

BRITISH COLUMBIA HISTORICAL NEWS

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Courtesy Rheta Skea

Above: *Hotel keeper John Hector and his wife, Augusta Nilsson and their two daughters. Oldest daughter, Ruth Victoria, married James Skea and did some teaching in Ruskin and Langley. The youngest, Jean Louise, taught at Cache Creek, then trained as a secretary and worked for Finning Tractor in Vancouver. See Ronald Greene's "Token History" column starting on page 36.*

**Indo-Canadians in BC's
Lumber Industry**

**The Nahwitti and the
Strikers at Fort Rupert: 1850**

Mr. Sam Henry of Nakusp

**How Golden Got Its
Museum**

**Why Was it Called
Castlegar?**

Zeballos: 50 Years and More

Included:
Information and
subscription form for
the 2003 conference
in Prince George.

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“Any country worthy of a future should be interested in its past.”
W. Kaye Lamb, 1937

IT'S A GREAT JOB

Being the editor of this journal has been a great experience. I would have liked to continue doing this for many more years, but I must move on, and we need a new editor.

So what are we looking for in a successor? The future editor should of course be interested in BC history—should be a reader, a researcher, writer, or author. Previous editing experience could help, but is in no way necessary. One learns quickly on the job. Some word processing skills would be an asset. On the other hand, layout and typesetting of the journal do not have to be done by the editor. I prefer to do it myself, but another volunteer or the printers could take over this part of the production.

Essential are sustained dedication and a lot of energy and enthusiasm. This is a long-term and time-consuming commitment. An editor spends many days communicating with contributors, preparing the manuscripts for publication, and overseeing the journal's final production.

Council entrusts the publication to the editor. It is the editor who creates the journal, sets its standards, and decides its contents. The editor needs imagination, judgment, vision, and the courage to make decisions.

Yes, this is a challenging task and it is also a fascinating, rewarding, and unique learning experience. Surely there is someone out there capable and eager to take over. Please help us find that person.

the editor

Pulling Lumber: Indo-Canadians in the British Columbia Forest Industry, 1900–1998

Richard A. Rajala

Richard Rajala teaches history at the University of Victoria and the College of the Rockies, and writes mainly on social and environmental history of the West Coast forest industry. This essay was written for the Canadian Museum of Civilization in support of its BC history exhibits, and appears here with the permission of that institution.

¹ Sarjeet Singh Jagpal, *Becoming Canadian: Pioneer Sikhs in Their Own Words* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1994), p15.

² Hugh Johnston, *The East Indians in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1984), pp 1-5.

³ Donald H. Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995), p 10; Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p 135; Sonia Manak, "The Sikh Immigrant Experience," *BC Historical News* 31:4 (Fall 1998), p 34.

⁴ Johnston, *The East Indians*, p 6; Avery, *Reluctant Host*, pp 47-48.

⁵ Emmaline Smillie, "An Historical Survey of Indian Immigration Within the Empire," *Canadian Historical Review* 4 (Sept. 1923), p 221; Norman Buchignani and Doreen M. Indra with Ram

THE connection between East Indians and British Columbia's forest industry is a constant thread in the history of this important Canadian ethnic group. East Indians began arriving in the early twentieth century, just as the industry ascended to a position of dominance in the provincial economy. Subjected to discrimination in both the workplace and public affairs that drew inspiration from a rising tide of anti-Asian sentiment, the pioneers of East Indian immigration established a foothold as labourers in sawmills. Taking on the least attractive, most arduous tasks, they forged a reputation for hard work that provided a measure of security in an economy marked by boom-and-bust cycles. Victimized by a political culture that depicted Asians as the source of a host of social and economic problems, denied citizenship rights, and cut off from their families by immigration restrictions, East Indians found in the lumber industry a foundation for survival. Not until 1947 did they make the transition to Indo-Canadians, finally achieving voting rights essential to citizenship.

Until recently, almost all Indian immigrants to Canada originated in the Punjab region of northern India. Most were Sikhs. Their religion founded about five centuries ago became an efficient military force when confronted with persecution by the Moghuls. Drawing unity from the Khalsa, which required that males wear a head covering over uncut hair, small comb, bangle, ceremonial sword, and breeches, the Sikhs ruled the Punjab until Britain seized power in the mid-nineteenth century.¹

Under British rule the Punjab region underwent a painful transition from a subsistence to a market-based agricultural economy. Rising land values fostered heavy rural debt among Sikh families, prompting an exodus of young men seeking employment during the 1870s. The initial wave of migrants ventured to Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaya, some journeying as far as Australia until 1901 legislation barred further entry there. Service in the British Indian Army provided yet another option for those pushed off the land.²

The establishment of a trans-Pacific steamship service from Hong Kong to Vancouver by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1891 created the opportunity for immigration to Canada, where an economic boom would generate a rising demand for labourers willing to endure the rigours of work in a range of resource industries. Most accounts date the birth of Indian awareness of Canada as a destination from 1897, when a Sikh British Army regiment travelled across the country after attending Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in London. Received warmly by white Canadians who did not perceive any immediate threat of immigration from India, the soldiers reported favourably on the employment prospects and climate of British Columbia.³

CPR passenger agents also played a part in generating interest in Canada as a possible destination for Indian immigrants. Agitation from British Columbia trade unions concerned over labour market competition had been responsible for the introduction of a head tax on Chinese immigrants as early as 1885. The original tax of \$50 was doubled in 1900, then raised to a prohibitive \$500 in 1903, prompting the CPR to dispatch agents to Indian and Japanese ports in an effort to stimulate traffic on its faltering Pacific route. Mackenzie King would later cite CPR propaganda as the principal factor in Indian immigration as a rationale for restricting their entry. But the mere existence of the service, in conjunction with "push" factors in India and Australia's closed-door policy, made the arrival of East Indians on Canada's Pacific coast inevitable.⁴

Indian immigrants began to trickle into British Columbia in 1903, and by the spring of 1905 over four hundred had arrived. Some moved on to the United States, but those that remained sent favourable reports back to relatives. Met with curiosity rather than outright hostility because of their small numbers, fewer than three hundred Sikhs resided in the province during the spring of 1906. Encouraged by the opportunity of wage labour in the sawmills of Victoria and the Lower Mainland, the number of arrivals increased to almost 5,000 in 1907 and 1908. Most

>>>



had no intention of staying, hoping instead to send savings back to assist their families in paying off mortgaged land holdings. Having borrowed the cost of passage from friends and relatives, most arrived destitute and unable to speak English, a willingness to work their only asset.⁵

By this time the forest industry had ascended to the peak of the province's economic hierarchy, surpassing mining and the salmon fishery. The Lower Mainland and southern Vancouver Island were the primary coastal lumbering centres, linked by rail to booming Prairie markets or by steamship to Pacific Rim destinations. Although the scale of logging and milling operations varied widely, the largest had taken on a highly mechanized, mass production character. In the woods, steam donkeys "yarded" logs with steel cables to railways, which carried logs to tide-water for towing to the mills. There, electrically or steam-driven circular saws and band saws cut the logs into cants. Moving chains carried these to edgers and trimmers for sawing into the appropriate dimensions. The rough lumber might then be piled in the yard, or run through planers to produce a smooth finish prior to stacking in large sheds. By 1900 powered conveyors had eliminated some of the manual handling inside

the most sophisticated mills, but once the lumber emerged from the plant human labour performed much of the stacking and shifting around the yard.⁶

Between 1900 and 1913 revenues from forestry increased from \$136,000 to over \$2 million, and capital from American and eastern Canadian sources fuelled a boom that drew over 17,000 men of various nationalities and races into the industry. White labour predominated in the logging camps, although Japanese crews participated in supplying cedar bolts for shingle mills. Mounting anti-Asian sentiment prompted the provincial government to prohibit the employment of Japanese or Chinese workers on its Special Timber Licences in 1906, although enforcement lagged until protests in 1911 produced stricter regulation. In the mills, where the vast majority of the East Indians were destined to find employment, perhaps 35 percent of the workforce was Chinese in 1891. Japanese workers grew more numerous in the 1890s, most relegated along with the Chinese to unskilled labouring jobs. White workers occupied the most highly skilled positions, as machine operators, engineers, and tally-men.⁷

Above: Sikhs on arrival at Vancouver.

Srivastava, *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985), p 18.

⁶ C.J. Taylor, *The Heritage of the British Columbia Forest Industry: A Guide for Planning, Selection and Interpretation of Sites* (Ottawa: Environment Canada, 1987), pp 36-37, 48, 53; Gordon Hak, *Turning Trees into Dollars: The British Columbia Coastal Lumber Industry, 1858-1913* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp 116-32; On logging see Richard A. Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest: Production, Science and Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998).

⁷ G.W. Taylor, *Timber: History of the Forest Industry in B.C.*

Notes continue >>>

(Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1975), p 98; Taylor *The Heritage*, pp 92-93; Hak, *Turning Trees into Dollars*, pp 138, 150-53.

⁸ "New Westminster, B.C. and District," *Labour Gazette* 6 (Feb. 1906), p 869 [hereafter *LG*]; Allen Seager, "Workers, Class, and Industrial Conflict in New Westminster, 1900-1930," in *Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia: Selected Papers* eds. Rennie Warburton and David Coburn (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), p 120; Jagpal, *Becoming Canadian*, p 58; Hak, *Turning Trees into Dollars*, p 155.

⁹ W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), pp 108-9; Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians; 1900-1950," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 13 (May 1980), pp 161-72.

¹⁰ Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, pp 8-21; "Notes," *LG* 7 (Nov. 1906), p 539; Manak, "The Sikh," p 35.

¹¹ For a recent treatment of the Vancouver riot see Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989), pp 185-226.

¹² "Chinese and Indian Immigration to Canada—Report of Inquiry Under Commission by the Deputy Minister of Labour," *LG* 9 (Sept. 1908), pp 297-301; Avery, *Reluctant Host*, pp 50-52; Buchignani and Indra,

The curtailment of Chinese immigration provided immediate opportunity for the pioneer East Indians in the sawmills of the Lower Mainland and Victoria. In Vancouver, the mills along False Creek became the centre of Sikh participation. The giant Fraser Mills plant in New Westminster attracted a group that numbered about ten in 1906 but increased rapidly over the next few years. By 1907 Vancouver's population of 70,000 included 750 East Indians, 4,500 Chinese, and 1,800 Japanese. These minorities made up 14 percent of New Westminster's residents in 1913. A 1908 estimate put the total number of workers in major Vancouver sawmills at 2,443, divided among 1,067 whites, 802 Japanese, 399 Chinese, and 175 East Indians.⁸

The East Indian pioneers confronted a volatile atmosphere as concern mounted among whites about the perceived threat Asians posed to British Columbia's status as a "white man's country." A fear of economic competition underlay much of the hostility, buttressed by a deeply-ingrained sense of racial superiority. Although numerically insignificant, East Indians came in for a disproportionate share of suspicion because of their distinctive appearance, highlighted by the traditional Sikh turban and beard, poor housing conditions, and a popular conception of India as a land of poverty-stricken peasant masses. Within a short time of their arrival, many British Columbians viewed them as the least desirable of the Asian immigrants.⁹

As early as August 1906 the Vancouver and Victoria Trades and Labour Councils protested the unrestricted entry of "Hindoo" workers, and the press depicted Sikhs as "alien, foreign, diseased, and immoral." Vancouver, provincial, and federal officials responded by exerting pressure on both the CPR and the Indian government to curtail their entry. India's membership in the British Empire made Ottawa reluctant to take heavy-handed action, but the provincial government, free of the constraints imposed by diplomatic considerations, took immediate steps to limit East Indian citizenship rights. Legislation passed in the spring of 1907 disenfranchised all "natives of India not of Anglo-Saxon parents." Stricken from the provincial voters' list, East Indians were automatically deprived of the vote in federal elections. Subsequent provincial action prohibited them from employment on public works, from purchasing Crown timber rights, and from entering the legal and pharmaceutical pro-

fessions.¹⁰

Free for the moment from federal discrimination, Sikhs faced increasing resentment that autumn as worsening economic conditions made Asian labourers an easy scapegoat for mounting unemployment. Vancouver's Asiatic Exclusion League drew workers and prominent citizens together in defence of a white British Columbia. Perhaps inspired by an incident in Bellingham that saw white sawmill workers drive East Indian labourers from that town, a meeting of the Exclusion League two days later erupted into a race riot that swept through Chinese and Japanese areas of Vancouver.¹¹

Although the city's East Indians escaped the mob's wrath, Ottawa moved quickly to curtail further immigration from India. An inquiry headed by Deputy Minister of Labour Mackenzie King first attributed the bulk of Indian immigration to the activities of the steamship agents, and urged restrictions to calm race relations in the Pacific province. Rather than impose a head tax, a measure British officials feared might spark protest in its colony, the Laurier administration adopted two Orders-in-Council in January 1908 that achieved the desired end without making specific reference to East Indians. The first required all immigrants to travel from their country of citizenship by "continuous journey," an impossibility for Sikhs since no such service existed between the ports of India and Canada. The second required all Asians arriving in Canada from countries without "special arrangements" to have \$200 in their possession.¹²

East Indian immigration came to a virtual halt under the federal restrictions, effectively isolating the pioneers who had arrived between 1904 and 1908. Only 118 managed to secure entry over the next twelve years. An East Indian population of roughly 5,000 in 1909 dwindled to only 2,342 within two years. Four hundred and ninety of these men lived in Vancouver, another eighty-five in Victoria, with most of the remainder scattered throughout the lumbering centres along the east coast of Vancouver Island and the Fraser Valley. Less than fifty East Indian residents of Canada lived outside of British Columbia. By 1921 departures to India or the United States brought the total down to about a thousand, an overwhelmingly male population that immigration restrictions had separated from families in India. Although protests and court challenges persuaded federal officials to allow some wives



and children into Canada after 1912, few were able to surmount the obstacles.¹³

Isolated, politically powerless, and relegated to unskilled labour in the sawmills, the pioneers closed ranks. Keeping largely to themselves within both the job site and the wider community, they developed a tightly knit network of mutual support based on work and religion. At the mills, most laboured pulling, piling, and moving lumber, arduous tasks that demanded physical strength. In Vancouver, New Westminster, Abbotsford, Victoria, Comox, the Cowichan Valley, and other lumbering centres they constituted an essential component of the sawmill labour force, quickly acquiring a reputation as hard-working, reliable, inexpensive employees. An early-twentieth-century Victoria mill owner described them as “energetic workers with a keen desire to learn.” Another used similar terms; his East Indian employees were “steady workers, attentive to their work ... and quick to learn.” At some plants Sikh labour contractors emerged. Such arrangements encouraged exploitation, evident in a March 1909 incident at Fraser Mills when about a hundred

East Indians struck in response to the contractor’s failure to pay their wages. Asian workers were also subject to extortion from supervisors who demanded that they pay for their jobs. Three foremen were fired from the Royal City Mills on False Creek in 1908 for receiving monthly “tribute” from Japanese and East Indian workers.¹⁴

East Indian millworkers entered a labour process fragmented sharply along racial lines. They would be defined as unskilled, deserving of lower wages than whites who refused to accept occupations designated as “Asian jobs.” Employers capitalized on labour segmentation in their mills, justifying the discriminatory wage structure on the grounds of lower Asian standards of living. Fully exposed to the shifting tides of a volatile staples economy, Asians were frequently the first to suffer wage cuts or be fired when business dropped off. When markets slumped in late 1907, for example, the B.C. Lumber and Shingle Manufacturers’ Association slashed the wages of Orientals while maintaining those of white employees.¹⁵

Race remained a fundamental divide in Brit-

Above: *Sooke. Kapoor Lumber Company.*

Continuous Journey, pp 23-26.

