, ironing and mending. There were no drip-dry shirts then, the shirts were of cotton and looked scruffy unless ironed after each wash. When a collar got frayed it could be turned good side out to extend the life of the shirt. Irons had no heat controls or steam capability so damp cloths were used for pressing.

In Victoria I had been in the 5th B.C. Coast Brigade Artillery Militia so in Courtenay I transferred to the 2nd Battalion *(Machine Gun)* Canadian Scottish Regiment. We wore old uniforms from the 1914-1918 War and our arms and equipment were from that era too. A private was paid 20¢ for each evening parade attended, but had to assign that back to the unit to keep it solvent. Even so many of us were keen, attended regularly and studied specialties. Such was Canada's preparation for the World War that broke out the following year.

Later I was transferred to a branch in Victoria. This branch did not have a stenographer so, as junior man, I was told to type the monthly reports and be sure that they got on the ship to Vancouver that left at midnight. I'd never used a typewriter before so it was "hunt and peck", with the former "typist" most pleased to have fobbed the job off on to me. We sometimes carried large sums of money to and from the main branch. We'd wrap it in old newspapers and pocketing our revolvers board the street car, the bank reimbursing us for the six cent fares.

In the bank I learned accuracy, patience and perseverance which served me well in later years when I took a five year course of study for my chartered accountant diploma, and later still two years for a diploma in hospital management.

All this sounds like a tale of woe but no-one had told us about being below the poverty level. We made the best of things and had a lot of good times together. It was fun to be young.

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Mr. Green is a member of the Cowichan Historical Society.

Memories of Housekeeping in the 1930's

by Winnifred Ariel Weir

It was July, 1932, a few months after I was married, when I decided to have a few friends for dinner. There were just eight of us but I laboured all day over the McClary woodstove in the kitchen, baking Parkerhouse rolls and a gourmet meat loaf, heating the whole house in the process.

I had an ice-box which my husband had filled with fresh ice before he went to work. The ice was cut from Lake Windermere in February in blocks eighteen inches square and packed in layers of sawdust. He always hosed it off before carrying it into the kitchen but drips of water and sawdust smeared my newly washed floor. I reminded myself that I must empty the drainage pan under the ice-box before my guests arrived or we might find the kitchen floor afloat. In July it needed emptying twice a day.

The jellied dessert had been made the night before because jelly in those days was unreliable and needed a full 24 hours to set. There were fresh green peas and carrots from the garden.

To-day 57 years later I am having eight for dinner. The meatloaf is in the microwave; the dessert, made a week ago is in the freezer, the salad is crisping in the refrigerator and the kitchen is as cool as the rest of the air-conditioned house.

Many communities were not as deprived as ours in the 1930's. Many had ample electricity. Our electricity came from a diesel plant. In the summer the power went on at dusk and off at 11 p.m. The hours of electricity varied with the season. In winter it also came on at 6 a.m. and

went off at sun-up. There came a day when a prominent lady in the village got an electric washing machine and the power was left on every Monday morning until noon. Soon other housewives also got washing machines but we could use them only on Monday mornings.

My first washing machine, bought in 1933, because there would be a baby in a few months, was a wooden tub on legs, bound with iron bands and having a side handle which I swung back and forth to agitate the inner wheel which circulated the clothes. A hand wringer was fastened to it and it could swing sideways to also serve the two galvanized tubs of rinsing water. All had to be emptied by hand. There was also the big copper boiler on the wood burning stove in which I boiled any particularly dirty items. The wooden washing machine had to be stored with a few inches of water in it to prevent it drying out and developing leaks.

We could never use an electric iron as the diesel plant did not produce enough power. The flat irons always sat at the back of the stove, ready to be moved forward for use. How many housewives to-day know that to test the iron for the right heat, one spat on it.

There were no Pampers in those days nor diaper service. We made flannelette diapers, hemmed on the sewing machine. After laundering each day they were hung on the line outside even in 20 below zero F. When the frozen diapers came back into the kitchen they hung on an overhead rack to thaw and dry.

The hospital had a small x-ray machine which required all the power the diesel plant could produce so when the doctor required an x-ray for a patient, the telephone operator would phone each customer and ask us to turn off our lights for half an hour. So we would sit by coal-oil lamps or candle light.

The day came when we had power every day until noon and some of us aquired a vacuum cleaner and we could wash every day. That was luxury but there were occasional frantic days when I was rushing to finish the vacuuming or the washing before the power went off sharp at twelve and the babe, just out of diapers was asking to be taken to the bathroom.

There was no Pablum or commercial baby food. I cooked Cream of Wheat overnight in a double boiler to ensure its digestibility. When the doctor recommended vegetables I pressed them through a sieve, not once but twice on his advice.

Everyone had a vegetable garden and we canned and bottled through the hot summer months. If our root vegetables gave out before spring, we could buy them for two cents a pound. We relished the fruits of summer for in winter we could buy only apples, oranges and bananas. The first grapefruit in the spring were as welcome as the crocuses and lilacs.

Milk was delivered to the doorstep early each morning. It was ten cents a quart. It came in glass bottles that we washed and put out for the milkman to pick up next morning. Many of us had a few chickens in the backyard and eggs were deemed fresh for three days only.

It never occurred to us that keeping house was difficult. It was the same for all of us and we were happy with our accomplishments. We had a happy social life. There were dinner parties and dances. Dances were $1.50 a couple plus a cake or sandwiches for the supper and the baby-sitter was fifty cents.

We baked for church teas and bazaars and attended these events of all the churches. There were picnics in summer and swimming parties and skating parties on the lake in winter. Community spirit was all encompassing. We rejoiced at engagement parties and weddings, mourned with the bereaved at funerals, delighted in the small achievements of neighbours.

To-day I have most household appliances. Certainly keeping house is a breeze compared to the 30's. But I don't regret a moment of it.

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Mrs. Weir is Curator of the Windermere Valley Museum, former newspaper editor, and chairman of the district Cancer Society.

ADVANCE NOTICE CONFERENCE 1990

The Boundary Historical Society has plans well underway for hosting the B.C. Historical Federation's Annual Conference in Grand Forks, May 10th - 13th, 1990.
Mark these dates on your calendar. You won't want to miss this event.

