British Columbia
Historical News

Journal of the B.C. Historical Federation

STEAMBOATS, SLEIGHS AND STAGECOACHES

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CONTENTS

Company Towns, Especially Englewood

by E.A. Harris

The company town has been a feature of British Columbia's history since the first colonial days. The fur-trading posts established during the first half of the 19th century were, in effect, embryo company towns. The cities of Victoria, Nanaimo, Kamloops and Prince George all originated as Hudson's Bay Company – or North West Company – forts and, although the fur-trade is now a marginal occupation, present-day towns like Fort Nelson and Fort St. John still retain their fur-trade names.

Most company towns were single industry communities based on such resource enterprises as mining, lumbering, pulp and paper-making, and salmon-canning. The most complete type of company town was where the company was the sole proprietor – the employees occupied rented accommodation and dealt at the company store.

Anyox, at the head of Observatory Inlet, was a town of this type. Established by the Granby Company in 1912, it depended on a rich copper mine and smelter for its prosperity. The company employed a large work force and for over two decades Anyox was, after Prince Rupert, the biggest town on the north coast – with a peak population of 2,500.

For over twenty years Anyox was a very profitable operation. The mine and smelter produced a steady stream of copper ingots, as well as considerable amounts of gold and silver. This mining activity provided steady employment for a large work force but this economic prosperity was offset by some damaging side effects: sulphur fumes from the smelter killed the trees in the surrounding forest and seepage from the mine polluted local streams. In 1935, due to low copper prices and lower production, Anyox was closed down and most of the town's population departed, leaving what had become a kind of wasteland. The town's population dwindled and in 1939 the post office was closed. In 1942 a forest fire destroyed the dead trees and Anyox's abandoned wooden buildings – the once active mining centre was now a ghost town. But as the human population vanished, natural vegetation began to restore itself. Pete Louden, who lived his boyhood years in Anyox until 1935, made a return visit to the abandoned townsite in 1971. He wrote: "In Anyox today one can find a few traces of wooden roads and a few open areas which were once dirt roads, but generally the growth of the underbrush is so dense that a stranger would find traces of the town only by accident."

In British Columbia over the years many company and one-industry towns have come and gone. Some like Anyox have grown and prospered while others have maintained at least a nominal existence under different circumstances. Powell River began as a typical pulp and paper company town and continues in that capacity, but on a much wider municipal base. Ocean Falls, up coast from Powell River, was less fortunate. Founded in 1917, Ocean Falls produced many tons of paper products. This company town was also famous for its basketball teams, swimming champions and super abundant rainfall. The plant was closed in 1980 but a handful of permanent residents keep Ocean Falls from becoming a ghost town.

Britannia, a former copper mining company town on Howe Sound, now survives as a museum and tourist attraction.

Hedley, once the site of a great mine above the Similkameen River southeast of Princeton, has become a retirement and residential village. Chemainus on Vancouver Island has changed from sawmilling to tourism, with huge outdoor murals as attractions for visitors.

In 1953 the Aluminum Company of Canada established Kitimat as a carefully planned town hoping to achieve a workable balance between corporate and municipal controls. After clearing a portion of the dense rain-forest, the townsite was divided into industrial, commercial and residential areas with allowances for road, rail and seaport construction and today Kitimat functions as planned.

Wood & English sawmill at Englewood in 1928. Docks to the right and upper townsite to the left.
Photo courtesy of the author

Englewood and environs.
Sketch courtesy of the author

However company towns can still disappear with dramatic suddenness. For a number of productive years, Cassiar, near the province's northern boundary, was a busy community dependent on its open-pit asbestos mine. In 1992 when the operation became uneconomic and ceased operating, the population had no alternative but to leave and hope to find employment elsewhere. Today Cassiar stands empty and abandoned.

Englewood was another small company town, located on the northeast coast of Vancouver Island, which died more than forty years ago leaving few traces of its existence. It was founded in 1925, centered around a sawmill owned and operated by the firm of Wood & English — hence the name Englewood. Timber for the new sawmill would be brought by logging trains from camps around Nimpkish Lake. This logging railway had been in operation for several years with a coastal terminus at the mouth of the Nimpkish River where the logs were boomed and towed to mills elsewhere. There was a small terminal village consisting of a mess hall-bunkhouse, several cottages, and a one-room schoolhouse. These buildings were later moved to new sites at Englewood. The move was necessary because the Nimpkish river mouth did not provide enough protection or depth of water for the deep-sea freighters that would be calling at the sawmill to take on lumber cargos. A mile or so of track was torn up and the line redirected south over a low ridge and by a switchback down past the sawmill to tidewater.

A trestle was built close to the cove's rocky north shoreline from which the logging trains spilled their loads into the water to be readied for entry into the mill. This trestle was extended to a second dock to serve the coastal steamers that made twice-a-week calls, bringing freight and passengers. On this wharf a two-storey building was erected – the ground floor was occupied by the company-owned general store and the second storey provided space for a community hall.

The houses moved from Nimpkish were relocated on the very limited sites available near the coastal-steamer dock. The two-storey bunkhouse-mess hall was squeezed on to a narrow ledge between the trestle and the steep hillside. The company office was placed on its own set of pilings near the coastal-steamer dock.

A small creek flowed into this corner of Beaver Cove and a dam was built about half a mile upstream to provide a water supply for the mill and the community. The sawmill was built on the level area at the mouth of this creek and many piles were driven to construct a large loading dock to serve the deep-sea freighters that would be coming for lumber cargos. The valley bowl behind the mill was cleared to enlarge the townsite. The clearing was done hastily and the array of stumps that resulted was not a pretty sight.

A neat row of houses was built on the north slope below the rail line for management personnel and their families, with a wide boardwalk leading down to the sawmill and dock areas. On the opposite slope housing was erected for several Japanese families, as well as two large bunkhouses for single men. The one-room schoolhouse, which was one of the buildings moved from Nimpkish River, provided an adequate classroom for some twenty-seven pupils in grades one to eight. The school was placed at the extreme upper edge of the townsite with a fine view of the
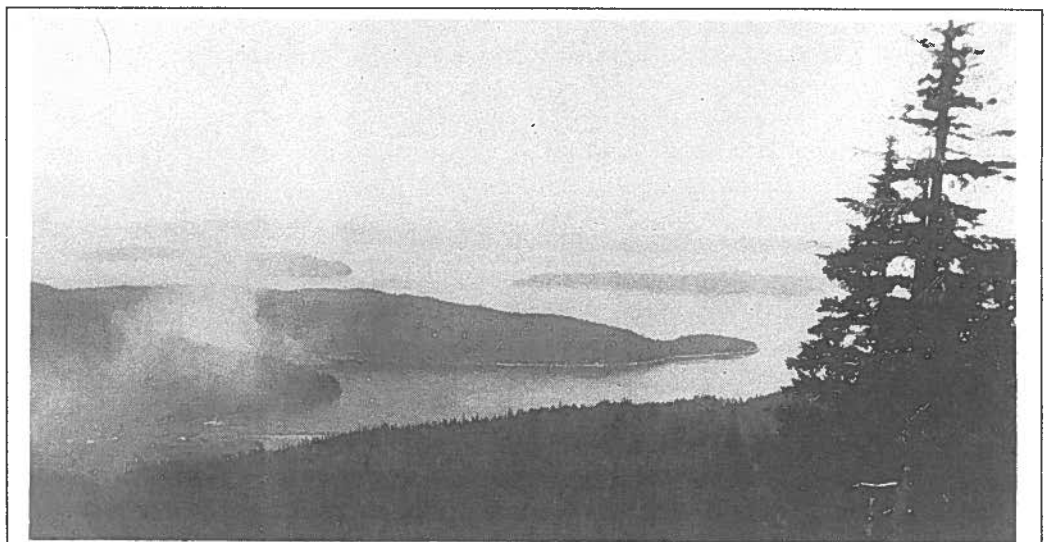
Looking down on Beaver Cove. Kokish River mouth and Beaver Cove settlement (lower left). Smoke cloud shows Englewood's location. Alert Bay on Cormorant Island (beyond point).
Photo courtesy of the author

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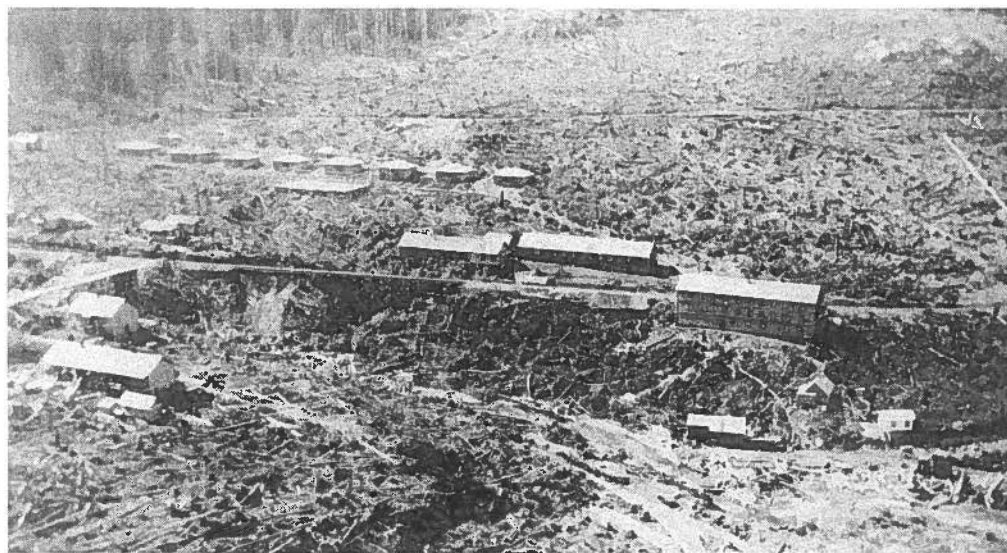
Englewood's stump-studded upper townsite. Management homes and tennis court (upper left). Japanese bunkhouses (centre). Logging railway crosses the photo midway to switchback uphill behind the houses. School was located at extreme left (out of photo).

Photo courtesy of the author.

the Lower Mainland found inhospitable.

Englewood was a hive of industry up until 1930 with two and sometimes three shifts at work. The plant was a typical west-coast sawmill that operated efficiently but somewhat wastefully. Sharp-toothed bandsaws sliced huge hemlock logs into beams and boards which were piled for export. Some of the waste wood was used for fuel but most of it went into the beehive burner that emitted a pretty constant cloud of smoke and ash. In 1929 some of the waste was reduced by the installation of a chipper-plant and scow-loads of wood chips were towed away to coastal pulp mills.

Englewood shared Beaver Cove with two other communities. The nearest, at the cove's southwest corner, a five-minute boat ride away, was also named Beaver Cove. It was located at the mouth of the Kokish River, a considerable stream, much larger than Englewood's small creek. Beaver Cove originated as an incipient company town in connection with a pulp mill that was established more than a decade before Englewood.

After a few years of activity, Beaver Cove's pulp mill closed down and was never re-opened. A caretaker was left in charge and most of the houses remained unoccupied. Some of the resi-

harbour and the settlement, marred only by the foreground of stumps.

In Englewood my rent-free abode was a three-room cottage, built on skids and located conveniently next to the school. A dozen or more of these semi-mobile homes were scattered about the townsite and occupied by mill employees.

My abode was at first not connected with the community's light and water systems and I had to make do with oil lamps and buckets of water carried from a nearby spring.

However there was never a shortage of mill edgings and slabs for fuel. This was sometimes augmented by lumps of coal the train crew slid off the tender to the Shay-geared locomotive – the five spot – as it puffed up the grade with a string of empty log cars.

At that time, except for a short road across the northern tip, there were no highways in northern Vancouver Island and Englewood had no automobiles. A small motorized and modified rail-car ran daily errands up and down the rail-line to the logging camps. In the millyard, long-legged Ross carriers toted under-slung loads of lumber that mobile cranes piled high for the incoming deep-sea freighters. Most of Englewood's output was destined for markets on the east coast of the United States so that

the ships had to make the long journey through the Panama Canal. No doubt other cargos were transported between ports en route. The ships were empty when they reached Englewood – except for an occasional stowaway. One day a five-foot-long snake, fortunately dead, was discovered among the stumps at the edge of our school playground. It was a handsome animal – green with an intricate design in black and yellow along its back. It must have unwittingly embarked at some Central American port, only to come ashore on the cool damp coast of northern Vancouver Island which even the little garter snakes of

Englewood lower townsite. SS Catala at coastal-steamer dock. Logging trains spilled their loads (at left) to be held in booms for entry into mill.

Photo courtesy of the author

dents later obtained jobs in Englewood, commuting across the cove by boat. Others eked out a living with some marginal agriculture and there were enough children to maintain another one-room school.

A third tiny settlement, near the cove's entrance, was located beside a pocket-sized harbour called Telegraph Cove – so called because the government had established a telegraph station there in 1911. In 1928 Telegraph Cove had a small sawmill, a wharf, and a few houses clinging to the rocky shoreline. It was a picturesque spot and much photographed. Today Telegraph Cove is a rendezvous for whale watchers – the rubbing area of Robson Bight being just to the south.

Two other places beyond Beaver Cove but within small-boat range of Englewood were Alert Bay, located on Cormorant Island in Johnston Strait, and the Finnish settlement of Sointula on nearby Malcolm Island. Alert Bay, with its large native population, had an impressive array of Kwakiutl totems. Alert Bay was a port of call for most of the many steamers that used to ply B.C.'s coastal waters. It also had a hospital operated then by the Anglican Church whose mission ship *Columbia*, with a doctor on board, was a frequent visitor to Englewood. The United Church minister in Alert Bay had a smaller boat for coastal visits and held Sunday services in Englewood for a small but dedicated congregation.

Englewood was a work-oriented place, a company town with no deep roots (except for the stumps). However the residents were neighbourly with a good community spirit. Dances were held fairly often in the spacious hall above the company store, with music provided by a local pianist or by a gramophone. Bridge was a popular pastime and other card games had their devotees too.

By the combined efforts of willing volunteers, a tennis court was constructed on the upper townsite. It was made of two-by-fours placed on edge and set about a quarter of an inch apart.

This provided a good solid surface that dried quickly, with no puddles after a shower. The court was of standard size and enclosed within a high meshed fence. The tennis may not have been up to Davis Cup standards but it pro-
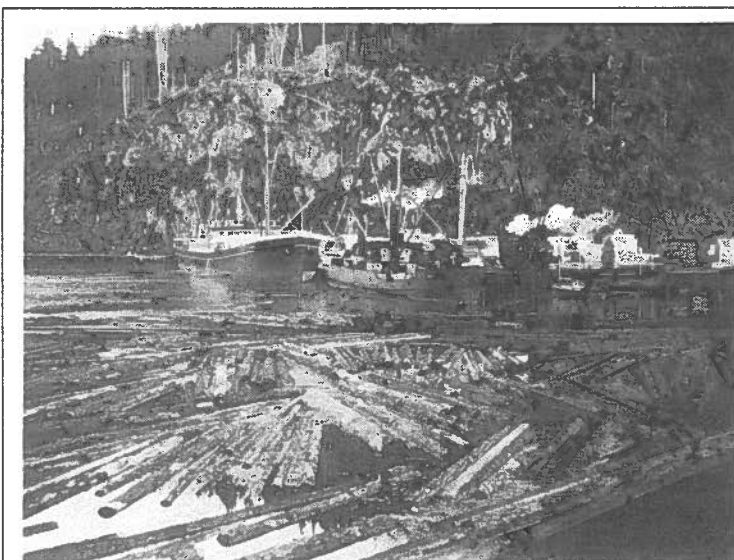
Deep-sea freighters loading at Englewood's lumber dock. Cargos for the east coast went via the Panama Canal.

Photo courtesy of J. Macmilan

vided enjoyable recreation for a wide range of participants.

Baseball fans also had their innings. In the spring of 1929 a fairly level shoulder on the south slope was levelled off for a ball field. On fine work-free days shouts of "batter up" and "play ball" enlivened the community.

By the later 1920s radio reception was becoming much more available in places like Englewood. The owners of new battery-powered sets, equipped with loudspeakers, often invited neighbours in just to listen to the radio and marvel at hearing words and music from all across North America and even overseas. Radio also provided the latest stock-market quotations. Some Englewood residents, like many others, were eager investors. When, later in 1929, the stock-market crash occurred, most of the paper profits vanished but, at first, few realized that the world was heading into the great slump of the 1930s.

It soon became obvious that a worldwide depression was setting in with much diminished international trade. By 1931, due to the loss of its lumber markets, Englewood sawmill closed down and most employees had no choice but to go somewhere else to get jobs.

Englewood never regained its former

productivity and for some years functioned as a mere booming ground for logs that were towed away to other mills. In 1952 Canadian Forest Products obtained a forest management licence for the Nimpkish region with headquarters at Woss Lake. The rail-line was moved from Englewood to a new coastal terminus at the mouth of the Kokish River near the older settlement of Beaver Cove. This logging railway is still operational – the last of its kind. The logs are taken to CanFor plants like Eburne Sawmills at the mouth of the Fraser in Vancouver.

Englewood was abandoned years ago and a visitor today, who could now drive to the Beaver Cove area and beyond, would have difficulty finding any traces of Wood & English's company. No buildings remain – they were moved or dismantled when Englewood was abandoned. After more than forty years, the boardwalks and the tennis court have disappeared and a renewed forest has grown up over what was once the stumpy upper townsite. About the only signs that there was once a settlement there are some old pilings along the shoreline – relics of the rail-trestle and the docks. However the name "Englewood" still survives in Canadian Forest Products' Englewood Logging Division and in the memories of individuals who lived there for some part of their lives.

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The "Neweete War"

by Lesley Cooper

Here I am and others like seeds floated from a foreign shore, bringing a new philosophy, power, and artificial resulting mode of living among these natural men and natural forests. What will be the result?
Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken[1]

When Dr. Helmcken wrote in 1890 of his experiences at the coal-mining post of Fort Rupert during 1850, he created a considerable narrative regarding the nature of native-white relations at the fort that would be of great use in the future. By combining these reminiscences with the colonial despatches and company correspondence, it is possible to construct a picture of the multicultural cauldron of unrest that was Fort Rupert in 1850–1851.

In July 1850 an isolated incident of violence between white and native took place that was the unhappy result of cross-cultural misconception. Three seamen who had deserted from the service of the HBC *Norman Morison* were murdered by three men of the Newitty Kwakiutl tribe.

The extant historiography of this incident has become muddled as time separates the event from its documentation. This paper will call upon primary sources to draw some conclusions about what HBC secretary Archibald Barclay termed a "most melancholy affair."[2] These sources include the despatches of Governor Richard Blanshard; correspondence outward of Chief Factor James Douglas; and the reminiscences of Dr. J.S. Helmcken, the first appointed magistrate for the

colony of Vancouver's Island.

Fort Rupert was constructed on Beaver Harbour, at the north end of Vancouver Island, as a coal-mining post.[3] Built in 1849 on the orders of Sir George Simpson and under the direction of Chief Trader William McNeill, the post reflected the traditional HBC post-and-sill style of timber frame construction.[4] The customary rectangular palisade, the fort housed a community that was anything
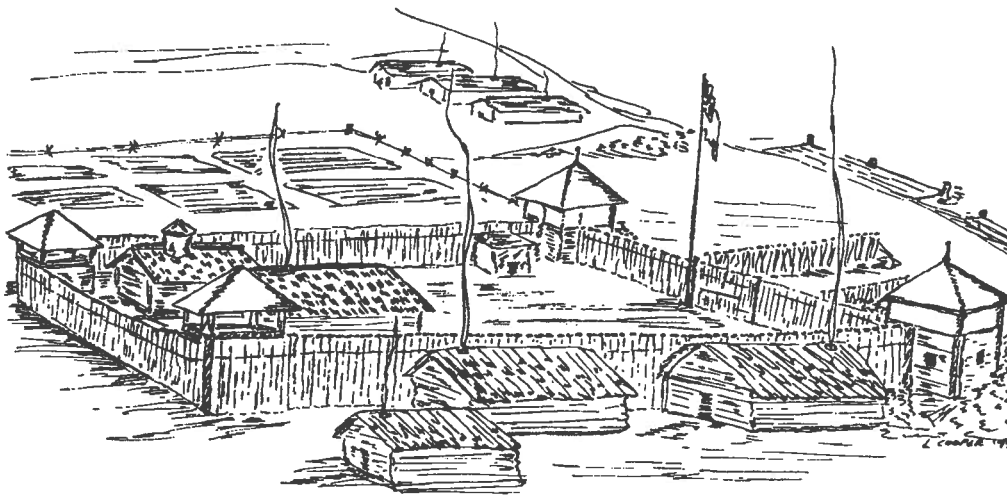
Fort Rupert did not stand in isolation from the surrounding Kwakiutl. As soon as construction on the new fort began, the Indians from nearby areas settled by the fort, using its walls for the support of their longhouses.

Lesley Cooper sketch

but traditional – in a short period of time it became a maelstrom of discontent. The population of the fort (largely miners) consisted of around thirty-five men, women and children of diverse cultures: English, Scotch, French-Canadian, half-breed and Kanaka, as well as the Tsimpshian and Kaigani Haida wives of the French-Canadian men.[5]

The fort did not stand in isolation from the surrounding Kwakiutl tribes. As soon as construction on the new fort commenced, the Indians from nearby areas began to settle immediately beside the fort, utilizing its walls for the support of their longhouses.[6] At least four tribes of the Kwakiutl Indians moved to Fort Rupert after 1849, causing by their migration much confusion regarding the standing of the various tribes.[7] The na-

tive population in the area was between 2,500 and 3,000, representing at least one-third of the total Kwakiutl population at the time.[8] The natives traded in fur and salmon at the new post, and also continued to dig the surface coal and carry it to the waiting ships in their canoes as they had for a decade. When the HBC commenced with underground coal mining, these natives were initially upset with this competition with their enterprise, an activity that had been the means of acquiring trade goods long before the creation of Fort Rupert. The Kwakiutl were not the only malcontents.