¹³ Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, pp 39-42.

¹⁴ Rajani Kanta Das, *Hindustani Workers on the Pacific Coast* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1923), p 44; *LG* (March 1909), p 1009; *Timberman* 9 (Aug. 1908), p 49.

¹⁵ “Our British Columbia Letter,” *Pacific Lumber*

Trade Journal 13 (Oct. 1907), p 30 [hereafter *PLTJ*]; *Hindustani Workers*, p 49; Hak, *Turning Trees into Dollars*, p 158.

¹⁶ Hak, *Turning Trees into Dollars*, p 157.

¹⁷ Gillian Creese, "Exclusion of Solidarity? Vancouver Workers Confront the 'Oriental Problem,'" *BC Studies* 80 (Winter 1988), pp 32-33; "Vancouver Trades and Labour Council Proceedings," *Western Wage-Earner* 2 (May 1910), p 5; "Editorial Notes," *Ibid*, 2 (Oct. 1910), p 12; *LG* 12 (Dec. 1911), p 600; "The Hindoo Question," *B. C. Federationist*, 20 Jan. 1912, p 4 [hereafter *BCF*].

¹⁸ "The Race Question," *BCF*, 8 August 1913, p 2; "How the 'White BC,' Election Slogan Works Out in Practice," *BCF*, 22 June 1912, p 3; Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, p 42.

¹⁹ "Lumbering," *LG* 6 (May 1906), p 1184; *Western Lumberman* 9 (Mar. 1912), p 26 [hereafter *WL*]; "British Columbia," *Timberman* 11 (Jan. 1910), p 32.

²⁰ "News From British Columbia," *PLTJ* 18 (Jan. 1913), p 21; "Unemployed Problem Demanding Attention of Municipalities," *BCF*, 18 July 1913, p 1.

²¹ Mahinder Singh Dhillon, *A History Book of the Sikhs in Canada and California* (Vancouver: Shromani Akali Dal Association of Canada, 1981), p 256; Jagpal, *Becoming Canadian*, p 52.

ish Columbia sawmills well into the twentieth century, a source of unity among whites that erected a barrier to class cohesion. As early as 1886 strikes occurred on the principle of Asian exclusion, despite the fact that white mill workers benefited from their presence. "The lower wages paid to Asians," Gordon Hak explains, "enabled skilled white workers to retain their jobs in a competitive environment and sustained their wages at a higher level than would otherwise have been possible."¹⁶

Nevertheless, the fear of cheap labour competition in association with racist attitudes that depicted Asians as inferior and unassimilable proved durable in the labour movement. In 1910 the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council urged legislation to abolish the employment of Oriental labour in British Columbia's lumber, mining, and fishing industries. The organization's journal frequently deplored the "hordes of Asiatics" working in Vancouver area sawmills. East Indians drew specific attention in 1912 when the change in immigration regulations permitted the entry of a few wives and children. "The fate of Canada as a white man's country is in the balance," one unionist warned. "The great question of whether this country of ours is to be the heritage of our children or the heritage of the yellow and black races must be decided now, once and for all."¹⁷

Only a minority within British Columbia's labour movement spoke up for inclusion prior to the First World War. The revolutionary Industrial Workers of the World translated organizing literature into Punjabi, and a 1913 *B. C. Federationist* editorial acknowledged that while the notion of "organizing or mixing" with Asians was repugnant to many, they too belonged to the "wage slave class." The more pervasive perspective condemned Asians for undercutting white wages and lowering working class living standards.¹⁸

White sawmill owners shared the prevailing view of Asians as undesirable, though essential to profitable operation. Operators did not employ "Hindoos" out of choice, the *Western Lumberman* claimed, but in response to a shortage of white mill workers. Nevertheless, some did attempt to eliminate the Asians from time to time. In 1906 the Victoria Lumber and Manufacturing Company at Chemainus declared that its Chinese workers would be displaced in favor of white labour, considered to be "cheaper than Chinese in the end." The Canadian Western Lumber Com-

pany, operator of the largest plant in the province, announced its intention in 1909 to hire French Canadian workers to take the place of its Asian employees at Fraser Mills. The firm established the community of Maillardville to house the new arrivals, and by early 1910 had reportedly discharged 150 East Indian and Chinese workers.¹⁹

When the industry slumped in 1913 the Small-Bucklin Lumber Company of New Westminster dismissed 90 Sikh "pilers and shifters" in an effort to create an all-white labour force. That summer, with Vancouver mills closing due to a lack of orders, trade unionists worried that the unemployed "Orientals and Hindus" would drift into other sectors of the economy. "In as much as they work for practically nothing and board themselves, even the present standard of wages will likely receive another jolt," predicted the *B. C. Federationist*.²⁰

Without the ties of family life, Sikh mill workers adopted a strategy of geographic mobility both as a matter of survival and a means of securing better pay and conditions. Information concerning job opportunities and wages flowed freely throughout the tightly knit community. Some Sikhs ventured as far as the Kootenays, finding work in the mills at Golden. Others travelled up the coast to Ocean Falls, where a small community emerged in conjunction with the Pacific Mills pulp and paper operation.

Wherever Sikhs gathered in sufficient numbers, temples were established as centres of religious and social life. The Khalsa Diwan Society, organized in Vancouver in 1907 to deal with religious matters, undertook construction of British Columbia's first Sikh temple, or Gurdwara, the following year. Victoria's Sikh community followed in 1910. The Canadian Western Lumber Company, which never succeeded in ending its reliance on Asians, built a temple for Sikh workers at Fraser Mills around this time. Sikh millworkers at Abbotsford purchased lumber from area plants for a Gurdwara completed in 1911. Ocean Falls, Nanaimo, and Golden also had a sufficient concentration of East Indian residents to warrant the building of temples. Beyond their purely religious function, the Gurdwaras typically provided kitchens for communal meals, temporary lodging for those in need, and a vital gathering place for East Indians.²¹

The Khalsa Diwan Society and local Gurdwaras also served as centres of Sikh political organiza-



tion, an aspect of growing importance as events unfolded during the prelude to the First World War. As a provincial recession deepened in 1913, British Columbia's East Indian community had apparent cause to rejoice that November when Supreme Court Justice Hunter struck down both the "continuous journey" regulation and the \$200 entry requirement on purely technical grounds. Over the previous year several Indian immigrants had taken advantage of a recently established steamship service between Indian ports and Victoria, only to be detained for deportation upon arrival. Hunter's ruling on their cases appeared to resolve the issue, and in consequence throw open the doors to unrestricted entry, but once again appeals from the province prompted immediate action by authorities in Ottawa. Citing "overcrowding of the labour market in Western Canada," Robert Borden's Conservative government adopted an Order-in-Council forbidding the entry of any "immigrants of the artisan and labouring classes" at west coast ports. Although the measure again made no mention of East Indians, its intent was to replace the barrier removed by Hunter's decision.²²

The Borden government's involvement with East Indian immigration took a more serious turn

in May 1914 when the *Komagata Maru* arrived at Vancouver harbour with 376 Sikhs on board. With Vancouver still reeling from high unemployment, the mayor presided at a mass meeting that demanded federal action to prevent their landing. Ottawa supported this position, having already renewed the Order-in-Council on 31 March. But when immigration officials issued deportation orders the Sikhs seized the ship on 18 July. Three days later the newly acquired naval cruiser *Rainbow* arrived from Esquimalt and anchored beside the *Komagata Maru*. The Indians agreed to return to Hong Kong, and thousands of Vancouverites lined the shores as the *Rainbow* escorted the Indian ship out of the harbour on 23 July. "Meant to be a symbol of unity for the Empire," notes Joan Jensen, "the new Canadian navy was thus first used to prevent the landing of British subjects in the Empire."²³

The *Komagata Maru* incident further eroded the pioneers' faith in their adopted home, prompting many to return to India or move on to the United States. But for some of those that remained, the years between the First World War and the early 1920s brought new entrepreneurial opportunities. Beginning in 1914, groups of East Indians with kinship or village ties began pool-

Above: Sawmill crew and inspector.

²² "Unemployment in Western Canada—Immigration of Artisans and Labourers at British Columbia Ports Prohibited by Order-in-Council," *LG* 14 (Jan. 1914), pp 820-21; Avery, *Reluctant Host*, p 54; Smillie, "An Historical Survey," p 222.

²³ Joan M. Jensen, *Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp 130-37; "Vancouver," *LG* 15 (July 1919), p 45; "Hindu Immigration to British Columbia," *LG* 15 (Aug. 1915), pp 268-72.

²⁴ K.K. Prasad, *The Historical Development of East Indian Economic Activities in British Columbia, 1900-1945* (Institute of Asian Research, University of British Columbia, 1983), pp 32-33; Joan Mayo, *Paldi Remembered: 50 Years in the Life of a Vancouver Island Logging Town* (The Author, 1997), pp 1-4.

²⁵ *WL 14* (Mar. 1917), p 24; Mayo, *Paldi Remembered*, p 24.

²⁶ Richard Rajala, *The Legacy and the Challenge: A Century of the Forest Industry at Cowichan Lake* (Lake Cowichan Heritage Advisory Committee, 1993), p 31; Mayo, *Paldi Remembered*, p 37; *WL 14* (Oct. 1917), p 54; Jagpal, *Becoming Canadian*, pp 67-77.

Below: *Fraser Mills. Canadian Western Lumber Co. Ltd.*

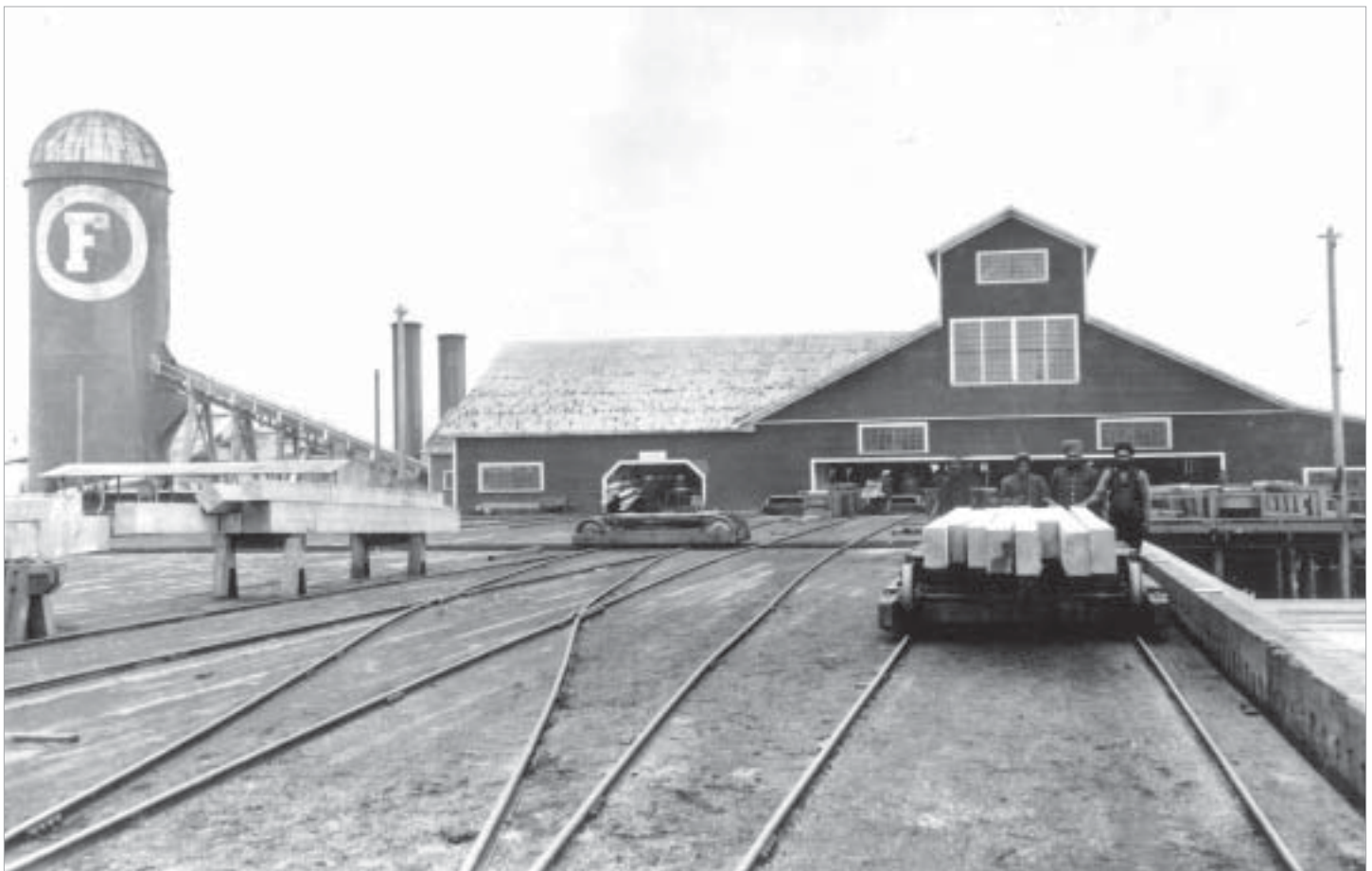
ing resources to lease or purchase small sawmills in the Fraser Valley. Typically the partners laboured in the mills alongside their Sikh employees, hiring additional Chinese and Japanese workers and sharing whatever profits their enterprises generated. Mayo Singh would take this route to become British Columbia's most prominent East Indian lumberman. A worker at the Fernridge Lumber Company in Rosedale when that mill failed in 1912, three years later he joined with thirty-five other ex-employees to purchase the operation.²⁴