The Early History of New Westminster I. W. A. Local (1-357)

by Werner Kaschel

The *"timberbeasts"*, as the early woodworkers were known in British Columbia during the late 1800's and early 1900's, were both radical and discontent. These men were faced with destitute working and living conditions, and discrimination, low pay for long tedious hours, and no holidays, pensions, or health benefits. During these early years various organizations tried to help the woodworkers attain better social benefits, higher wages, and other advantages, but unfortunately most were not successful. In July, 1937, a new organization arose to lead and organize the woodworkers. This was the International Woodworkers of America (I.W.A.), under the communist leadership of Harold Pritchett. The union faced and still faces struggles with powerful employers and anti-labour governments, however, through the many struggles that it has endured it has grown to a force of great strength and solidarity. Misconceptions concerning the I.W.A. and its locals however, seem to persist. Many speculate that the I.W.A. and its locals only help their members by settling grievances, negotiating contracts and performing other tasks for their workers. The I.W.A. and its locals actually go beyond these priorities by reaching out and helping the neighboring communities.

The I.W.A. local 1-357 from New Westminster has an interesting history and has played an important part in helping the trade union movement and surrounding communities. This article will examine the birth of local 1-357 and, the role it played for the workers, and the people of neighboring communities.

The I.W.A. during the 1940's saw a number of important gains for the union. One of those gains came in 1942 in the *"hub city"* of New Westminster, where the mighty Fraser River was (and of course still is) used to transport log booms to the nearby sawmills, veneer (plywood) plants and sash door plants. New Westminster was a woodworking town.

On 24 October 1942 the I.W.A. expanded its territory by chartering local 1-357 of New Westminster, its sixth in British Columbia. The growth of this local and its committees not only helped the wood workers significantly, but also aided the surrounding communities both socially and economically.

The first meeting of the newly born local was held in the Arenex at Queens Park, New Westminster, on 8 November 1942. Over four hundred and fifty new members, both brothers and sisters, turned out to listen to the first I.W.A. president, brother Harold Pritchett. That night he *"stressed the role woodworkers in general are called upon to play in the war effort."*[1] He laid down the conditions of the charter, the responsibilities of the organization, read the obligations of membership, and finally congratulated the members on their effort in organizing the mills in New Westminster. From this meeting came the first real feeling of solidarity among woodworkers in the New Westminster area.

The first elected executive council of 1-357 consisted of nine people. At the same time, the local chose seven people to sit on the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (V.T.L.C.). Shortly after their first meeting the local moved into its offices.

The original offices were located in the Ellis block on Columbia Street but by December, 1942 the local was settling into their new building at 650 Columbia Street. During the 1940's, the local organized a Social Committee, Ladies Auxiliary, and had helped to form the I.W.A. and Community Credit Union, as well as creating a number of other committees, in 1948. The local was dubbed the *"cornerstone of trade unionism in B.C."*, because it was the first I.W.A. local to break away from communist leadership.

Donations to charity organizations and funds for sports teams were some of the deeds the Social Committee and Women's Auxiliary took part in. A number of donations by the local were made to the Salvation Army Home, Boy Scouts, Crippled Children's Hospital, Red Cross, St. Johns Ambulance and the drive to build Queens Park Bowl. The local also sponsored baseball, soccer, and lacrosse teams in their neighboring communities. During the Second World War, the local had a War Finance committee, which promoted the purchasing of war bonds by members. The local itself bought $1,500 of Victory War bonds.

Women played an important role during the war in many industries, but their presence in local 1-357 was so significant that they accounted for 70% of the total workforce. The majority were considered excellent workers but after the war most lost their working jobs as the men returned home. However, by the late 1950's and early 1960's the local led the way on issues concerning women and their role in the workplace. Besides their work in the mills the women were also very active in the Women's Auxiliary, which was one of the first groups to emerge from the local.

The auxiliary organized a sick committee in the early forties, which was very popular among its members. The sick committee consisted of wives, or relatives of members, who visited the Royal Columbian Hospital and the Saint Mary's Hospital to see injured and sick woodworkers as well as other sick people. They often brought the injured and the sick people cigarettes,

flowers or a newspaper, the **B.C. Lumber Worker** to read. The Women's Auxiliary was engaged in planning an expanded program of social activity *"for combined purposes of fund raising and improvement of both social and recreational outlets for I.W.A. members and their families."*[2] The Women's Auxiliary also helped fund $300 for a new cabin at Camp Jubilee, a children's summer camp located at Burrard Inlet's Orlomah Beach near Deep Cove, opened up in 1935.

The Women's Auxiliary was very important because it supported both the members and the neighboring communities. Their cause was a philanthropical one. The Women were also very active in organizing a number of committees within the local. The Social committee, one of the biggest developed in the local during the early 1940's, branched out into a number of other committees such as the Sports, Labour Day and Dance committees.

A Sports committee emerged in the early 1940's, which created fastball teams among the different woodworking operations. An annual picnic was held in the summer months, where members and families met at a park to play baseball, enter sack races, flex their muscles in the tug of war and to compete in other track events. The picnic and sporting events in the outdoors created a relaxing, enjoyable time for the people as socializing was the main course of the day.

By 1944, a Labour Day committee was created. For many years this committee sponsored a float in the Pacific National Exhibition (P.N.E.) parade which *"exemplified the advantages of trade unions in the betterment of living and working conditions."*[3] A Mercury flatdeck was usually decorated for the local's float. By the mid fifties however, these floats ceased to be, because of a dispute between the P.N.E. officials and the V.T.L.C.

The Dance committee was another one of the committees created in the early 1940's and its projects became very popular among the members. Members from the Social committee, Dance committee and the Women's Auxiliary helped organize many dances, one of which was known as a *"Klondyke Night"* dance. These dances provided good entertainment and door prizes were awarded to lucky members. The Social committee did not concern itself solely with recreational matters however, it also arranged loans for members who were in need of money.

The loans were paid back in monthly installments and this may very well have laid the ground work for the establishment of the I.W.A. and Community Credit Union.