Neither were the HBC coal miners led by John Muir pleased with the organization of the mining effort. Brought out from England on contracts at variance from the traditional HBC indenture, the journeyman colliers were displeased with the menial labour they were expected to perform (e.g. ditch-digging), and by the spring of 1850 were in high revolt.[9] By the beginnning of July, the miners, their wives and the general labourers had all expressed their displeasure. There was simply not enough incentive to remain at an isolated post under the harsh shipboard-style command of McNeill, ill-fed and surrounded by thousands of potentially dangerous Indians.[10] This was 1850 and the call to gold that reverberated up and down the northwest coast from California clearly held more promise of adventure and easy money.[11]

By the sixth of July, the nine Kanaka HBC employees had quit the confines

of the fort when their contract expired; the six miners of the Muir party and the blacksmith had deserted the fort and were camped out at Suquash, near the camp of the friendly Newitty Kwakiutl; the miners' wives had also deserted and were refuged on board the barque *England* lying at anchor in Beaver Harbour; and McNeill was on furlough in Victoria, having left his young son-in-law George Blenkinsop in command. The disturbed state of the white population was well known by the Kwakiutl, whose trading and normal post-related activities were affected as well. Dr. J.S. Helmcken, recently burdened with the office of magistrate (an office rendered almost invalid for lack of support), recorded that "anarchy reigned – hell and earth seemed mingled – mutiny within, a couple of thousand excited Indians without and around."[12] The next day, the first rumours of a murder committed near Newitty began to circulate. By the ninth of July, it was confirmed that three English seamen had been murdered, and suddenly the issues of personnel conflict within the fort took second place to the perceived threat existing without.[13]

On June 27 the *Beaver* had arrived at Fort Rupert on her way north. Captain Dodd delivered to Dr. Helmcken the advice that Governor Blanshard had appointed him as magistrate for the Fort Rupert district; Blanshard also wished Helmcken to investigate the circumstances of the miners' strike and the complaint of unfair punishment meted out by McNeill and Blenkinsop. Aware of Helmcken's new status, the captain now complained to the new magistrate that four of his men had deserted the *Beaver* at Victoria and were believed to be aboard the *England*. With little hope of recruiting more personnel from within the tiny colony, he wanted his men to return to the vessel.[14] The *England* had

arrived in Beaver Harbour earlier in June and was lying at anchor, taking on coal before departing to San Francisco. Helmcken searched the ship, but found nothing. After the departure of the *Beaver*, he urged Captain Brown of the *England*

X \FORT RUPERT SITE
●PORT HARDY

CAMPBELL RIVER ●

Sources: "Trutch Map," 1871, and A.L. Farley, Atlas of British Columbia (1979).
Sketch map by Lesley Cooper, 1994

land to get the deserting men back on board, being highly concerned for their safety. Indians reported to the fort at about this time that they had seen three men on a nearby island and, supposing these to be some of the six deserting miners, Blenkinsop asked a friendly Quochold chief named Whale to go and persuade the men to return to the fort, promising him a reward for each man who returned. The promise of reward, conveyed in French, was on the basis of *par tete* (per head) and may have been misconstrued to mean "dead or alive."[15] This wording of this reward (ten blankets for each man returned) was to be the basis of an unsubstantiated claim that the HBC had incited the Indians to violence.[16] Whale returned without having seen any white men on the island. As to the deserters from the *Norman Morison*, Helmcken's warning to the captain of the *England* had been in vain.[17] There were now sleepless nights for Helmcken and Blenkinsop: as the miners and their families returned to the fort for protection, the two men stood

watch from the stockade walls every night, uncertain of what the native response might be.[18]

James Douglas states in his communication to the governor and committee regarding the murders (dated October 5, 1850) that HBC employee Charles Beardmore was given the responsibility of finding and recovering the bodies of the murdered. Beardmore reported to Helmcken at Fort Rupert that the Newitty denied responsibility for the murders, laying the blame instead on the Haida. They did describe to Beardmore the location of the bodies, about four miles from Sucharti; two of the men had been shot "about the heart" and stripped, the third drowned. One body had been cached in a hollow tree. After covering the find with brush, Beardmore reported it to Helmcken at the fort. Helmcken recovered the bodies himself the next day by canoe, and the bodies of Charles Lobb, A.F. Hale and George Wishart were buried at the garden area to the rear of the fort.[19] Helmcken was now worried about the safety of the fort; the natives, knowing the disaffection of the servants, were losing respect for the white man. He urged Blanshard to come to Fort Rupert.[20] With Beardmore's first report of the incident as the basic data for this appeal, a series of actions initiated by Governor Richard Blanshard began that only served to fan the flames of what James Douglas eventually termed the "Neweete War."[21]

Upon receipt of Helmcken's letter, Blanshard reacted in precipitous fashion: he forbade any person from leaving Fort Rupert and wrote to Grey at the Colonial Office in high anxiety of the "massacre of three British Subjects." He relayed the intimation that the HBC had been responsible for instigating the Indians to murder, although adding the proviso that he had not as yet investi-

gated the matter himself. Blanshard stated that he had been unable to make any attempt to secure the murderers because of "want of force."[22] When George Wellesly (HM corvette *Daedalus*) arrived at Victoria on September 22, he carried Blanshard on to Fort Rupert, committed to give any assistance that might be required. Once at the fort, Helmcken was sent to the Newitty camp to demand the surrender of the murderers. The Newitty replied to Helmcken's demand by offering furs in return for the slain men, an appropriate payment for the offense in their culture.[23] Perhaps even this offer of payment was considered by the Newitty to be exorbitant, since in their eyes the white deserters were essentially slaves, and slaves were accorded no status or worth in their culture.[24] This was an unacceptable offer, and Blanshard's response was to

Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken

have three boats of British troops from the *Daedalus* go to the camp, then, finding it deserted, proceed to burn all of the property and cedar longhouses.[25] Helmcken had not been able to accept that the Newitty were indeed responsible, considering their past friendliness, and the day after the *Daedalus* returned to Fort Rupert, he resigned as magistrate.[26] A frustrated Blanshard wrote to the Colonial Office in October that since Helmcken was a paid servant of the HBC, he could not be considered an impartial person.[27] In November he submitted his own resignation to the Colonial Office, citing as reason his ill health and the heavy expenditures of office.[28] In reality, Blanshard had overstepped his authority and would be ignominiously asked to defray the expense of the *Daedalus* excursion out of his own pocket.[29] It took nine months to receive a reply, leaving plenty of time for Blanshard to instigate one more attack on the Newitty.[30] In t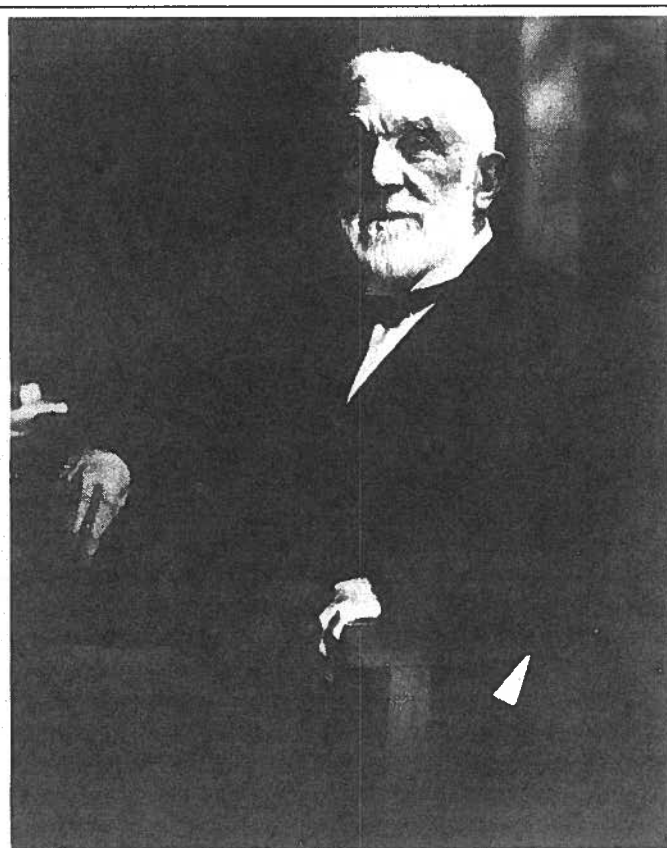he summer of 1851 the *Daphne*, commanded by one Captain Fanshawe, provided the means for another firing on the Newitty that resulted in native wounded and fatalities and destruction of their camp and provisions.

As a result, the Newitty left for Sea Otter Harbour, far to the west of their original village.[31] This action backed by the Royal Navy also induced the Newitty to finally give up the murderers – they executed the guilty themselves and delivered the bodies to the personnel of the *Mary Dare*.[32] The bodies of the murderers were interred alongside those of their victims, by the garden at Fort Rupert.[33]

As stated above, Beardmore submitted two statements to Helmcken, and the first was erroneous.[34] As an employee of the HBC, Beardmore aligned his loyalties with the company instead of the Crown authority – giving Douglas the account of the incident before he submitted it to Helmcken who, as magistrate, was the representative of the colonial government.[35] The truth of the matter was given to Helmcken late in August, after Blanshard had already hastily written to the Colonial Office. The corrected account stated three Newitty named Tackshicoate, Twankstalla and Killonecaulla had come upon three white men they felt to be some of the deserting miners. They attempted to communicate where the miners were camped, thinking that these three men

would want to join them. The *Norman Morison* deserters misunderstood the intent of the Newitty; one man brandished an axe at the Newitty men and another flung a rock at the Newitty canoe and smashed it. Thus provoked, the Newitty stabbed the three white men to death, stripping and concealing two of the bodies and sinking the third in the ocean.[36] The bodies were found on an island about four miles from Sucharti, where Helmcken recovered them the next day. The original account submitted by Beardmore was the cause of the inter-tribal unrest; the fort tribes of Kwakiutl offered to war against the Newitty on behalf of the fort, as the proper thing to do.[37] It had created the inference of tribal guilt by inflaming the situation beyond the status of an isolated incident provoked by misunderstanding. It was this inference that helped to upset the balance of native-white relations that had been maintained under the supervision of Chief Factor James Douglas.[38]

Douglas had, over the years, acquired considerable expertise in native-white relations. Unlike Blanshard, who felt that "the Queen's name is a tower of strength only when it was backed by the Queen's bayonets," Douglas abjured the use of the sword as being too expensive. He wrote to Barclay that "serious disturbances may often be prevented, by good advice alone, a course more consistent with the dictates of humanity and more conducive to the best interests of the Colony … "[39] He did not share the apprehension experienced by Helmcken and Blanshard, nor did Douglas consider this incident to require the punishment of an entire tribe for the guilt of a few.[40] Blanshard's answer to the murders was to confine the fort inhabitants and to re-open his plea for a regular garrison of troops to be stationed within the colony.[41] Douglas reiterated his belief that the defense of the colony could be provided for by the hiring of Métis HBC retirees, at less cost to the company, a solution derided by Blanshard.[42] The company made the practical recommen-

dation that no further firearms be sold to the natives until Douglas might "take proper measures to restore a better understanding with them."[43] The crux of the situation was that the company was responsible for the ordinary defense of the colony, under the terms of the charter granted in 1849.[44] In summary, then, Blanshard believed in a traditional military response that did not apply to a cultural environment managed capably by the economically driven diplomacy of Douglas and the fur traders, an environment that had been remarkably pacific up until the explosive events of the summer of 1850.

Specific themes emerge from this incident: the frustration of the HBC employees who were determined to leave unremunerative isolation for the promise of the California gold rush; the misconceptions held by the Kwakiutl regarding the white system of labour and punishment; and the conflicting opinions of governing and company authorities concerned with colonial defense. Overlaid is the theme of the dualism that existed in having two brands of authority at work within the tiny colony of Vancouver's Island – Blanshard, as the slightly regarded Colonial Office representative, and Douglas, traditionally and effectively the authority within the colony. It is small wonder, then, that the Kwakiutl of the Fort Rupert district were less than respectful and more than confused at the behaviour of the white man.

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Lesley Cooper is currently a graduate student in History at the University of Victoria.

APPENDIX

Vancouver Island. Despatches.
Governor Blanshard to the Secretary of State (Earl Grey).
Despatch 5.

Victoria, Vancouver Island
August 18, 1850

My Lord,
I have to inform your Lordship of the massacre of three British Subjects by the Newitty Indians, near Fort Rupert. Want of force has prevented me from making any attempt to secure the murderers; indeed the only safeguard of the Colony consists in the occasional visits of the cruizers of the Pacific Squadron, which only occur at rare intervals and for short calls. The massacre of these men has produced a great effect on the white inhabitants, many of whom do not scruple to accuse the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company of having instigated the Indians to the deed by offers of reward for the recovery of the men (sailors who had absconded) dead or alive. I have not yet been able to enquire into the truth of this report, but it is very widely spread, and men say that they ground their belief on what the Hudson's Bay Company have done before. The establishment at Fort

Rupert is in a very critical state. A letter I have received from Mr. Helmcken, the resident Magistrate, states that people are so excited by the massacre, which they charge their employers with instigating; that they as a body have refused all obedience both to their employers and to him as Magistrate; that he is utterly unable to maintain any authority, as they universally refuse to serve as constables, and insist upon the settlement being abandoned, that to attempt such a step would lead to their entire destruction, as they are surrounded by the Quarolts, one of the most warlike Tribes on the Coast, three thousand in number and well armed. Mr. Helmcken has tendered his resignation as magistrate; as without proper support the office merely exposes him to contempt and insult; and he further states that being in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, he cannot conscientiously decide in the cases which occur, which are almost invariably between that Company and their servants. This is the very objection I stated to your Lordship against employing persons connected with the Company in any public capacity in the Colony. I am in expectation of the arrival of one of Her Majesty's ships of war, according to the promise of Admiral Hornby, Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific, when I shall be able to proceed to the North and restore order. In the meantime I have prohibited any persons from leaving Fort Rupert without special permission, as if the people attempt to abandon the settlement and straggle about the Coast they will infallibly be cut off by the Indians, who are daily becoming more inclined to outrage, and are emboldened by impunity.

The miners have left the Colony in a body, owing to a dispute with their employers. The seam of coal is consequently undiscovered.

I have seen a very rich specimen of gold ore said to have been brought by the Indians of Queen Charlotte's Island, but I have at present no further account of it.

I remain, &c.
(signed) Richard Blanshard
Governor of Vancouver
Island

FOOTNOTES

1. Dorothy Blakey Smith, *The Reminiscences of John Sebastian Helmcken.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 1975, 298.
2. *Fort Victoria Letters, 1846–1850*, Hartwell Bowsfield, ed. Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1979, 175n.
3. The HBC had taken on a contract to supply the Pacific Mail Steamship Company with coal, as part of the company's ongoing diversification. W.K. Lamb, "The Governorship of Richard Blanshard," *BCHQ*, Jan.–Apr. 1950, 8.
4. Richard and Alexander Mackie, "Roughing it in the Colonies," *The Beaver*, Apr/May 1990, pp. 10–12; Patricia M. Johnson, "Fort Rupert," *The Beaver*, Spring, 1972, p. 4.
5. James Audain, *From Coalmine to Castle.* New York: Pageant Press, 1955, 9; Smith, *Reminiscences of J.S. Helmcken*, 303–304.
6. Ibid.
7. Johnson, "Fort Rupert," 5.
8. Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia: Vol. 1. The Impact of the White Man.* Anthropology in British Columbia Memoir no. 5, Victoria: Provincial Museum, 1964, 39, 58; Johnson, "Fort Rupert," 5; Smith, *Reminiscences of J.S. Helmcken*, passim.
9. The strike action and desertion of the Muirs is a topic of its own, dealt with from varying perspectives by Keith Ralston, "Miners and Managers: The Organization of Coal Production on Vancouver Island by the Hudson's Bay Company, 1848–1862," *The Company on the Coast*, Nanaimo: Nanaimo Historical Society, 1983; and Lynn Bowen, *Three Dollar Dreams*, Lantzville: Oolichan Books, 1987. Suffice it to say that at the time of the Newitty incident, the white population was fully embroiled in policy-oriented conflict resulting in strike action and desertion.
10. Lynn Bowen, *Three Dollar Dreams.* Lantzville: Oolichan Books, 1987, 26, 28.

11. Smith, *Reminiscences of J.S. Helmcken*, 313; Bowen, *Three Dollar Dreams*, 30.
12. Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977, 50; Smith, *Reminiscences of J.S. Helmcken*, 313.
13. *Fort Victoria Letters*, lxxv.
14. Smith, *Reminiscences of J.S. Helmcken*, 310.
15. It was standard practice for the HBC to offer a reward to natives for the return of deserting servants. Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 50–51.
16. Johnson, "Fort Rupert," 9.
17. Smith, *Reminiscences of J.S. Helmcken*, 311–313.
18. Ibid., 313–314.
19. Smith, *Reminiscences of J.S. Helmcken*, 314.
20. *Fort Victoria Letters*, lxxv.
21. Ibid., 227, Douglas to Barclay, 31 October 1851.
22. Vancouver Island – Despatches – Governor Blanshard to the Secretary of State [Earl Grey] 26th December 1849 to 30th August 1851. New Westminster: Government Printing Office, n.d. [hereafter *Blanshard*]. Despatch no. 5. See Appendix for complete text.
23. Ibid., Despatch no. 7.
24. Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 51.
25. *Blanshard*, Despatch no. 7.
26. Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 51; Smith, *Reminiscences of J.S. Helmcken*, 315. Helmcken had in fact written two resignations on July 18 – one to Blanshard, resigning his post as magistrate, the other to Douglas requesting permission to retire from HBC service.
27. *Blanshard*, Despatch no. 7. This was but one example of the dualism that characterized the colony of Vancouver's Island, a dualism that served to effect the transition from fur trading colony to province. Beardmore's behaviour is another case in point.
28. *Blanshard*, Despatch no. 8.
29. Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 53.
30. *Fort Victoria Letters*, lxxvii.
31. *Fort Victoria Letters*, 203–204; Douglas to Barclay, 4 August 1851.
32. Ibid., 215, Douglas to Barclay, 3 September 1851.
33. Smith, *Reminiscences of J.S. Helmcken*, p. 323.
34. Ibid., 317–318.
35. Lamb, "Governorship of Richard Blanshard," 12.
36. Smith, *Reminiscences of J.S. Helmcken*, 318.
37. Ibid., 313.
38. Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 55.
39. *Fort Victoria Letters*, lxxv; and 142, Douglas to Barclay, 22 December 1850.
40. Ibid., 183, Douglas to Barclay, 16 April 1851.
41. *Blanshard*, Despatch no. 5.
42. Dorothy Blakey Smith, *James Douglas: Father of British Columbia.* Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971, 44; Blanshard, Despatch no. 6.
43. *Fort Victoria Letters*, 175n; Barclay to Douglas, 1 January 1851.
44. Smith, *James Douglas*, 44.

9

The David McLoughlin Story

by Carle Jones

Early in May 1903, a white-haired, white-bearded old man was laid to rest in Basil McLean's field overlooking Porthill, in the extreme northwest corner of the Idaho Panhandle. His pall-bearers were six Indian chiefs dressed in full regalia and as Father Coccola from the St. Eugene Mission near Cranbrook closed his Bible at the end of the service, he was symbolically closing the book on one of the most interesting periods in the development of the Kootenay District.

David McLoughlin was the first white man to settle and raise a family in the Kootenay Flats. Owing to circumstances, which include the loss of his diary in a house fire which also consumed other family records and voluminous nineteenth century Kootenay weather reports, it is difficult to trace the story of his sojourn in this area. A résumé of his forebears and his early life may assist us in understanding his character and activities.

David's father was John McLoughlin, the "Father of Oregon," who from 1825 until 1845 was in charge of all Hudson's Bay Company activities west of the continental divide, from Yerba Buena (now San Francisco) in the south to the Stikine River in the north. Headquarters were located at Fort Vancouver (now Vancouver, Washington) on the Columbia River, which he built in 1825.

John McLoughlin and his brother David were born of Scottish-Irish immigrants at Riviere de Loup on the south bank of the St. Lawrence River, 120 miles downstream from Quebec City. Both boys were educated to be doctors and Dr. David went on to become a highly respected physician in Paris. Dr. John cast his lot with his maternal uncle, Malcolm Fraser, one of the founders of

the North West Company. He soon rose to a position in charge of all company business in Rupert's Land, with headquarters at Fort William. It was at Fort William that McLoughlin espoused his

Three Oregon pioneers honoured in Portland, Oregon, at the first (Dr. John) McLoughlin Day celebration in 1901. From left: F.X. Matthieu, Sidney Moss and David McLoughlin.

Photo courtesy of the McLoughlin Memorial Association

second wife, Marguerite Wadin McKay, halfblood Chippewan widow of North West Company trader Alexander McKay. Four children were born of this marriage: John, Jr.; Eliza; Eloise; and David, this last in 1818. With the amalgamation of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, McLoughlin, Sr. moved in 1821 with his family to Astoria to take up the post of chief factor. He subsequently became established at Fort Vancouver.

Many thousand words have been written about the role played by Dr. John McLoughlin in furthering the fortunes of the Hudson's Bay Company and encouraging settlement in Oregon Territory. At the time of his death in 1857 he was a controversial figure, but posthumous appraisals have generally heaped praise upon him.

McLoughlin, Sr. doubtless had a hand in his son David's early education. In

1832 David was one of twenty-four pupils, all part Indian, enrolled in a Fort Vancouver class under the charge of an immigrant teacher, Mr. John Ball. David and his older brother John were later sent to Montreal to further their education and still later went to live in Paris with their uncle David. John qualified as a physician, while David eventually trained as an engineer with the military, becoming an ensign in the British Army Engineers at Addiscombe Military College. He was gazetted to Calcutta, India, in 1839, but his father persuaded him to relinquish the military life and return to the Columbia.

David's father purchased a £100 share in the Hudson's Bay Company for him and posted him to Fort Victoria as an apprentice clerk to learn the fur trade under James Douglas. In 1843 he is noted as working in the retail store in Fort Vancouver and in September 1844, he was instrumental in helping to put out a fire that could have destroyed the entire fort. In 1845, however, he resigned from the HBC service, ostensibly to look after his father's affairs in the Willamette Valley but, being swept up in the gold fever of the time, hired Indians to work for him and managed to acquire a modest fortune in gold dust. On March 15, 1847, he was reported to have entered into partnership with two prosperous American merchants, Mr. Pettygrove and Mr. Wilson of Oregon City. How much of his own money and how much of his father's money went into the partnership venture is a matter of conjecture, but the venture proved to be a disaster. David sold out his partnership after three years and went south to California on another prosperous gold-hunting trip. It is thought that he spent some of the early

years of the 1850s in the Clearwater River goldfields of central Idaho. When his father died in 1857, David sold his share in the estate, valued at $20,000, to his sister Eloise and her second husband, Daniel Harvey.

From 1857 to 1865 we don't know much of David's wanderings. About 1862 he was at Fort Shepherd, opposite the confluence of the Pend Oreille and Columbia Rivers (see map p. 30), either attached to the HBC fort or to the adjacent customs. He seems also to have been for a time a constable at Wild Horse Creek. In 1863 he married Annie Ksooke (Grizzly), daughter of a chief of a Kootenai Indian band. In 1865 he is said to have established Fort Flatbow (later described as Little Fort Shepherd) on Duck Creek in the Kootenay Flats, near the point where travellers on the Dewdney Trail had to cross the Kootenay River. This was adjacent to a cable ferry known as "McLoughlin's Ferry." John Galbraith, builder of the ferry at Fort Steele, states in a letter written in 1909 that in 1870 he visited Fort Shepherd and found it unoccupied. Mr. Hardisty, the factor, had apparently given its contents to David McLoughlin who had removed them to the Kootenay Flats site where he had established his ferry and a small trading post which he operated for the Hudson's Bay Company. Around 1871 he is thought to have moved his family to Ockonook, on the east side of the Kootenay River, immediately south of the international boundary. There he built a log house which became home to his large family, and also served as a trading post as well as a hostel for prospectors venturing downstream into the Kootenay Lake area from Bonners Ferry. Prior to 1890, settlement on the Kootenay Flats between Bonners Ferry and Kootenay Lake was sketchy, although in the summer months prospectors headed for Kootenay Lake would rent rowboats built by the Fry brothers at Bonners Ferry and row past McLoughlin's door. In 1878 McLoughlin acquired a neighbour when Yankee prospector George Wallace Hall preempted 320 acres on the bench in the present-day B.C. settlement of Lister, and in 1886 J.C. Rykert, Canadian customs agent, established a customs station immediately north of the international boundary to intercept the Hendryx

steamboats *Surprise* and *Galena* and other water-borne traffic working down to Kootenay Lake from Bonners Ferry.

David and Annie McLoughlin had seven daughters and one son. Three of the daughters died young, one in infancy and two during an epidemic at the De Smet Mission in Idaho where they were attending school. The remaining daughters married but the son, John, did not, so the McLoughlin name was not carried on in the Kootenay. David seems to have been anxious that his children receive an education. One of his younger daughters, Amelia, told that she had been taught to read by her father, then at the age of six she rode her pony some eighty miles to the St. Eugene Mission School near Cranbrook where she stayed six years, her parents visiting her twice a year. For some years before a state-supported school opened at Porthill in 1895 under Miss Agnes McKay, David McLoughlin taught a class which included some of his own children as well as settlers' children from both sides of the boundary line, using a room in Mike Driscoll's rudimentary hotel. Pioneer Lister settler John Huscroft told of attending David's school at Ockonook when he was eight years old.

Because he was the best educated man in the area and always willing to help his fellow man, David McLoughlin was established as a local sage among the new settlers. Actually, McLoughlin's reputation as an authority on the Kootenay District was quite widespread. As the Northern Pacific Railroad was completing its link between Wallula, Washington, and Pend Oreille Lake in 1881, it initiated a vigorous campaign to interest entrepreneurs, settlers and tourists in the hitherto isolated country in the Idaho Panhandle, western Montana and southeastern British Columbia. David McLoughlin was given a free return trip on the railway to enable him to travel to Portland to address the Portland Chamber of Commerce on the prospects for the Kootenay District. McLoughlin followed this effort up with a lengthy letter published in the September 14, 1881, *Spokane Chronicle* outlining the great prospects for the agricultural development in the Kootenay Flats could the flood waters of the Kootenay be diverted into the Columbia River at Canal Flat. When W.A.