When their newly titled Cheam Lumber Company exhausted the plant's timber supply in 1917, Mayo's syndicate took over the Marcum Lumber Company near New Westminster. "Still another coast mill has been taken over by Hindoos," observed the *Western Lumberman*. When that operation neared the end of its timber supply Mayo located new private reserves in the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway Belt between Duncan and Lake Cowichan. Kapoor Singh, then homesteading in Ontario, came west to join the partners as a bookkeeper during this period.²⁵

Under the management of Mayo and Kapoor, the syndicate established a sawmill and ethnically

diverse community later named Paldi, after Mayo's village in India. The plant went into production in late 1917, supplied by a two-mile logging railway and an assortment of steam donkeys. Mayo built a temple for his Sikh employees in 1919, and by the early 1920s the settlement had become a "neat looking mill village" consisting of East Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and white sections. Nearby at Hillcrest, Carleton Stone operated a sawmill that gained a reputation among Sikhs as a reliable place of employment. In 1935 Stone built a Gurdwara for his Sikh workers, and Hillcrest became the site of a substantial East Indian settlement. Mayo and Kapoor gradually bought out the other Paldi shareholders during the decade, operating the enterprise as equal partners and establishing the Kapoor Lumber Company near Sooke on the same basis.²⁶

Mayo and Kapoor would eventually go their separate ways, the former gaining renown for his philanthropy until his death in 1955. By this time his operations included mills at McKay Lake and Summit, several logging operations, and a new mill under construction at Nanaimo that his sons went on to manage. Kapoor later established a large sawmill at Barnet, employing a multiracial



workforce there and at the Cowichan Valley logging operations that supplied the plant. East Indians engaged in logging for both companies, a rarity during a period when occupational segregation along racial lines prevailed. At Paldi Sikhs worked in the most highly skilled positions, as high riggers and hooktenders, illustrating the extent to which East Indian ownership provided opportunity at the very apex of the logging labour force.²⁷

East Indian syndicates established a number of enterprises during the same period that gave rise to the Mayo-Kapoor partnership, including the Tansor Lumber Company at Duncan, the Eastern Lumber Company at Ladysmith, the Virginia Lumber Company at Coombs, and the Bharat Lumber Company in Vancouver. By 1922 Sikhs operated seven logging camps, two shingle mills, and six lumber companies in British Columbia, as well as over twenty farms. "Our Hindu fellow-subjects of his Majesty King George, having served ... in menial capacities while getting an insight into the lumber industry, are now manifesting a most disturbing tendency to compete with their former employers," noted an industry organ.²⁸

The wood-fuel business, a logical outgrowth of participation in lumbering, offered another outlet for East Indian entrepreneurialism. A few of the pioneers embarked on such ventures as early as 1908, purchasing scrap wood from mills and transporting it to homes in horse-drawn carts. Investment in motorized trucks followed, with family-based enterprises later becoming prominent in the delivery of sawdust when the development of conversion units for stoves and furnaces permitted home heating with this inexpensive fuel. By 1927, 21 East Indian dealerships serviced the Lower Mainland, and perhaps 60 existed throughout the province. Most of these owner-operators conducted business with a single truck, but larger fleets emerged over time. Sohan Brothers of Burnaby became the major player, owning thirty vehicles. Only the availability of cleaner, cheaper fuel alternatives during the 1950s curtailed Sikh involvement in the field.²⁹

For the vast majority who remained wage labourers, the 1920s brought a certain stability. No longer sojourners, but effectively isolated from the society that offered little in the way of acceptance, the Sikhs focused on carving out an existence. Some 400 new arrivals cleared the immigration hurdle during the decade, thanks to

a half-hearted acceptance of family unification that permitted the entry of 144 adult women and 188 children. The age and gender imbalance remained, however, and by 1930 fewer than two hundred East Indian families resided in Canada.³⁰

At the workplace, relations between Asians and whites remained strained. Although labour shortages and inflation promoted working class militancy during the First World War, and the BC Federation of Labour launched an organizing drive among loggers and lumber workers late in 1918, the extent of racial tolerance among the new Lumber Workers Industrial Union is difficult to assess. The organization included some Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian members during its brief post-war challenge to the control exerted by employers, before withering away during the early 1920s in the face of recession, mounting unemployment, and a determined open-shop drive. But even at the height of the organizing drive race remained a barrier to unity. When the American Federation of Labour's United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners pressed for a wage increase at Victoria mills in 1919, the demands included replacement of Asian workers with returned soldiers.³¹

As racial divisions overwhelmed class cohesion in the early 1920s, the provincial labour movement embraced the traditional policy of Asian exclusion. Mill owners countered the growing chorus of demands for the eviction of East Indian, Chinese, and Japanese workers with two arguments. Not only could they not survive in the marketplace paying the white wage rate throughout their plants, the Asians were confined to jobs that Caucasians "would not care to handle." By mid-1919 a Repatriation League had come into existence to pressure employers into substituting veterans for Asians, with some apparent success. The Port Haney Sawmill discharged a number of Asians that June, and by year's end the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council boasted that the League had achieved a substantial reduction in Asian sawmill employment.³²

While adamant that whites far outnumbered Asians in their plants, employers continued to assert that the latter were essential to their competitive survival. "No white man likes to employ a brown one instead of his own kind," declared the *Western Lumberman*, but in the final analysis the question was one of productivity. "If a white man will not produce as much as he demands as a wage and a brown man will, why, the brown

²⁷ *Canada Lumberman* 75 (Apr. 1955), p 82; John F.T. Saywell, *Kaatza: The Chronicles of Cowichan Lake* (Cowichan Lake District Centennial Committee, 1967), pp 138-39; "Kapoor Emphasizes Standardization," *Truck Logger* (Sept. 1949), p 14; Mayo, *Paldi Remembered*, pp 45, 53.

²⁸ Prasad, *The Historical Development*, p 33; Das, *Hindustani Workers*, p 27; "Hindus Now Operating Five British Columbia Mills," *WL* 14 (Apr. 1917), p 31.

²⁹ Murindar Singh, *Canadian Sikhs: History, Religion, and Culture of Sikhs in North America* (Ottawa: Canadian Sikhs' Studies Institute, 1994), p 93; Jagpal, *Becoming Canadian*, pp 58-59; Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, p 78.

³⁰ Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, pp 71-74.

³¹ Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity," pp 38-40; Seager, "Workers, Class," p 123; "Will Negotiate Instead of Striking," *WL* 16 (May 1919), p 41.

³² "Fire Orientals From Mills is Remedy," *WL* 16 (June 1919), p 40, *WL* 16 (June 1919), pp 16, 33; *WL* 16 (Dec. 1919), p 36.

³³ "White and Oriental Labour," *Pacific Coast Lumberman* 4 (Aug. 1920), pp 27-28; "The Hindu and the Jap," *WL* 19 (Mar. 1922), p 74.

³⁴ "Would Eliminate Orientals," *WL* 19 (July 1922), p 35; "B.C. Mills to Oust Orientals," *Pulp and Paper Magazine of Canada* 20 (10 Aug. 1922), p 686; "The Oriental Question," *WL* 19 (Dec. 1922), pp 22-23; "Exclusion of Orientals Sought by B.C. Legislature," *LG* 22 (Dec. 1922), p 125.

³⁵ "Oriental Employees in British Columbia," *LG* 24 (Dec. 1924), p 1024; "Unemployment and Oriental Labour," *LG* 25 (Jan. 1925), p 25; "Oriental Population of British Columbia," *LG* 27 (Apr. 1927), pp 399-400; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Society in the Twentieth Century," in *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia* ed. Hugh J.M. Johnston (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1996), p 276; Rajala, *The Legacy and the Challenge*, p 26; Taylor, *The Heritage*, pp 164-65.

³⁶ Das, *Hindustani Workers*, pp 68-72; Johnston, *The East Indians*, p 8; Jagpal, *Becoming Canadian*, pp 57-62.

³⁷ Das, *Hindustani Workers*, p 68; Johnston, *The East Indians*, p 8; Jagpal, *Becoming Canadian*, pp 57-62.

³⁸ Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, pp 88-90.

³⁹ Prasad, *The Historical Development*, pp 45-46; Barman, *The West Beyond The West*, p 102; Loggers, *Wives and Sawmill Workers: Memories From the Cowichan Valley* (Malaspina University College, nd), p 33.

man is going to get the work." White workers should befriend their bosses, put forth an honest effort, and soon there would be "no room or place for the Hindu or Jap."³³

As British Columbia's economy continued to spiral into the post-First-World-War recession, racial tensions escalated. Chinese, East Indians, and whites found common cause in a 1925 Victoria sawmill strike, but provincial politicians took centre stage in a concerted campaign to undermine Asian employment. Attorney General Alex Manson made a 1922 appeal to lumber, shingle, and pulp and paper manufacturers to oust their Asian workers. Later that year the legislature passed a unanimous resolution asking Ottawa to "completely prohibit Asian immigration into Canada," following up with another requesting amendment of the British North America Act to bar Asian ownership or employment in the province's forest, mining, fishing, and agricultural industries.³⁴

Ottawa responded by closing the door to immigration from China in 1923, and by 1925 the province was able to report a marked decrease in the Oriental component of the labour force to 12 percent from the 1918 level of 20 percent. Still, Asiatic employment in lumbering stood at almost 22 percent in 1924. East Indians, who had made up almost 5 percent of the lumber industry's employees in 1919, comprised 2.42 percent of the 1925 total. An estimated 1,103 East Indians resided in the province by that date, their population dwarfed by 25,216 Chinese and 19,455 Japanese. Booming domestic and foreign demand brought the value of production in the provincial forest industry from under \$50 million to \$87 million in the years between 1923 and 1929, and two years later Asians comprised 7.3 percent of British Columbia's population. But while prosperity during the latter 1920s may have encouraged some moderation, anti-Asian sentiment remained strong. When threatened with minimum wage legislation in 1926, a measure mill owners perceived as a threat to Asian employment, they pledged to voluntarily reduce their dependence on these workers by 25 percent each year over the next five years.³⁵

The beleaguered Sikh minority withstood the storms of the 1920s, most now resigned to a role as "bunkhouse men." At mill sites racial segregation dictated the arrangement of accommodations, each group occupying separate bunkhouses. The typical East Indian bunkhouse was a long

wooden structure, two or three men sharing each of the cramped rooms that ran along each side of a narrow hallway. A meeting room at one end of the building provided a place for socializing, but living conditions were spartan at best. Rajani Kanta Das found conditions at Paldi superior to those at other mills, where men slept in drafty, low-ceilinged "shacks" and moisture crept up the walls from ground that rains frequently turned into a muddy quagmire. Alternatively, men might pool resources to rent a lodging house near the mill. In either case, they saved money to send back to families in India by operating communal kitchens or cookhouses, each man contributing an equal share of his earnings to purchase food and pay the wages of older men who prepared the meals. Such "dining clubs" operated on a democratic basis, the members taking turns assuming the responsibility for buying provisions and collecting monthly dues.³⁶

The mills operated on ten-hour shifts, six days a week, and according to one survey East Indian wages ranged from 26 cents to 75 cents an hour during the early 1920s. Whites might earn up to \$1.00 an hour. When Das toured British Columbia mills at this time he observed that workers of all races dressed similarly, according to the norm for the various occupations. He encountered many Sikhs who had cut their hair and discarded the turban in favour of hats, and Jagpal contends that the pioneers exerted considerable pressure on younger Sikhs to conform to western dress and hair styles. Still, Johnston estimates that just over half of the men retained their traditional turbans and beards.³⁷

British Columbia's marginalized East Indian community experienced great hardship in 1930 when lumber and paper markets collapsed under the weight of the Great Depression. Plant closures and wage cuts over the next three years reinforced hostility toward Asians. T.D. Pattullo's new Liberal administration responded to the economic crisis by instituting a range of reformist legislation in 1934, including a minimum wage law. But the measure included an exemption for 25 percent of the workers in sawmills, typically Asians who remained confined to the lower ranks of the occupational hierarchy.³⁸

Although forest product demand began to pick up around this time, the Depression "only worsened already harsh conditions" for Asian workers. The downturn in lumbering prompted East Indians to take up seasonal agricultural work,



Above: *Lumber piles, Cameron Mills, Victoria.*

general labouring, or various forms of self-employment. Some returned to India, but those who hung on survived by relying on the strategies developed over preceding decades. Able to live frugally in groups, to rely on the Gurdwara for support, and to move quickly when opportunity beckoned, the Sikhs weathered the Depression with little or no dependence on the “dole.” Karm Manak began working with his father at Hillcrest in 1929, went back to India for two or three years when the Depression hit, returning in 1933 to take work in a Vancouver mill for 10 cents an hour. Within a couple of years he had elevated his hourly rate to 15 cents, before accepting a job back at Hillcrest at 25 cents an hour.³⁹

The emergence of allies in the struggle for political equality brightened an otherwise dismal decade. Established in 1932, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation threw its support behind Asian voting rights. So too, eventually, would the International Woodworkers of America. Wage cutting by employers during the early 1930s provided the opportunity for a rebirth of industrial unionism, beginning with the Fraser Mills strike of 1931. There, English Canadian, French Canadian, Japanese, Chinese, and East

Indian workers made common cause against the Canadian Western Lumber Company to force wage concessions after a strike of two months duration.⁴⁰

The woodworkers’ union made little headway in the sawmills for the next few years, perhaps in part because of resistance to Asian membership. But the initiation of an organizing drive in Lower Mainland mills in 1936 targeted racial divisions that allowed employers to play Asians and whites off against each other. To this end the union made a point of exposing the exploitation of minorities, drawing attention to an East Indian greenchain foreman for the Mohawk Lumber Company at New Westminster who forced the single countrymen under his authority to live at the boarding house he owned. Operations that continued to practise wage discrimination also came under attack. The union cited the Mayo Lumber Company and Hillcrest Lumber Company near Duncan as two of the worst offenders because of the large number of Asians employed by those firms.⁴¹

The IWA’s membership stood at only 1,564 when the Second World War erupted, a conflict that created a decisive shift in the balance of power

⁴⁰ Jeanne Myers, “Class and Community in the Fraser Mills Strike, 1931,” in *Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia: Selected Papers* eds. Rennie Warburton and David Coburn (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), pp 141-160.