The formation of the I.W.A. and Community Credit Union in the summer of 1944 was one of the many contributions this local has made to its members and the nearby community. The growth of the Credit Union membership jumped from 240 in 1946 to over 2,500 in 1959. The Credit Union encouraged both members and relatives to join. Loans for building houses, sicknesses or accidents could be taken out by I.W.A. members. The ties between the local and the Credit Union bettered the financial circumstances of the members, created a stronger economy for the community of New Westminster and in turn, strengthened the union. As well as providing the community with a financial institution the local also created education classes for its members.

Education classes were set up for shop stewards and members on the Plant committee. They helped promote safety precautions at work. This ultimately led to the organization of Safety committees in the sawmills and plywood plants of the local. The Safety committee usually published news letters or bulletins through the local's Press committee.

The Press committee initially printed letters and bulletins, which were relayed to the wood operations throughout the local. They contained messages such as accident reports, notices and demands, social events and safety meetings. By 1945, a newspaper was formed by the local called the BUZZ SAW. A two page issue came out monthly, containing articles of interest to local members. The committee continued printing bulletins whenever necessary including some concerning political elections.

A political committee in the local studied the proposals for legislation effecting labour and working people. It looked at the people aspiring to political office and helped fund and organize campaigns for the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F.). The only two political parties that were supporting the cause of the working class were the Communist Party (C.P.) and the C.C.F., who were both fighting amongst themselves to see who would take political control of the union. This struggle in the political realm of the union and its locals created internal conflicts amongst the members. The local helped fund the C.C.F. and in turn it helped the local in the cause of the working class. The C.C.F. also aided the I.W.A. in its struggle with the communists.

The threat of communist run unions was common in many organizations like the I.W.A. during the 1930's and 1940's. The government and employers of B.C. were afraid the communists within the union were becoming a serious threat to the capitalist system. *"In 1943, we (Stewart Alsbury, George Mitchell and a few other members from local 1-357) organized the Old Timers Group at Fraser Mills against the opposition (communist) leadership, because they were using the union and its money to support their own political purpose."*[4] Two major events led to the exclusion of the communist leaders inside the I.W.A. during the Cold War era. The first was the passing of the American government's Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, which put an end to communist leadership in both Canada and the United States. The act stopped communist leaders from B.C. entering the U.S. to attend international union meetings and it also enforced the resignation of those communist leaders. By March, 1948, *"the only*

local where there was an effective turnabout (i.e., white bloc victory) before the so-called "Forty-eight resolution" was the New Westminster local where Stewart Alsbury was the elected president of local 1-357 and the leader against the opposition. As a result of the Hartley Act and their strength in the I.W.A., Harold Pritchett and other communists tried to break away from the international. In October, 1948, they held a meeting for all I.W.A. locals, which resulted in the communists forming a national union, the Woodworkers Industrial Union of Canada (W.I.U.C.). The second event occurred at this meeting, when delegates from local 1-357 were the first members to walk out after Pritchett and his group suggested their disaffiliation with the I.W.A.

The W.I.U.C. did not give up without a struggle. *"The fight between the I.W.A. and the W.I.U.C. turned violent at Iron River, a logging camp and W.I.U.C. stronghold south of Campbell River on Vancouver Island."* In December, 1948, Stewart Alsbury and a few other I.W.A. men were sent to Iron River to break up an illegal strike set up by some W.I.U.C. loggers. As eager as Alsbury was to settle this despute nonviolently he led his group into a violent confrontation, where he was seriously injured. *"I went out on a tour to Vancouver Island to help the I.W.A. rid itself of the opposition faction, where I got beat up severely in my cause. . . I had four ribs broken and was out of action for sometime."* The W.I.U.C. ceased to exist by 1950 and the I.W.A. was back in action thanks partially due to the leadership of local 1-357, which kept growing significantly.

The break from the communists within the I.W.A. was significant since it helped its members and other trade unions fight off communist leadership. The communist leaders were accused of *"using the I.W.A. as a racket for (their own) personal profit"* and the I.W.A. was used by them to extend the influence of their party.[5]

The locals membership increased from 2,300 in 1942 to over 5,000 in 1959. In the 1950's, the local witnessed significant growth following the burning of their first mortgage and the accumulation of more property. The local also helped form the United Good Neighbours Fund (U.G.N.), helped fund strikes, improved communication for members with the radio program *"Green Gold"*, created social activities like Christmas Tree party and a fishing derby, as well, it fought against racism in the neighboring communities.

By 1949, *"we bought a building on 533 Clarkson Street, which was (the local's) first real office because prior to that we had been renting."*[6] A gala event occurred for the local on February 1950 - *"1-357 Will Burn Mortgage At Banquet"* was the sub-heading in the **B.C. Lumber Worker** in February 1950. A dance and banquet was set up by the New Society, a branch group from the Social committee that was formed in the late 1940's, which was held in the Gai Paree where members watched the burning of the mortgage. In 1951, the local bought the property at 537 Carnarvon Street directly behind their building, where they constructed a new building containing four offices. Local 1-357 was renting all the office spaces out by September 1952 and one was rented to the I.W.A. and Community Credit Union. In 1958, the local purchased a lot of land on the corner of 12th Street and 8th Avenue, where they built a new building which opened up in May of the same year. The local resides at the same location today.

In 1954, local 1-357 along with the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce joined together to form the United Good Neighbours Fund, formerly the Community Chest. The local's contribution to the community came in the aid of social welfare, which was set up in the U.G.N. The local prompted other business, industries and unions to help the U.G.N. Men from the local provided leadership to the U.G.N. as presidents, directors, and campaign chairmen. Volunteer canvassers provided by the local played an important part in the collecting of funds for the U.G.N. The U.G.N. was important because it aided needy people.

The I.W.A. supported any strike that included a bonafide union in Canada or the United States. In the mid 1940"s the local made contributions to strikes on the regional level, but later it also made efforts to aid strikes on provincial, national and international levels. Contributions were made in forms of both money and food.