Baillie-Grohman came into the Kootenay country in 1882, he stopped overnight with David McLoughlin and arranged for the storage of some of his equipment. In his subsequent book *Fifteen Years Sport and Life in the Hunting Grounds of Western America and British Columbia*, Baillie-Grohman speaks disparagingly of McLoughlin and credits himself to be the first to visualize the Canal Flat diversion plan. Baillie-Grohman was no doubt blissfully unaware that McLoughlin's letter in the *Spokane Chronicle* would one day surface to give the lie to his own claims. Further tribute to David McLoughlin is to be found in the December 31, 1883, *Report on the Lower Kootenay Indians*, submitted to the B.C. Legislature by A.S. Farwell after he and G.M. Sproat had carried out an 1883 scouting tour of the Kootenay District to assess its prospects for the government:

" ... These Indians, including men, women and children, number 157, divided as follows: 35 men, 34 married women, 39 boys, 32 girls; 4 widows with 6 boys and 3 girls between them and 4 widows without encumbrances. I obtained this statement from David McLoughlin Esq. who resides 200 yards south of the boundary line. Mr. McLoughlin formerly had charge of the Hudson's Bay Co.'s trading post on the left bank of Kootenay River at the Shepherd trail crossing, but on the decline of the mining interests on Wild Horse Creek and neighbouring creeks and the consequent closing out of the Hudson's Bay Co.'s business at that point, he took up a farm on the American side of the line. Mr. McLoughlin speaks the Kootenay language fluently and is well acquainted with the habits and customs of the Indians. These natives are not nearly as civilized as the Upper Kootenays. They are indolent, poor, badly clothed and badly armed. They have no houses, and live, summer and winter, in lodges constructed of poles covered with mats or hides. Mr. McLoughlin informs me that in

11

former years, these Indians were supplied with seeds of different kinds, and they made efforts to raise potatoes, wheat, etc., but the uncertainty of securing their crops, through the flooding of the land, so thoroughly disheartened them, that they gave up farming in disgust. During the past season, no seed of any kind was planted. From the same source, I learned that these Indians, only a year or two since, possessed quite a number of horses and cattle. Their stock is now reduced to about eight or ten head of cattle and 60 horses. This decrease has been brought about by gambling. A great many of these Indians formerly wintered on Goat River about nine miles north of the boundary line; now only two or three families winter there. A few families winter close to Mr. McLoughlin's house, and the remainder winter on Jerome Creek, some eight miles south of the line. They run their stock in the winter on Goat River, and between McLoughlin's and Jerome Creek. As the summer advances and the water recedes, the Indians move down the river and fish, and take their stock with them. In the event of the [Baillie-Grohman] Reclamation Scheme being a success, I am of the opinion that a reserve of say, 1,000 acres of grass land in the neighbourhood of Goat River would be sufficient. In case the lessee fails to drain these bottom lands, the Indians will practically have the run of the whole country, as they have had for years past … "

Farwell also remarked on McLoughlin's fine garden at the boundary where he grew wheat, potatoes, onions and fine tobacco.

In 1897 McLoughlin applied for and was given the patent on 120 acres of land on the present site of Porthill. We have a copy of this patent signed by U.S. President Grover Cleveland. The notorious C.P. (Chippy) Hill, fresh from his real estate scam at the short-lived mining town of Sanca on Kootenay Lake,

attempted to wrest this claim from McLoughlin. McLoughlin filed suit in the First Judicial Court of the State of Idaho, but the matter was settled when Hill purchased eighty acres from McLoughlin. Hill became postmaster of what had been Ockonook, and in 1900 succeeded in renaming the settlement "Porthill." When the Bedlington & Nelson Railway (subsidiary of the Great Northern Railway) was built north from Porthill to Wynndel in 1899, its right-of-way came through McLoughlin's potato patch. After the railway was abandoned, the right-of-way became our present Highway 21. The present U.S. customs house and Hawks Tavern at Porthill are located on land that once belonged to McLoughlin.

Although he had chosen the life of an itinerant trader and squatter, David McLoughlin sometimes surprised people with a show of his cultural background, as on the occasion of a visit of Sir McKenzie Bowell, prime minister of Canada, to Mr. J.C. Rykert, the Canadian customs officer at the boundary. David came to call clad in a white buckskin suit, stayed for lunch, and conversed with the prime minister and his host in perfect Parisian French.

In 1901 the Oregon Historical Society and the Oregon Pioneers Association decided to hold in Portland the first of what became annual McLoughlin Days celebrations in honour of Dr. John McLoughlin. Upon learning that David, the son of Dr. John McLoughlin, was still alive, they contacted David and provided him with a new suit of clothes, a pair of shoes, and a return ticket from Porthill to Portland. Because he had spent the preceding forty years in the wilderness, David found himself helpless as a child in Portland. He was greeted and entertained by members of the societies and by an old friend, Mr. Francis Xavier Matthieu, whom he had last seen at Fort Vancouver in 1842. David's picture was taken with Mr. Matthieu and another oldtimer, Mr. Sidney Moss. This is the only likeness of David that we have seen. In an address to the assembly, David remarked on the changes he could see in Portland – from a brush-covered wilderness to the present thriving city – and then expressed his pleasure at the kind reception he was given and his gratitude that they had seen fit to so honour the

memory of his father. Then without further ado he returned to his home in the Idaho Panhandle.

One April day in 1903 Father Coccola of the St. Eugene Mission said, "I have a feeling that my old friend David McLouglin needs me." The feeling was so strong that he did not wait for a train but obtained a handcar and made his way to Creston and Porthill, where he arrived in time to administer the last rites to David.

The story of David McLoughlin must be treated as interpretive history and involves the careful sorting out, without prejudice, of all the aspects that had a bearing on his choice of lifestyle. Not many men have the choice that was available to him. With his education and background he could have carried on the pattern of life established by his father and taken an active part in the continued political and commercial development of the country. Instead he chose a more relaxed and less demanding life in the wilderness where he could hunt and fish and prospect without criticism, his larder always filled with fish, deer, moose and mountain goat and fruit and berries. He was free to ride his horses and wear clothing adapted to his circumstances, untrammeled by the dictates of fashion. Notwithstanding his rustic lifestyle, his insistence on an education for his children indicates that he did not entirely lose respect for his origins and upbringing. David had known many famous men – James Douglas, William Fraser Tolmie, John Work and Peter Skene Ogden to name a few – but he was satisfied with the friendship and respect of such men as Father Coccola and the native peoples among whom he spent so much of his life.

A rumour persists that David McLoughlin prepared manuscripts that were posted to a now unknown address by a neighbour, Joseph Anderson of Porthill. How exciting if they could be found and added to the recorded history of the Kootenay Flats!

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Carle Jones of Creston researched the McLoughlin story in the Washington, Oregon and British Columbia archives. He was also able to interview three of David McLoughlin's granddaughters, two of whom live in Porthill and one in Seattle. Carle was honoured in 1993 by the B.C. Museums Association for his many years as a volunteer with the Creston Museum.

Road to the Pacific Rim

by Tom W. Parkin

Construction of roads in B.C. has always been closely associated with the trade and prosperity of isolated regions. Now that paved highways reach every community on Vancouver Island, some residents have forgotten the celebrations which accompanied each newly completed link, even as recently as thirty years ago.

One such link was the Pacific Rim Highway connecting Port Alberni with the west coast of the Island. It officially opened on September 4, 1959. But the idea for such a road had been around since early in the century. The issue was often discussed by politicians, and residents of the Albernis, Tofino and Ucluelet tried many times to secure promise of construction. But sparse population, the Depression and World War II caused a lengthy delay.

During the war, the Royal Canadian Air Force signal corps constructed a rough trail and telephone line through Sutton Pass to installations on the Pacific rim. Five or six linekeeper huts were located along the way. But this was by no means a road, and it was lost in undergrowth following the surrender of Japan.[1]

Gradually, MacMillan Bloedel wound a private road up the mountain slope above Sproat Lake and B.C. Forest Products built up the west side of the Island Mountains. But there was still a ten-kilometre gap between.

Tom Aarts, today a thirty-year employee of the Ministry of Transportation and Highways in Port Alberni, recalls those days: "In the late fifties, while it was still an industrial road, the government constructed that portion of road in-between, and for years it was called 'the government stretch.' That's when it was opened to the public on a restricted basis. There were gates at either end, and it was from five at night, I believe, until seven in the morning, that it was open to the public. During the daytime it was closed for a lot of years."[2]

On August 22, 1959, before the official opening on Labour Day, a celebratory caravan with 400 people in Volkswagens, Cadillacs, jeeps and junkers drove to Port Alberni from Tofino. Construction on the intermediate portion still wasn't finished, but the contractor made temporary passage through the government stretch for the locals. Dust was thick, but spirits were high. The gateway was finally open.

Tom Aarts: "It was prettier then, because you went quite high on the mountain and looked way down onto Sproat Lake into Port Alberni. But I can understand why it was done. It was to get away from the snow and ice in the wintertime, and we used to get slides there, too.

Tom Aarts, district technician, Port Alberni sub-office, Central Island District, Ministry of Transportation and Highways.
Tom Parkin photo

"There were three to four switchback curves on either end, and the road was about a lane-and-a-half or lane-and-three-quarters wide. If you passed, one driver had to hug the rocks and the other was precariously close to the shoulder. It scared the hell out of a lot of Prairie people."

Once the road became public, Highways crews took over maintenance and began to upgrade the route. John Morris, who retired in 1985 at Nanaimo, was district highways manager at that time: "At Hydro Hill we had to build some concrete retaining walls, and that was a chore because you couldn't get into the rock. And beyond that, you go through quite a twisty area – we widened out where possible. Then you get to Kennedy Lake Hill. You can't blast that rock, it's impossible. It goes away up – it's a real major thing. So we built retaining walls. It took us six months to build those six retaining walls, that are there now, in order to make it passable.

"Bill Bos was resident engineer on the job and Alex Brayden was his foreman. Bill had a good eye for materials and cuts and fills. He planned all those improvements. Today people say, 'Oh, what a corkscrew road,' but you should have seen it before Bill started. It was much worse."[3]

As the highway was being improved, so did the economies of Ucluelet and Tofino. West coast products now reached markets faster and cheaper – sometimes. Tom Aarts recalls drivers still had to be cautious: "One corner in that road had rock bluff and was called 'Fish Truck Corner.' Over three or four years' time, three trucks loaded with fish managed to slam into that particular rock, leaving an abundance of fish all over the road."

It was during efforts to "daylight" such curves that the Tay fire was started in

John W. Morris on Pacific Rim Highway 4 in 1969. January and February that year saw twelve-foot drifts on this normally bare route. A snowblower had to be brought down from the department's Allison Pass camp on the Hope-Princeton Highway to clear this Island road. Even in Victoria, a total of four feet fell.
Agnes M. Flett photo

1967. That was a dry summer – the driest recorded since 1900, with an April to July rainfall totalling only 93.3 millimetres. Temperatures were high and the wind was up when a road-building explosion pulled out a hydro-pole guywire.

The pole collapsed and live wires ignited brush. Although Martin Mars water bombers were brought in from their nearby base on Sproat Lake, the first drop missed the burning area, fanning the flames with its draft. A series of compounding errors ensured the fire's continuation for two weeks. Rainfall on September 1 allowed the 500 firefighters their first respite, with the blaze declared officially out on October 10. It remains the largest fire in that forest district.[4]

But fifteen per cent grades on the former logging road above Sproat Lake remained. The *Alberni Valley Times* called it "a roadway that instantaneously became famous for its switchbacks as well as its muffler-stealing, oil-pan denting, and gas-tank puncturing antics." Nor was it conducive to the development of tourism at the new Pacific Rim National Park established between Tofino and Ucluelet.

Thus in 1971 construction began on a new twenty-kilometre route which ran across the same mountain, but at a lower elevation. George Dodge, now retired in Courtenay, was construction supervisor: "There was no access at all because the switchbacks were way up the hill, and we had to go along the lake. So I had to go into my job with a boat at first. And of course the contractors, they went in with their Cats, but for me to inspect I had to go by boat, which was something different."[5]

One of Dodge's crew members was Dan Bowen, now senior district development technician with Highways in Courtenay: "We were kept real busy all the way through. We had to survey in the winter. Along Sproat Lake we had four

Dan Bowen, senior district development technician, North Island District, Ministry of Transportation and Highways.

Tom Parkin photo

feet of snow, so we all put snowshoes on and trekked out in the bush in a line.

"We had an old fellow on the crew named Adam Bauer, who was about sixty-three years old. Most of our crew were under twenty-seven, a very young group. Adam, he'd be the guy who would fix things up. He'd fix snowshoes or he'd fix a broken transit leg. At lunchtime he'd light the campfire. We'd all trek with our snowshoes back to some spot. And he'd light the fire and have it all set up there, so we'd toast our sandwiches and have our supper.

"[Another] of our guys was a big guy – about six-foot-three, 200-and-some-odd pounds. When we weren't looking, he fell upside-down in a tree well. He was hanging by his snowshoes and couldn't get out. We were up the slope looking down, wondering where he was, and he was yelling for help. We finally got down there. It took a good half-hour to get him out.

"We had to run alignment over the old switchbacks one day in the spring, and it was at the time the herring fleet was in Ucluelet and Tofino. They used to haul out the herring in any kind of vehicle that could hold fish, and the juice would run on the road. The smell almost gagged us."[6]

Barely managing to overcome these hazards of nature, the crews carried on. Over a million cubic yards of material were moved in the right-of-way. In other places, special rocks were moved for spawning fish. Original streambed gravel was placed inside culverts to encourage fish to pass through. On Friesen Creek, boulders were placed to break the flow and create resting areas for salmon.[7] It showed a growing environmental awareness by the department. Fish were important, not just as prod-
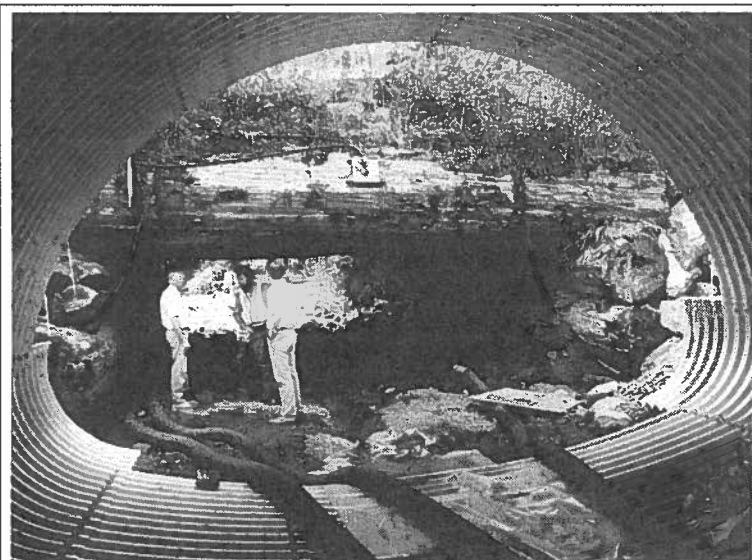
A construction crew from the Ministry of Transportation and Highways stands beneath a log culvert on Hydro Hill (West) Creek. The rotting structure was replaced by a multi-plate culvert (foreground) on a new alignment in 1992. Highway 4 (Pacific Rim Highway) continues to receive annual improvements, particularly over stream crossings.

Tom Parkin photo

ucts to be moved by road, but as a resource to be protected by highway builders.

And so a crowd watched a second opening ceremony on Highway 4 on October 14, 1972. The *Alberni Valley Times* quoted Tofino mayor Hugo Petersen as calling the highway "a Godsend to those who have to use it. A credit to the builders and the pioneers through whom it was possible."[8]

"This road is certainly better than rowing up to Port Alberni," quipped Nuu-chah-nulth chief Bert Mack.[9]

Alexandra Skelly, wife of the MLA, cut the ribbon and the new road was open. The work of those Highways men, some now gone in the intervening years, continues to serve us well.

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Tom Parkin is a public information officer with the Ministry of Transportation and Highways in Nanaimo. A video version of this story is available for loan. Contact Parkin's office at (604) 390-6122.

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Navigation on the Stikine River 1862–1969

by Edward L. Affleck

British Columbia's Stikine River Valley, located east of the Alaska Panhandle and north of the 56th parallel of latitude, offers the venturesome traveller today an unparalleled vista of glaciers, canyons, lava beds and volcanic cones. Any reader whose interest in the Stikine and the adjacent Cassiar district is aroused by this article should forthwith beg, borrow, etc. a copy of R.W. Patterson's spellbinding book entitled *Trail to the Interior* which contains an account of his 1948 trip up the Stikine River then over the continental divide to Dease Lake and to Watson Lake. The mouth of the Stikine River lies within the coastal strip of the Alaska Panhandle; one works up through the shallows about thirty miles above the river's mouth before he finds himself across the border into British Columbia. Thanks to the northern latitude, the navigation season on the turbulent Stikine River is relatively short.

British Columbia boasts three great navigable rivers, the Fraser, the Skeena and the Stikine, all of which pierce the rugged Coast Mountains to provide access to a vast interior hinterland. The three rivers were long the province of the native fisherman and the fur trader. All three river systems were invaded in the second half of the nineteenth century by prospectors seeking gold and within weeks of such gold discoveries, the white man's inimitable invasion craft,

the sternwheeler, a vessel well equipped to work heavy cargo up the shifting channels and treacherous white water of rivers, appeared on the scene. Before the beginning of World War I, sternwheelers on the Fraser and Skeena Rivers had played their major part in opening up the river valleys and hinterland beyond to exploitation and development and were in decline as railways with superior hauling capacity were built through the valleys.

The situation is different with the Stikine. One hundred and thirty years after the first sternwheeler appeared on its waters, the Stikine River system and the vast hinterland of the Stikine Plateau and the Cassiar Mountains remain a largely undeveloped frontier. The sole settlement of any size in this hinterland, the mining town of Cassiar, is now joining the ranks of ghost mining towns which dot the map of British Columbia. This article deals with the successive sternwheeler invasions of the river

throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, and with the decades of navigation by tunnel-screw diesel-powered vessels which followed World War I.

It was the discovery of gold on the Stikine in 1861 near present-day Telegraph Creek which prompted the intrepid Captain William Moore in the spring of 1862 to load up his Fraser River sternwheeler, the *Flying Dutchman*, lash a fully loaded barge to her hull, then steam up the Inside Passage to the small settlement on the northern tip of the Russian island of Wrangell. When the United States purchased Alaska in 1867, this settlement became a U.S. Army fort, Fort Wrangel, and some time after the army departed, the port became known as Wrangell. Beyond Wrangell about 180 miles of steaming remained to work the vessel up to the very head of high-water navigation on the Stikine. Capt. Moore doubtless looked at the scenery from time to time, but it is likely that most of his attention was fixed on the turbulent river channel. He was doubtless relieved to find that while navigation on the Stikine posed a fair number of risks, the river was largely free of the unending traps which lay in wait for the skipper working a steamer on the Skeena. In his book previously mentioned, R.W. Patterson suggests that Capt. Moore had to cope with more than navigation hazards on his first trip, as the sight and sound of the *Flying Dutch-*

E.L. Affleck map
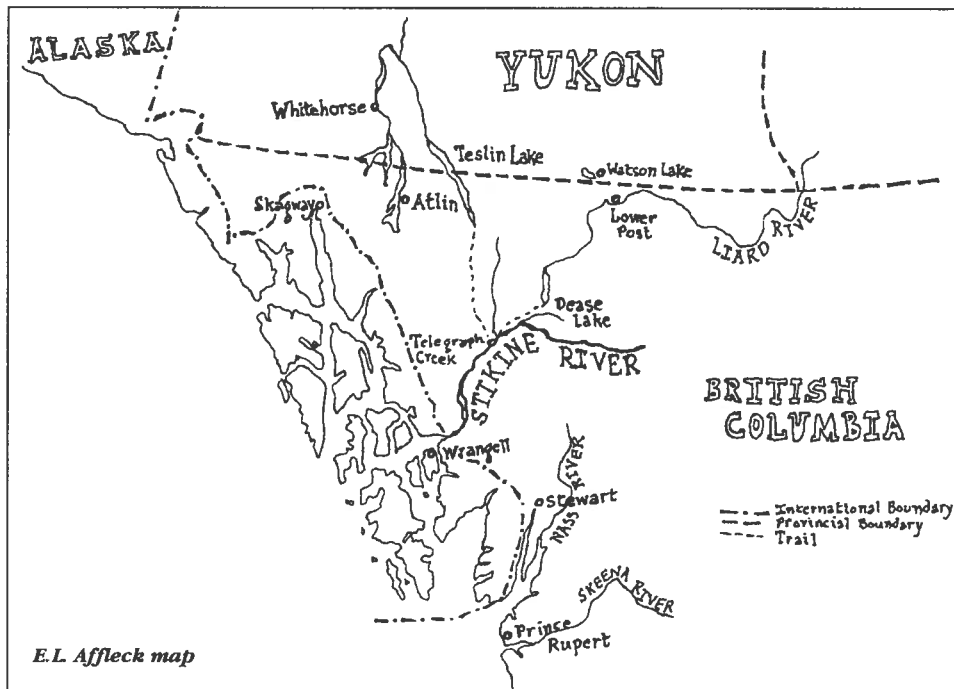
man made the Tahltan Indians decidedly bellicose. A generous gift of Hudson's Bay blankets succeeded in quieting their wrath. The Stikine shared the Skeena's propensity for rising with astounding rapidity in hot weather as snow melted from the hills, but not long after the flood crest had subsided for the 1862 season, the Stikine gold rush petered out. In this short season of seventy-two days, however, the *Flying Dutchman* earned good money for her master, carrying hordes of humanity as well as the endless amount of freight generated by the establishment of a mining camp. No one had yet unlocked the secret of the gold hidden beyond in the Cassiar mountains, so Moore worked the *Flying Dutchman* back to the Fraser and resumed his battle with Irving's Pioneer Line for the Fraser River trade. The great Collins Overland Telegraph project served to re-open the Stikine to steam navigation. In the summer of 1866 the sternwheeler *Mumford*, loaded with telegraph wire and other construction materials, worked her way up the head of navigation to what was thereafter known as Telegraph Creek, a station established on the telegraph line which was being built overland from North America to Europe by way of Alaska and Siberia. The following year the *Mumford* was engaged in transporting much of the material back down to Fort Wrangel. Cyrus Vance had succeeded in laying a trans-Atlantic cable, so the Collins Overland project was abandoned.

The discovery of gold in the Dease Lake area in 1872 by Thibert and McCullough set off the Cassiar gold rush, the biggest of its kind since the Cariboo excitement of the previous decade. The doughty Capt. William Moore, fresh from organizing mule trains from Hazelton on the Skeena River into the Omineca gold mining camps, obliged once again with the building of a pack trail from the head of navigation on the Stikine into the
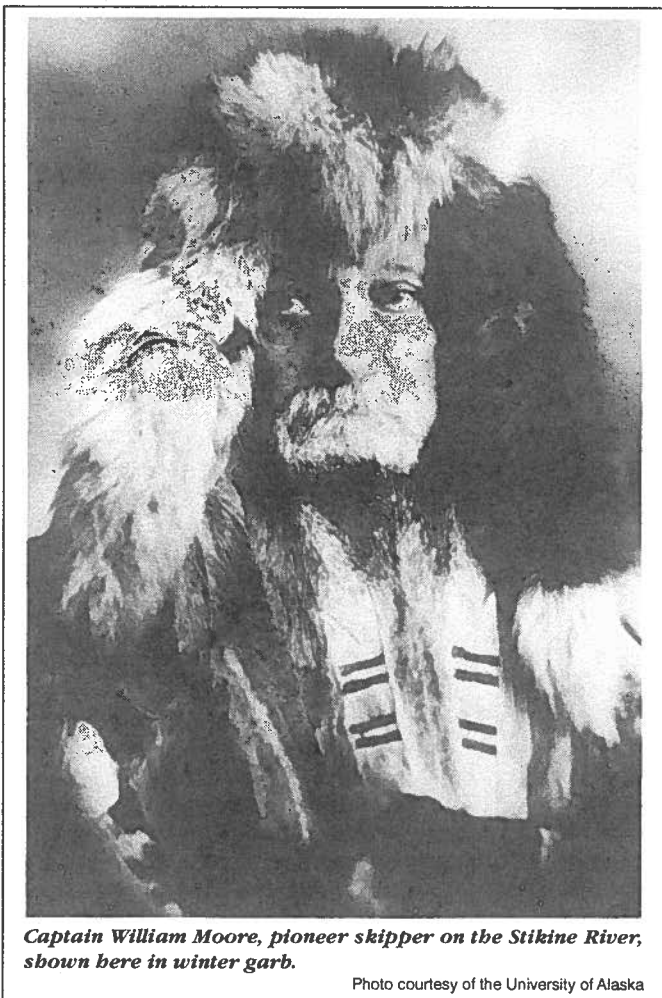
Captain William Moore, pioneer skipper on the Stikine River, shown here in winter garb.