⁴¹ “Commence Drive to Build Union in Local Mills,” *B.C. Lumber Worker*, 18 Apr. 1936, p 1 [hereafter *BCLW*]; “Men Forced to Live in Home of Foreman,” *BCLW*, 13 June 1936, p 4; “Elimination of Tyee is Problem in Mills,” *BCLW*, 13 June 1936, p 8; “Evade Wage Law on Lower Island,” *BCLW*, 11 July 1936, p 10.

⁴² Jagpal, *Becoming Canadian*, pp 142-44; Rajala, *The Legacy and the Challenge*, p 102.

⁴³ "East Indians Get Equal Pay Granted," *BCLW*, 25 Jan. 1943, p 2; "Youbou Orientals Demand Equal Pay for Equal Work," *BCLW*, 8 Mar. 1943, p 3; "All Orientals Join IWA, Equal Pay Established," *BCLW*, 1 Nov. 1943, p 5; "Union Gains at Fraser Mills," *BCLW*, 8 Feb. 1943, p 6; "IWA Demands Improved Sanitary Conditions," *BCLW*, 12 July 1943, p 3; "Local 118 at Victoria Elects Officers," *BCLW*, 10 Jan. 1943, p 3; Vir Inderjit Kaur Padda, "The East Indian Community Research — Cowichan Valley," (Unpublished Report, Royal British Columbia Museum, 1980), p 17; For a very revealing account of one Sikh's experience as an IWA official see Tara Singh Bains and Hugh Johnston, *The Four Quarters of the Night: The Life-Journey of an Emigrant Sikh* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

⁴⁴ "Votes for B.C.'s Minorities IWA Demand," *BCLW*, 4 Nov. 1946, p 2; Jagpal, *Becoming Canadian*, pp 146-47; Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, p 99.

⁴⁵ Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, p 98; Pradda, "The East Indian Community," p 17, 23; Jagpal, *Becoming Canadian*, p 90, 121; Mayo, *Paldi Remembered*, pp 70-71.

in the camps and mills. Booming markets, enlistments, and the internment of the Japanese in 1942 created a labour scarcity that drove wages upward and generated a more favourable atmosphere for industrial unionism. IWA fortunes improved as organizers such as Darshan Sangha held meetings and distributed literature throughout the coastal region. Appointed to organize East Indian mill workers, Sangha began going from mill to mill during the early 1940s, working to overcome the very real fear that union membership would bring immediate dismissal. Once successful in recruiting a small group of supporters who would continue rallying support among East Indians in the plant, Sangha moved on. This approach began paying dividends in 1942 at Cowichan Lake, a centre of union solidarity. East Indian crews at the Hillcrest Lumber Company, now situated at Mesachie Lake, and Industrial Timber Mills at Youbou contributed their support to unanimous votes in favour of IWA membership that summer. Workers at the giant Victoria Lumber and Manufacturing Company mill at Chemainus also voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with the IWA.⁴²

The following spring changes to the province's labour code provided for government recognition of unions in the event of such votes, and the IWA scored another important victory by obtaining a Regional War Labour Board ruling at Fraser Mills confirming the principle of equal pay for Asian workers. Evidence of the benefits of union membership fostered support among Asians. By late 1943 the entire contingent of 63 East Indian workers at Youbou had joined the IWA, following confirmation of the "equal pay for equal work" decision. The union also protested the miserable bunkhouse conditions endured by East Indian and Chinese workers at Fraser Mills and other plants, contrasting these with new housing facilities at Youbou. That bunkhouse, built at union insistence, featured steam heat, spring beds, and two-man rooms. By 1946 the IWA was British Columbia's largest labour union, thanks in part to the support of East Indian members and activists who served their locals in a range of official capacities.⁴³

Aside from its role in securing a measure of workplace equality, the IWA provided East Indians with their first institutional opportunity to participate in the dominant culture. Moreover, the union threw its support behind East Indian efforts to gain equal citizenship rights during the

war years. Mayo Singh and Kapoor Singh were among the prominent leaders of the voting rights campaign that finally secured the franchise for East Indians in 1947. Other signs of integration emerged in the immediate postwar years. In 1949, two years after India and Pakistan gained independence, Indian Prime Minister Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi visited Vancouver, an event that drew Sikhs from around the province. East Indians encountered less systematic discrimination in their everyday lives after the war; restaurants, beer parlours, and movie houses that once routinely refused them entry increasingly accepted their patronage. The timber town of Lake Cowichan named a young East Indian woman its "Lady of the Lake" in 1950, a gesture of acceptance unlikely in British Columbia before the Second World War.⁴⁴

Most Sikh males continued to find employment in sawmills after the war. According to one 1946 estimate over five hundred of 555 wage workers were engaged in lumbering or wood manufacturing. Greenchain labour provided the most significant occupational sector, thanks in part to the presence of East Indian contractors in many mills. Workers stood on each side of a long platform that extended from the mill, pulling boards off moving chains and piling them according to grade on wooden blocks for removal by motorized carriers. "It didn't matter if you were educated or not," recalls Darshan Sangha, "if you were Hindustani you would be working on the greenchain." Evenings in the bunkhouse might be spent listening to music played on traditional instruments such as the Harmonium. Organized recreation included a volleyball league involving teams comprised of Vancouver Island sawmill workers. Annual three-day religious festivals called *Jor Mallas* provided another opportunity for Sikhs to gather. Held at various temples, the events featured athletic events such as soccer, wrestling, and Kabudhi, a traditional game of the Punjab.⁴⁵

Union rules assisted East Indian demands for dignity and equal opportunity, but gains at the workplace did not come without struggle. Tara Singh Bains secured employment with a Punjabi contractor in Nanaimo in 1953, working the night shift. Bains and his fellow greenchain workers lived in an old house owned by the contractor, paying \$50 a month for rent, "enough for an excellent house at the time." Although union members, the crew endured exploitation at the contractor's hands until Bains secured each man's pledge to strike in support of a demand for the

hiring of another piler. The greenchain workers eventually achieved their goal, and Bains went on to become a vice-president of the IWA sub-local.⁴⁶

Charges of Communist affiliation stalled his union career, and by 1956 Bains was working on the greenchain at MacMillan Bloedel's Somass Division sawmill at Port Alberni. He progressed to the planer chain, passed the lumber grader's exam, and ascended to this position, "a job that East Indians didn't usually get." A market slump sent Bains back to the greenchain, and he had to overcome a foreman's discrimination in order to regain his grader's status. He went on to play a prominent role in the small Sikh community at Port Alberni until his departure in 1960.⁴⁷

Entrepreneurial activity in the post-war period reflected the traditional dominance of the wood industries. The 335 East Indian-owned businesses in British Columbia in 1946 included 130 fuel merchants, 29 sawmill owners, and ten logging operators. The population remained small because of the continued existence of immigration restrictions, and tied to the west coast. Of the 2,148 East Indian residents of Canada in 1951, 1,937 made British Columbia their home. The demographic picture began to change that year, however, when Canada dismantled the immigration ban erected in 1908. Pressure from India, coupled with a need to grant token recognition of the newly independent countries of South Asia, prompted Ottawa to establish a quota system that permitted the annual entry of 150 Indians, one hundred Pakistanis, and fifty Ceylonese. Canada boosted the Indian quota to three hundred in 1957, bringing British Columbia's South Asian population to 4,526 in 1961, the highest since the 1908 restrictions.⁴⁸

Over the same decade the imposition of higher occupational criteria resulted in the arrival of more South Asian professional, managerial, and technical workers who sought employment in urban centres across Canada, a process of dispersal that continued during the 1960s and 1970s. The end of the quota system in 1962 resulted in a tremendous surge of Asian immigration, bringing the total across Canada to 67,860 in 1971. By that date 30,920 South Asians resided in Ontario, exceeding British Columbia's level by over twelve thousand. Despite their qualifications, many educated Sikhs were destined for unskilled or semi-skilled labour in British Columbia's mills, however, sparking some resentment over job

competition that produced racial confrontations in Quesnel, Prince George, and Fort St. James during the 1970s. British Columbia's East Indian population became more diverse as it grew. About a thousand Hindus had immigrated to the province by 1971, along with a small group of Pakistani Moslems.⁴⁹

Sawmill work remained the largest single source of Sikh employment in British Columbia into the 1980s. Roughly 2,000 worked in the Vancouver-area mills during the early 1980s, perhaps 60 percent of the adult male population. James Chadney cites "relative accessibility and historical precedence" as the two most important factors in this ongoing relationship. Mill work continues to be considered a low-status occupation, more open to immigrants than other less demanding avenues of employment. Pulling lumber "needs strength and is hard work" wrote IWA plant chairman Dilbag Singh Johal in explaining the concentration of East Indians on the greenchain in his Lower Mainland mill in 1975. Tradition also played a part in directing East Indians to the mills. "It was sort of expected of me," said one of Chadney's informants. "My dad, my older brother, and one of my uncles all worked in the mills."⁵⁰

Over the past two decades mill modernization, timber shortages, and environmental pressures have effected a drastic reduction in forest industry employment in British Columbia. Many mills have disappeared, and in the remainder greenchains have been replaced by automatic sorters. The membership of IWA Local 217, centred in the sawmills along False Creek, Burrard Inlet, and the Fraser River, dropped from about 7,000 in the early 1970s to 2,200 in 1998. Cowichan Lake, once the site of three large mills that provided East Indians with employment, now faces closure of the only remaining plant at Youbou. An understanding of how this process of deindustrialization has affected East Indian employment awaits further research. It is beyond question, however, that the history of neither British Columbia lumbering nor the province's East Indian population can be adequately understood without reference to the relationship between the two.⁵¹ For East Indian immigrants the wood industries have provided both a point of entry and a path of upward mobility, a source of permanence that discrimination and hostility could obstruct but not close. ~

⁴⁶ Bains and Johnston, *The Four Quarters*, pp 61-66.

⁴⁷ Bains and Johnston, *The Four Quarters*, pp 67-81.

⁴⁸ Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, pp 105-107; Johnston, *The East Indians*, p 11.

⁴⁹ Buchignani and Indra, *Continuous Journey*, pp 210-12; Johnston, *The East Indians*, pp 13-14; John Norris, *Strangers Entertained: A History of Ethnic Groups in British Columbia* (Vancouver: British Columbia Centennial Committee, 1971), pp 235-36.

⁵⁰ James Chadney, *The Sikhs of Vancouver* (New York: AMS Press, 1984), pp 44-48; *The Barker* 17 (Oct. 1975), p 7.

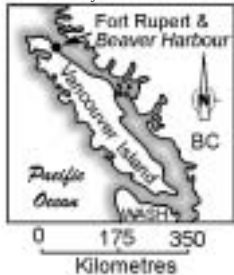
⁵¹ *Lumberworker* 63 (Mar. 1998), p 11.

Negotiations for Control and Unlikely Partnerships: Fort Rupert, 1849-1851

by Marki Sellers

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IN THE summer of 1850 three English sailors were killed, apparently by Natives, near Fort Rupert on Vancouver Island. The sailors had recently deserted from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) ship *Norman Morison*, and were on board the barque *England* heading for California. The murder of the three sailors aroused the fear of the non-Native settlers of the new colony and resulted in the use of military force against the Nahwitti Kwakwaka'wakw, amongst whom the murderers were suspected to originate.¹

That same summer, a strike was underway at Fort Rupert. White miners at the fort were undertaking job action against the HBC, in protest of poor conditions and treatment by officers. After the leaders of the strike were imprisoned in the bastion and the miners were threatened with sword and pistol, they and their families collectively deserted the fort. Securing passage on the barque *England*, they fled Fort Rupert for the gold fields of California.

The Nahwitti incident of 1850 and the events at Fort Rupert are important to the early history of British Columbia. They represent the first colonial use of military force against an Aboriginal community on Vancouver Island, and the first collectively organized job action in the colony. The handful of historians who have studied the events of 1850 have tended to focus on either the job action and desertion of the miners at the fort, or else on the death of the deserting sailors and the military action taken against the Nahwitti. As a result, the scholarship on these events has been unnaturally divided into a discourse on the Kwakwaka'wakw or on the white labourers. This essay looks at the multiple relationships between the Native and non-Native population, and between these two sets of events.

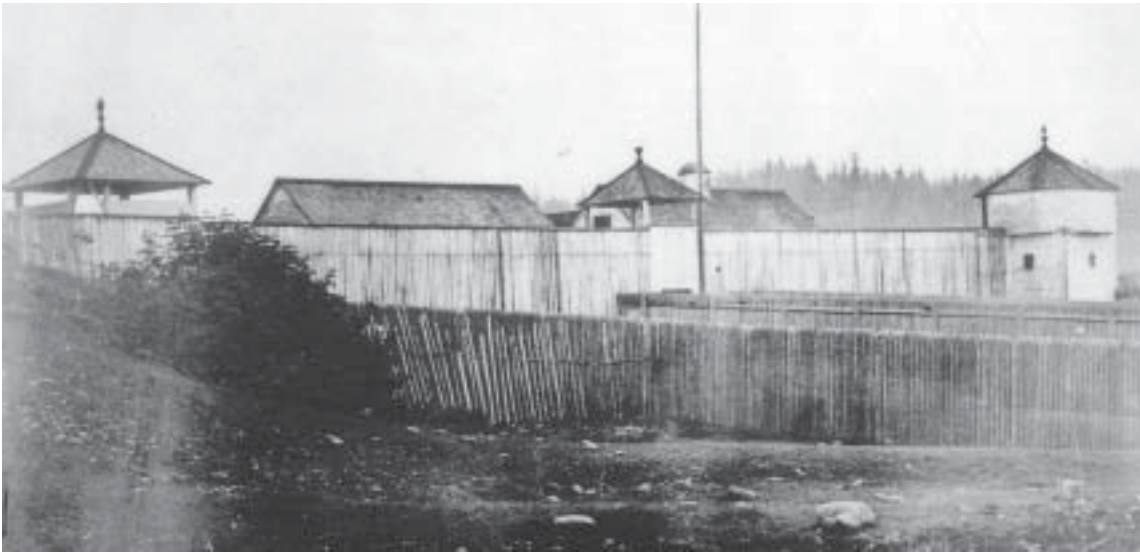
The job action and desertion of the fort miners, the death of the three sailors, and the military action taken against the Nahwitti all happened within the context of larger relationships and events: they were connected to a struggle for power and control. The Nahwitti, the Kwagiulth,² the fort's miners, the officers of the HBC, and the new colonial government were each involved

¹ The Nahwitti are a Kwak'waka-speaking group of the Kwakwaka'wakw nation. In the early 1800s the Nahwitti were actually three different communities living at the extreme northern tip of what is known as Vancouver Island. These communities, from west to east, were: the Yutlinuk, the Nakomgilisala, and the Tlatlasikwala. In the late 1800s the three communities consolidated, becoming the Nahwitti. During the first half of the nineteenth century the term Nahwitti, variously spelled, was often used by whites to refer to the Tlatlasikwala. The Nahwitti incident occurred in Tlatlasikwala territory, along the northeastern tip of Vancouver Island. Robert Galois, *Kwakwaka'wakw Settlements, 1775-1920: A Geographical Analysis and Gazetteer* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994).