Among the strikes they funded in the early 1950's were the Weyerhaeuser strike in Washington, Eddy Match in Mission, and the big Army & Navy strike in New Westminster. The Army & Navy store workers, as well as members of other striking unions received $25 a week from the I.W.A. local 1-357. Any time a strike occurred, the local's paper, BUZZ SAW, urged I.W.A. members not to purchase items from the striking outfits, and to obey the picket lines. During the I.W.A. strikes of the 1940's and 1950's, local 1-357 also faced hardships which were lightened by the comradeship and diligence of its own members. For example, the Women's Auxiliary searched for food and money from stores and farms in the Lower Mainland, later, they even set up soup kitchens for picketers at the mills. *"Women from this local worked like hell during these strikes . . "* The Women's Auxiliary helped members significantly during strikes by providing them with food and funds, so they could survive the duration of the strike. News regarding strikes and I.W.A. material was heard on the local's radio program, *"Green Gold"*.

Green Gold was introduced in 1939 on CJOR by I.W.A. president, Harold Pritchett, who talked about the news in the labour scene. Strikes, negotiation proposals, demands, safety talks, working condi-

tions were just some of the items mentioned on the program. Local 1-357 participated in the *"Green Gold"* talk show on CKNW on Saturdays at 7:05. The first program by the local commenced on 5 April 1952. The CKNW program had been *"received with acclaim by radio listeners. The programs have already proved to be a valuable medium for presentation of I.W.A. news and policies."*[7] One of many topics mentioned on the program was education and safety in wood operations.

It was stated that *"the Education Program launched by local 1-357 has been an outstanding success."*[8] The program had classes dealing with co-operatives, education for shop stewards and grievances committees, but the central theme of the program was its safety class. Members at the plant level were able to talk about accident reports, claims and the prevention of accidents. The local's educational program involved showing film on safety rules and hazards at the workplace and soon these films were shown to other I.W.A. locals. The popular demand for local 1-357 films was overwhelming. In 1950 it was announced that the I.W.A. *"shows 30 films a month and is now rated by the National Film board as the biggest of any rival circuits."*[9] The local's Education Program was important to its members and other locals, because it improved the education of shop stewards and safety committees in turn making safer working conditions for all.

The Women's Auxiliary, Sports committee and Social committee introduced many athletic activities such as bowling, which became an instant success with the members. Fishing derbies were another adventure the local attempted in the early 1950's and they became a popular activity.

During such recreational activities workers, families and friends could get out to relax, socialize and wait patiently along the sand bars of the Fraser River to catch *"the big one"*. This yearly event still takes place with prizes consisting of trophies and cash. The *"Christmas Tree Party"* was another event that brought the workers and family members together. The parties ended in the late fifties, but while they were in existence they were a great success, as exemplified by the fact that as many as 2,000 to 4,000 often gathered for the celebration. Refreshments, gifts and entertainment were made available to the members and their families. The high cost of such large parties unfortunately made the *"Christmas Tree Party"* unfeasible; the last one being held in 1958. The Women's Auxiliary and the Social committee were major agents in the organization of social events in the local. This, of course, was very important for the members since such events created enjoyable times for them away from the mills. Although the committees spent a significant amount of their time developing social activities they also took time to focus on more serious issues.

Racism has been a factor in B.C. since the 1880's, when Chinese were found working for half the wage of the caucasian worker. Since the formation of the I.W.A. in 1937, this old tiered wage system was abolished in the forest industry, because the I.W.A.'s philosophy is *"based on brotherhood and sisterhood of the working people joining together cooperatively to pursue common and economic and social interests."*[10] The local's Social committee has helped to *"combat racism and racial discrimination of all forms in the mills within the boundaries of the local, and to look into particular problems faced by our immigrant brothers and sisters"*, since the 1950's and perhaps earlier.[11] *"I.W.A. Leads Attack Against Prejudice"* was one of the talks on CKNW on 11 April 1952, where speakers from the local attacked **The Vancouver Sun** for writing a discriminatory article on problems in South Africa.[12] They also supported equal rights for all races of men in the work force in B.C. The strength and sincerity of the local's attack against racism helped members and those in need when situations of prejudice occurred.

In summary, it is clear that local 1-357 has played an important, and interesting role within both the I.W.A. and Greater New Westminster area. The local's achievements are many. It helped to organize the I.W.A. and Community Credit Union and aided in the formation of United Good Neighbours Fund. During its continuous growth and expansion the local, through its various committees was able to aid both its own members and the greater community. Many years have passed since the local began its efforts to improve conditions within the workplace, but the time has been certainly well spent; the local and all its brothers and sisters are a credit to both Canada and the trade union movement.

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The author is a Simon Fraser graduate with a B.A. in History, and a holder of a Public History Certificate. His home is in Surrey.

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Gems From Archives

This Program Courtesy of Kootenay Lake Historical Society

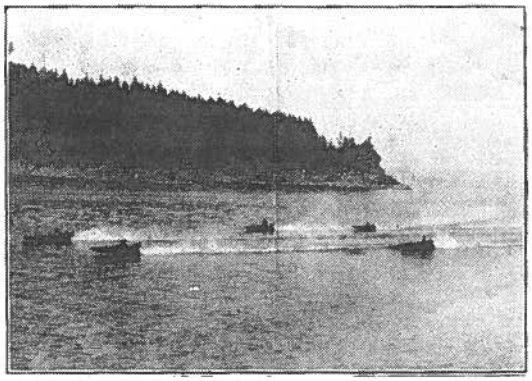
Kaslo Water Carnival

SPONSORED BY THE KASLO BOAT CLUB

To be held on Kootenay Lake, at KASLO, B. C., on

WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY

July 26 and 27, 1933



FRANK S. ROULEAU, Commodore J. A. RIDDELL, Captain
R. A. CHESTER, Mate

BOARD OF GOVERNORS—A. T. Garland, R. Hewat, W. L. Billings, A. W. Anderson, G. D. Bowker and A. P. Allsebrook

Program — Thursday, July 27th

PROGRAM COMMENCES AT 1 P.M.