Photo courtesy of the University of Alaska

Cassiar district. Typical of boom times, transportation entrepreneurs rounded up fleets of coastal vessels and river sternwheelers to capture what promised to be a profitable freight and passenger trade. In our era of pondering over the feasibility study, it is difficult to grasp the celerity with which individuals in the last century risked large amounts of capital in plunging into the transportation business. Once landed at the upriver ports of Glenora or Telegraph Creek, a further sixty miles or so had to be traversed by rough trail before the Cassiar fields were in sight, but the rigours suffered by prospectors in the Cassiar rush could not compare with what those flocking to the Klondike in 1898 endured. Capt. Moore was on the scene in 1874 with the sternwheeler *Gem*, but

soon found himself facing competition not only from two Fraser River rivals, John Irving with the *Glenora* and Otis Parsons with the *Hope*, but also from veteran Puget Sound sternwheelers such as the *Beaver, Cassiar* and *Nellie*. Moore eventually bought out his Fraser River rivals and worked successively the *Gem*, the *Gertrude*, the *Glenora* and the *Western Slope* on the Stikine. The *Western Slope*, a fairly commodious deep-draft sternwheeler, was built for Moore with the aim of working from Victoria up the Inside Passage to a connection with the *Gertrude* in the Canadian reaches of the lower Stikine, thus avoiding wharfage and wrangling with the customs at Wrangell. In the short unprofitable 1879 season, the *Western Slope* came to no harm, but it is a measure of William Moore's boundless intrepidity that he would contemplate working a sternwheeler, however stout, through the more exposed parts of British Columbia's Inside Passage! The nimble *Gertrude* was perhaps the most successful sternwheeler ever to work on the Stikine as she not only could carry a good cargo but her shallow draft enabled her to work up to Telegraph Creek for a longer period in the season. A small screw steamer, the *Lady of the Lake*, was commissioned on Dease Lake in 1878 to promote travel into the Cassiar, but the boom died down shortly thereafter and most of the sternwheelers on the Stikine then worked their way south to fight for the Fraser River and Puget Sound trade. However, John C. Callbreath, owner of the *Nellie*, kept her in service on the Stikine for about a decade and then replaced her with the pint-sized sternwheeler *Alaskan*, which survived into the time of the Klondike boom. To Callbreath, a resourceful man who established a trading business at Telegraph Creek and later became Alaska's first salmon hatchery operator, lies much of the credit for maintaining steamer service on the Stikine in the lean years before World War I. The Hudson's Bay Company might from time to time divert one of its Skeena River sternwheelers to the Stikine for a trip each season, but it was the Callbreath steamer which stuck to the Stikine.

In his booklet entitled *Steamboat Days on the Skeena River*, Wiggs O'Neill wrote the following description of a trip up

the Stikine: " ... I would like to mention a trip I made up the Stikine River in 1897 when I was a kid as an invited guest of Capt. J.H. Bonser on the H.B.C. Str. *Caledonia*. The canyon of the Stikine is comparatively straight, only one bend in the middle of it, and the water is very mild compared to our Kitselas Canyon [in the Skeena River]. There was another boat on the river named the *Alaskan*. Coming down river we blew our whistle as we approached the head of the canyon and entered. Presently we noticed smoke coming around the bend, that told Capt. Bonser that the *Alaskan* was in the canyon, but it was too late for us to back out and wait. Presently her bow poked around the bend with Capt. Takelberry standing at his wheel with his great white beard down in front of him like a pinafore, holding her close to the right wall of the canyon. Capt. Bonser was backing full speed and holding back all he could, until our bows came abreast of each other. At the correct moment he rang a stop signal and full speed ahead. We shot by the other boat with barely a foot to spare. Both skippers blew three blasts of the whistle, as much as to say 'good going, old fellow.' The surprising thing was, with only the two boats on the river in a distance of 180 miles that we should meet each other in the middle of the canyon. It was a lonely river as there was no settlement between Wrangel and Telegraph Creek but a shack or two at Glenora where a Canada Customs Officer was stationed. No one ever guessed that the following year, 1898, would see 26 river steamers on the Stikine ... "

Much has been written about the wild building on Puget Sound of dozens of sternwheelers to work on the Yukon River system during the Klondike gold rush. Within about two or three years, at least half of that Yukon fleet was excess tonnage. The situation was equally as crazy on the Stikine in 1898, as the Stikine Plateau promised easy access to the headwaters of the Yukon River. Dawson City could be reached from St. Michael, Alaska, near the mouth of the Yukon, but St. Michael was far distant from Vancouver and Puget Sound, while navigation up the lower Yukon was lengthy and tedious. The lower Yukon winds a shallow sinuous course over the Alaska Flats; on such placid waters ice

forms early in the season and lingers late into the spring. As summer lengthened into fall, the threat was ever present that the river level would fall suddenly and trap a steamer in the ice for the winter. A vessel so trapped would be ground to shreds by heaving blocks of ice when the ice broke up in the spring.

Two shorter routes to the Klondike via Yukon River headwaters beckoned enticingly. One involved steaming up the coast of Lynn Canal, breaching the Coast Mountains through either White Pass or Chilkoot Pass and coming upon Lake Lindeman and Lake Bennett, part of the western headwaters of the Yukon system. From Lake Bennett, steamers, punts and rafts could be worked down river to Dawson. A triple navigation threat above present-day Whitehorse – Miles Canyon, Squaw Rapids and White Horse Rapids – formed a barrier for any steamer wishing to return upstream, and discretion soon dictated that any steamer working downstream with cargo be pulled into shore above this barrier, her cargo sent around the barrier by portage then transshipped by another steamer working between Whitehorse and Dawson City. This hazard remained until the White Pass & Yukon Railway route was extended in 1900 from Lake Bennett down the Yukon as far as Whitehorse.

The second "short route" involved the familiar trip up the coast to Wrangell, thence by sternwheeler up the Stikine to Glenora or Telegraph Creek and then over the rough trail on the Stikine Plateau to the headwaters of Lake Teslin, another body of water forming part of the headwaters of the Yukon system. From Lake Teslin in season a steamer could work uninterruptedly down the system to Dawson. On both these headwater routes, the ice broke earlier in the spring and formed later in the fall than was the case on the lower Yukon. The two rival routes were each strenuously promoted, and lobbying began in Ottawa and elsewhere for the granting of charters to build (a) a railway up over White Pass to Lake Bennett and beyond and (b) a railway from Telegraph Creek to traverse the 125 miles over the Stikine Plateau to the southern reach of Teslin Lake. In the fashion of the times, government granted more than one charter in response to various petitioners seek-

ing to lay steel over each of these routes.

Much has been written about the tough salt-water settlements of Skagway and Dyea which sprang up on the west side of White and Chilkoot Passes and of the masses of humanity which paused there on a relentless scramble to reach the Klondike. Wrangell developed into an equally tough jumping-off place as men bound for the Klondike were dumped off coastal steamers and were mulcted of their savings by gamblers and prostitutes as they girded up their loins to ascend the Stikine River and cross over to the Yukon by the Stikine Plateau. Some were equipped with outfits, that is, toboggans and sleighs hauled by horses, dogs and even goats, while others planned to rely on "shanks mare" to get them to the promised land.

The Cassiar Central Railway Company in 1897 was the first company to obtain incorporation to build from the Stikine to Lake Teslin, and the name "Cassiar Central" stuck to the project, even though it was Mackenzie and Mann's 1898 Canadian Yukon Railway Company, replete with proposed land and cash subsidies, which actually began to take shape as soon as the bill providing for such subsidies seemed to be assured of a favourable reception from the Liberal Party dominating the 1898 House of Commons in Ottawa. While the Canadian Pacific Railway was not to be involved in the construction of the line, one conjectures that the CPR contemplated leasing it upon its completion. The normally conservative CPR immediately proceeded to acquire two veteran ocean-going ships, the *Athenian* and the *Tartar*, to work the route between Vancouver and Wrangell, then to build twelve sternwheelers to work between Wrangell and Glenora. A series of boat-building ways was erected on the CPR's False Creek foreshore in Vancouver, but four of the twelve boats were ordered from a yard at Port Blakely on Puget Sound, a ship-building area already taxed with orders to build sternwheelers to work the St. Michael to Dawson City route on the lower Yukon.

The CPR, however, was not the only player in the Stikine field. Every available shipyard in Victoria and on the Lower Mainland was put to work over the 1897–98 winter on sternwheeler construction. Albion Iron Works in Vic-

17

toria built the steel-hulled *Beaver* for the Canadian Pacific Navigation Co., while Victoria's John Todd built the *Canadian, Columbian, Victorian* trio for the Canadian Development Co. Esquimalt Marine Railway built the *Casca* and J.C. Shatford the *Sybil,* both for private interests. A Puget Sound yard built the *Glenora* for a small U.S. concern.

On the B.C. mainland, B.C. Iron Works built the *Caledonia* and *Strathcona* for the Hudson's Bay Company, the *Iskoot* and the *Nahleen* for the Klondyke Mining Trading & Transport Co. Ltd., the *Lightning* for Stacey-Hiebert Syndicate, the *Marquis of Dufferin* for the British American Corporation, a concern active in the Rossland Mining Division in the West Kootenay district, and the *Rothesay* for Rothesay Shipping Co. Smaller yards built the *Stikine Chief* for Stikine Navigation Co. Ltd. and *James Domville* for Klondyke, Yukon & Pioneer Co. Ltd. In the winter of 1897–98, the intrepid Capt. Frank Armstrong of East Kootenay steamboating fame planned to erect a small sawmill and planer on the Stikine just above the Alaska/British Columbia boundary and to build there a sternwheeler. Weather conditions defeated his efforts to haul the necessary equipment upriver, so he transferred his endeavour to Cottonwood Island, the point at the mouth of the Stikine where the Canadian Yukon Railway had established its headquarters. In fifty-eight days he not only had the lumber sawed but constructed a highly successful shallow-draft sternwheeler, the *Mono,* and whisked her upriver before the customs authorities were alert to his activities.

Most of the excess riverboat tonnage around Puget Sound and the Portland area was snapped up for the St. Michael to Dawson City trade, but the veteran sternwheelers *Courser, Elwood, Louise, Ramona* and *Skagit Chief* were sent to the Stikine River to supplement vessels under construction. Had the best-laid plans of all these transportation enterprises come to fruition, there would have been over thirty sternwheelers working

up the Stikine by mid-summer 1898, carrying men bent for the Klondike as well as rails and other lucrative trade connected with the budding Canadian Yukon Railway construction. In fact, however, fewer than half the projected fleets ever saw service on the river, but those on the scene by May 1898, including the CPR's *Hamlin, Ogilvie,*

Captain Frank Armstrong constructed the Mono *on Cottonwood Island. She is shown here at a dock in Wrangell, Alaska.*
Photo courtesy of BCARS No. 24977 A-9274

McConnell and *Duchesnay,* did a brief but lucrative business. By mid-summer of 1898, however, the Stikine bubble had burst. The Liberal-sponsored railway bill passed in the House of Commons but failed to pass in a Senate dominated by Conservatives. The support required to get a railway through to completion shifted to the White Pass & Yukon system, which would eventually construct a narrow-gauge line from tidewater at Skagway to Whitehorse, Y.T., and thereby beat out both St. Michael and the Stikine in the transportation stakes.

One of the attractions of the Stikine route for Klondike seekers had been the prospect of earning a little money en route wielding a pick and shovel on the railway grade. After the Canadian Yukon Railway scheme collapsed, few bound on foot for the Klondike elected to take the Stikine River route to Glenora and the pack trail to Lake Teslin, as this

trail quickly gained the reputation of being even more rigorous than the routes over White Pass and Chilkoot Pass. As traffic on the river dropped drastically, the various steamboat companies hastened to take their sternwheelers off the Stikine River before winter set in.

What happened to the vessels which never made it to the Stikine? Material for two of the CPR's twelve sternwheelers was diverted to shipyards in the West Kootenay district and took shape as the sternwheeler *Minto* for the CPR's Arrow Lake service and the *Moyie* for the Kootenay Lake run. The remaining six vessels under construction, plus the four worked on the Stikine, were eventually sold by the CPR and were worked on the Yukon, the Fraser, and on Puget Sound. Some concerns were not so lucky. The British American Corporation lost both its own *Marquis of Dufferin* and the *Constantine* purchased from the CPR when they foundered under tow to St. Michael for service on the Yukon. Klondyke Mining, Trading & Transport Co. lost its steamer *Iskoot* in 1898 while it was under tow to Wrangell. Its steamers *Nahleen* and *Louise* were worked briefly and unprofitably on the Stikine in 1898 then were sent to Victoria for the winter. On July 12, 1899, one of the most spectacular fires ever in Victoria harbour consumed both the *Nahleen* and the *Louise* to the waterline as they were being readied for service on the lower Yukon. There were no fortunes made by steamboat concerns in the 1898 Stikine River bubble!

By 1899 about all that remained of the Canadian Yukon Railway affair on the Stikine were materials stockpiled at its headquarters on Cottonwood Island, caches of steel rails and other freight abandoned at various points on the river bank and the beginnings of the railway construction upstream on the Stikine. The Hudson's Bay Company worked its sternwheeler *Strathcona* fitfully on the river for a season or two then resorted to sending one of its Skeena River

sternwheelers up to the Stikine to work a few trips each season. The enchanted land of the Stikine beyond the Coast Mountains once again became the preserve of a few hardy settlers and prospectors.

In 1916 the Hudson's Bay Company replaced its sternwheeler service on the Stikine with the *Tahltan*, a small gasoline-powered vessel which shortly proved to be too underpowered to work successfully on the river. At considerable cost, the company re-commissioned the sternwheeler *Port Simpson* to take over the service for the season. The era of steam on the Stikine ended in August 1916 with the last trip of the *Port Simpson*. Rising labour and fuel costs were already making the profitable operation of a steam-powered sternwheeler a dicey situation anywhere in British Columbia, The subsequent appearance on the river of Captains Syd Barrington and Charles Binkley, two seasoned Yukon River skippers, revived and prolonged heavy-duty river navigation on the Stikine for another half-century. The Barrington outfit placed a series of tunnel-screw-propelled motor vessels, all named *Hazel B.*, on the river and these economical vessels served admirably the isolated ranches on the river as well as the fitful mining business in the Cassiar hinterland. The Barrington diesel boat service really came into its own early in World War II when an airport was shipped up the Stikine on barges powered by the Barrington boats then hauled overland to Dease Lake. Navigation on the Dease system was revived with the hasty construction at the head of Dease Lake of barges and shallow-draft diesel-powered

vessels. At Lower Post, materials so barged were transshipped for the short haul to Watson Lake. The construction of the Alaska Highway in 1941–42 once again made for active shipping up the Stikine and down the Dease-Liard systems. Shipping activity on the Stikine cooled down thereafter, but in the post-World War II era, Capt. Al Ritchie then later Capt. Edwin Callbreath continued the diesel-type service with the *Judith Ann* and other vessels.

Eventually bits and pieces of what is now provincial Highway 37 were built into the Stikine/Cassiar hinterland from Upper Liard on the Alaska Highway and from Kitwanga and Stewart in the south. Already suffering from the competition of airplanes, heavy-duty motor vessels could not stand additional competition from heavy-duty trucks. Service on the Stikine was accordingly abandoned in 1969, leaving what local business offered to very small vessels. During the 1970s, various attempts were made to revive boat service from Wrangell to Telegraph Creek as a tourist attraction, but none met with much success. Jet boats have in recent times ferried tourists from Wrangell up the Stikine as far as the Alaska/British Columbia boundary, while freight vessels continue to transport high-quality sand mined for construction purposes from the bars on the lower reaches of the river, but river traffic above the little canyon is idle. The record of river navigation on the Stikine from 1862 to 1969, however, remains a proud one, and if the events of the crazy 1898 year of navigation on the Stikine continue to be mind-boggling, one can only sagely mutter that truth is stranger

than fiction!

Will heavy-duty river navigation ever return to the Stikine? It is doubtful, for should exploitation of the area's resources ever reach a level to make highway transport inadequate, it is possible that the abandoned British Columbia Railway extension from Fort St. James to Dease Lake could be revived. If and when such an occasion arises, the multi-million-dollar bridge constructed for the railway across the Stikine River in the middle of nowhere will at last come into its own.

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E.L. Affleck has always been interested in sternwheelers in British Columbia. Now that he is retired, he has intensified his research of this and other aspects of B.C. history.

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British Columbia Historical Federation Scholarship 1995–1996

The British Columbia Historical Federation awards a $500 scholarship annually to a student completing the third or fourth year at a British Columbia college or university.

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2. An essay of 1500–2000 words on a topic relating to the history of British Columbia. The essay must be suitable for publication. The winning essay will be published in the *B.C. Historical News.*
3. Letters of recommendation from two professors.

Applications must be submitted before April 30, 1995, to Anne Yandle, 3450 West 20th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6S 1E4.

Scholarship Chair Anne Yandle presents Robert Wright with the cheque for the 1994 BCHF scholarship. Wright was a student at Douglas College when he wrote "The Plight of Rural Women Teachers in the 1920s." He is now studying at Simon Fraser University.
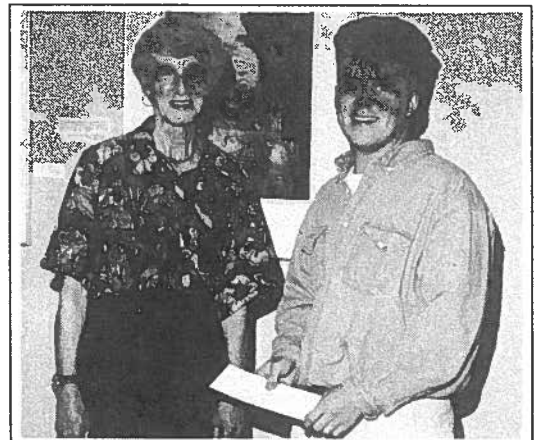
Finnish Immigrants and Their Political Ideology

by Rick James

In the late nineteenth century, Finland was in the midst of severe economic and social distress. Political repression was then added to the country's problems with Nicholas II's ascension to the Russian throne in 1894. Attracted by the promise of a better life in the new world, many Finns were motivated to emigrate. A large part of the Finns who came to Canada brought with them strong socialist and Marxist beliefs as part of their cultural baggage. These Finnish immigrants, with their leftist ideologies, played a significant factor in radicalizing British Columbia's politics throughout 1900 to 1939.

Two primary forces motivated many of Finland's inhabitants to regard migration as an acceptable alternative to the uncertainties prevalent in their homeland. The first resulted from the country's population having tripled in the nineteenth century. By 1900 all marginal land was settled and the rural population (87.5% of the total) had no room to expand. Adding to this crisis in the traditionally immobile, agrarian society was the dislocation created by the industrialization of Finland, which began in the late 1860s. As agricultural workers headed to the urban centres looking for economic opportunity, the cities were able to absorb some of them, but not all. These migrant workers who sought employment in the lumber industry, railroad construction and factories, and who found themselves unable to return to their earlier occupations, became particularly vulnerable to economic downturns and famine.

The economic crisis at the end of the century was exacerbated by political and social changes. Finland had benefited from a period of liberalization as an autonomous Duchy of Russia throughout the reigns of Tzar Alexander II and Alexander III. The small country had been granted, along with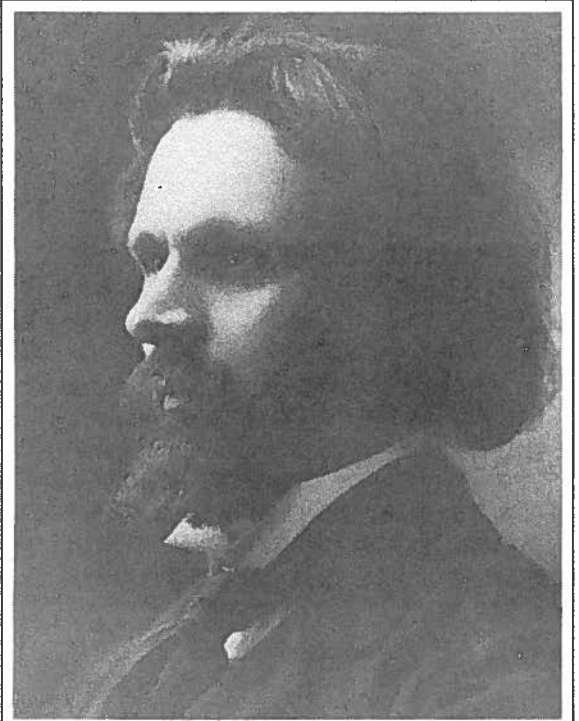 other freedoms, self-government. Throughout this period the Finnish language and culture flowered, inspiring a sense of national identity and pride. With the ascension of Tzar Nicholas II in

Matti Kurikka
Photo courtesy of Kurikka's great-grandson, Matti Linnoilla

1894, despotic rule returned to Finland. Spurred on by a fiercely chauvinistic pan-Slavic movement, the new tzar implemented restrictive legislation which curbed rights and privileges granted by earlier regimes. From 1898 onwards, the Baltic states and Finland suffered under an aggressively pursued Russification policy.

The Finland that faced the return of autocracy was one that had undergone dramatic changes in its political landscape. The nation had thrived under democratic self-government and as living and working conditions deteriorated, the working class readily assimilated the new political ideologies that were flowing through Western Europe. As a consequence, the recently emerged Finnish socialist movement had become a powerful force by the turn of the century. Although economic reasons had stirred large portions of the population to con-
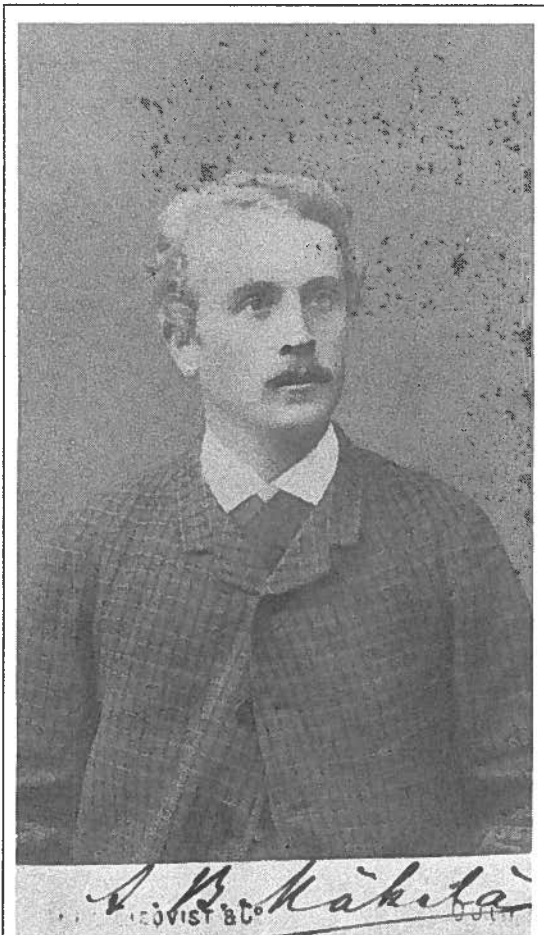
A young Finnish radical, Austin Mäkelä.
Photo courtesy of Sointula Museum

sider emigration, for many (especially those citizens with leftist tendencies), Finland's loss of political autonomy provided the final catalyst. (A major stimulus was the introduction of new conscription laws. Finns were now required to serve under Russian, instead of Finnish, army regulations and their term of service was lengthened from ninety days to five years.)[1]

For those immigrants who had been attracted to Canada by the promise of freedom, wealth and opportunity, reality often didn't accord with their expectations. A previous migration had occurred when Finnish labourers were drawn to work on the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. With the railway's completion, many of those left unemployed in British Columbia found new jobs digging coal in Robert Dunsmuir's Vancouver Island mines. Rather than walking on "streets paved with gold," settlement in an alien land brought new forms of exploitation. Victimized miners faced hazardous conditions working underground, and for the non-English-speaking majority, discrimi-

A. Mäkelä's funeral, 1932.

Photo courtesy of Meraloa Pink Collection

nation above ground. "To know the toil and burdensomeness of descending into the bottomless jaws, never knowing whether one will surface alive, dead or badly injured ... " was how Matti Halminen described every miner's fears.[2] Any attempts by workers, either individually or collectively, to raise their

wages or to improve their working conditions were routinely suppressed by their employers.

The first formal attempts of the Finnish immigrants to come to terms with the harsh realities of their new environment were temperance societies. As the societies were representative of a culture that was both ethnically and class-oriented, they not only provided a moderating influence but also encouraged more united action. *Haalis*, or halls, were soon built and social functions such as theatrical performances, sports events and dances were organized to foster community spirit. Handwritten newspapers, socialist clubs, libraries and reading rooms stimulated intellectual pursuits and political discussion.