BC Archives HP-060083

Right: Fort Rupert. 1898



Left: View of Hudson's Bay Company Fort Rupert. ca. 1880.

in a negotiation over control of resources and labour. In addition, the Nahwitti and Kwagiulth Kwakwaka'wakw, the Company, and the colonial government were in a struggle over the ownership of land. Yet the events of 1850 were also about a partnership between members of the Aboriginal population and the white immigrants at Fort Rupert. Both the fort officers and the miners of the fort needed the Kwakwaka'wakw to survive. The fort required the permission of the Kwagiulth to access the land and coal, and needed their country produce to survive.³ The miners required the help of the Nahwitti to desert the fort and depended on their continued support once they left the fort.

The conflict at Fort Rupert began with its very establishment in 1849 at Beaver Harbour. The HBC's presence in the area was sharply focused on taking ownership over the coal. Although the fort did engage in collecting furs from Aboriginal traders in exchange for Company goods, the primary purpose of the fort was to secure and mine the known coal deposits in the area.⁴ In 1835 the HBC learned of the coal deposits from Native informants.⁵ Following this, the Company made plans to mine the coal and sell it to the emerging steamship industry. They hoped that by establishing a formidable presence in Beaver Harbour they would be able to transfer control of the coal from the local Kwagiulth Kwakwaka'wakw, as well as protect it from American interests.⁶ Following the construction of the fort, the HBC hired the local Kwagiulth to mine the surface coal, and sent to England for experienced miners to work the underground deposits.⁷ The HBC then negotiated a series of con-

tracts to provide coal to steamships on the Northwest Coast.⁸

The Hudson's Bay Company and its officers never expected that their right to own and mine the land would be contested by the Kwagiulth. After HBC employee Duncan Finlayson's information-gathering visit in 1835 the Kwagiulth realized that Europeans were interested in the coal. Quick to seize this new economic opportunity, the Kwagiulth began to surface-mine the coal themselves and sell it to European ships visiting the area.⁹ The establishment of the fort at Beaver Harbour and the arrival of the miners threatened the Kwagiulth's control of the land and the coal and the Kwagiulth's new market. They reorganized their villages into a single winter village near the fort to take advantage of trade, but they did not recognize the HBC's claim to the land. From the onset of the Hudson's Bay Company's interest in the coal at Beaver Harbour, the Kwagiulth had asserted their right to mine the coal, and their Native right of ownership. Finlayson reported in 1836 that the Kwakwaka'wakw would not permit the Company "to work the coals as they were valuable to them, but that they would labour in the mine themselves and sell to us the produce of their exertions."¹⁰ They made it clear to officers and servants of the Company that they themselves controlled and owned the coal.

After the fort was established, the HBC hired Kwagiulths to mine the surface deposits. This action initially suppressed the conflict between the Kwagiulths and the HBC. While the fort waited for the arrival of the experienced miners from England, Kwagiulth labour became the pri-

² The Kwagiulth are the community of Kwakwaka'wakw living at Fort Rupert. After the fort was built in 1849 the Kwagiulth merged their communities into a single village at the fort. The Kwagiulth and the Nahwitti had a history of conflict with each other.

³ The HBC purchased, for example, 3,000 salmon to fertilize the garden, and other fresh meat for the workers. See Andrew Muir, *Private Diary, Commencing 9 November 1848 to 5 August 1850*, BC Archives, 29 October 1849.

⁴ Eric Newsome, *The Coal Coast: The History of Coal Mining in BC - 1835-1900*, (Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 1989); John Sebastian Helmcken, *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken*, Dorothy B. Smith, ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1975); Patricia M. Johnson, "Fort Rupert," *The Beaver* (1972): 4-15.

⁵ Galois *Settlements*; Helmcken *Reminiscences*; and others.

⁶ Margaret A. Ormsby, introduction to H. Bowsfield, Ed. *Fort Victoria Letters, 1846-1851*, vol. 32 (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1979) xxxviii.

⁷ James Douglas, in *Fort Victoria Letters*; Helmcken *Reminiscences*; Johnson "Fort Rupert;" and others.

⁸ For example, the HBC negotiated a contract to provide one thousand tons of coal to an American mail delivery steamship. See Douglas *Fort Victoria Letters*.

⁹David Lewis, *Yesterday's Promises: A History of the District of Port Hardy*, (Victoria, British Columbia: Robinsion Press, 1978).

¹⁰Quoted in Galois *Settlements*, 201.

¹¹Quoted in Galois *Settlements*, 201, emphasis added; Ormsby, introduction, *Fort Victoria Letters*, viii.

¹²Lynne Bowen, "Independent Colliers at Fort Rupert: Labour Unrest on the West Coast, 1849," *The Beaver* (1989): 25-31; Johnson "Fort Rupert"; Mark Leier, Lecture at SFU, 19 February 2002; and others.

¹³Bowen "Independent Colliers"; Lynne Bowen, *Three Dollar Dreams*, (Lantzville: Oolichan Books, 1987); Leier, Lecture at SFU, 19 February 2002.

¹⁴Andrew Muir, *Private Diary*, 88-89.

¹⁵Michael Muir, "Reminiscences," as researched for H. H. Bancroft in *BC Sketches*, BC Archives, 14.

¹⁶Galois *Settlements*, 201.

¹⁷Fort Rupert Journal quoted in Galois *Settlements*, 201. Galois' square brackets.

¹⁸Andrew Muir *Private Diary*, 16 and 17 April 1850: 91-92.

¹⁹Leier, Lecture at SFU, 19 February 2002; Bowen *Three Dollar Dreams*.

²⁰Muir *Private Diary*; Bowen *Three Dollar Dreams*; Leier "Lecture"; Newsome *Coal Coast*.

²¹Bowen *Three Dollar Dreams*; Newsome *Coal Coast*; Leier, Lecture at SFU, 19 February 2002; Douglas in *Fort Victoria Letters*; Helmcken *Reminiscences*.

²²Douglas *Fort Victoria Letters*, 3 July 1850: 104.

²³Douglas *Fort Victoria Letters*, 104-105. "The U.S. Propeller *Massachusetts* called at Fort Rupert on the 18th Ultmo. for coal. She was sent to the Indian

mary means of mining the coal. Although the HBC was under the impression that they now owned the coal, it is unlikely that the Kwagiulth saw it that way. The surface coal being mined was not within the fort itself, but two or three miles away. Furthermore, the HBC had not restricted access to the deposits by, for example, erecting a fence. The coal still belonged to the Kwakwaka'wakw, and it was being mined by their labour. The HBC was paying the Kwagiulth for the "produce of their exertions" at a rate of a 2 ½ point blanket for every two tons.¹¹ In effect, the Kwagiulth had negotiated their relationship with the Company. The Company could sell the coal to steamships in the area, but the coal belonged to the Kwagiulth. The Company was paying them for a product, not their labour.

The arrival of a new labour force from England again threatened Kwagiulth control at Beaver Harbour and reopened the conflict. In the fall of 1849, eight Scottish miners arrived, with their families, from England to begin work on the sub-surface coal deposits.¹² The miners had come to Fort Rupert expecting to dig coal in an established coal pit,¹³ but instead they were required to look for a good coal seam and sink the mine shaft themselves. As the new HBC miners began to work outside the fort, sinking a coal shaft, they encountered resistance from the Kwagiulth. Andrew Muir, one of the Scottish miners who had arrived from England, complained in his diary of being:

away from the Fort with our work and no protection ... and several times the Fort having rows with the Indians and us working at a distance from the Fort without any protection whatsoever the Indians has come down and threatened to shoot us.¹⁴

Another miner, Muir's younger brother, later reported he was also concerned "for there was not a large enough force of protection. The Indians surrounded the mouth of the shaft, protesting that they would kill all below unless compensation was given them for their land rights."¹⁵ As their threats were directed towards the coal pit and the new miners, it is likely that these Kwagiulth were resisting the theft of their property.

In April 1850 some of the chiefs at Beaver Harbour took their concerns about the theft of their property directly to the Company.¹⁶ They demanded the HBC stop "enclosing 'more of their lands as ... [the Company] had not paid

them for it'."¹⁷ That night Kwagiulth people stole items from the workplace of the miners. Andrew Muir wrote "how could we be thought to stand and work our work...their annoyances by day and their thieving depredations by night."¹⁸ Clearly the Kwagiulth did not mean them to "stand and work their work." The Kwagiulth resisted the economic threat posed by the miners, and attempted to control their own labour and their land.

In 1850, the Kwagiulth did not have to try very hard to disrupt production by the Fort Rupert miners. Spending months searching for a good coal seam and sinking a mine shaft (work they were not skilled at and did not have the proper tools for), the fort miners had had little opportunity to mine coal,¹⁹ and felt they had been misled by the Company. They were unhappy with their working and living conditions and the treatment they received from the HBC officers at the fort.²⁰ The miners soon began to protest their conditions, engaging in a labour slowdown and a strike, which further increased the Company's dependence on the Kwagiulth mining.²¹ Although the Hudson's Bay Company had anticipated that the miners would produce tens of thousands of tons of coal for the Company to sell, with the general difficulty of work, the strike, and punishments for their job action, the Scottish miners' labour produced almost none. James Douglas wrote in July of 1850 that the miners had "not yet discovered a workable seam, nor turned out a single bushel of coal since their arrival, all the coal we have hitherto sold being the produce of Indian labour."²² While the miners fought to control the conditions of their labour, the Kwagiulth miners had continued to mine the surface coal and sell it to the Company, even providing their labour to load the coal onto ships.²³ In effect, the Kwakwaka'wakw labourers were the miners at Fort Rupert. The strength of their position as miners, and the pressure they were able to exert against the fort's already unproductive mining efforts, led the HBC to negotiate a treaty with the Kwagiulth.²⁴ But this was not the end of conflict for the fort.

In June of 1850, while the miners were still on strike and gaining the support of the other fort workers, the barque *England* arrived to take on coal for its journey to California. Stowed on board the *England* were four sailors who had deserted from the HBC ship *Norman Morison* while at Fort Victoria. The sailors were attempting to reach

California where the gold rush was underway. Probably having heard news of the riches to be gained in California, or of the higher wages paid to sailors on American ships, the deserters had left the restrictive conditions of work on the HBC ship and were heading for what they hoped was a better life.²⁵ Not all of them would make it.

When the barque *England* arrived at Fort Rupert, the miners had been on strike almost continuously for three months, since early April. In addition to their demands for better food and working conditions, the miners requested protection from the Kwagiulth while they were working.²⁶ The continued pressure from the Kwagiulth over the issues of land and resource control had made an impact. The miners were looking for a resolution to their complaints and had appealed to both the HBC and the Governor of the colony in hopes of getting satisfaction.²⁷

With the arrival of the *England* a new solution presented itself. There was no wharf at Beaver Harbour, so the Kwagiulth loaded coal onto ships from their canoes.²⁸ While their ship was loading, the sailors from the *England* visited the fort and conveyed to the miners tales “of the riches of California and the gold fields.”²⁹ These stories, combined with the general unrest among the workers, led them to become “peevish” and “in-subordinate.”³⁰ Strengthened by the new alternative, Andrew Muir and the other miners confronted HBC officer Blenkinsop about their intentions to leave the fort. Blenkinsop wrote:

The Miners with Mr. Muir [Andrew Muir] at their head, came to me in a body this morning and said they would all leave this place in 10 days if they could not get a settlement, their intention being as they told me, to go to Fort Victoria to see the Governor and after the settlement was come to, they had made up their minds to work no more for the Company.³¹

The miners’ threat of desertion threatened the Hudson’s Bay Company’s economic interest in Fort Rupert. The HBC still imagined that coal production at Beaver Harbour could lead to lucrative profits. The Company hoped the fort would become a major supply centre for coal on the west coast of North America,³² but the desertion of workers was a threat to the fort’s existence. With only forty men inside the fort and three thousand Kwagiulths without, the officers feared that desertions would leave the fort “weak and almost defenceless” against a Native attack.³³ In an effort to stop workers from deserting, the officers spoke to Kwagiulth chiefs living near the fort and asked them “not to sell them [the workers] any canoes, or to take them away” from the fort.³⁴ In addition, to prevent escapes, the Company guarded the gates more closely. On the eighteenth of June however, pulling off the first in a series of desertions, four employees from the fort managed to slip away.³⁵

At risk of losing their control over the fort and the coal, the HBC officers took action to maintain their power at Fort Rupert. They understood that any escape from the fort would likely hinge upon the cooperation of the

diggings about 20 miles south of Fort Rupert with Mr. Beardmore who dug and sent 235 tons of coal on board in the space of 12 days. . . .” The miners were on strike when the *Massachusetts* and the *England* arrived to take on coal. Both boats received coal from the fort, coal gathered by Natives. Johnson “Fort Rupert.”

²⁴ Galois *Settlements* 201. Blenkinsop made a treaty with the Kwagiulth in 1850; the following year another treaty was signed between the Kwagiulth and the HBC.

²⁵ In the period between 1846 and 1851 many men deserted the HBC’s service to participate in the gold rush in California or for the higher wages offered in the United States. For example, the HBC signed three-, five- or seven-year contracts with its employees. HBC sailors were paid £4 per month, or else £17 a year. Sailors working for American companies were paid \$100 to \$140 (in American dollars) per month. This was considerably more than what HBC sailors were paid. James Douglas wrote many times of the “extravagance” of this American wage.

²⁶ Barry M. Gough, *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-90*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984); Bowen *Three Dollar Dreams*.

²⁷ The miners had sent a letter to Governor Blanshard listing their complaints and asking for redress. The Governor responded in June by appointing John Sebastian Helmcken as magistrate to hear their complaints.

Notes continue >>>



Left: *Canoe at Fort Rupert.*

²⁸ Helmcken *Reminiscences*. Johnson "Fort Rupert". Patricia Johnson reported that Natives carried the coal out to the ships.

²⁹ Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 308.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Douglas *Fort Victoria Letters*, 103. Letter to Barclay 3 July 1850, containing part of a letter from Blenkinsop.

³² Ormsby, introduction, *Fort Victoria Letters*.

³³ Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 308.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Muir *Private Diary*. These four deserters sailed away that day on the *Massachusetts*, a boat that had arrived to take on coal from the fort.