Swimming—boys under 10 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c, distance 25 yards
Swimming—girls under 10 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c; distance 25 yards
Swimming—boys under 14 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c; distance 35 yards
Swimming—girls under 14 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c; distance 35 yards
Swimming—boys under 12 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c; distance 35 yards
Swimming—girls under 12 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c; distance 35 yards
Swimming—boys under 16 years—1st $1.00, 2nd 50c, distance 50 yards
Swimming—girls under 16 years—1st $1.00, 2nd 50c, distance 50 yards
Diving—boys under 12 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c
Diving—girls under 12 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c
Swimming under water—open, 1st $1.50, 2nd $1.00
Diving—boys under 10 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c
Diving—girls under 10 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c
Diving—boys under 14 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c
Diving—girls under 14 years—1st 75c, 2nd 50c
Diving—boys under 16 years—1st $1.00, 2nd 50c
Diving—girls under 16 years—1st $1.00, 2nd 50c
Duck Race—girls, open
Duck Race—boys, open
Diving for plates—men, open—1st $1.50, 2nd $1.00
Diving for plates—women, open—1st $1.50, 2nd $1.00
Diving—men, 1st $1.00, 2nd 75c
Ladies Diving—1st $1.00, 2nd 75c
High Diving—men, open—1st $1.50, 2nd $1.00
High Diving—women, open—1st $1.50, 2nd $1.00
Swimming—men, open, 75 yards—1st $1.50, 2nd $1.00
Swimming—ladies, open, 75 yards—1st $1.50, 2nd $1.00
Special—youngest swimmers on the beach—3 "Kidd medals", special donations,—contestants to swim 15 yards without help of any kind.

Committees in Charge

RACING—J. A. Riddell, Chairman; F. Rouleau, B. F. Palmer, R. A.Chester and J. R. Tinkess.

FINANCE—B. F. Palmer, chairman, R. A. Chester, J. R. Tinkess.

AQUATIC—R. Hewat, chairman, A. T. Garland.

WORKS—J. A. Riddell, chairman, C. J. White, P. M. Elder, J. Brochier.

PUBLICITY—F. S. Rouleau, Walter Hendricks.

DANCE AND ENTERTAINMENT—W. L. Billings.

For further information and entry blanks, write, wire or phone
FRANK S. ROULEAU, Kaslo, B. C.

Program — Wednesday, July 26th

PROGRAM COMMENCES AT 1:00 P.M.

Bang-and-Go-Back Race, open, one heat, 1st, shield; 2nd merchandise $2.00.
Class B Outboard Race 1st heat, for the Boat Club Shield, emblematic of the Class B championship of Kootenay Lake, to be held by the winner for one year; 1st, merchandise valued at $10.00; 2nd, merchandise $5.00
Outboard Handicap Displacement Runabout Race, 1st heat, 1st shield and $2.00; 2nd merchandise $3.00
(Handicaps—Boats powered with Class B motors, 10 series, to carry driver only; Class B, 16 series to carry extra passenger; and larger motors to carry two extra passengers.)
Class C Outboard Race, 1st heat, 1st shield and merchandise $15.00; 2nd, merchandise valued at $10.00
Class A Outboard Race for the Davis Cup, 1st cup; 2nd merchandise $2.00
Inboard Race, boats with a speed not over 35 miles an hour, first heat, 1st shield and merchandise valued at $5.00; 2nd merchandise valued at $5.00
Class B Outboard Race, 2nd heat
Outboard Displacement Runabout Race, Handicap, lady drivers, 1st, shield; 2nd merchandise valued at $2.00.
Class C Outboard Race, 2nd heat
Outboard Displacement Runabout Handicap, 2nd heat
Inboard Runabout Race, 2nd heat
Aquaplane Race, open to outboard or inboard boats, merchandise $5.00
Outboard Marathon, for the Outboard Championship of Kootenay Lake, for the City of Kaslo Cup, to be held by the winner for one year, 15 miles, 1st, shield and merchandise valued at $15.00; 2nd merchandise valued at $10.00; 3rd merchandise valued at $5.00.

All races except Marathon, to be run on a 1½ mile oval course, three laps.
All races open to the world. Winners decided on N.O.A. point system—1st, 400 points; 2nd 361; 3rd 324; 4th 289, etc.
Entry fee $1.00 per boat, which covers all races, including marathon.
Entries close on Wednesday, July 26 at noon.

BOAT CLUB DANCE, DRILL HALL, WEDNESDAY NIGHT, JULY 26th.

An Incident in Diplomacy

by Fraser Wilson

More than fifty years ago I was a cartoonist for the Vancouver Sun. As well as doing political cartoons and caricatures I produced an eight column strip for the bottom of page one, every Saturday. The name of the strip "Events of the Week" is self explanatory.

The strip reproduced on this page appeared on the first Saturday in October 1937. The frame referred to in this article is enlarged above. It attempted to recognize and salute the visit of Emperor Hirohito's brother, Prince Chichibu and his wife to our fair city. Understanding the feeling of the Japanese people of that day that their Emperor was a deity, I was careful not to caricature their Royal Highnesses, but to make as near life-like resemblances to them as possible.

Imagine the surprise of the **Sun** editors as well as myself at the response we received on Monday and all during the following week. More than three hundred letters, all derisive and threatening came into the office. The sentiments ranged all the way from *"just cancel my subscription"* to one that stated, *"You will pay for your insolence when we take over your country!"*