Although the Finns had bettered living conditions within their communities, they still faced the harsh realities of backbreaking and dangerous work for inadequate pay. Many of the immigrants who arrived after 1900, having left their homeland when the workers' movement was making its breakthrough, en-

Band concert at Sointula's "baali" circa 1903.

Photo courtesy of Sointula Museum

21

couraged radical socialist solutions.[3] The idea of building a communal home beyond the reach of the capitalist world was proposed by some of the Finn miners in Nanaimo as a remedy for their plight. They then encouraged Matti Kurikka, former editor-in-chief of Finland's largest working-class paper, *Tyomies*, living in self-imposed exile in Australia, to come to Canada to found a utopian society. The charismatic Kurikka appeared ideal for this role as his particular brand of socialism, rooted in Tolstoy, Christianity and Theosophy, placed its emphasis on love and harmony with nature and mankind.

The Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company was formed, an agreement was reached with the provincial government in 1901, and Malcolm Island, located off the northern end of Vancouver Island, was designated as the site for the Finns' utopia. By the spring of 1902 Finns from all over the world were travelling to Malcolm Island to become part of the Kalevan Kansa. Even though there was no accommodation, by the end of 1902 over two hundred people were living on the island; most of the new colonists were men (100) but some brought their wives (43) and children (88). While enthusiasm and energy were high, many of the immigrants were urban craftsmen and professionals, ill equipped for the rough living and hard work required to clear a heavily forested island by hand. A sawmill, a foundry and a brickyard were started and a logging crew organized but the lack of training and experience was a serious handicap that directly affected the colony's finances. In an attempt to become self-sufficient, cloth and leather

Social Democratic Party charter.

Photo courtesy of Sointula Museum

was ordered for the tailors and shoemakers but Malcolm Island was too far removed from urban markets to make small-scale manufacturing viable.

From 1901 to 1905 Kurikka and the Sointula Finns published the first printed

Finnish-language newspaper in Canada, first from Nanaimo and then later from Sointula. A huge success, the *Aika* (Time), while circulating its message of socialism and idealism throughout North America, Europe and Australia, also encouraged Finns to join the utopian venture. But after facing the harsh realities of life on British Columbia's raincoast, many of the approximately 2,000 Finns that passed through Sointula in the three years of the colonization scheme simply moved on. Kurikka's attempts to create a model communal society away from "the capitalistic and materialistic class struggle," as well as "the Church with its false doctrine," collapsed and the colony was declared bankrupt in 1905.

Even while the utopian experiment at Sointula (Harmony) was succumbing to dissension and mismanagement, Finn immigrants on Malcolm Island and elsewhere were searching for more practical political solutions. Committed to the fact that Canada was now their homeland, Finnish socialists realized that they needed to establish common cause with their fellow Canadian workers. To achieve this goal, many of the locally based Finnish societies helped to organize the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), which was formed in 1905. The founders of the party had defined their objective as none other than "the transformation ... of capitalist property into the collective property of the working class." Language difficulties forced individual Finnish members to reorganize themselves into a separate language group to eliminate the cumbersome process of translating the party's business into Finnish. (Finns,
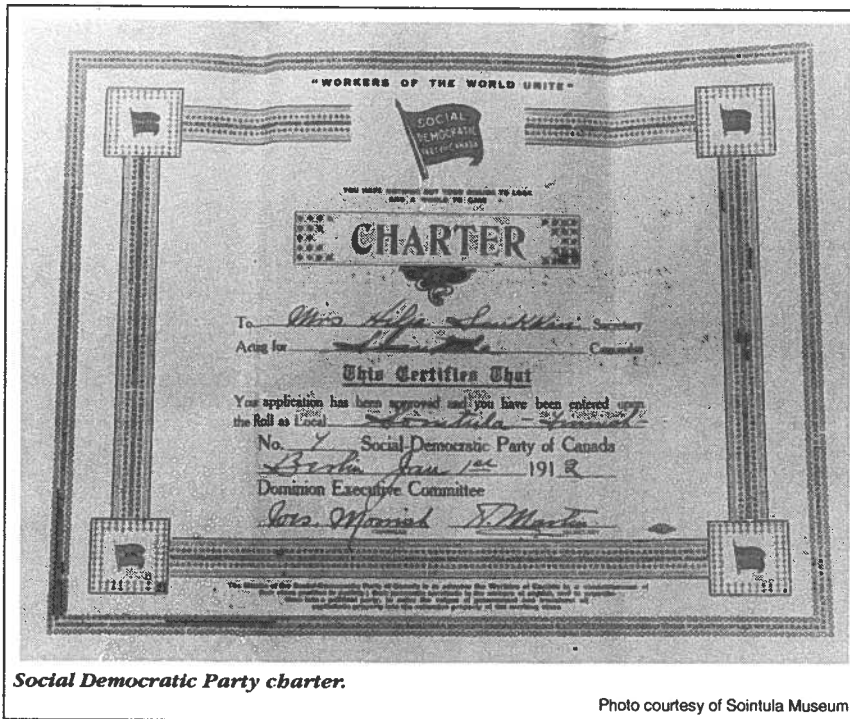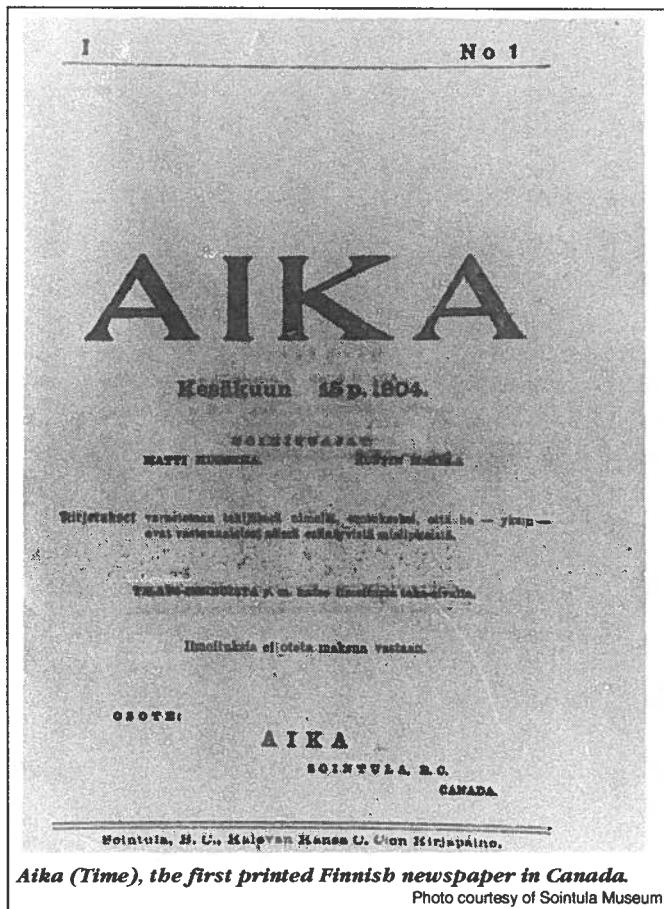
Aika (Time), the first printed Finnish newspaper in Canada.

Photo courtesy of Sointula Museum

more so than most immigrant groups, suffered difficulties with the English language. The Finnish language has no resemblance to any other European tongue other than Estonian and early Magyar. Grammar and syntax are extremely complicated and there are no articles, gender, nor letters b, c, f, q or w and no prepositions, their place being taken by fifteen case-endings.)[4] In 1908, the Sointula local had attempted to run a candidate in the upcoming federal election but lack of funds prevented this. The party's secretary noted that one of the heaviest expenses incurred by the SPC had been the printing of the constitution in Finnish.

Although highly respected for their personal discipline achieved through their temperance societies, when the Finns began to act en bloc to force changes in party policy, they were resented as "clannish" foreigners. The problems arose over ideological differences: Finn radicals of the SPC had pressed for interim measures to ameliorate the immediate conditions of the working class rather than await the Revolution. As a result, the "outsiders" were tarred as being revisionist by the doctrinaire Marxist leadership who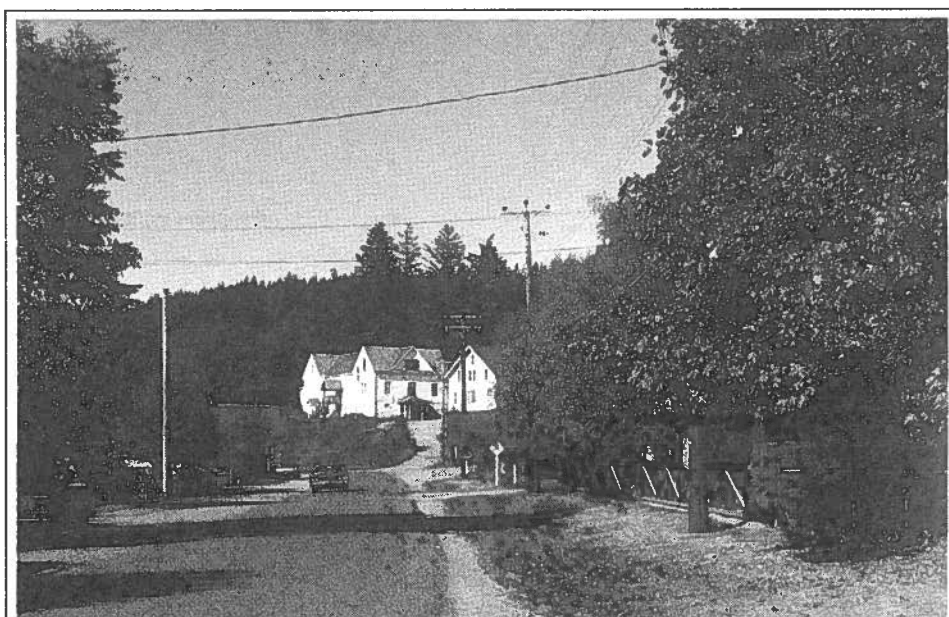 saw the party's role as being restricted to the education and agitation of the masses. The contempt and intolerance of the predominantly British leaders of the SPC led either to the expulsion, or withdrawal in protest, of the Finn member-

Looking down First Street toward Finnish Organization Hall, Sointula, B.C.
Rick James photo

ship. By 1911, all former Finnish SPC locals had left and went on to assist with the founding of the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC) later that year.

While the Finn radicals had been affiliated with the SPC, two of the constituencies that held sizeable Finnish communities sent Socialists to the provincial legislature in the election of 1909. The party's electoral support continued to fall off from the high of 1909, and in the election of 1916 neither the SPC nor the SDPC returned a member to the British Columbia legislature.

Before the Finnish Socialist locals joined the SDPC, they formed their own ethnic association, the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada (FSOC). In this way, when they federated with the SDPC, they were able to establish their own national identity as well as maintain their autonomy. Regrettably, with the outbreak of World War I, the immigrant organization with an "alien" character, which professed socialist and anti-war sentiments, became suspect. The Canadian government began by suppressing "enemy language" publications and eventually any organization that could be viewed as showing "ethnic support" for the Central Powers. Orders-in-council were speedily enacted against radical left organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World, SDPC and the FSOC. Many members withdrew their support from the Finnish radical movement for fear of government persecution. The FSOC disbanded but resumed operations as the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC) following the war. In order to receive official sanction, the FOC transformed itself into a strictly cultural institution.

The Bolshevik takeover in Russia in 1917 revitalized many Finnish-Canadian radicals. The revolution was taken as a sign of the impending triumph of the working-class struggle in the western world. A "reconstituted" Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada was revitalized out of the "provisional" FOC in 1919 after the War Measures Act restrictions
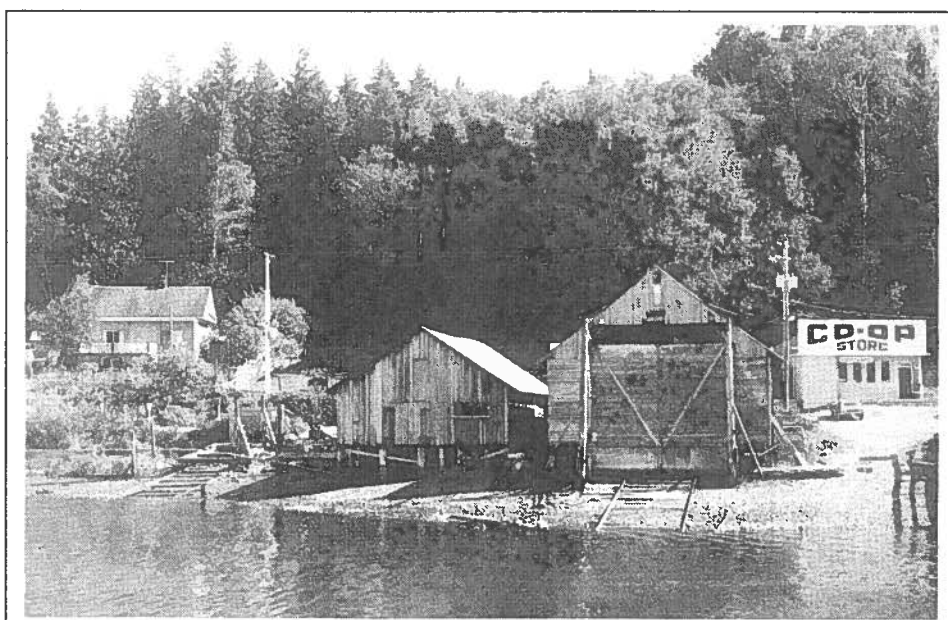
An early settler's home, Anderson Marine Ways and Co-op Hardware Store, Sointula, B.C.
Rick James photo

against socialist associations had lapsed. The FSOC, keen to form an alliance with other re-emerging socialist parties, in 1921 became affiliated with the Workers' Party of Canada. In 1924 the FSOC was simply known as the Finnish Section of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). As the FSOC had compelled its members to take out a CPC card, the Finnish Section made up over half the party membership in the mid-1920s. (As the Finns had no intention of "gifting" their hard-earned assets and properties – their community halls, the publishing house, Vapaus, etc. – to the Communist Party, they incorporated their own cultural institution, the Finnish Organization of Canada, Inc., in which they vested the title to all their assets. From 1925 onwards, the radical Finnish-Canadian movement shifted its focus and made the FOC its organizational centre. As a consequence, the Finnish Section of the CPC faded away.[5]

With their refusal to sacrifice their organization to the party's policy of bolshevization of the various language sections (ethnic groups were to be blended together into smaller, homogenized "Canadian" cells), ruptures in the CPC opened. The final split occurred with the ousting of A.T. Hill from the FOC in 1929 and, later in the year, the suspension of J.W. Ahlqvist and other prominent FOC members from the Communist ranks. Thereafter the FOC went on to operate as an independent force in the leftist movement.

By the 1930s dissension in the FOC mirrored the difficulties the Canadian radical left had as a whole in finding common ground. A significant group of moderate leftists broke away from the organization through 1930 and 1931 and later pledged their support to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. In order to retain a membership worn down by the fractional and destructive fighting within the radical movement, as well as the fear of persecution by a government who suspected the "alien" group of subversive activities, the FOC began to emphasize cultural activities to a greater extent during the 1930s.[6]

Many Finn-Canadians through the inter-war years simply retreated into their communities rather than face a suspicious and sometimes hostile outside world. A.B. Mäkelä, a prominent Marx-ist intellectual (who could have played a more prominent role in British Columbia radical politics, much as Hill and Ahlquist had in Toronto), never returned to the level of political activity he had reached in Finland. He was content to live out his final years on Malcolm Island as a lighthouse keeper, holding only one post of importance – editor of the FSOC's newspaper, Vapaus, which he held for less than a year. Mäkelä, a friend of Matti Kurikka, had worked on the staff of Tyomies and taken over as editor when Kurikka left for Australia. Kurikka encouraged the practical Mäkelä to join him in Sointula as Kurikka felt himself "out of control" with his idealistic scheme. With the dissolution of the colonization company, the two men became bitter enemies – Mäkelä took over the leadership of the remaining settlers when Kurikka and his followers left the island in 1905. An article in the October 13, 1934, issue of the Vancouver Province aptly summed up the outside world's impression of a small Finn community: "for 30 years the Finns have maintained a communist state on Malcolm Island. Today they probably know less about what's happening in Canada than in the Soviet Union ... "

Although their language difficulties and the nativism of Canada's Anglo-Saxon population had restricted Finn immigrants from having a more serious impact on the larger political scene, the Canadian government got more than the "stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat" that they had bargained for. Finnish-Canadian radicals had readily risen to attack with their counter-ideologies, not only the exploitative conditions they found in British Columbia's resource towns, but also to challenge the status quo of Canada's political establishment. Between 1900 and 1939, Finnish radicals made a significant contribution to the Canadian socialist movement far beyond what their small numbers in the immigrant community would suggest.

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Rick James lived in Sointula for ten years before moving to the Comox Valley. He has assisted Paula Wild with research for her forthcoming book Sointula: An Island Utopia *An excerpt from an article by Wild in the* Islander, *October 31, 1993, summarizes later Sointula: "The end of the Kalevan Kansa wasn't the end of Sointula, however. Many of the town's remaining settlers found employment in the West Coast's logging and fishing industries. Slowly Sointula grew, and today it is a prosperous fishing village. Echoes of the original settlers' dreams are heard in the Finnish language that is still spoken – and felt in Sointula's strong sense of community."*

FOOTNOTES

1. Alan Neil Kuitunen, *The Finnish Canadian Socialist Movement: 1900–1914.*

2. Halminen, Matti, *Sointula – Kalevan Kansan Ja Kanadan Suomalaisten Historiaa*, p. 251.

3. In 1901, there were only 780 people of Finnish origin in British Columbia. By 1911 their numbers had risen to 2,858. Finns never comprised more than half of one per cent of the Canadian population. Varpu Lindstrom-Best, *The Finns in Canada*, p. 16.

4. Alan Neil Kuitunen, *The Finnish Canadian Socialist Movement: 1900–1914.*

5. Edward P. Laine, *Canadian Ethnic Studies Association*, Vol. VIII, p. 100.

6. By 1941 the Finnish population in British Columbia had increased to 6,858. Many of the newcomers in the inter-war immigration period held "white" sympathies, which further added to the political dissension in Finnish communities. Varpu Lindstrom-Best, *The Finns in Canada*, p. 16.

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The Story of Edna Eldorado

by Sam Holloway

This story has appeared in various publications and some readers expressed their disbelief. However, further checking and the discovery of the photo taken by noted geologist, J.B. Tyrell, tells me the story is authentic.

Sam Holloway

Far from their homes in the south, three young prospectors mushed their team through the crackling cold. They had covered thirty miles that day over a narrow trail and had but three miles to go to reach their cabin on Eldorado Creek in the Klondike. It was Christmas Eve, 1897.

They suffered from the cold and, in spite of the time of year, wanted only to light a roaring fire to thaw their bones and relieve the searing pain in their chests. They paid no heed to the northern lights that had dropped a dancing curtain of ghostly colours over the frozen valley.

Then, in an open space to the right of the trail, they saw a lonely cabin almost enveloped in frost; the frost itself reflected the colours of the aurora borealis until cabin and sky were joined in a mystical scene, a scene that caused the young men to stop and stare. A faint wisp of smoke drifted from the stovepipe, as if to declare there was life within the cabin; but it was a life that was feeble and quiet.

"Let's go in and warm up," said Johnny Lind. "They must have gone into Dawson for Christmas and we can get that fire going in no time."

They unlatched the door and tramped in. Dave Mitchell took a candle from his pocket and lit it in order to find the source of piteous moans coming from the bed in the corner. In the flickering candlelight he, Johnny Lind and Bill Wilkinson beheld a sight they would remember for the rest of their lives.

A young woman lay on the bed with a newborn baby clutched to her breast. She stopped her faint cries to smile at Dave who quickly kneeled at her side. Her eyes, pain-filled yet satisfied somehow, opened wide for a moment, fluttered weakly, then closed in death.

The three young men stared at each other, stunned into silence, a silence the baby finally pierced with its shrill, life-filled cry.

While Johnny Lind built up the fire, Bill

The Edna Eldorado cabin.

J.B. Tyrell photo
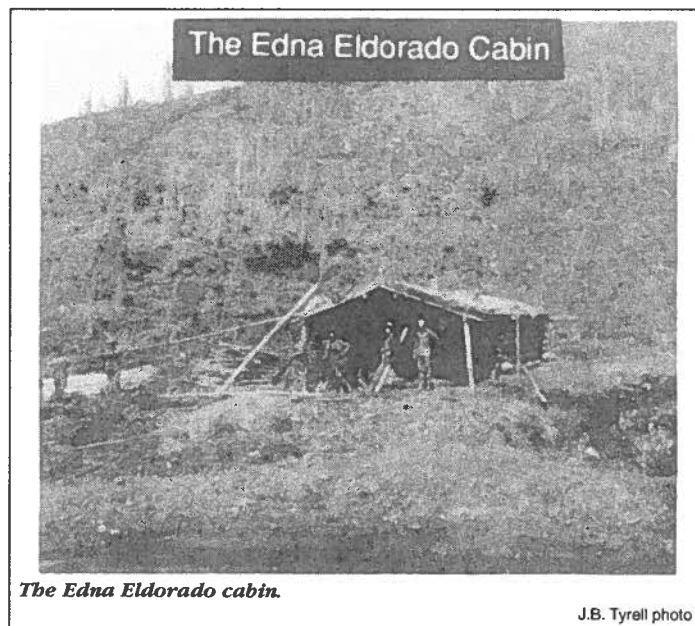
Wilkinson stripped off his many layers of clothing and even removed his new woolen underwear he had bought in Dawson that day. Quickly he wrapped the baby in the underwear and whatever blankets he could find. Just then the door burst open and another young man ran to the bedside.

"Jen! I've got the doctor!" He collapsed on the floor beside the bed and the doctor strode into the crowded cabin. He immediately checked the woman on the bed and the young man on the floor. "Both dead. He froze his lungs with all the running he did today; it's forty-five below outside; and the mother … goddammit, these people should never have come north! Is there a woman around here you can take the baby to?"

"No," said Bill, who still held the baby in his huge arms. "Not close by there isn't."

"Well," said the doctor, "I've got to be going. You'll have to take care of it somehow." He packed his case and went out and the miners never saw him again.

They made a tiny bed from a packing box, tucked the baby into it, and dashed over the trail to their own cabin. Using a whiskey bottle and the finger from a leather glove, they fed the squalling child its first earthly meal: bear-stew broth with a tiny portion of brandy mixed in. The baby fell asleep in its box while the young men sang Christmas carols and gave thanks to whatever god they believed in.

But that isn't the end of the story.

Dave Mitchell set out the next morning to find a mother for their Christmas child. The news spread quickly and soon a dozen women arrived at the cabin; each was willing to adopt the baby, and the young miners faced a difficult decision. A Mrs. Brock stood back from the crowd, listening to the arguing, and finally she could stand it no longer.

"You're all a bunch of fools!" she exclaimed. "Give me that baby! You, Dave, take up a collection and get going into Dawson for some canned milk. Bring some clean blankets and some diapers too." She picked up the baby and held it with such a natural air that the boys knew the right decision had been made. Later they found out Mrs. Brock had lost a baby back in Nova Scotia; and here in the Klondike, by a miracle of events, she had found another.

For the rest of the winter the baby stayed in Mrs. Brock's cabin and it became the centre of attention on Eldorado Creek. The miners found a minister to baptize it in the spring and, after many suggestions, a name was chosen for the child: she was to be called Edna Eldorado. She was christened in an outdoor ceremony with gold nuggets and pokes of dust piled up around her. It was said that the toughest men in the north cried like babies on that spring day in the Klondike.

That is how the story has come down to us – through magazine and newspaper accounts and personal re-telling – how three gaunt young prospectors were led by the northern lights to the side of a newborn babe, on Christmas Eve in 1897.