³⁶ Muir *Private Diary*, 18 June 1850: 116-117.

³⁷ Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 308. In his account, Helmcken reports on what the chiefs agreed to.

³⁸ Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997) Harris suggests that Natives who had an interest in the fort would, in an attempt at "currying favour and presents from officers at the forts," often cooperated with forts by bringing deserters back. (Harris *Resettlement*, 45). Galois, in *Settlements*, argues that the Kwagiulth valued their role as intermediaries in the trade at the fort and took actions to secure this role.

³⁹ Gough *Gunboat Frontier*; Helmcken *Reminiscences*.

⁴⁰ Helmcken *Reminiscences*.

⁴¹ Capt. Brown of the *England*, quoted in John Sebastian Helmcken, "Vancouver Island Courts - Magistrate Court - Fort Rupert" BC Archives: 17 July report to Blanshard.

⁴² Gough *Gunboat Frontier*; Helmcken *Reminiscences*; Helmcken "Magistrate Court".

⁴³ Helmcken "Magistrate

Kwakwaka'wakw population at and around the fort. On the day of the first desertions, Blenkinsop offered a reward of ten blankets for each man returned.³⁶ The officers attempted to prevent a worker-Native alliance by securing the assurance of the Kwagiulth chiefs that no aid would be provided to the deserting workers. Although the Kwagiulth chiefs promised not to sell the workers any canoes or to take them away they did not promise to prevent deserters from escaping.³⁷ Even as the chiefs agreed to cooperate with the officers, forging a partnership of sorts, they continued working in their own interests. It seems likely that the Kwagiulth agreed to cooperate with the officers because they valued the economic benefits of the fort and their roles as intermediaries in the trade.³⁸ It is also likely that the deserters did not leave the area unnoticed by the three thousand Kwagiulth surrounding the fort. While not assisting them, perhaps because the miners were a threat to Kwagiulth interests, the Kwagiulth also did not attempt to turn them in.

Into the midst of this tension caused by a struggle over the land, the coal, and labour arrived the HBC steamer *Beaver*. Reaching Fort Rupert on 27 June 1850, the *Beaver's* mission was two-fold. First, the captain of the *Beaver* was searching for the four sailors who had deserted from the *Norman Morison* at Fort Victoria and were rumoured to be on board the barque *England*.³⁹ Second, it carried correspondence for the fort, including a letter from Governor Blanshard appointing Dr. Helmcken as magistrate at the fort.⁴⁰ Shortly after the *Beaver* entered the harbour, someone on board the steamer came to the barque *England* and warned the deserters that "they were about to be apprehended."⁴¹ Three of the deserters, afraid of being arrested, then slipped overboard and fled in a canoe.⁴²

Though they initially camped on an island in the harbour, receiving food and communication from other sailors, they apparently became scared by the interest of the Kwagiulth and fled their hideout.⁴³ Helmcken wrote :

A day or two afterwards I told Capt. Brown [of the *England*] and the carpenter to get these men on board ... [as they] were no longer wanted.... He promised to do so. I have no doubt that these men were afterwards supplied with victuals by the ship's crew; but possibly did not trust the declaration that they were no longer wanted.⁴⁴

The officers at the fort were aware of the sail-

ors' location in the harbour because Kwagiulth informers told Blenkinsop that they had seen "white men upon the beach of [the] island."⁴⁵ After reporting the location of the men to the fort, the Kwagiulth then went at night into the camp of the sailors and stole a paddle to present as evidence to the fort officers. Already nervous about being apprehended, and likely wary about their unfamiliar surroundings, the theft of the paddle while they were sleeping may have heightened their fear further. A few days following this incident Captain Brown reported to Helmcken that the sailors "had been seen by Indians and thinking they would be apprehended had taken a canoe and gone up the straits to await the ships coming."⁴⁶ They had fled in the direction of the Nahwitti.

On the evening of the second of July, nine days after delivering their ultimatum to Blenkinsop, the miners of Fort Rupert deserted.⁴⁷ John MacGregor, John Smith, Andrew Muir, Archibald Muir, Robert Muir and John Muir, Jr. escaped the fort and made their way in a canoe to Nahwitti territory. John MacGregor and John Smith both left their wives behind. When Helmcken discovered the miners were missing he immediately suspected that they would attempt to find passage on the barque *England* still in Beaver Harbour. He wrote to Captain Brown on the third of July that "it is supposed that these men whom you are well acquainted with, are now hiding upon the coast waiting the arrival of your vessel to obtain passage to California," and threatened charges if he took "deserters from this service."⁴⁸

Captain Brown responded to the letter on the sixth of July, declaring that he did not know the miners, and that he did not knowingly have them on board his vessel.⁴⁹ He then invited Helmcken to search his vessel that afternoon, as he was ready to depart Beaver Harbour.

The miners were not only receiving help from the barque *England*, they had also forged an alliance with the Nahwitti that allowed them to escape the fort. Camped across from a Nahwitti village, awaiting the arrival of the *England* as she sailed north, around the tip of Vancouver Island, the miners received aid and kindness from the Nahwitti. The miners waited seven days before the *England* passed Shushartie Bay and they were able to board her. During that time Andrew Muir visited the Nahwitti village, where he was seen on the ninth of July by Linecoux, an interpreter



at the fort.⁵⁰ He reported that Muir “told him all the miners were safe and encamped opposite Sucharti; that the Newittees were kind to them; that they would not return to the fort.”⁵¹ Similarly, Charles Beardmore, the fort clerk, reported having seen the miners during a visit to the Nahwitti village in July.⁵² Nancy, a Nahwitti chief, gave Beardmore a letter he was to deliver for Andrew Muir. The letter, addressed to the second mate of the barque *England*, clearly shows that the miners were receiving help from the Nahwitti. Muir wrote:

Dear Bill: “Oh but your lang o coming” here we are knocking about always expecting you, but have not yet been so fortunate, last night Nancy came to us and informed us that Dr. was on board on the scent so we are under his [Chief Nancy’s] care at present, he knows all about our whereabouts, he [Helmcken] is so dull the Dr. I hope you will get quit of that plague you have on board before you come this length. Our provisions are at an end nearly. Send back word with Nancy giving your advice and inform the mate and Captain too. I have directed to you as Nancy is most familiar with you, we have heard various reports about the women, let us know will you. This is sad knocking about but that is nothing if we can make a good termination of the affair.⁵³

Chief Nancy and the Nahwitti helped the

miners with more than just communication, kindness, and a safe place to stay while waiting for the *England*. In his inquiry about the wives of John Smith and John MacGregor, left behind at Fort Rupert, Muir was attempting to find out more than their general condition. The women were to seek passage on the barque *England* for themselves, and to meet up with their husbands as the ship moved through Nahwitti territory.⁵⁴ Denied their request for “permission to leave for California on the Barque England,” the women deserted the fort and made their own way on board the *England*.⁵⁵

In order to get on the ship, or to avoid detection once on board, the women needed the Nahwitti’s help. Helmcken was making regular visits to the ship looking for deserters from the fort. On the afternoon that the women boarded the ship, Helmcken had been on board for over twenty-four hours and he had given no indication that he was about to leave.⁵⁶ In order to prevent the discovery of the women on board the *England*, the Nahwitti created a diversion that caused Helmcken to leave the ship.⁵⁷ A group of Nahwitti arrived with a message for the doctor, reporting that “some women had been killed by a tree falling at the coal field and others were wounded.”⁵⁸ Helmcken left immediately to “see whether any assistance could be rendered the un-

Above: *Fort Rupert*.

Court”; Helmcken *Reminiscences*.

⁴⁴ Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 310.

⁴⁵ Helmcken “Magistrate Court” 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴⁷ Muir *Private Diary*; Helmcken “Magistrate Court”; and others.

⁴⁸ Helmcken letter to Captain Brown, quoted in “Magistrate Court,” 3 July 1850.

⁴⁹ Captain Brown letter to Helmcken, quoted in “Magistrate Court,” 2 July 1850.

⁵⁰ Helmcken *Reminiscences*.

⁵¹ *Ibid* 313; Helmcken “Magistrate Court,” 9 July 1850.

⁵² *Ibid* 318; Helmcken “Magistrate Court,” 13 July 1850.

⁵³ Muir quoted in Helmcken “Magistrate Court,” 17 July 1850.

⁵⁴ Helmcken does not realize this but his report reveals it.

⁵⁵ Helmcken “Magistrate

Court." The women left by escorting to the ship a woman who was authorized to leave, and simply did not return to the fort.

⁵⁶ Helmcken "Magistrate Court."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Helmcken "Magistrate Court," 7 July 1850.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7 July 1850.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 16 July 1850.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Helmcken *Reminiscences*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Helmcken "Magistrate Court," 16 July 1850.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 8 July 1850.

⁶⁸ Helmcken "Magistrate Court," 13 July 1850. This is the initial report given by Beardmore on 13 July. Just over a month later he retracts this story, saying it was false, and gives another version of the events.

⁶⁹ Helmcken *Reminiscences*; Helmcken "Magistrate Court."

⁷⁰ Helmcken "Magistrate Court," 9 July 1850.

⁷¹ Beardmore, quoted in Helmcken "Magistrate Court," 13 July 1850.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Beardmore, quoted in Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 318. This is Beardmore's corrected statement, given 20 August, to Helmcken.

⁷⁴ Helmcken reported that

fortunates and to remain at the fort in case any disturbance might arise from this untoward accident."⁵⁹ The actions of the Nahwitti allowed the women to remain undetected and to therefore meet up with their husbands when the *England* passed through Nahwitti territory at Shushartie Bay. Reflecting on the incident a few days later, Helmcken wrote:

This report it is now said was a mere subterfuge...the report of the people being killed at the coal field...turned out to be only one or two wounded by a tree falling during a gale at night. The tree had been partly cut through and a fire lighted against it, and the Indians sleeping close by when it fell.⁶⁰

It is unclear whether the tree was intentionally felled or if it was simply a fortuitous event, which the Nahwitti were able to use to their advantage. In either case the effect was the same. The passage of the women was secured through the cooperation of the Nahwitti.

But the Nahwitti relationship with HBC employees was not purely cooperative. At the same time as the doctor received a message about the accident at the fort, Chief Nancy, also on board the ship, received a message that caused him to also immediately leave the ship.⁶¹ Nancy was told that "his wife or some relation was sick."⁶² Speculating about the message later, Helmcken reported that this message was also "subterfuge in order to get him [Nancy] and all the Newitties out of the vessel."⁶³ He later suspected that Nancy was actually receiving, or about to receive, a message about the deaths of the three sailors who had deserted from the *Norman Morison*.⁶⁴

The sailors had paddled north into Nahwitti territory, likely hoping to reconnect with the barque *England* as it left Beaver Harbour. They got as far as twenty-five miles from the fort, and one or two miles from where the miners were camped, before they were killed.⁶⁵ There are many different versions of what happened to the sailors. The Kwagiulth, who disliked the Nahwitti and "look[ed] upon them as dogs," were quick to report that "the Newitty's committed the murder."⁶⁶ Upon being questioned by fort employees, the Nahwitti professed their innocence and "declared the [Kwagiulth] report to be false."⁶⁷ The Nahwitti may also have made a report that claimed that northern invaders, the "Hyders or Sabessa men had committed the murder."⁶⁸ However, as a fourth report was given testifying to the Nahwitti's guilt, and as the Nahwitti knew



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the location of the sailors' bodies, had the sailors' clothes, and later offered compensation to the fort for their murder, it is likely that the Nahwitti were indeed responsible for the men's deaths.⁶⁹

The most likely chain of events is that some of the Nahwitti killed the sailors in an act of self-defence and a desire to maintain status. Lineous, who was sent out by the fort to discover who had murdered the men, reported that "the Newitte people had supplied them [the sailors] with food but not receiving any present, they endeavoured to rob them of some clothes, which the men resisted, the Indians then shot them and also stabbed."⁷⁰ In the report that suggested that northern invaders had committed the murder, the Nahwitti stated that the northerners had approached the sailors and invited them into their canoe.⁷¹ The sailors became aggressive, "took an axe [and] flourished it in the air" and "took up a big stone, pitched it into the canoe and smashed it."⁷² A third report stated that:

some Newittes had been out hunting. On their return they fell in with a canoe containing three white men. Wishing to show them w[h]ere the six other (miners) deserters were, they approached. The white men took to land, the Newittes followed. One of the white men brandished an axe in a threatening manner... whilst another took a big stone, flung it at and smashed the Indians' canoe. The Newittes became infuriated, fired, killed one, the others took to the bush, were followed, shot and stabbed likewise, and then stripped and hidden in hollow trees; one man sunk in the ocean.⁷³

Given the similarity of these three reports, and the aid the Nahwitti had given the miners, it is possible to reconstruct a likely combination of facts.

Within each of these reports lies evidence of self-defence. In all of the accounts, the sailors are

reported as having acted in a threatening manner toward their killers. When this information is combined with evidence about the Nahwitti's friendliness towards whites and their partnership with the miners, another version of the events seems likely.⁷⁴ For example: Some of the Nahwitti came upon the sailors and attempted to help them find the miners, who were within one or two miles of the sailors' location. The sailors, frightened of the Nahwitti, and of being

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caught, paddled to a nearby island to escape. The Nahwitti followed and attempted to communicate with them. The sailors then became aggressive, threatened the Nahwitti with an axe, and threw a rock at a canoe, destroying it. The Nahwitti became angry and attempted to defend their bodies and their honour. They killed the three sailors, drowning one in the water, and took the clothing from the men before leaving. This version accounts for the deaths of the sailors, suggests an explanation for the Nahwitti possessing the sailors' clothing, and provides a motivation for the Nahwitti killing the sailors.

Just as the Nahwitti had a motivation for killing the sailors, they also had a motivation for forging a partnership with the miners and helping them to escape the fort. The Nahwitti and the Kwagiulth had a history of rivalry.⁷⁵ The establishment of Fort Rupert in Kwagiulth territory further intensified this competition,⁷⁶ and the Nahwitti's efforts to help the miners desert the fort may have been motivated by their rivalry with the Kwagiulth. For the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, "Newitts," located in Shushartie Bay Nahwitti territory, had been a primary fur trade centre on Vancouver Island.⁷⁷ As long as the trading centre had been within Nahwitti territory they had been able to control the trade to some extent, and may have seen their relative status and wealth increase. Upset at their loss as the primary trading centre, the Nahwitti

may have aided the miners in an attempt to hurt the fort, and therefore, damage the Kwagiulth's power. The act may have been motivated by a desire to protest against their loss of power and control in the trade with Europeans.