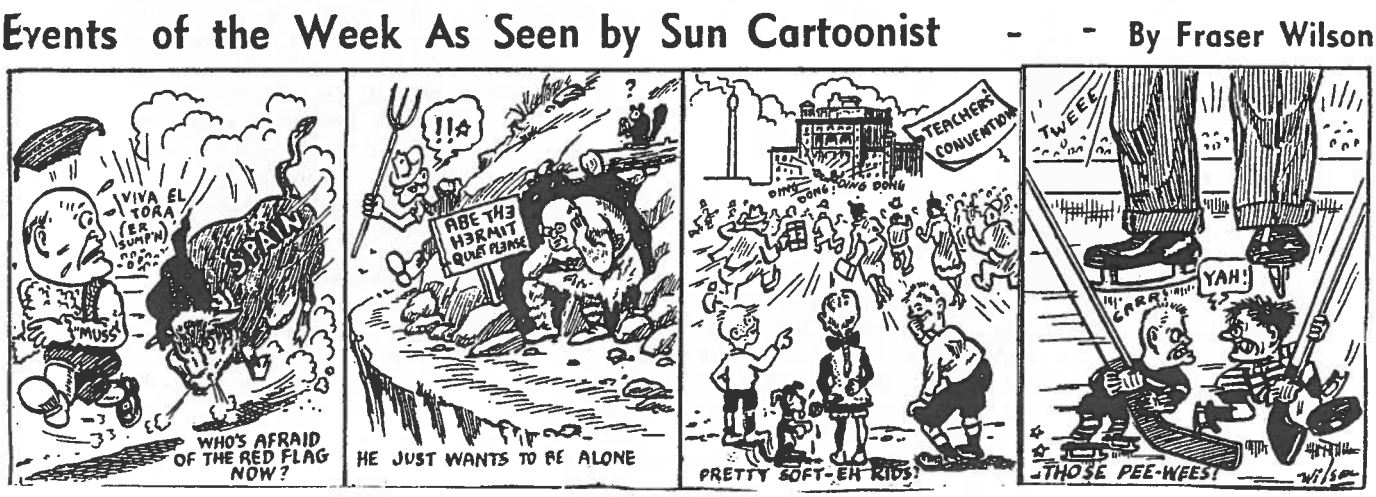
This was more than four years before Pearl Harbour. And although thousands of Japanese-Canadians were loyal to this country, it will never be known whether these three hundred letters were the work of that many individuals or a barrage by a small group of fanatics.

The **Sun** published an apology early in the next week.

P.S. Looking back-doesn't my *"Mr. Van"* as I called him, greeting the prince, bear a striking resemblance to a certain local politician?

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Fraser Wilson is a well known Vancouver artist. He was honored recently when his mural in the old Labour Hall was cleaned and put on display to the public. He was an officer in the Burnaby Historical Society for thirty years.



NEWS & NOTES

The Kanakas

Where are the descendants of the Hawaiian immigrants who came to B.C. in the 1840-1870s?

Tom Koppel of Ganges is researching the Kanakas, especially those who became farmers, preemptd land or lived and worked other than in the southernmost Gulf Islands. If anyone has information, pictures, or documentation please get in touch with:

Tom Koppel • Box 944 • Ganges, B.C. • V0S 1E0 • Phone: (604) 537-9571

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Britannia - A National Historic Site

Britannia ruled the waves on Discovery Day, May 13, 1989. The Britannia Beach Historical Society and the Federal Government arranged a day of celebration to honor the fact that the Britannia Milling Complex was to be designated a National Historic Site.

The Britannia Milling Complex is in Britannia Beach, 55 kilometres or 35 miles north of Vancouver on the scenic Sea to Sky Highway, or 99, enroute to Squamish.

Once the largest producer of copper in the British Empire the mill has been long shut down. The multi-level 11 storey mill, which towers above the mine is the only gravity fed ore concentrator in North America that is accessible to the general public, and, as such, was deemed worthy of recognition.

Discovery Day was declared to help celebrate this honor and to open the Village Green Park. This park, which will bring lasting pleasure to the Britannia Beach population, was designed by architect Jim Bezanson and acknowledges the four main elements of the community - forests, water, minerals and people. In the centre a flagpole is alongside the Historic Plaque mounted on a replica of the Mill. For the families there are picnic tables, a sandbox, swings, etc.

The dedication ceremony was held in the Park, with lively entertainment and interesting speeches by the various dignitaries from B.C. and Ottawa.

Discovery Day was blessed with fine weather to fit the happy feeling in the air. The pancake breakfast, displays, arts and crafts, food concessions and helicopter rides were all very popular. After the historic ceremony the assembled crowd enjoyed the reception held at the nearby school.

Nearby B.C. Museum of Mining received lots of attention with the interesting tours available there giving demonstrations of mining equipment and techniques.

Known as the immovable giant, embedded in the hillside since the turn of the century the Milling complex is now honored, thanks to the many patrons and dedicated work of the Britannia Beach Historical Society and the organizing committee with its numerous volunteers.

Joan Bellinger

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Saanich Historical Artifacts Society

The Annual Summer Fair of the Saanich Historical Artifacts Society was held in June, 1989. The acreage which this Society has acquired held plenty of interest for young and old. Steam tractors and vintage machinery were in operation and little steam trains chugged along short tracks.

Many groups attended, including a tour by the West Coast Railway Association. Members of this group later had a ride on the Sooke River Railway, the only remaining track of C.N.'s Victoria to Deerholme and Youbou line.

Sooke River Railway Preservation Society is in the process of restoring various track vehicles, including handcars and passenger cars.

The Sooke Museum proved to be fascinating and included a guided tour of Moss Cottage, restored and liveable.

Both the Saanich Society and The Sooke Railway Society welcome new and interested members.

Joan Bellinger

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Borderlands (June 2-4)

The Yukon Historical and Museums Association and Professor Ken Coates of the University of Victoria, B.C. are to be congratulated on having organized a highly successful conference held at the Yukon College, Whitehorse. Its objective was to examine United States - Canadian relations within the context of the Alaska-Yukon Boundary and its effects, past and present, on northern borderlands.

Mutual problems and tensions were discussed in a congenial and amicable atmosphere, and it was in a spirit of good-natured humor that each side reviewed its past mistakes. An enthusiastic audience of over 100 drawn from different parts of the respective countries testified to the interest generated by such a meeting.

Speakers ranged from well-known Native Elders of the Yukon and Alaska to Canadian and U.S. academics and graduate students in various disciplines, archivists from the Yukon and Alaska, as well as members of Parks Canada and the U.S. National Parks Service.

Among the topics addressed were trans-governmental relations, Native Peoples, resource development, the Alaskan Panhandle and British Columbia, early fur trade, and northern business activity.