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The Plight of Rural Women Teachers in the 1920s

by Robert Wright

In the early twentieth century many rural female school teachers in British Columbia experienced a variety of hardships and obstacles. This essay will focus on the negative aspects of the lives of female rural school teachers, not to deny that there were positive aspects to their lives. They were often taken for granted, forced to adhere to unreasonable rules and regulations and sometimes had to live and work in deplorable conditions. This essay will discuss the rural teacher's responsibilities and working environment to promote understanding of how " ... physically, emotionally and professionally demanding ... " their lives were, " ... so much so that many young people lived lives of quiet, lonely, desperation as they tried to provide a limited level of educational service to their students."[1]

In 1925, 79% of the teachers in the rural areas of B.C. were female, 91% were unmarried and the average age was 23.6[2] (some were as young as sixteen years old).[3] Female teachers had been in the majority since the middle of the nineteenth century.[4] When compared to other career options for women at the time, such as domestic service, factory or cannery work, or married life, teaching looked appealing. In order to become a teacher, very little specialized skill or equipment was needed.[5] In 1920 all that was needed to become a teacher was two years of high school and nine months of Normal School.[6] The teaching life allowed a young woman to break away from her family, become independent and feel as if she was going on an adventure. Many women said that it was a "desirable stage between schooling and marriage."[7] It was also seen by many women as a way to meet a husband.[8] These wonderful ideals that were imagined by most of the young female teachers did not always become a reality. Despite the fact that many of the women were aware of the shortcomings of the profession, the teaching industry had no problems finding inductees.[9] Women "were particularly socialized to see their futures as involving children and were restricted to a few sex-labelled employments ... Finally, neither opposition to their presence nor a host of rivals succeeded in driving women from a profession that many needed to survive and many loved."[10]

The School Act of 1911 stated that the function of a teacher in B.C. was "to teach, 'diligently and faithfully' and 'maintain order and discipline'."[11] This particular definition was very broad and failed to mention the specific "hats" that the teacher was expected to wear. These "hats" included one of "an instructor," one of "a disciplinarian," one of "a health worker," one of "a clerk,"[12] and one of "a caretaker."[13]

The teacher's function as an instructor and a disciplinarian might be thought to be fairly straightforward, but that was not always the case. Often the teachers found that their training at Normal School did not prepare them enough for the rural environment.[14] They might have a class of twenty to thirty students at a time, covering a number of different grades, including high school.[15] She would have been an English-speaking teacher and she may have been placed in a community where none of the children spoke English.[16] Even when the teachers were given assistance from the school inspectors, by receiving new curriculums, the curriculums were given without instruction. Many teachers found that when they did go looking for instruction "from their superiors, the superiors were just as much in the dark," or the inspectors did not have the "time or the desire" to accommodate the specific needs of each individual teacher.[17] Despite the fact that many of the schools had very inadequate resources, the teachers made do with what they had.

As a health worker the teacher was expected to have some medical knowledge due to the isolation of most of the communities.[18] The students would have to be checked daily for contagious diseases.[19] They also had to be checked externally for "bugs" such as head-lice and fleas.

The teacher's function as a clerk was essential if the schoolhouse was going to run smoothly. They were responsible for calling the roll and recording the attendance and absences in a well-maintained register.[20] This register was very important because if the average attendance of the schoolhouse was less than eight, it faced being closed.[21] The teacher also was expected to keep a visitors' book, inform trustees of sickness and unsanitary conditions, write report cards and administer public examinations.[22]

As a caretaker the teacher was responsible for the aesthetic appearance of the school, inside and out. In theory the teacher was to be aided by the members of the school board, but the brunt of the responsibility was almost always left with the teacher. Outside, she must "improve and beautify the school grounds."[23] Inside, she must be responsible for lighting the fires, scrubbing the blackboards, washing the floors and any other janitorial duties that needed to be done.[24] If a senior student was recruited to assume janitorial duties and the school board declined to pay, the teacher would have to provide a gratuity from her own meagre salary.

There is a distinction that must be made between the two different types of schools that existed in rural areas of B.C. There were rural schools and there were assisted schools. In 1926, the assisted schools outnumbered the rural schools three to one.[25] Although both types were usually one-roomed schoolhouses, they were supported financially by very different sources. A country school that was given rural status meant that the school was not urban and it was

not consolidated with other communities. This status also meant that the school did not benefit from "centralized municipal administration or finance."[26] A country school that was given assisted status was also not an urban school, but it was part of a consolidated network of schools and did fall under municipal administration and finance. In an assisted school, the teacher's salary, the building, and a grant for supplies were covered by the provincial government. All these benefits were subject to the conditions and regulations laid out by the government. The main condition of the financial support was part of the Compulsory Attendance Act, "a monthly enrolment of at least 10 and an average of 8 was mandatory to avoid closure."[27]

The assisted schools were under the control of a board of three trustees. The trustees' only qualifications were that they had to be British subjects and qualified voters.[28] For rural schools there were no qualifications. The school board was usually made up of elected ratepayers who were parents or prominent figures in the community.[29] In some of the communities, the control over education was put in "the hands of local dictators" who possessed "petty jealousy towards each other" and the result was local control at "illogical extremes."[30] In theory, and under official regulation, the school board, especially in an assisted school, had numerous responsibilities. They were responsible for the hiring and firing of the teacher; reporting teachers' resignations; regular school visits; providing supplies and books for underprivileged children; acquiring property and money to operate the school; and the equipping and repairing of the schoolhouse when needed.[31] It was decided by the community whether or not the school board acted within its official capacity, not the teacher.

The rural and assisted schools in B.C. during the 1920s were dependent on the community for their existence and longevity. Whether the school was in good or bad condition depended on the support and the enthusiasm of the community. Unlike the urban schools that represented state power, the rural schools represented local initiative.[32]

The parents in the rural communities often supported schooling for their children, but were very resrictive when it came to "outside intervention."[33] It was very important in all of the small rural communities that the parents were happy with the school and its teacher. The very existence of the school depended on "the teachers ability to adapt to the community's desires and the parents' willingness to support the school by enroling their children."[34] There were many times that the parents disapproved of some aspect of the teacher's professional or personal actions. These times produced enormous resistance among the parents.[35] The parents may have chosen to stop funding the school or may have just removed their children from school and had them learn at home.[36] Marion Leighton, a teacher in Mud River in the 1920s, warned the school inspector that "it would not be a wise policy to send an inexperienced teacher here for the community does not have much co-operation, spirit or harmony so it makes a teacher tread most carefully to keep on friendly terms with all."[37] The parents knew all about the Compulsory Attendance Act and what effect their children's absence could have on the school. Pulling a child from school was one of the least disturbing things that parents or children or a community could inflict on their local teacher. It was noted by a school inspector of the 1920s that a woman named Miss Langois "had survived that stench of urine poured into the school stove … laughter at rumours of an illicit affair with a student … broken windows and stolen fuel-oil … one serious attempt to burn down the schoolhouse … nights with catcalls and peeping boys … confiscated real pistols, dynamite caps, kitchen knives and obscene drawings."[38]

The socio-economic status of the people in the community was often reflected in the school building itself. The cost of the construction of the assisted schools was reimbursed by the provincial government only after the building was finished. The rural schools were entirely dependent on local donations and loans acquired by an individual on behalf of the school. The funding at a school, especially a rural school, may have been too inadequate to build an entirely new structure. This meant that an existing structure had to act as a substitute. Classes may be held in a tent, one of the parent's houses, a social hall, a light-house or a village store.[39] Alex Lord, a school inspector between the years 1915–36, put some descriptions in his reports of the bad conditions that he observed: "poorly heated, badly lighted, woefully equipped, unsanitary and ugly;" "insubstantial;" and "entirely inadequate."[40] These poor working conditions were compounded by a scarcity of books and supplies.[41] It was not uncommon for a teacher and her class to have "eagerly consulted Eaton's catalogue as a text for reading and spelling."[42]

Loneliness was a major part of life for many rural school teachers due to the isolation of the communities in which they taught. The isolation came in primarily two different types. The first type was that the community could only be accessed by taking a train to a centralized point and then by country road or trail. The Peace River and Cariboo Country were examples of such areas in B.C.[43] The second type of community were the island schools that were dependent on the Union Steamship Company's boats. Access to many of the severely isolated communities was primarily set up to deal with commercial transport, not people transport.[44] Often if there was people transport to an isolated community, the teacher's family did not have the money or the inclination to visit.[45]

The isolation not only posed a problem of loneliness for young female teachers but also one of danger. Sometimes the nearest neighbour to a teacher's accommodations was miles away. A teacher that was in trouble may not have access to any nearby help if she needed it. In Port Essington, near Prince Rupert, a twenty-one-year-old teacher named Miss Loretta Chisholm left her boarding house to take a walk on a Sunday morning in May 1926 and never returned. Nothing was heard of her until her battered body was found. An autopsy report concluded that she had suffocated to death.[46]

Most times when a rural teacher arrived in a community she was unaware of where she would be living. The teachers usually had three choices of accommodation. They could either have "bached," stayed in a hotel or boarded.[47]

If a rural teacher was to "bach" it meant that she would live on her own. Living alone did not offer much in the way of luxuries or safety. More than

likely the place where she would live would be no more than a lean-to on the side of the schoolhouse.[48] If the teacher's accommodations were separate from the schoolhouse, "a family may be willing to give up their barn or 'mudhouse,' neither alternative being sanitary or comfortable."[49] An alternative that one teacher chose was to live in "the government jail with borrowed furniture."[50]

Living in a hotel might be somewhat more "luxurious, but it too was not free from problems. Not only were the hotels usually not a very safe place for a young female to live, but it was not very respectable. The parents of the community often looked down on a teacher who lived above a beer hall or a saloon. They felt that a young female with morals would never stay in such an establishment."[51]

The most common accommodation for a rural school teacher was in a boarding house. The host family usually contained a member of the school board. This was the community's way of keeping an eye on the teacher. Some teachers were actually told by the members of the school board who they may be seen with and where they may live.[52] Boarding might also result in the complete loss of privacy for the young woman. One "teacher slept with the mother and child in one bedroom while a man boarder slept with the husband in the other bedroom."[53]

None of the three choices of accommodation usually offered clean or comfortable conditions. Many teachers stayed in places "frequently plagued with mice, bed bugs, lice, the cold, damp, poor food, primitiveness, lack of privacy, hostile neighbours and loneliness."[54]

The conditions and expectations described in this essay were placed on the shoulders of almost all the rural teachers of B.C. in the 1920s. They were sometimes more than the teachers could bear. On November 15, 1928, in Camp 6 of the Lake Cowichan Logging Company, a twenty-year-old school teacher took her own life. Mabel Estelle Jones was found dead in her cabin with a suicide note beside her body.[55] The note read: "There are a few people that would like to see me out of the way, so I am trying to please them ... I know this is a coward's way of doing things, but what they said about me almost broke my

heart. They are not true. Forgive me, please. Say it was an accident."[56] The school complaints that Mabel wrote about were lodged by two members of the school board. The complaints were about classroom and schoolyard discipline, the wasting of supplies, and lack of attention to detail by the teacher.[57] These types of complaints may seem superficial and trivial to teachers today, but as previously explained in this essay, during the 1920s it was very important in all of the small rural communities that the parents were happy with the school and its teacher. Mabel may have had more deep-rooted problems that were not adequately explained by the papers in 1928, but in her mind the complaints from the school board were the most important. Although Mabel was found temporarily insane by the coroner's jury, the school board was blamed for "unjustifiable, unfeeling and underhand criticism."[58]

The women in Victoria were "up in arms" about the school board's actions concerning Mabel Jones and they began to lobby the government in order to "prevent the recurrence of anything like the suicide of Mabel Jones."[59] The minister of education at the time, Mr. Hinchliffe, acted upon the concerns of the women in B.C. He stated that his actions were in response to "the fact that rural areas were too rugged and wild for the delicate sensibilities for the young female teacher ... "[60] On April 1, 1929, he appointed Lottie Bowron as the Rural Teachers' Welfare Officer.[61] Lottie Bowron would become a sounding board, a spokesperson, and an activist for complaints of the female rural teachers in B.C. She became known for her approach "based on seeking accommodation rather than creating conflict."[62] In her five years as the only Rural Teachers' Welfare Officer in the history of B.C., she was instrumental in the important changes that occurred in the B.C. education system during the next few decades.

Since the 1920s there have been many changes to the B.C. educational system, but it is easy to understand that the changes did not come without struggle and sacrifice. Rural school teachers had to be responsible for almost all aspects of their schoolhouse, including its maintenance, administration and educational instruction. Their duties were numerous

and often overpowering. They often lived in isolation, loneliness and adversity so they could give the children of B.C. an education. These young female "teachers opened their doors, their beds, their food and their hearts in order to help and protect their students."[63]

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FOOTNOTES

1. Robert S. Patterson, "Voices From the Past: The Personal and Professional Struggle of Rural School Teachers" in *School in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History*, eds. N.M. Sheehan, J.D. Wilson and D.C. Jones. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1984, p. 110.
2. J.D. Wilson and Paul J. Stortz, " 'May the Lord Have Mercy on You' The Rural School Problem in British Columbia in the 1920s," *B.C. Studies*, v. 79 (Fall 1988), p. 40.
3. J. Calam, *Alex Lord's British Columbia: Recollections of a Rural School Inspector, 1915–36*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991, p. 16.
4. Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*. Mississauga: Copp Clarke Pitman Ltd., 1988, p. 63.
5. J.D. Wilson, "I Am Here To Help You If You Need Me," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, v. 25 (2) (Summer 1990), p. 97.
6. Calam, 13.
7. Wilson, 98.
8. Wilson, 97.
9. Strong-Boag, 64.
10. Strong-Boag, 64–65.
11. Calam, 13.
12. Calam, 14.
13. J.D. Wilson and Paul J. Stortz, " 'May the Lord Have Mercy on You': The Rural School Problem in British Columbia," *B.C. Studies*, v. 79 (Fall 1988), p. 31.
14. David C. Jones, "Creating Rural-Minded Teachers: The British Columbian Experience" in *Shaping The Schools of the Canadian West*, eds. David C. Jones, Nancy M. Sheehan and Robert M. Stamp. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1979, p. 159.
15. Patterson, 107.
16. Wilson and Stortz, 47.
17. Patterson, 109.
18. Patterson, 108.
19. Wilson and Stortz, 4.
20. Calam, 14.
21. Wilson and Stortz, 29.
22. Calam, 14.
23. Wilson and Stortz, 48.
24. Wilson and Stortz, 48.
25. Wilson and Stortz, 29.
26. Wilson and Stortz, 28.
27. Wilson and Stortz, 29.
28. Calam, 10.
29. Wilson and Stortz, 32.
30. Wilson and Stortz, 46.
31. Calam, 10.
32. J.D. Wilson, "Lottie Bowron and Rural Women Teachers in British Columbia, 1928–1934" in *British Columbia Reconsidered*, eds. Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992, p. 345.

33. Wilson, 346.
34. Wilson, 346.
35. Calam, 15.
36. Calam, 15.
37. Wilson and Stortz, 46.
38. Patterson, 107.
39. Wilson and Stortz, 45.
40. Calam, 15.
41. Calam, 16.
42. Strong-Boag, 64.
43. Wilson, 104.
44. Wilson, 104.
45. Patterson, 107.
46. Wilson, 105.
47. Wilson, 107.
48. Patterson, 106.
49. Patterson, 105.
50. Wilson and Stortz, 44.
51. Wilson, 107.
52. Patterson, 104.
53. Patterson, 105.
54. Patterson, 105.
55. *The Daily Province*. "Jury Censures School Board Over Island Teacher's Death And Urges They Be Removed." November 17, 1928, p. 3.
56. Wilson, 340.
57. *The Daily Province*. "School Board Is Fired After Girl's Suicide." November 21, 1928, p. 2.
58. *The Daily Province*. November 17, 1928, 3.
59. *The Daily Province*. "Victoria Women Are Up In Arms." November 20, 1928, p. 3.
60. Wilson and Stortz, 40.
61. Wilson, 342.
62. Wilson, 357.
63. Patterson, 106.

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The Stagecoach and The Sleigh on the Kootenay Flats 100 Years Ago

by Edward L. Affleck

(Ed. Note: The alternate spellings of Kootenay and Kootenai are correct. The former is used in Canada; Kootenai is an American spelling.)

Pioneer transportation on the Kootenay Flats usually brings to mind the pack train or later the sternwheel steamboat. From 1885 to 1898, however, the stagecoach provided a major link in the transportation chain, giving the Kootenay Flats and Kootenay Lake access to a railway.

Between 1885 and 1891, two competing stagecoach services, those of Skinner & Co. and of Smith & Feather, worked from the Northern Pacific Railroad transfer point at Kootenai Station on Pend Oreille Lake north over the Pack River Pass wagon road to Bonners Ferry, thence up the Kootenai River to Crossport. Travellers bound for the Kootenay Flats or Kootenay Lake transferred at Bonners Ferry and headed downstream on one of the small screw-propelled steamers *Galena, Halys* or *Idaho*.

Over one hundred years ago, in 1892, the Great Northern Railway opened rail service between Spokane and Bonners Ferry. This service coincided with the rush north to the Slocan mining camps west of Kootenay Lake. The *Nelson, Spokane, Alberta* and other sternwheelers having larger carrying capacity than their screw-propelled mates then took over the bulk of the river traffic downstream from Bonners Ferry.

With the arrival of the Great Northern Railway, Skinner & Co. pulled out of the stage service. The resourceful Sam Smith, however, decided to maintain reduced stage service on his existing routes and to extend his stage routes down the Kootenai River. He had a considerable investment in real estate at Kootenai Station, as well as a large barn and feed store and hotel in the Eatonville section of Bonners Ferry. He was aware that in the late fall, low water in the Kootenai River made it difficult for steamers to work up over a ledge in the river bed several miles below Bonners Ferry. Furthermore, should ice form on the river, a channel could not be kept open above Porthill, or in very bitter weather, above Chambers City, a landing on the Kootenay River channel at about the latitude of present-day Wynndel. Smith accordingly opened a stage service between Bonners Ferry and Porthill, working as far downstream as Chambers City when business offered.

The primitive road downstream to Porthill guaranteed a rough trip by stage. In the winter, Sam Smith would make a sleigh trail, and conveyance by sleigh was a much smoother proposition. There was sufficient hotel and saloon accommodation at Porthill to provide adequate comfort to a traveller awaiting the arrival of a steamer working her way up from Kootenay Lake. The picture was bleak, however, whenever ice closed the channel as far downstream as Chambers City, as the sleigh traveller awaiting the arrival of a steamboat at that point was thrown on the mercy of the single establishment operated by Mr. Chambers. This establishment offered no refreshment other than the liquid variety. Beds, benches and chairs were non-

29

existent. The traveller desperate to rest his feet had perforce to commandeer a bar stool and order a drink.

In January 1898, Smith was in the vanguard in opening up a sleigh road from Bonners Ferry to Moyie Lake and made good money hauling supplies into the camp on Moyie Lake for the construction in progress of the B.C. Southern Railway between Cranbrook and Kootenay Lake. By July 1898 a contract had been let for more railway construction, this time the Great Northern Railway's branch lines down from Bonners Ferry to Kuskonook. Sam Smith sagely decided at this time to retire from staging to his ranch on the west side of the Kootenai River above Porthill and to get into the contracting business. With the completion of the B.C. Southern Railway in November 1898, traffic for the Kootenay Flats could come in from Nelson and transfer to the new railway at Kootenay Landing, and with the forecast completion in 1899 of the Great Northern branch lines (i.e., the Kootenay Railway & Navigation Co.) down from Bonners Ferry to Kuskonook, there would be little traffic offered to a stage line, since one or the other of the two new railway lines would be in a position to service just about every point on the east side of the Kootenay River between the lake and Bonners Ferry. The Great Northern service actually did not get completely underway until 1900, but throughout the 1899–1900 winter the steamer *Alberta* was able to work up to Porthill and make the transfer there with the section of the Great Northern line working between Porthill and Bonners Ferry. On several of the *Alberta*'s trips that winter, she picked up strike-breakers from Minnesota brought in to replace miners on strike in the mines around Nelson, Rossland and the Slocan.

It is a pity that Sam Smith did not commit his memoirs to writing as he must have had a fund of tales to tell about his stagecoach experiences. The tales of extricating the stage from potholes, slides, fallen trees, etc. must have been legion. There was also the day in January 1892 that the stage working between Kootenai Station and Bonners Ferry was held up and a passenger, Mr. Ed Huntley, a wealthy Chicago clothier, was relieved of a considerable amount of jewellry.

The steamboats on the Kootenay

This map of southeast British Columbia and adjacent American states shows many of the points referred to in "The David McLoughlin Story" and "Stagecoach and Sleigh on the Kootenay Flats." The railways built in the 1890s followed the rivers fairly closely.
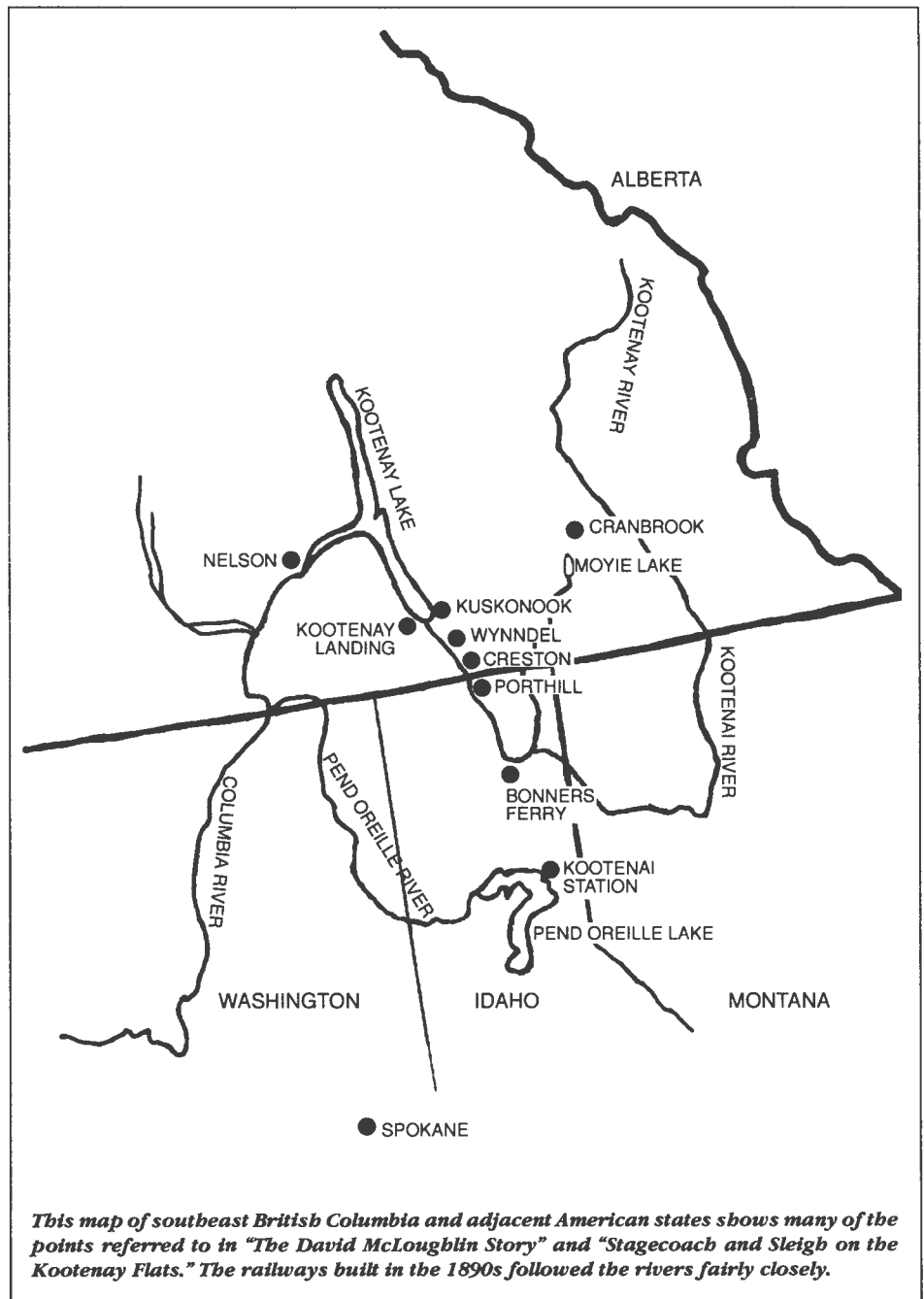
which Sam Smith's stage line serviced have long vanished from the scene, and many of the rails which put him out of business have disappeared also. Let us

ensure that Sam Smith is assigned a rightful place in the record of pioneer transportation in the Kootenay Valley.

Christmas in Sumas in the 1870s

by Shirley Cuthbertson

When I was small, my mother used to do my hair, and I didn't like it, so she would tell me stories to keep me still. Her mother's family, the Chadseys, lived at Sumas, between what is now Abbotsford and Chilliwack, near Sumas Lake. A while ago, I got her to tell me the Christmas story once again.