This inter-group rivalry between the Kwagiulth and the Nahwitti also influenced the Kwagiulth's actions during the conflict of 1850. The Kwagiulth were quick to assert that the Nahwitti had committed the murder.⁷⁸ Helmcken, aware of the conflict between the Nahwitti and the Kwagiulth, placed little faith in their report. He wrote: "they cannot know excepting from report. Our Indians [the Kwagiulths] look upon them as dogs and I think are jealous of them, so that little dependence can be placed upon their evidence."⁷⁹ Following the reports, by the Kwagiulth and fort employees, of the Nahwitti's guilt, the Kwagiulth volunteered to wage war on the Nahwitti for the fort.⁸⁰ Helmcken stated that "the Quockaulds [Kwagiulth] ask daily whether they shall go and fight the Newittes for us."⁸¹ The Kwagiulth seem to have attempted to use the incident to further their struggle with the Nahwitti for status, power and control.

[They] offered, almost importuned us to allow them to go and make war upon the Newittes.... They were told the white men would revenge themselves ere long in their own way, but the warriors could not under-

Above: *Remains of Fort Rupert in 1929. Opposite page recent photo at the same site.*

he could "hardly believe the Newittes committed the murder, because they [had] always been very civil to the whites, are a very small tribe and must have known these men, because so many had been on board Capt. Brown's vessel coming through the straits here and whilst lying in harbour. Moreover it is to their interest to keep friends with the whites and also they have hitherto been afraid to offend them. If they murdered these men why should they not have treated the miners in the same manner? They were living close by." Helmcken "Magistrate Court," July 16th, 1850.

⁷⁵ Galois *Settlements*.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 28.

Notes continue >>>

⁷⁸ Helmcken "Magistrate Court," 16 July 1850.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Helmcken

Reminiscences, 313.

⁸¹ Helmcken "Magistrate Court," 16 July 1850.

⁸² Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 313.

⁸³ Helmcken "Magistrate Court."

⁸⁴ Helmcken "Magistrate Court," 16 July 1850.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Gough *Gunboat Frontier*.

⁸⁷ Gough *Gunboat Frontier*; Helmcken *Reminiscences*, and others.

⁸⁸ Gough *Gunboat Frontier*. The HBC and fur traders had used such force before to impose their will upon Aboriginal people on the Northwest Coast, or to punish Natives. For a discussion of the use of force by the HBC in New Caledonia see Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*. On the subject of vengeance and punishment by fur traders against Natives see John Phillip Reid, "Principles of Vengeance: Fur Trappers, Indians, and Retaliation for Homicide in the Transboundary North American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* (1993): 21-43.

⁸⁹ Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 320.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 321.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*; Gough *Gunboat Frontier*, 43.

⁹² Gough *Gunboat Frontier*, 43.

⁹³ Gough *Gunboat Frontier*; Helmcken *Reminiscences*, and others.

⁹⁴ Gough *Gunboat Frontier*, 43.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Gough *Gunboat Frontier*, 43.

⁹⁶ Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 321.

⁹⁷ Gough *Gunboat Frontier*.

⁹⁸ Helmcken *Reminiscences*; Gough *Gunboat Frontier*.

⁹⁹ Gough *Gunboat Frontier*, 44.

¹⁰⁰ Helmcken *Reminiscences*; Gough *Gunboat Frontier*; Galois *Settlements*.

¹⁰¹ Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 322.

stand why we should wait, as they were quite ready and eager for the fray....⁸²

The Kwagiulth were clearly opportunistic in the death of the sailors and more interested in attacking their rivals than in helping the white men of the fort seek their kind of justice.

Although the officers at the fort had assured the Kwagiulth that they would revenge themselves in their own way, in truth the conditions at the fort prohibited them from acting. The officers offered a reward for the surrender of the murderers, but did not take immediate action against the Nahwitti whom they suspected.⁸³ In a letter to Governor Blanshard Helmcken explained: "we cannot go to war, because the distance is great and our men too few to protect the Fort and fight also, even if they were willing so to do."⁸⁴ The HBC's lack of control over workers within the fort weakened their relationship with Natives outside the fort. In an appeal for help from Governor Blanshard, Helmcken wrote that

if we make no demonstration the Indians will lose all respect for us and make an attack upon our fort....The Indians well know the disaffected state of this fort and what with this and their riches have become saucy and probably should any disturbance arise with them they would attack us, the Indians being 3,000 in number and our men between 30 and 40 it is not very difficult to imagine who would gain the victory.⁸⁵

These comments captured the attention of the governor, and led him to request aid from a military ship.⁸⁶

In October of 1850 the English corvette, HMS *Daedalus*, arrived at Fort Rupert with the Governor on board.⁸⁷ The voyage was supposed to be one of "inspection and inquiry" but it became the first use of military force by the colonial government against an Aboriginal community on Vancouver Island.⁸⁸ Before force was used to capture the murderers, Helmcken approached the Nahwitti village with the fort interpreter, constable, and six Natives, to demand the surrender of the murderers. He reported that "the chiefs said they could not, but were willing to pay the value of the murdered men in blankets, furs or any goods, according to their (Indian) custom."⁸⁹ Unwilling to accept this offer, the white men "determined to send armed boats to seize the murderers."⁹⁰

A few days later "three armed boats from the *Daedalus*" were sent to Nahwitti.⁹¹ Their goal was

to arrest the murderers or take chiefs as hostages and, if that did not work, to attack and burn the camp.⁹² When the armed boats arrived, however, they found the Nahwitti village deserted.⁹³ The commander of the boats then ordered the village burned.⁹⁴ Of the destruction Blanshard wrote: "the Indians decamped with the greatest part of their property, the remainder was burnt with the houses."⁹⁵ The *Daedalus* then returned south.⁹⁶ Governor Blanshard, convinced that the murderers would not be surrendered without the use of more force, and believing the Company and the settlers to be in danger, determined he would return to Fort Rupert with another military ship.⁹⁷

In July of 1851, almost one year after the death of the sailors, HMS *Daphne* arrived at Fort Rupert.⁹⁸ Armed boats, containing "sixty sailors and marines" were sent out from the *Daphne*.⁹⁹ Since the destruction of their village in the fall of 1850 the Nahwitti had relocated to a stronger defensive position.¹⁰⁰ When the boats arrived, the Nahwitti attempted to defend themselves. A gun battle broke out and at least two Nahwitti were killed and three injured.¹⁰¹ According to reports, the Nahwitti then fled into the woods around their village. The men from the *Daphne* burned their village and destroyed their property. Following these attacks the Nahwitti communicated to officers at the fort that they would surrender the murderers. A short time later some of the Nahwitti arrived at the fort with the bodies of three men reported to be the killers. With the surrender of the murderers, the Nahwitti incident ended.

Even while the Nahwitti villages were being destroyed by white men, the Nahwitti maintained a level of control. In the confrontation over the deaths of the sailors, the power of the Nahwitti can be seen, not in their ability to win the battle, but manifest in their actions.¹⁰² When Helmcken approached the Nahwitti and demanded the surrender of the murderers, the Nahwitti offered their own solution to the conflict: the payment in blankets for the dead men. The practice of offering blankets as compensation for a wrong was a common practice amongst Northwest Coast Aboriginal peoples. Helmcken wrote:

it shows too how quarrels were settled Indian fashion by payment of damages. The Indian idea of law – and indeed it is their law – of payment applies even to persons killed.... This Indian law was often acted on at Fort Rupert

and suited very well – none other would – or could – have been put in force.¹⁰³

Their offer of compensation rejected, it is probable that the Nahwitti recognized that military force would be used against their village. Helmcken, when refusing their offer of the blankets, had told the Nahwitti that “as they had refused peaceably to surrender the murderers force would have to be used and perhaps many would thereby suffer.”¹⁰⁴ In an act to protect their lives, and the belongings they could salvage, the Nahwitti fled their village before the military attack, leaving the white men a deserted village to burn. When the Nahwitti rebuilt their village they chose a location that could be better defended.¹⁰⁵ Finally, when the second attack destroyed their village and property, and resulted in the deaths of two Nahwitti, the Nahwitti expressed their power within their own community by surrendering the murderers. By capturing and killing the murderers the Nahwitti, as much as was possible, ended the conflict on their own terms. They also ensured that the captured murderers were men they were willing to give up.¹⁰⁶ Upon surrender of the murderers to the fort, the Nahwitti claimed the reward offered for their capture.¹⁰⁷

The events at Beaver Harbour in 1850 are important to the early history of British Columbia. They present a snapshot of power dynamics in the new colony, and in doing so dispel old myths. Neither the colonial government nor the Hudson’s Bay Company held the balance of power at Fort Rupert. Instead, the Kwakwaka’wakw maintained their dominance and the white settlers were subject to a larger struggle for power between the Kwagiulth and the Nahwitti. Although the HBC and the colony had some influence, they were forced to engage in a struggle for control and ownership with the Kwakwaka’wakw people.

It is in this struggle for power that the most



Above: John Muir family and friends at Sooke BC.

interesting history emerges, a history that is not unnaturally divided along lines of ethnicity. In the negotiations between the Company, the Kwagiulth, the Nahwitti, and the miners, innovative and creative resistance often won out. The Kwagiulth used direct action to stop the miners and the Company from stealing their coal. They successfully negotiated payment for their land, and won their demand for payment for the “produce of their exertions.”¹⁰⁸ The Nahwitti forged an alliance with the deserting miners, allowing them to undermine the strength of the fort and therefore to strike at the wealth and status of their enemy. The miners engaged in work slowdowns and a strike. They eventually formed a partnership with the Nahwitti that allowed them and their families to escape to California. Although the Company, and the colonial government, used coercive measures against these groups, the miners, Kwagiulth, and Nahwitti were able to maintain their agency, often getting the better of the HBC. ~

¹⁰² Bruce Stadfeld, *Manifestations of Power: Native Response to Settlement in Nineteenth Century British Columbia*, (Burnaby: MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1993).

¹⁰³ Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 142-143.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid* 320.

¹⁰⁵ Galois *Settlements*.

¹⁰⁶ It is unclear from the historical record whether the men surrendered were indeed the killers. Helmcken notes that at least one of the men was suspected to be a slave of the Nahwitti. He wrote: “it is said one with light coloured hair escaped, and that a slave was killed and substituted for him and used in his place.” Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 323.

¹⁰⁷ Helmcken *Reminiscences*, 323. It is not clear whether the reward was actually paid them.

¹⁰⁸ Galois *Settlements*, 201.

Edward Mahon and the Naming of Castlegar

By Greg Nesteroff

¹From a family history provided by Lady Suzanne Mahon via Marolyn Mahon, 15 April 2002.

²*The Laughing Bridge: A Personal History of the Capilano Suspension Bridge*, Eleanore Dempster, 1988, 46.

³BC Minister of Mines reports, 1893, 1896, 1897.

⁴*Nelson Miner*, 29 August 1891. McCleary, a seasoned Kootenay prospector, pre-empted the acreage in May 1888, and operated a ferry across the Columbia to Sproat's Landing prior to the establishment of regular steamboat service.

⁵*Nelson Miner*, 22 May 1897.

⁶Townsite survey, 15 November 1897, held by the City of Castlegar.

Below: *Castlegar, Ahascragh, County Galway, is a stately manor erected around 1815 by Sir Ross Mahon—the third home of that name on the same property.*

How did Castlegar, BC, get its name? This simple question has been asked for decades without a satisfactory answer, and until recently it didn't appear there ever would be one. But thanks to some Internet sleuthing and a couple of century-old documents, the mystery has finally been solved: the name comes from the Irish ancestral home of the original townsite owner, Edward Mahon.

Castlegar is today a thriving city on Highway 3 at the confluence of the Kootenay and Columbia rivers, with a population of about 7,500. It has a forest-based economy, with a pulp mill and saw mill, and due to its central location it is also home to the regional airport and college.

Castlegar, Ahascragh, County Galway, is a stately manor erected around 1815 by Sir Ross Mahon—the third home of that name on the same property. The earlier incarnations were built in 1696 and 1720 respectively by Sir Ross's great-grandfather, Captain Bryan Mahon, an officer in Lord Clanricarde's army.¹

The name Castlegar—or Castlegare, as it was also spelled—is believed to be derived from the Gaelic "Caislean Gearr," meaning "short castle," although the present home does not resemble a castle. There are actually five places called Castlegar in Ireland. The largest is also in County Galway, and does boast the remains of a medieval castle, allowing speculation that it may have played some role in the naming of the house at Ahascragh.

Edward Mahon was born in 1862 at

Rawmarsh, Yorkshire, England, the sixth son of Sir William Mahon, an Anglican minister.² Edward studied the ministry and the law, but found neither to his liking. As the rules of inheritance dictated that the eldest son was to receive the family property, Edward and his brothers Gilbert and John came to Canada to make their fortune in mining and real estate. They owned several claims in the Slocan and Nelson mining divisions, including the *Snowstorm*, the *Pacific*, and most probably, the *Vancouver* group.³

In August 1891, Edward purchased a ranch that would become Castlegar. He paid Albert McCleary about \$3,000 for 320 acres.⁴ Edward's purchase proved to be a wise investment, for within five years a smelter would be established at nearby Trail, and a railway located up the Columbia to the landing of Robson West. Prompted perhaps by the forthcoming railway developments, Mahon decided in May 1897 to have a townsite surveyed on his property.

The *Nelson Miner* reported: "A new town is to be established at the terminus of the northern extension of the Columbia & Western railway, on the west bank of the Columbia river and opposite Robson. The site is better known as the McCleary ranch, a tract of land admirably situated for the building of a town. The new burg has not yet been named."⁵

The townsite of Castlegar was laid out by provincial land surveyor Henry B. Smith on 15 November 1897 and the plan deposited at Rossland the following year.⁶

However, Mahon quickly sold out to Fritz Augustus Heinze, the Montana mining magnate who built the aforementioned railway and smelter. In a letter written at Sandon on 12 October 1897, Mahon noted: "We closed with Heinze re: Castlegar townsite."⁷ This is the only reference to the town in his surviving correspondence.

In February 1898 the Canadian Pacific Railway acquired a sweeping number of the assets owned by Heinze, including the smelter and railway. The Castlegar townsite was presumably part of this purchase.