The titles of a number of the papers should give an idea of the wide scope covered. Mr. Sam Williams, Champagne, Aishihik Elder, introduced the theme of "Life in the Borderlands Area" which was followed by an account by Dr. Catherine McClellan, Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin, entitled "Before Boundaries: Peoples of Yukon/Alaska", Dr. Lew Green, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, spoke about the "Phototopographic Mapping and the Panhandle Boundary", Mr. J.W. Shelest, (Kitchener, Ont.) Ph.D. candidate, Cambridge, England, gave an insight into "The Dryad Affair: Anglo-Russian Rivalry for the Alaskan Lisière", Dr. Frederica de Laguna, Professor Emeritus, Bryn Mawr, talked about "Lieutenant Emmons and the Alaska Boundary Controversy, 1902-03", Nancy Cameron of Yukon College, Whitehorse, focused on the "Alaskan Prohibition and its Impact on the Yukon Territory 1921-25; Dr. William Hannable, University of Alaska, Anchorage and President of AHS spoke on "The Alaska-Yukon Boundary: the Maritime Dimension", Dr. William Morrison, Brandon University, Manitoba, explored the subject of "Canada's Western Arctic: Testing Ground for Canada's National Interest in the North", and Barbara Kelcey, graduate student University of Victoria, addressed the topic of "Victory or Death: Women on the Klondike Trail".

The final part of the conference was dedicated to 'Contemporary Perspectives on the Boundary' and a projection into the future. Nacho Ny'ak Dun Chief Albert Peter, representing the Council for Yukon Indians, stressed the decline in salmon and caribou stocks and underlined the urgent need for trans-boundary cooperation. His call to apply long-term vision to various issues shared by all northerners was reiterated by all speakers who followed.

As Rosemary Blair-Smith, Beaver Creek, (Tanana-Southern Tutchone), summed up: it was a meeting of minds, an effort to share and transmit knowledge. It is to be hoped that such international dialogue will be continued in the future.

Alix O'Grady
B.C. Historical Federation, Victoria

Bookshelf

"Books for review and book reviews should be sent directly to the book review editor; Anne Yandle, 3450 West 20th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6S 1E4."

As Wise As Serpents;
Lynn Gough; Victoria, B.C.: Swan Lake Publishing, 1988. Pp. 276, Illustrated, bibliography, index, footnotes. $15.95

Lynn Gough's **As Wise As Serpents** is subtitled *"Five women and an organization that changed British Columbia 1883-1939"*. The women were Cecilia Spofford, Maria Grant, Helen Grant, Margaret Jenkins, and Emma Spencer, all of Victoria; the organization was the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the WCTU: the changes wrought are purported to have been many. Gough represents these respectable, socially conscious activists as reforming forces driving the public along the road to prohibition and women's suffrage, driving the public toward its own good.

While each woman had her own special interest, the interests crissed and crossed, the two main movements going hand in hand but reaching out to haul in any other reform group within grasp. When not pounding away at sin and drink in the Standard theatre, soliciting anti-alcohol pledges, pushing for Sunday saloon closures, or listening, rapt to Billy Sunday, the good women promoted gospel services in jails, set up a home for *"Magdalenes"*, interested themselved in unwed mothers, protested male domination of school boards, opposed movies, and reacted not so much to the thought of war as to the sight of a soldier drinking, especially one with a woman on his knee. To further their causes these fairly well-to-do, middle-class ladies entertained any visiting temperance advocate or any visiting royalty, and cornered any premier they could at one of their good-cause garden parties.

Filled with interesting tidbits of social history, this book is, however, lifeless, joyless. One chapter called *"Franchise Fever"* communicates no sense of fever whatsoever, and one paragraph about a victory parade on September 11, 1916 attempts to rise from the dead but quickly collapses back into a coma. And surely these good women celebrated somehow on the day prohibition came into effect; surely after such long years of hard work these worthy women smiled at least, or had a celebratory cup of tea or even a private but satisfying sit-down with a sigh and loosened stays. But no! Not here!

Numbed by such joylessness and confused by detail rather than astonished by backed-up generalisations, the reader quietly slips away. Too many names obscure the main characters and force readers to check back and back and back before they give up. The over-use of first names compounds the confusion: *"Maria Grant"* is what we want, not merely *"Maria"*; and Emma should occasionally have been Mrs. David Spencer. Like too many writers of local history, Lynn Gough uses "escape-hatch" words such as "probably", "presumably" and "perhaps", words throwing doubt on the validity of her own facts.

Organization creates even more confusion. At no one place, for instance, does the reader learn the background of the Temperance movement, either at home or elsewhere. Victoria seems to have existed in isolation though one very short paragraph does indicate that fire had wiped out Vancouver. John Robson is dead by blood poisoning after catching his hand in the door of a London taxicab, but a couple of pages later he seems happily resurrected and attending a garden party in Victoria.

Unfortunately too many writers of local history create unreadable books. These writers forget that they must somehow inject some life into their texts, the facts alone do not a history make, that organization prods the reader onward, that hundreds of meaningless and undigested quotations do not give a sense of authenticity, that a chunk of any-old-quotation-at-all does not necessarily make a good title, that their job is to answer questions, not ask them, rhetorical or otherwise. As interesting and relevant as the subject matter might be, prohibition, for example, the presentation too often drives a good reader to drink.

Gordon Elliot

Gordon Elliott is a member of the Vancouver Historical Society. He is the author and editor of many books of British Columbia local history.

Hammerstome, the Biography of an Island,
Olivia Fletcher;Hornby Island, Apple Press, 1989. 148 p. illus. $17.95.

When a friend gave me this book, she remarked that it was history with a difference. As, indeed, it is. Olivia Fletcher recounts the environmental history of Hornby Island in anything but a dogmatic, pedantic style. In fact, she conveys it with a feeling of wonderment which catches and illuminates the imagination of the reader. The hammerstone, which is used as the theme of the book,is a weathered chunk of ancient lava that millions of years after its formation had been used by the Pentlatch Indians, members of the Coast Salish culture group, who spent about nine months of the year hunting and gathering on Hornby Island. This artifact of to-day is a multi-purpose tool of the past.