Would you tell me the story about Christmas when Grandpa was a little boy?

Christmas must have been a happy time in the valley – it was one time when families got together and enjoyed the day with each other, which they couldn't do every day of the week. Travel was difficult and their farms weren't too close, but at Christmas time they enjoyed the day together, especially if it turned out to be a fine day. The Chadsey brothers had each had the rest of the family for Christmas for several years, and finally one of the sisters-in-law decided that there were just too many. She wasn't going to have them all in her house.

About how many would there be? The 1870s – that's quite early.

Yes, it's early, but when you put the children together, there were three or four in each family, and with husbands, wives, bachelor neighbours, etc., it was becoming quite a crowd and she decided that they wouldn't do it any more. So my grandfather took it literally, and decided that if she wasn't going to do it, then he would give the Christmas dinner. They weren't going to just stay home, he would see to it that it was prepared and served.

How was he going to do it?

Well, no one knows how he dreamed up the plan but he started out the day before Christmas and he went to see his brother James. At that time the two of them were operating a flour mill, but he didn't intend to go to work. He went to his sister's home, Mrs. Miller's (Laura Chadsey), and there he found his sister and her husband enjoying their supper. Not wanting to disturb them, he went into the storehouse, which was usually separated from the kitchen of the house or from the dining room. There might be a pantry and an outside kitchen too, so the storeroom would be quite separate. The outside pantry was very cold in the winter. It hadn't any heat in it and therefore it was a good place to store things when there were no fridges. He took everything my dad's Aunt Laura had in her pantry – everything that she had prepared for Christmas Day – and stored everything away in the box on the wagon. While he was doing this, he was caught by his mother. Fortunately, she saw the point that he was making and she helped him to gather up all the things he had missed. Then he set out for Mrs. James Chadsey's and on the way he met Mrs. Chester Chadsey (Aunt Hannah) driving in her buggy with the twin boys.

He had plans to get the big Christmas cake which was at her home. The cake was really something because it had icing on it and that was something almost unheard-of in those days. It had been made in a milk-pan, so it was very big. He called out to her that he was going to get her Christmas cake and, of course, she told him that was impossible, besides, she said, he couldn't get into the house. So away he went, but just as he was leaving, one of the twins shouted, "Uncle Will, the cake's in the ... " and his mother clapped her hand over his mouth – so it was in the something, but he didn't know what.

At his brother James's place, he found Mrs. Harriet Chadsey working away preparing her Christmas dinner, as they were all doing. Her pies were out in the pantry, put on the ledge to cool, and he removed them, adding them to his collection in the wagon. Then he went round to the door and asked them to come to dinner the next day, after having removed their pies. While he was talking to them, he backed up to the door and took the key from their house.

Why did he do that?

Locks were not very safe in those days, because one key would unlock most doors, and when he got to Chester Chadsey's house he let himself in and set to work to take all that was there. All the preparations had been made, all the food was ready, but he couldn't find the cake. He was almost ready to leave and then he began to think what the boy had said to him – " ... in the ... ." He had been in all the rooms, but hadn't found it and suddenly he thought of the grand piano, which was a big, square instrument. It was a type of grand piano which was rectangular and very large. When he went to the piano it was locked, so right away he knew that there must be a reason for locking it. He got a nail and picked the lock and, when he opened it, there was the cake – a marvellous cake to add to his collection, of course.

Before leaving, he thought he would be good, so he set the table for breakfast for them all. He put a hazelnut on everybody's plate.

The next visit he made was to the minister's home, the Methodist minister, Reverend Bryant. Mrs. Bryant was very busy preparing everything for their Christmas dinner, but she entered into the spirit of the affair and offered to help him. In fact, she worked all that night cooking the things he had brought, cleaning the birds if they were not already cleaned, making the stuffing and baking them. Pies and extras were ready and loaded in his wagon, of course.

Reverend Bryant had been away in New Westminster and was trying to get home for Christmas. The boat was very late and when he arrived at Miller's landing about one in the morning, he saw his house brilliantly lit up – lights in all the downstairs windows. He rushed home as fast as he could, thinking someone was ill in the house, and there he found his wife helping to prepare all the stolen food.

Then Will Chadsey proceeded to his brother George's home, where he picked up more contributions to his dinner, all carefully prepared by Aunty Lizzy (Eliza Jane). His last call was to the McGillivray home where Mrs.

McGillivray was preparing their dinner, and going in and out of the pantry. He wasn't able to steal anything he really wanted, but he did get quite a few apples.

What about Mrs. Chadsey, your grandmother?

Of course, Uncle Will's wife, Mary Jane, was also preparing for the dinner and doing all the 'extras which would help to make the dinner a success. She had a lovely sense of humour and she wanted all the family together too. Through the night he continued working, getting lumber for tables and benches, and everything else that was necessary for his Christmas plan.

Christmas Day, the next day, was beautiful. I've heard of that from other relatives. It was like a spring day. On his way to the school where the party was to be held, he passed the home of Mrs. George Chadsey – Aunt Lizzy, who scolded him for working on that day. He told her that because the Christmas dinner was off, he might as well work, why waste the time? He suggested to her that before he started work, a piece of pie would taste good, and she went to get him a piece. Up until that moment, she hadn't been aware of what had disappeared out of her pantry … it was as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard.

In the meantime, Will had dispatched riders with invitations to dinner, men who worked on his farm, and Indians, who took invitations to all the bachelors in the area as far as they could go. He invited other people to come, people who were in the midst of their own preparations for their own Christmas dinners. Mrs. Kipp even had her puddings on the stove when they got Will Chadsey's invitation, so she packed the puddings and the children up and brought everything.

You can imagine how happy all the bachelors were … to be invited out for Christmas dinner was really special, so everybody came, everybody for miles around. All the Chadseys and the Millers, Reverend and Mrs. Bryant, the Wells, all the Kipps, Mr. and Mrs. Ashwell, Mr. and Mrs. McCutcheon, the Reeces, William Barker, Harry Barber and Horatio Webb, the Vedders, the Evans and the Halls … It was a glorious day and a marvellous Christmas dinner, all thanks to Will Chadsey. The children had a tug-of-war and races outdoors, they had the dinner in the schoolhouse, and everyone was happy with their Christmas dinner together again.

Who told you this story?

It was my own dad, Will Kipp, who married Annie Chadsey (Will Chadsey's daughter), who told me the story. He wasn't very old, so he didn't remember everything, but his older brothers and sisters remembered that Christmas Day and everyone used to talk about it. Everyone used to tell their story a little differently.

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Shirley Cuthbertson is on staff at the Royal British Columbia Museum. She is a keen participant at Historical Society/ Federation events. She heard this story from her mother.

SOURCES

Mrs. Velma B. Cuthbertson (nee Kipp) and Will Kipp (her father), "Christmas With Chilliwack Pioneers in 1873," *Chilliwack Progress*, M.A. Barber, 193? (Horatio Webb told Mr. Barber the story).

Commander Charles Rufus Robson, RN: Local Hero

by Paul C. Appleton

Most residents of Esquimalt and Victoria are aware of the Veterans' Cemetery on the Gorge Vale golf course, but fewer know of the "Naval Corner" at the Old Quadra Street Cemetery. This corner contains the headstones and remains of a number of naval personnel and civilian mariners, many of whom met their deaths in tragic circumstances during the nineteenth century. Most of the headstones are badly weathered, and some have been moved from other locations. In an effort to maintain this small segment of our naval past, the Retired Naval Officers' Association recently donated $10,000 to the Old Cemetery Society for a memorial to the naval people who are interred at Pioneer Square.

One of the officers who is named on the new memorial is Lieut. Charles Rufus Robson, Commander of the HMS *Forward*, who was recognized as a real "local hero" at the time of his funeral on November 8, 1861. The esteem in which Robson was held may be judged by the attendance at the funeral, estimated at 1,500, and by the presence of Governor James Douglas at the Christ Church ceremonies in Victoria.

The *Colonist* reported that the body of Lieut. Robson was brought into the harbour by the gunboat *Grappler*, accompanied by five boats from the *Topaz* and the *Hecate*. The shore party was led by a company of marines, who were followed by the band from the *Topaz*. A gun-carriage drawn by sailors came next, carrying the flag-draped coffin, then the ship's company from HMS *Forward*, the officers from his ship, and Governor Douglas. Some 500 mourners walked to the strains of the Dead March as they proceeded to the church.

Commander Robson's death was certainly tragic – the result of being thrown from a horse – a type of accident by no means uncommon at the time. On Sunday, October 27, he was out riding near Esquimalt when a sheep ran between the legs of his horse, throwing both horse and rider. Paralyzed from a spinal injury and with a fractured skull, he was taken to the Naval Hospital at Skinner's Cove in Esquimalt – today the site of the CFB Esquimalt Naval and Military Museum. In spite of a valiant effort by the Medical Officer, Dr. Forbes, Robson died on November 5, 1861, at the age of forty-seven.

Not much is known about Commander Robson's early life, only that he left a wife and a clergyman father in Yorkshire. However, the newspaper re-
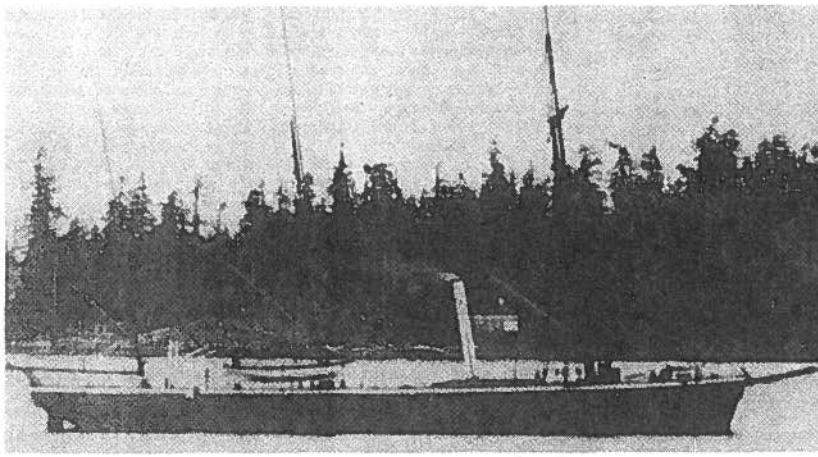
The gunboat HMS **Forward**

port does provide us with information that explains why he was so honoured at the time of his death.

Several stories demonstrate that he was a brave and capable officer. In 1850, while serving in the West Indies, he volunteered to take command of an American vessel sailing from West Africa to Philadelphia when all of its officers had died of yellow fever. During the sixty-nine-day passage he too got the plague, but still managed to remain in command from his sick berth.

Later, during the Crimean War, he was mentioned in dispatches while serving in the Baltic. However, these were not the reasons for the esteem which Robson enjoyed among the colonists. This was based on his leadership in command of HMS *Forward*, one of the two screw-driven gunboats which were fitted in 1859 for service to counter "Indian threats and American aggrandizement" along the B.C. coast. The 103-foot *Forward* and her sister ship *Grappler*, with complements of forty, armed with 68-pounders forward, 32-pounders aft, and two 24-pound howitzers amidships, were an effective show of power to carry out their mandate.

Under Robson's command, HMS *Forward* engaged in two police actions against the Kwakiutl tribe that lived around Cape Mudge, on the southern tip of Quadra Island south of Campbell River. Numbering about 4,000, they were seen as decidedly aggressive and undisciplined by Governor Douglas. In the summer of 1860 a party of them attacked and robbed some boats off Saltspring Island and escaped back to Cape Mudge. Sent to retrieve the stolen property and

capture the culprits, Lieut. Robson was forced to bombard the native stockade in order to achieve his objective.

The second, more serious, action took place in May of 1861. According to reports, a band of marauding Haidas stripped and looted a schooner at Victoria, ransacked some houses on Saltspring Island, stole a great deal of

Lieut. Charles Rufus Robson

property and threatened the lives of the settlers there. About thirty canoes strong, they proceeded to Nanaimo where they tried to sell the stolen goods. This prompted the local magistrate to appeal for a gunboat to go after the culprits.

On May 17, 1861, the *Forward* arrived at Cape Mudge. Robson tried to settle the matter peacefully, but was met with defiance and was forced to fire a warning shot over the native camp. When the Haida replied in kind, Robson be-

gan to fire on their canoes and a general skirmish began. Eventually the principal chief capitulated and after a long interrogation Robson was able to make some arrests. His action in using "gunboat diplomacy" against the natives was seen as justifiable by his superiors and naturally met with the full approval of the Council of the colony. In the eyes of the settlers, Robson was something of a hero for acting with much firmness and discretion.

Commander Robson was also involved in two rescue operations that especially endeared him to the American population in Victoria, swelled to large numbers due to the Fraser River gold rush. In December of 1860 the Peruvian brig *Florencia* was dismasted in a storm below Cape Flattery, and the *Forward* was ordered to her aid. Arriving at Nootka Sound, Robson heard of the loss of the U.S. brig *Consort* further south. Turning back, he rescued eighteen Americans marooned at Carchina and returned to tow the *Florencia* to Victoria. Unfortunately the tow line parted in a gale two days later and the brig drifted away. After two days of searching, Robson managed to locate her and resume the tow. Continuing storms prevented *Forward* from going south, so Robson went around the north end of the Island and brought the *Florencia* safely to Nanaimo.

The Americans at Victoria were deeply appreciative of Robson's errands of mercy. A number of them sent a petition to the American Senate and Robson received a citation from President Lincoln for his actions.

Thanks to the efforts of the Royal Canadian Naval Association and the Victoria Old Cemeteries Society, Charles Rufus Robson and his brothers-in-arms will continue to be remembered by future generations of Victorians. Both Pioneer Square and the Esquimalt Naval Museum, formerly the hospital where Robson died, are well worth a visit by anyone interested in our naval heritage on the west coast.

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The author is the secretary of the Esquimalt Naval Museums and Archives Society.

The Bridge That Jack Built

by Alice Bjorn

A dilemma in the Chilcotin was solved by good neighbours and considerable ingenuity. Wayne and Trina Plummer were managing Neil Harvey's Deer Creek Ranch on the south side of the Chilcotin River. They began to discuss how they could arrange for their son Levi, almost six, to catch a school bus to Alexis Creek. The bus ran on the Chilcotin Highway on the north side of the river. The road into Deer Creek Ranch crosses an alkali flat which becomes an impassable bog several times each year. At those times the Plummers left a vehicle on each side of the bog, leaving one and walking across to pick up the other. This questionable route would mean driving thirty-six miles each school day.

If they were to bridge the river, however, it would be necessary to build only half a mile of road from the ranch to the river bank and another 0.8 miles (1.3 km) through Dan Lee's ranch to the main highway.

Jack Casselman, a fifty-four-year-old neighbour, had just sold his Brittany Lake Ranch so was looking for a new challenge. He promised to investigate the possibility of spanning the river with a suspension bridge. He visited Vancouver and studied the Capilano and other bridges. On his return he recruited Wayne Plummer's brother-in-law, Lynn Bonner of Riske Creek. Two and a half months later the bridge was ready.

First they bulldozed holes in the river bank and embedded concrete anchor blocks 12 x 8 x 6 feet (3.6 x 2.4 x 1.8 meters). They then stretched two cables across the 280-foot (85 meters) wide river – starting with a light rope taken across by rowboat. Several attempts were needed to have the boat touch the opposite bank and hand off rope at the desired point because of the swift current. The main cables are one-inch (25 mm) thick, capable of holding fifty tons (45,500 kg); the drop cables are 5/16 steel rated between five and six tons apiece. The cross pieces for the walkway are Douglas fir 4 x 4s and the planking one-inch pine boards. The cables were pulled into place over a 35-foot (10.6 metres) A-frame of peeled poles on
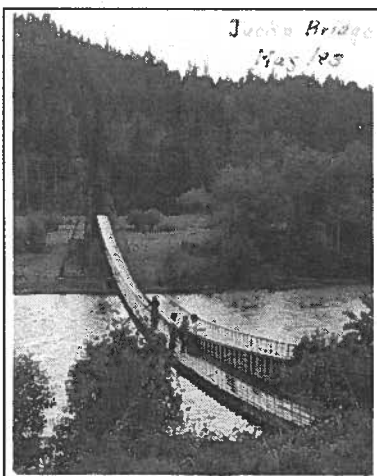
Viewing the bridge across the Chilcotin River from its north anchor. Note the edge planks.
Alice Bjorn photo

the south shore then anchored in a cribbed approach platform. Jack hung straps then laid planks to create a bridge deck that is four feet (1.2 metres) wide.

They had a bit of a party when the bridge opened in that summer of 1976. Trina broke a champagne bottle over it (after the guys had removed the contents). It was dubbed "The Bridge That Jack Built." But Jack Casselman requested that Lynn Bonner share the honour so some refer to it as the Cassel-Lynn bridge.

The bridge cost $8,000, paid by ranch owner Neil Harvey. This covered supplies and a small wage for Jack Casselman and his helpers. Paul St. Pierre speculated that: "This, by a quick calculation, amounts to between one-twentieth and one-thirtieth of the cost if it had been a government project, but it wasn't."

Trina Plummer took her little son across that bridge every morning and again in the afternoon. He rode behind her on a motorcycle. When the wind blows hard down the Chilcotin valley, the bridge has both a ripple and a whip, taking the pleasure out of riding. Wayne added vertical planks at the edges as a safety measure. Next he cut the fenders and running board off a Volkswagen

Beetle. Trina and Levi relished the enclosed comfort when the temperature plummeted or the snow was swirling.

The author walked across the bridge first in 1976 when Jack's family was taken to admire the handiwork. It was a calm day so Jack simulated the swing that could be felt with a breeze ... and I felt the onset of motion sickness. My admiration grew for the mother who transported her six-year-old across this bridge on a motorcycle. We saw it again in 1983 when we gathered to attend Jack's funeral. By this time Levi was a high school student boarding in Williams Lake and coming home for the occasional weekend. The Volkswagen was used for a couple of seasons, supplemented by a snowmobile
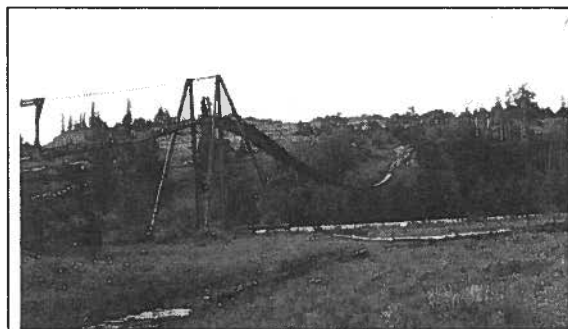
The south end of the bridge that Jack built.
Alice Bjorn photo

when snow conditions demanded this. A three-wheeled ATV cycle then became the vehicle of choice and is still used today. The bridge approach sports warning signs: "Cross at your own risk." After all, it was a private project built by do-it-yourself Cariboo neighbours, and Cariboo residents are a hardy and resourceful breed.

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NORTH VANCOUVER MEMORIES

Do you have personal memories of life in North Vancouver or have you unearthed an interesting story set in this district? If so, please share them. Write them down, formally or informally, and send your contribution to the North Shore Historical Society, c/o Robert Brown, 2327 Kilmarnock Crescent, North Vancouver, B.C. V7J 2Z3.

CENTURY RANCH AWARDS

The Bayliff family of Chilancoh Ranch near Redstone and the Durrell family of the Wineglass Ranch near Riske Creek received Century Ranch Awards from Agriculture Minister David Zirnhelt. The awards are given to ranches that have been in operation for one hundred years or more. The Bayliffs have been ranching since 1887 (see BCH *News* Vol. 21 No. 1), the Durrells since 1893.

MARGARET ORMSBY SCHOLARSHIP FUND

A banquet designated as a tribute to Margaret Ormsby was held in Kelowna in conjunction with the B.C. Studies '94 conference. Guest speakers were Vaughn Palmer of *The Vancouver Sun*; John Bovey, Provincial Archivist; and Chad Reimer, a student. The thrust was to acquaint those present with the fund-raising

Margaret Ormsby at the Kelowna dinner held in her honour October 8, 1994.

currently underway to establish a prestigious and worthwhile scholarship for graduate studies focused on British Columbia. Four graduate students are devoting considerable time canvassing for donations. The Margaret Ormsby Scholarship will be under Heritage Trust. Donations have been allowed 100 per cent tax deduction status by the government of British Columbia. Mail your cheque to: Margaret Ormsby Scholarship Committee, 1454 Begbie Street, Victoria, B.C. V8R 1K7.

CHILLIWACK MAY 4, 5, 6, 1995

Members of branches of the B.C. Historical Federation will receive information and registration forms via their local secretary in February. Any non-member may ask for details and registration for the program of speakers and tours from Ron Denman, 45820 Spadina Avenue, Chilliwack, B.C. V2P 1T3. Phone (604) 795-5210 or (604) 794-3688 (evenings).

PUBLIC APPEAL PAYS

Heather Bruce of Kelowna is researching Sunday School Vans much more extensively than your editor. She has read many inches of files in archives and is now in England researching Eva Hasell's home and life there. Heather also hoped to liven her findings with personal stories. She circulated an appeal via newspapers in 1993 and to date has received 251 replies. "So many stories. Ministers chuckle over Eva Hasell's battles with bishops; Vanners (in their 80s) tell of their adventures; bus and truck drivers recall marvelling at two women braving the roads of our Canadian past; women who were once lonely remember the delight of having other women to talk to and share a cup of tea with. I also hear from 'precious jewels' – the kids, like me, now middle-aged and not quite so sparkly!" (See BCH *News* Vol. 27 No. 4, p. 10.)

ROBERT WRIGHT

The first winner of the $500 B.C. Historical Federation Scholarship given at the end of the second year of studies is Robert Wright of Coquitlam. This student attended Douglas College in 1993–94 and is now enrolled at Simon Fraser University. He was presented with his award at the September 21 meeting of the Vancouver Historical Society.

MERIT AWARD FOR OUR 1st VP

The 100th meeting of B.C. Heritage Trust took place in Nelson October 20–22 (approximately six meetings per year since its inception in 1978). To celebrate this occasion a reception was held, which was attended by heritage workers from several Kootenay communities: Kaslo, Sandon, New Denver, Silverton, Castlegar, Rossland, Grand Forks and Nelson. The host community is invited to nominate two local volunteers for the Heritage Trust Merit Awards. A unanimous choice was Ron Welwood, who is now our first vice-president and chief organizer of our 1997 BCHF conference. This conference is to be held jointly with the Heritage Society of B.C. May 29–June 2, 1997.

ELEK IMREDY 1912–1994

Sculptor Elek Imredy is best known for his statue of "Girl in a Wet Suit" perched on a rock near Lumberman's Arch in Stanley Park. He also produced the life-size bronze statue of former Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent which stands in front of the Supreme Court building in Ottawa; Judge Matthew Begbie in New Westminster; Charles Melville Hays, president of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in front of Prince Rupert's City Hall; and the Mariners' Memorial on the Prince Rupert harbour front. Elek and his wife Peggy were active members of the Vancouver Historical Society. Donations

in his memory may be sent to the Vancouver Historical Society Bibliography Fund, P.O. Box 3071, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 3X6, or to the Vancouver City Archives or the Vancouver Maritime Museum.

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S AWARD

The 1994 winner of the Governor General's Person's Award was Rose Charlie of Agassiz. The title "Person's Award" originated from the legal language used in a 1929 decision by the British Privy Council that Canadian women were "persons" and eligible to hold office. Grand Chief Rose Charlie, a founding member of the group Indian Rights for Indian Women, received the award for her work to help change legislation that deprived aboriginal women of their status when they married non-Indians. This announcement came too late to be included in our "Women's History Month" issue.

UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE

Vancouver hosted the 26th Annual Conference of Historical and Underwater Archaeology in January 1994. The 1995 conference is to be held in Washington, D.C. If any of our readers wish details, apply to Laurence E. Babits, Maritime History Department, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina 27858-4353 or phone (919) 757-6788.

BOOKSHELF

Dictionary of Canadian Biography,
volume XIII, 1901–1910
Ramsay Cook, ed. Toronto: University of
Toronto Press, 1994. 1295 p., $85

It is a pleasure to see this thirteenth
volume of the *Dictionary of Canadian
Biography* published for two reasons: it
is a sign that this important scholarly work
is still in progress and, secondly, it brings
us into the first decade of the present cen-
tury. The project, which was launched
with the publishing of volume one (1000–
1700) in 1966, has often wavered but
has never failed to maintain the high
standards originally established.