Part 1 is the story of the geological upheavals from some 350 million years ago, which created Hornby, and will, no doubt, continue in future time. I like her apt description of what the eagle must see to-day while soaring above the St. John Point Peninsula of Hornby, as resembling "a green moonsnail with foot extended". My handbook of

intertidal univalves states, *"the moonsnail is noted not only for its large round shell, but also for its extremely large fleshy foot"*. This foot can be both extended and contracted, reminding us of the fall and rise of the tides which govern island life. The writer gives an easily understood explanation of the theory of tectonic plates. Hornby was born as part of Wrangellia's birthplace 350 million years age. (This data is known through findings in Buttle Lake Limestone). From the South Pacific the Island was carried north on the Pacific Ocean Plate in a continuing voyage on top of other plates with the consequent squeezing and earthquake activity, to the sequence of glacial advances and retreats of two million to nine thousand years ago.

In Part II, Fletcher reconstructs the cyclical life of the native Pentlatch people prior to the coming of the Europeans. Hunters and gatherers, they were a sub-culture of our Coast Salish, spending the winter on Vancouver Island, the rest of the year reaping the bounty of Hornby. From the memories of elderly Salish women, from the writings of anthropologists, and from the evidences of archaeological digs, it is concluded that these people were not warlike, and that arrowheads found on the island were used for hunting, rather than for fighting, by an egalitarian society. It is suggested that fear of disease, death and conflict followed discovery by the Spaniards and the incursions of the fiercer Indians of the north. The Pentlatch culture died out in the 19th century in the resultant change in lifestyle introduced by European settlers. Fletcher calls upon the residents of to-day to be aware of this history of continuing change in their environment, and to think of themselves as its guardians in the face of new pressures.

Rarely does one pick up a local history which is so well documented, and in form so well served. Jane Wolsak's graphite drawings are an artistic accompaniment to the text. Print is large and clear, and the book itself lies flat when the reader turns to the gazetteer of place names mentioned, or to the glossaries of terms used. Explanations are satisfyingly full, and maps are mercifully simple and uncluttered. The bibliography attests to research in the latest studies. I am sure that Fletcher was not surprised to learn of the recent finds of dinosaur bones in the Comox area.

Now that I have read this intriguing book, I cannot imagine visiting Hornby Island without it by my side to assist the exploring of evidence of its prehistory which apparently abounds to-day.

Ruth Barnett

Ruth Barnett, who lives in Campbell River, is a former President of the B.C. Historical Association.

The Accidental Airline:
Howard White and Jim Spilsbury. Madeira Park, B.C., Harbour Publishing 1988. 246 p., illustrated. $24.95.

This is the highly entertaining tale of Queen Charlotte Airlines, operated on the B.C. coast by Jim Spilsbury from 1946 to 1955. Full of adventuresome anecdotes and individualistic characters, it contains some of that romantic aura which is particular to the Coast.

Spilsbury was born in 1905 in Whonnock, the son of an upper-class English family that had fallen upon hard times. Growing up on Savary Island, he developed a knack for tinkering with radios. While still a teenager, he began a marine radio repair business. Radio technology was in its infancy, and Spilsbury was creative in developing new applications, such as a wireless signalling system for logging operations. By the early 1940's, he was servicing the entire B.C. coast from his Vancouver office.

In 1943 Spilsbury bought a 3-passenger Waco seaplane to service the business, and began chartering it for additional income. The purchase of a 20-passenger Stranraer flying boat in 1946 resulted in a twice-weekly regular service between Vancouver and Prince Rupert and the birth of Queen Charlotte Airlines - an *"accidental"* airline in that it was initially only a sideline. Bit by bit, his "Queer Collection of Aircraft" was built up, through the vicissitudes of seat-of-the-pants flying, and seat-of-the-pants business management.

With the number of unpredictable factors Spilsbury had to deal with, it was a wonder the airline survived as long as it did. His pilots were mostly swashbuckling mavericks famous for their heroism and for their alcoholism. Their life-saving mercy flights made for good publicity, but their recklessness also resulted in fatal crashes. Government bureaucrats imposed ridiculous regulations and were susceptible to bribes, according to Spilsbury's (possibly) jaundiced view.

In making the transition from a small operation to a large-scale business organization, Spilsbury trusted the wrong people, tolerated incompetence too long, and got double-crossed by some of his senior managers. One of QCA's biggest problems, he admits, was inability to **think** like a big airline.

In the early 1950's the Kitimat megaproject was the most lucrative source of revenue for coastal airlines. Vicious competition for this trade with Russ Baker's Central B.C. Airways was a major factor in the demise of QCA. In 1955 it was sold to Baker and became part of Pacific Western Airlines.

The Accidental Airline is an important contribution to B.C. coastal history and aviation history, and an interesting case study in business management. Spilsbury's crusty character, and the exciting times he lived in, enhanced by Howard White's professional writing ability, make for delightful reading.

Jim Bowman

Jim Bowman is Archivist for the Chilliwack Museum and Historical Society.

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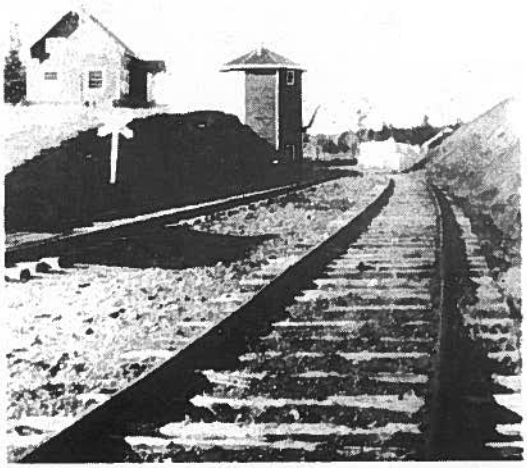

Station House and Water Tower and P.G.E. Tracks near Enterprise Station, showing cattle pen on the siding.

Mrs. Clare McAllister of Victoria - B.C.H.F. Honorary President 1989-90.

Police Patrol: Provincial Police Commissioner from Prince Rupert on the left, Larry Requae local constable on the right. Carle Jones cooking. Taken at American Creek north of Stewart - 1938. ***(See story page 8.)***