Due to financial cutbacks, major
changes have been made which will see
volumes published by decades from
1901–1940 instead of shorter time peri-
ods with more volumes, which was the
original plan. The coverage of the lives
and work of Canadian men and women
from all areas of Canada will be retained.
The dictionary will, therefore, always be
of the greatest importance as a major ref-
erence work for a study of Canada.

Volume XIII, which covers those Ca-
nadians of importance who died between
1901 and 1910, has 648 individual bi-
ographies contributed by 438 authors.
Family names are used rather than titles,
married names, pseudonyms, etc. Cross
references are provided from alternative
names to those under which the main
biography appears. A detailed section of
editorial notes and abbreviations provides
the information needed to clarify the vari-
ous methods of entry.

The volume ends with an extensive
general bibliography, list of contributors,
index of categories, i.e., accountants,
criminals (4) and indigenous peoples,
among others, under which are listed the
names of those who have biographies in
the main text.

A two-part geographical index follows:
place of birth and career. Both listings are
under the present provinces and territo-
ries as well as foreign countries. A nomi-
nal index concludes the volume. This is
a listing of those whose names appear in
the texts of the biographies. Page refer-
ences are included for these.

The major part of the volume consists
of the biographies arranged alphabeti-
cally. These vary in length from less than
a page to three or more. Each biography
concludes with a bibliography which lists
sources of information.

The British Columbia entries cover a
wide range of activities. Due to the com-
parative youth of the province at the turn
of the century, only two of the subjects
were born in the province. There are over
seventy B.C. names included in the bio-
graphical section and more appear in the
nominal listing.

The volumes of the *Dictionary of Ca-
nadian Biography* are very easy to use.
The indexes assist in locating specific ref-
erences. The format and type are clear
and the paper is of excellent quality, all
of which make this an outstanding work
which will retain its importance. Let us
hope that nothing prevents the future
volumes from being published.

Melva J. Dwyer
*Melva Dwyer is the treasurer of the
Vancouver Historical Society.*

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**Cancelled wtih Pride: A History of
Chilliwack Area Post Offices**
Cecil C. Coutts. Abbotsford, Cecil Coutts,
1993. 188 p., illus. $26

This book covers postal history in the
Chilliwack area from colonial times to the
present. It can be read with pleasure and
respect by anyone with an interest in
stamps and the postal history of the dis-
trict. It is a model which I hope will in-
spire others to follow for their own
localities. They will find it hard to surpass.
One is left with an urge to track down
and solve some of the unanswered ques-
tions, and a sense that if Mr. Coutts has
been unable to find the answers, then the
task will be tough indeed.

The book is physically pleasing in lay-
out and carefully and generously illus-
trated. There is no sense of crowding, nor
yet of wasted white space. The type is of
good size and easy to read, uncramped
and free of compository error. The maps
are both clear and legible. By contrast,
many otherwise notable authors have

produced admirable texts let down by
inferior maps. Too few and lacking in
detail, they are often photographically
reduced to illegibility, except perhaps to
archie and mehitabel. I myself would
have liked some indication of physical el-
evation, which justifies the location of
buildings and routes.

Perhaps there should have been some
further clarification of those times when
mail for the CPR had to cross the river to
Harrison Mills. Slips? The landlubber's re-
dundant "the" before HMCS *Rainbow* on
page 134. It is also questionable whether
the full text of the Cultus Lake recreation
site lease is vital for a postal history.
Enrichments of this kind do, however, give
a valuable sense of time, place and social
resourcefulness and I was interested to
compare it with more recent agreements
of the same kind in which I have been in-
volved. On the whole, I think such digres-
sions are acceptable and widen the appeal
of the book, providing they are not over-
done, which is not the case here.

It was a pleasure to find the section on
slogans. It nudged from some recess of
my mind agreeable memories of my fa-
ther-in-law, Victor Swan, JPS, who pro-
duced the first catalogues of British
slogans from 1917 to 1957. And who also
financed continental holidays by taking
with him an envelope full of flawed or
unusual stamps carefully selected from
bulk to sell to Paris dealers.

With the onset of phone, radio and fax,
there is an ultimate sadness about this
book. It is, after all, about the resolve of
a community of resourceful pioneers to
set up and maintain contact with the rest
of Canada, with the help of what was then
a more appreciative government. I have
supported the movement to retain rural
post ofices, some of which have been lost
in the search for lower cost. Fortunately,
Canada Post has latterly relented suffi-
ciently to retain some historic names and
codes with the new contractors. It is never
fair to compare rural costs with urban
costs for service, whether roads, postal
service or hydro and telephone. Rural
distribution costs will always be greater.
They are a very small price to pay for the

BOOKSHELF

pleasure and comfort of having cities with extensive surrounding agricultural, recreational and resource areas. Also for the incidental inconveniences of communication in our dear, incomparable province of mountains and fjords.

I think I'll paste an envelope in the back of our copy to receive any suitable postcards or other junk-shop treasures I find which will amplify a very enjoyable read.

Francis Sleigh
Francis Sleigh, former treasurer of the B.C. Historical Federation, lives near Chilliwack.

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The Legacy and The Challenge: A Century of the Forest Industry at Cowichan Lake
Richard Rajala. Lake Cowichan Heritage Advisory Committee, 1993. 142 p., $12.95

When asked why history is worth bothering with, I usually answer that if we don't know where we've been, we'll never figure out where we're going. The best illustration of this epigram can be found in the British Columbia forest industry. Long the mainstay of the provincial economy, it is now floundering under the burden of its own misguided mythologies.

Socially, politically, economically and ecologically, the forest industry is a mess. It is shedding workers at a phenomenal rate, leaking money in all directions and infuriating the public with its activities in the woods. One of the most obvious characteristics of people in and around the industry is that they have no sense of their own history. Until very recently, students in the UBC Faculty of Forestry have been taught practically nothing about the origins of the policies and practices of their profession. The people who run the forest companies, like the government bureaucrats and politicians who attempt to regulate the industry, know little or nothing of their corporate and institutional past.

No wonder we are in trouble.

Richard Rajala is the first professional, academic historian to take the forest industry as his subject. And, while he has published several informative and provocative papers on forest history, this is his first book. His arrival, long since overdue, is most welcome.

The Legacy and The Challenge pur-

ports to be the history of the forest industry at Cowichan Lake. In fact, the book provides far more than the story of a local industry.

The first two chapters are straightforward chronological accounts of the rise and fall of the logging and milling companies established to exploit the spectacular timber resources of the Cowichan Valley. They provide the most thorough and accurate account available of the industry's complex and convoluted development in this region, and bring us up to the beginning of the 1930s depression.

The third chapter is an account of developments in the labour movement, which I personally found a bit tedious, and a unique documentation of pre-war opposition to the forest practices employed by the industry. This second part has never been covered elsewhere and Rajala has done an excellent job of describing the attempts by Chief Forester E.C. Manning to impose some restraints on a rapacious industry.

The last two chapters consist of a well-researched account of post-war forest policy development and the impact of those policies on the economy, the people and the environment of the Cowichan Valley. Rajala has provided a persuasive description of the failure of provincial policy over the past fifty years, and shown how those policies have led to the devastation of the regional economy during the past decade.

In the end, he has written far more than a local history. He puts regional history into a broader context that explains why events have happened around Cowichan Lake, and used the history of that region to demonstrate the failures of provincial forest policy.

Rajala is a fresh and original thinker. Anyone who cares about the future of forests and forestry will welcome his presence and look forward to more of his work.

Ken Drushka
Ken Drushka is the author of Working in the Woods: A History of Logging on the West Coast, 1992.

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Whistle Punks & Widow-makers
Robert E. Swanson. Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1993. 160 p., illus., $29.95

Harbour Publishing, which shared with us such remarkable talents as Jim Spilsbury and Bus Griffiths, has discovered yet another Living National Treasure of the west coast of B.C.

He is eighty-nine-year-old Bob Swanson, who began working in the woods in his early teens, becoming a steam donkey fireman at the age of fifteen. His inventive mind led to a university degree, largely acquired through independent study. Most of his working life was with the provincial government. As an inspector of boilers, tramways, ski lifts and railways, he became intimately familiar with every logging camp and mining operation on the west coast. He still operates his own company, which designs and produces tuned air horns. The "O Canada" horns heard in downtown Vancouver every noon hour were his creation.

A brilliant engineer and successful businessman, Swanson's creativity is also expressed in his literary output. In the 1940s he published four volumes of logging poetry, which were collected and re-issued in 1992 as *Rhymes of a Western Logger*. The twenty-six stories in this more recent volume were originally published in the trade newspaper *Forest and Mill* in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

These stories are essentially character sketches of loggers Swanson knew during his long career on the coast. His portrayal of the ingenuity, self-reliance and rugged individualism of the coastal logger is as deft as a high-rigger's top-cut.

There's not enough space here to mention all the characters. There was Jessie James, the stylish, fun-loving boss logger who installed a bar in his Cowichan Lake camp. There was Eight-Day Wilson, the legendary short-staker who went to extremes to avoid long-term employment. Curly Hutton, the locomotive engineer whose method of cleaning the inside of a Shay boiler was to dump in three sacks of potatoes. Bull Sling Bill, who was reputed to have won $20,000 at roulette one morning before breakfast in Dawson City during the gold rush, only to lose $30,000 by eleven o'clock. Saul Reamy,

the pioneer Gastown logger who preserved the famous locomotive "Old Curly."

Faithful to the tradition of Paul Bunyan, Swanson is inclined to, er, exaggerate the exploits of his heroes. But they were real-life people, acquaintances of his. Swanson's intimate and detailed knowledge of the technical, geographical, historical and sociological aspects of the forest industry make this book a useful contribution to historical scholarship, in addition to its entertainment value.

More credit should be given to the contribution by the forestry historian Ken Drushka who edited and introduced the book. His account of meeting Bob Swanson during a "gruelling" book signing tour is priceless in itself. The beautifully produced archival photos which grace nearly every page and relate directly to the text are just as significant. The book's attractive typography and layout and durable binding add to its delighfulness.

I enjoyed this book immensely, but something about it was disturbing. Like much of Harbour Publishing's output, it appeals to white collar urbanites' nostalgic longings. It mythologizes the less-than-glamourous life of the logger. Does it unwittingly lend support to the ideology of the so-called "Share" groups, with their strident complaints that "loggers are an endangered species"?

(Bob Swanson died on October 4, 1994.)

Jim Bowman

Jim Bowman, an expatriate British Columbian, is a Calgary archivist.

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Taku: The Heart of North America's Last Great Wilderness
Allison Mitcham, illustrated by Naomi and Peter Mitcham. Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot Press, 1993. 232 p., illus., $14.95
Far Pastures
R.M Patterson. Victoria: Horsdal & Schubart, 1993. 290 p., illus., $14.95
Trail to the Interior
R.M Patterson. Victoria: Horsdal & Schubart, 1993. 255 p., illus., $14.95

The Taku country, as Mitcham defines it for the purposes of *Taku: The Heart of North America's Last Great Wilderness*, "includes the coastal region near the present city of Juneau, the Taku River and the immense lakes now known as Atlin and Teslin." This is the territory inhabited by the Coastal and the Inland Taku (Tlingit), and Mitcham's book leans towards the native Indian history. This gives the book an uncommon bias: too often readers have received the history of a region entirely from the viewpoint of non-native exploration, settlement and development – the entries for Teslin and for Atlin, for examples in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Edmonton, 1988), concentrate on the non-native history of the communities.

The Taku region was off at the margins of the main Klondyke gold rush and consequently has not received the attention of historians. Many readers, however, will find interesting material in Taku, especially in those parts which deal with commercial activities in the 1870s, 80s and 90s, and with the development of trails into the interior of the country. Both Atlin and Teslin Lakes debouch into the Yukon River system so that those trails from the mouth of the Taku might well have become important in the rush to the Klondyke. That they did not is part of Mitcham's story.

Taku contains twenty-five pages of notes for the something less than 188 pages of narrative. Often the notes are invaluable; unfortunately some major ones, such as those for Frederick Schwatka and Captain William Moore, are not included in the index, while many lesser ones are. The maps, most dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, are poorly reproduced, and while I was pleased to find included sections from the 1893 map of the surveyor J.H. Brownless, a fabled character of Atlin's early days, and the 1930 map of W.E. Cockfield for the Geological Survey, they are most difficult to read. Lacking is a clear, simple, easily understood map. There are numerous photographs, including many of water colours and line drawings by the author's daughter and her husband which, we are informed, are "to varying degrees, based on archival materials."

Mitcham has provided a most informative listing of "source materials," although she states she has listed "only a few of the most important published sources." This limitation is unfortunate. Numerous readers of this book will want to know what the author, in her own interviews and from sources available through her visits to the Taku area, had available and has used. A photograph on the book's cover shows her daughter "on the fish weir on the Nakina" (a tributary to the Taku); I wonder how much the author learned from that source, and from interviews with Taku Indians living at Atlin and Teslin and on the lower reaches of the Taku River. A large part of the history in the book took place within the memory of living members of the Indian community, or in the times of their parents and grandparents, and her sources from that community warrant listing. Is it too much to ask that recordings of interviews, or transcripts of them, be deposited in the Atlin or other local museums or archives?

Despite these things, *Taku* is a welcome book and provides a valuable glimpse into a little known and seldom travelled corner of our province.

In his foreword to *Far Pastures*, former book publisher Gray Campbell writes of R.M. Patterson that "he came to our untamed frontier wilderness as a pioneer, took his lumps and bruises, became a skilled northern traveller and left a literary heritage." Men of letters among the prospectors and trappers of Canada's north have been not so much few and far between as virtually non-existent. The man given to a life of trapping is seldom given to literary effort, even of the most elementary form. R.M. Patterson was an exception. He developed in his writing that rare capacity which can raise the personal and apparently commonplace to a level approaching the philosophical. And so, in *Far Pastures*, a dog fight at Fort Simpson becomes a commentary on the social consequences of one aspect of the transportation system of the country. Writing a letter in 1929 in the kitchen of the RCMP building in the same community requires a little imagination beyond the ordinary: "Notepaper was a bit short just then, so the letter was being written on the backs of Wolf Bounty Claim forms – a scandalous but necessary abuse of government stationery."

Far Pastures is a collection of seventeen short essays which are grouped into

four periods of Patterson's life: (1) Peace River, 1924–27; (2) Northward Ho, 1927–29; (3) The Foothills (of Alberta), 1929–46; and (4) The Mountains of Youth, 1943–55, this last section being a recounting of trips made into the locales of earlier escapades. The essays are full of the minutiae and the nuances which give substance to history. I was intrigued, for example, with Patterson's relationship with the government and its homesteading arrangements: "There was a comical misconception prevailing in the Provincial Department of Lands to the effect that a homestead was a farm and a homesteader was a farmer. That may have been the case elsewhere, but not on Battle River in the early twenties. There homesteads were in the nature of investments – they provided hay and oats and pasture for saddle and pack-horses that would take their owners back, in the fall, to their far-off traplines; they were the summer homes of men who worked in the woods in wintertime."

Such passages in *Far Pastures*, written with ease as well as with understanding, mean that the reader comes away from the book with a vivid sense not only of pieces of one man's life, but also with feeling for a major sector of our heritage.

Patterson's *Trail to the Interior* takes a different form – that of a travel book with a connected narrative. It is on two levels. The first level is that of a trip he made, in large part by canoe, from tidewater at Wrangell, Alaska, up the Stikine River, across the Pacific-Arctic divide to Dease Lake, and down that lake and the Dease River to Lower Post on the Liard. It was a trip undertaken with a minimum of baggage. "As to the outfit," Patterson writes, "that was easy: mosquito net, eiderdown, rifle, tarpaulins." On the framework of his account of that trip, Patterson weaves the second level, stories of bygone days of the "persistent, determined men who pioneered" the trails he is now travelling.

Trail to the Interior is of a richness uncommon in books of its genre. His own life gave Patterson a deep sympathy for and understanding of those who lived in and travelled at and beyond the frontiers of human habitation, a personal knowledge of the demands on human beings in wild

places with the unsurpassed rewards and the uncompromising penalties to be paid by the careless or the unlucky. Not surprisingly, the men who people *Trail* are varied: Dr. G.M. Dawson in 1887 on one of his greatest trips for the Geological Survey; Warburton Pike, a few years later, struggling through the sub-arctic forest; in this century Harper Reed, Indian Agent based in Telegraph Creek, serving an area larger than many European countries; and Frank Watson, of Watson Lake, after forty years at the very edges of the wilderness, losing the battle against the invasions of twentieth century progress.

There is a joy to *Trail to the Interior*, and there is some sadness. And there is a picture of northern British Columbia, some of its places and some of its past, which will long remain in the mind of the diligent reader.

George Newell
George Newell is a member of the Victoria Historical Society.

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The Skyline Limited: The Kaslo and Slocan Railway
Robert D. Turner and David S. Wilkie. Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1993. 296 p., illus., $50

The Southwest Kootenay District in 1888 was still virtually a pristine wilderness. In the course of the succeeding decade, lode mining, with its diverse infrastructure, expanded at a rapid pace as an impressive number of gold-silver-copper and silver-lead-zinc prospects were discovered, developed and brought into production. The Klondike gold rush of 1898 has tended to cast into the shade the great mining boom in the Kootenay which preceded it, so much yet of that storied decade still lacks an appropriate historical account.

The Skyline Liimted by Robert D. Turner and David S. Wilkie redresses some of this deficiency by providing an engrossing account of a transportation war which developed during the 1890s in the Slocan Mining Division of Southwest Kootenay. The first great discoveries of high-grade silver-lead-zinc lodes in the Slocan were made over the winter of 1891–92. By the summer of 1892 the pressure was on to develop heavy-duty transportation sys-

tems which would enable all the equipment and supplies necessary for the lode mining and milling infrastructure to be freighted in and concentrate to be shipped out for smelting. In the days before the development of heavy-duty vehicles powered by internal combustion engines working on super highways, a heavy-duty transportation system meant a railway and/or a steamboat line.

In the wake of the Slocan discoveries, two lakeshore settlements sprang up to the east and west, each with a steamboat connection to a major railway line. Nakusp on Upper Arrow Lake boasted in 1892 a steamboat connection with Revelstoke, a transfer point on the Canadian Pacific Railway. Kaslo on Kootenay Lake boasted a steamboat connection with Bonners Ferry, Idaho, a transfer point on the Great Northern Railway. Each settlement looked forward to the building of a wagon road and then a railway into the heart of the Slocan. Each dreamed of becoming the major shipping point into the Slocan and the major smelting point for Slocan ore. Nakusp awaited a government subsidy to finance the building of a wagon road, while the feisty citizens of Kaslo nudged out Nakusp by raising a private subscription which enabled them to get on with building a wagon road into Sandon, the heart of the Slocan, in the winter of 1892–93. In 1895, in the wake of a series of financial and natural disasters, the Kaslo & Slocan Railway, a narrow-gauge road chartered by a group of New Westminster timber and salmon fishery barons, but heavily financed by Great Northern Railway interests, beat out the Canadian Pacific Railway's Nakusp & Slocan branch in the race to reach Sandon. The plot then kept thickening over the next decade and a half in a transportation war carried on in a period of adverse times in the base-metal mining industry. Turner and Wilkie prove equal to the challenge of recounting this gripping story.

The Skyline Limited reflects the benefits of scrupulous research and lucid writing style. The abundant number of superb illustrations of railway structures and rolling stock, steamboats, and flashbacks of the early days in Kaslo and

Slocan, many reproduced from the files of pioneer Slocan photographer R.H. Trueman, should capture the interest of the most casual reader. The railway buff will relish the wealth of detail on the layout, construction and maintenance of the K & S line and on its rolling stock. The historian will appreciate the deft way in which the story of the K & S Railway has been recounted in the context not only of the struggle between the Canadian Pacific and Great Northern interests but also of the struggle of the many producing mines in the Kaslo and Slocan Mining Divisions to remain alive in the face of a mighty U.S. lobby to choke off imports of refined lead and zinc from Canada. The K & S Railway, an engineering triumph, was throughout its brief unprofitable life dealt some mean cards by the mining economy and even meaner ones by the forces of nature which regularly visited devastating snow slides on the railway in the late winter and then administered a *coup de grace* in its closing years in the form of an annihilating forest fire.

In the 1930s, a time when the railway seems destined to vanish altogether from the face of Southwest Kootenay, and public transportation on Kootenay Lake is confined to a brief vehicle ferry service, it is difficult to contemplate the baffling formation in 1898 of the Kootenay Railway & Navigation Company, a Great Northern Railway holding company for a plethora of railway and steamboat lines which seemed doomed from the outset to ensnare the Great Northern in a quagmire of operating losses, not the least of which arose from the Kaslo & Slocan Railway operation. The full story of the Kootenay Railway & Navigation Company and of the odd lot of bedfellows who joined together in this strange consortium perhaps remains to be told, but Turner and Wilkie provide us with considerable insight into the financing and operating affairs of the KR & N, a corporate mouse which may have slowed down the march to oblivion of the plucky Kaslo & Slocan Railway.

The Skyline Limited, a publishing extravaganza, should provide the solution to a number of Christmas gift problems. No railway buff will want to be without it, while anyone who has the slightest inter-est in the heritage of the Kootenay District will treasure it.

Edward L. Affleck
Edward L. Affleck is the author of
Sternwheelers, Sandbars and Switchbacks,
Kootenay Chronicles and many other books.

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Seven Knot Summers
Beth Hill. Victoria: Horsdal & Schubart, 1994. $15.95

Here is a new book that is destined to become a classic of Inside Passage cruising literature. A distillation of thirty years' pottering among the islands and inlets of British Columbia's coast, *Seven Knot Summers* describes Beth and Ray Hill's adventures aboard the aging *Liza Jane*, a converted wooden fishboat.

The purpose of their voyaging has never been mere sightseeing. Beth Hill explains that her aim was always to experience "the feeling of being intimately bonded to this world – not just the islands, tides and giant mountains, but the coastal people, both those I met and the ones whose ghosts fled as I tried to see them."

For Hill, no coastal place is just an inanimate landscape of sea and forest. Each bay and meadow is the setting for romance, history, murder, hauntings.

On one level, *Seven Knot Summers* can be used as an informal guidebook to Georgia, Johnstone and Queen Charlotte Straits (all of the waters that lie between Vancouver Island and the southern mainland coast). The arrangement of the narrative is that of an actual cruise from Sidney, B.C., northward along the western side of the three straits, then homeward via the islands and channels of the eastern (mainland) shore.

The guidebook includes a recurrent focus on one of Beth Hill's intriguing rock-picture discoveries, not only at well-known locations like Gabriola Island but also on remoter sites such as the Thurlow Islands and Kingcome Inlet.

At its deeper levels, the book is far more than a cruising manual; its entertainingly written anecdotal content encompasses a veritable history of our inland sea. Every chapter comprises memories of snug anchorages, quaint communities and ruggedly individual personalities. Encounters with the legendary Allen and Sharie Farrell aboard their engineless lugger *China Cloud* at Lasqueti Island and with Flora and Dave Dawson who revived their abandoned village of Gwa'yi in Kingcome Inlet are typical of the scores of such events that give these coastal travels their extraordinary depth.

In a sense, Beth Hill's adventures are primarily excursions into history. The rich historical detail that we find in connection with every community and anchorage is well documented in the author's exhaustive bibliography. Yet the most fascinating revelations are not literary, but related through the living medium of oral history. It is through leisurely dockside conversations that the secret past of each place is learned. The ghastly murders at Owen Bay were recounted by an aging Johnstone Strait fisherman, a Desolation Sound cabin dweller shared her knowledge of the settlers who built her ancient log home, the story of the cougar who joined a dinner party at Refuge Cove was told by the man in whose kitchen the event occurred.

Clearly it is only at the Hills' "seven knots" that so deep an exploration of the coast is possible. Their leisurely pace calls to mind a contrasting phenomenon that I observed last summer while cruising these same waters: we were passed continually by 40-knot gin-palaces whose crews we later found at anchor typically with curtains drawn and television flickering and blaring. Give me *Liza Jane*'s style of cruising any day!

If I were to raise one small quibble, it would perhaps be this: the book's sole map is on a scale so small as to include almost no individual place names. I would like to have seen a detailed map accompany each chapter to help us identify the places visited and discussed.

But why should I look for anything to quibble about in a book that is so close to perfection as this memorable voyage into the landscapes and the histories of our magnificent coastal straits?

Philip Teece
Philip Teece is a librarian with the Greater Victoria
Public Library. He is also the author of
A Dream of Islands and numerous articles on
sailing the Pacific coast.

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