Castlegar remained dormant until 1902, when a railway bridge was completed across the Columbia, whereupon it became a pivotal junction





Left: Edward Mahon on the steps of Castlegar, Ahascragh.

point for railway traffic moving between Nelson, Trail-Rossland, and the Boundary. By this time, however, Mahon had left the area, and his earlier involvement was evidently forgotten. When James White of the Geographic Survey of Canada inquired in 1905 about the origin of Castlegar's name, the response from postmaster William J. Farmer introduced the first of several conflicting theories:

The place called Castlegar was called into existence some two years ago by the CPR, who made a junction here, previous to which time, there was no settlement. From what I can gather, the name originated from some building which was erected at the time of railway construction, resembling in some way the structure called Castle Garden, where emigrants land in New York; anyway, I fear from an historical point of view, Castlegar is far too new to interest anyone.⁸

Subsequently, three other theories emerged:

- That two homesick CPR engineers, Sullivan and Murphy named a water tank Castlebar, after the capital of County Mayo, Ireland. A mapping error somehow changed it to Castlegar.⁹
- That "castle" referred to a prominent rock formation overlooking the Columbia River, and "gar" was Gaelic for "rock." However, gar does

not mean rock in Gaelic.¹⁰

- That "Castle" was for the Castle Rock, but "gar" was after Algar Johnson, an early settler, sometimes nicknamed "Gar."¹¹

Eventually it was also suggested that Castlegar might have been named for a place in Ireland, although it was usually assumed the namesake was the larger community in Galway.

Meanwhile, Edward Mahon co-founded a land company that held the majority of lots in what became the City of North Vancouver. For many years he also owned and promoted the Capilano suspension bridge. He was active politically and socially until his death on 18 June 1937 at age 75.

Castlegar, Ahascragh, remained in the Mahon family until 1969. It has since changed hands a few times, but remains in good repair and was featured in *Country Life* magazine.

Some of this information, including the fact Mahon named Castlegar, appeared in *The Laughing Bridge: A Personal History of the Capilano Suspension Bridge*, by Eleanore Dempster (1988)—but no one from Castlegar seemed to realize it. In February 2002, Phil Markin, the city's director of development services, looked at the original townsite survey, which listed Edward Mahon as owner. He did an Internet search, found references to Dempster's book, and the mystery began unravelling. Edward's son Bryan still lives near Seattle, and confirmed that his father named Castlegar. However, when he and his wife Marolyn passed through the city several years ago and inquired about the name, they were given one of the rival theories.

There is nothing in Castlegar to remember Edward Mahon by (although there is a Mahon Street and Mahon Park in North Vancouver), and until recently he would have been unfamiliar to all but the most knowledgeable local historians. Hopefully some belated recognition is forthcoming to the city's forgotten founder.

In any event, despite the fact no one knew the true origin of Castlegar's name, residents were loath to change it. When the twin towns of Castlegar and Kinnaird amalgamated in 1974, voters were given the chance to re-christen the new municipality, but an overwhelming number wished to leave it as Castlegar.¹² One letter writer to the local newspaper said: "Its roots are too deep to be disturbed. Its achievements too numerous to be forgotten. Castlegar it should remain by virtue of seniority and distinction."¹³

⁷ Letter from Edward Mahon to J.W. McFarland, 15 October 1897, provided by Bryan and Marolyn Mahon.

⁸ Letter from W.J. Farmer to James White, 29 August 1905, printed in *Canoma*, July 1978, 7-8.

⁹ "Castlegar celebrates its 40th anniversary," *Trail Daily Times*, 29 August 1942.

¹⁰ "There's history behind their names," *Cominco Magazine*, August 1944/

¹¹ *Pioneer Days of Nakusp & Arrow Lakes*, Kate Johnson, 1952, 132-33.

¹² "New city now officially named Castlegar," *Castlegar News*, 31 January 1974. Of 999 votes cast, 825 were for Castlegar.

¹³ "Change name you break chain, this thread in history—keep Castlegar," *Castlegar News*, 28 February 1974.

Thanks to Ted Affleck, Eleanore Dempster, Marolyn and Bryan Mahon, and Phil Markin.

Mr. Sam Henry

by Rosemarie Parent

This article was put together from archival material, including taped interviews, in the archives of the Arrow Lakes Historical Society. Their publication Port of Nakusp was also used for the text.

In the late 1800s, the Slocan and Lardeau areas were filled with people of many nationalities, but there were few Chinese. Because the Chinese were known to work for lower wages, the miners, afraid of losing their own employment opportunities, made them unwelcome.

Although Nakusp offered little incentive for Asians to settle, there were a few who took advantage of the more open-minded climate that existed in the town. One of the most prominent to come to Nakusp was Sam Henry, whose name was listed in the 1895 BC Directory as having a laundry business on Bay Street. The next time we hear of Sam Henry is in 1897, when he had the vision to establish a market garden to supply the steamers. Near his laundry was a plot of land made up of black soil well suited to small gardening. Spring-fed, this land produced bounteous crops of vegetables, which were gratefully picked up by the new boats on the Arrow Lakes. This was only a small farm and Henry had his eye on a huge parcel of land lying east of his present location. He was sure it was the best land on the Arrow Lakes.

By 1904, Henry finally managed to purchase this land in two lots—one of 72 acres and an adjoining one of 89 acres. Also spring-fed, this beautiful earth could produce vegetables at record rates. It was low-lying land that produced internal heat, allowing plants to be sown early in the year. This is where the Spicer family is now, opposite the marina in Nakusp. Interestingly, although Chinese were not allowed to own property, records show, even after the new land act was written in 1908, that Henry did own this property.

Henry bought the Genelle house in 1911 and moved it off the mill land to the farm. It is still in use on the Spicer property. Barns and outbuildings were erected to accommodate the men working the farm. Some were housed in a large frame building, sitting near the Nakusp Trading Store on Bay Street. As many as twenty Chinese men were employed at times. They were a familiar sight as they trotted off in a group to the boats early in the morning, each with two baskets of vegetables hung from a pole over their shoulders.

In the eyes of the non-Chinese residents Henry had a complicated matrimonial life. As a wealthy man, it was a common Chinese practice to have many wives. Many believed Henry had left several wives back in China, but no one knew for certain. He did have two wives who lived in Nakusp. His first wife was Yip Shee, a large woman who was always known as “Big Mrs. Sam.” She was a very demanding and controlling woman. A son was born to her named Gee, which meant George, in honour of George Jordan, a prominent Nakusp citizen, whom the family greatly respected.

In 1909, Henry took a trip back to China and returned with a young wife, Jung Shee, who became known as Ying. When she had a son named Willie, the little fellow was taken immediately from her by Big Mrs. Sam, who acted as if the baby was hers. Poor Ying was never able to mother her own child.

When Henry died, Big Mrs. Sam took charge and sent Ying out to work as a housemaid in many homes around Nakusp. Another young girl, whose name was Faun, lived with the family. She was thought to be Henry’s daughter, but no one interviewed was sure who her mother was. Most thought her mother was one of the wives in China, rather than Big Mrs. Sam.



Enid Shelling recalled in an interview an episode from when she was a young girl on a trip to town with her father, Fred Wensley. On the brisk fall day in 1912, as they travelled by horse-and-buggy they could hear a pounding as they neared the main street. At the corner of Broadway, they saw the most unusual procession taking place. Making their way down the street men were raising large sticks above their knees and then pounding the sand along the road as they marched along. With them was a group of women with white sacks covering their heads, giving them, in Enid Shelling’s eyes, a grotesque appearance.

The town band began to play the mournful piece, *Dead March in Saul*, when a dignitary from the Asian party instructed the band to play livelier music. They then switched to *Wolverine March* and *The Girl I Left Behind Me*. Enid’s father smiled as the band changed tunes, and finally realized the significance of the parade. Henry must have died. Fred lived on a farm and didn’t come to town often, so he had not heard the news.

A Chinese band from Revelstoke was also contributing to the event with the clanging of cymbals and the rattling of sticks, which was presumably an attempt to scare off evil spirits. The Buesnel

brothers' wagon bore the casket while Henry was guarded by a lively group of men who were throwing hundreds of tiny perforated pieces of paper in the air. This was thought by Enid Shelling to be another device to keep the devil forces from getting to Henry because the devil forces had to go through each hole. Others familiar with Chinese custom say that the tiny perforated pieces of papers represent money for the wandering spirits of other deceased.

The procession, which was impressively long, included many Chinese dignitaries from Vancouver. A large group of town residents had joined them out of respect for the influential man. The parade snaked up some of the side streets and then back to Broadway. Upon reaching the cemetery, the whole Chinese contingent, except the horses and wagons, brought Henry back, walking backwards. The whole sequence had been a charade, a mock funeral to convince the devil that Henry was in the Nakusp cemetery. In fact, he ended up in the local funeral parlour owned by Joe Crowell.

There he lay in state until the proper time for reburial was reached, thus ensuring his safety and protection from evil forces.

It was an ancient custom for Chinese to be buried in the homeland so that the bones could be worshipped by the relatives. They believe that the spirit lived on with the remains. In 1927, a group of Chinese citizens in Toronto were busy raising funds to ship the remains of four hundred deceased Chinese back to China. Henry's remains were also to be returned at that time. However, there was a problem. Crowell, the undertaker, had filled Henry with so much formaldehyde that his body refused to decay. Seven years later they tried again, but when they dug him up, Henry was still in pristine shape. They tried a third time, but finally gave up and shipped him back to China as they found him.

Crowell found out that another custom the relatives insisted on was the taking of food to the deceased. Nuts and dried fruit were left around the casket. A few days later, other foods including a

whole chicken were brought and left there, which caused distress to the undertaker who did not want to attract animals to the parlour. But this, according to the undertaker's son, continued for two years until the body was buried. It is custom that the food is not left at the casket, but is brought back home.

Henry had proven to be a fine businessman during times when the Chinese were not allowed much latitude in this area. For years he supplied many residents and the paddlewheelers of the Arrow Lakes with fine vegetables and he was a much respected member of the community.

It wasn't until 1922, ten years after Henry died, that Clem and Phil Buesnel bought the main section of the estate property to set up a fine dairy farm, named "Bay View Dairy." By this time much of the land had been sold for houses, especially along Nelson Avenue. ~

Oposite page: *Yip Shee (Mrs. Sam Henry) and her son.*

Below: *Mr. Sam Henry and family.*



The Building of the Golden Museum

by P.L. Miller

Written on 23 March 1981.

MY family and I arrived in Golden in July 1968, at a time when the town looked a mess—a sewer line for the town was being installed, sidewalks were being constructed, main town roads were being paved. Nor was the situation helped by a rock crusher plant operating on top of the hill, spewing dust for miles around the countryside. I thought with considerable misgivings of the home I had left in the West Kootenays, but was mature enough to realize that these were growing pains in the life of a town, that things had to seem bad before they could be better.

A few months after our arrival my wife, a most gregarious type, ran into a member of the recently formed Golden and District Historical Society, Mrs. Chris Schiesser, and lo and behold, the Society had a new member. Two members, in fact, since she had signed up for a family membership; and it wasn't long before I had my arm twisted to attend the monthly meetings. I was reluctant for two reasons: I did not know the group, nor did I have any knowledge of their purpose and intentions.

However, I finally broke down and attended my first meeting in November 1969 and also the ones in January and February, and then the Annual Meeting in March. And at the last meeting I received quite a jolt—I was elected to be one of the Directors and wound up as president!

With this development, my feeling was not one of elation but could more accurately be described as panic. I still knew very little about the group and about the town, and here they wanted to build a museum, and I was right on the firing line.

The Society had held a "walkathon" from Parson to Golden in the spring of 1969, and had collected a shade over \$10,000, this sum to be a first step in the construction of a local museum. But in 1970 construction prices were already rising by leaps and bounds, and I had sufficient construction and cost-estimating experience to realize that with this sum one would be fortunate to build a good,

solid brick outhouse. What to do?

My first year as president was a busy one, doing my homework and seeking various alternatives. One of these was the old Roman Catholic Church we could purchase for \$5,000. However, the building was much too old—the exterior walls were bulging outward and the floor was rotten. To revamp it to be suitable as a museum would have taken far more money than we had. Another alternative was the old police station and Edgar's

foundation for \$7,382. My job wasn't made any easier by the fact that some members had grandiose ideas of a library-and-museum complex, to be subsidized by federal, provincial, or municipal grants. My feelers in this direction were squelched rather promptly—no money from these sources would be available for several years—and in the meantime people in Golden wanted to know what we were doing with their 10,000 dollars—and where was the museum?

The situation came to a head at the general annual meeting, March 1971. My position was that we should forget the library-museum complex as being too uncertain and too far in the future. After all, we had very few artifacts at the time to install in a lordly building. However, we could go ahead and build a Steiner Arch museum on the donated Elk property, hopefully raising more money as we went along to keep our head above the water.

Prior to the meeting, my grapevine told me that, a member was bringing two aldermen to help squash my suggestion, and was I interested in having

the mayor there as a neutral arbitrator? Of course I was interested, and this was the first time I met Walter Zazulak, a very good man who was to become a close personal friend, and would be of great help to the society in later years.

Anyway, the final vote was 38 to 2 in favour of my suggestion. I was also re-elected for another year.

It would be pleasant to say that everything was sunshine and roses after the meeting. It wasn't. The opposing member took the results as a personal affront, and did not attend any more meetings after this. This is a pity, as this member was very intelligent and very capable, and the group could certainly have used the talents of this person. And it's always sad when someone cuts off their nose to spite their face.

At this point—another person entered the picture—Mr. Uwe Soerensen. To Mr. Soerensen belongs most of the credit for the



Courtesy Naomi Miller

Above: *The Golden Museum at opening day, 1 June 1974.*

residence behind the Court House. This looked promising until the Deputy Minister of Public Works put a *kibosh* on it by saying *nyet*. The third alternative was a CPR fuel tank behind the CPR station. However we had first to clean the tank and then transport it to our location—which we didn't have at the time—and in view of welding costs plus a small inside area, this offer from the CPR was declined.

I investigated other possibilities. The Elks were willing to donate five adjoining lots (at the site of the present museum) and I breathed a lot easier now that we had a possible site for whatever structure would eventually be built. I think I wrote to every building construction firm in Western Canada, giving approximate desired dimensions and requesting costs. Most of the price quotes were just plain out of reach, but one did look promising—a 40 ft. by 50 ft. Steiner Arch building, which could be erected on our



Above: *Opening day at the Golden Museum: Guest John Kyte, Provincial Museum advisor stands with Peter Miller, Andy Spowart, Ellen Cameron, Uwe Soerenson, and Naomi Miller. Bandmaster John Mutter with Students and Mayor Zazullak at the microphone.*

actual construction of the museum. I did the groundwork, designed the interior layout, and looked after the costs, but without Uwe's knowledge of carpentry and his leadership as foreman of construction, results would have been less satisfying, much more costly, and would no doubt have taken much, much longer. After our trials and tribulations together, Uwe too I have come to regard as good personal friend.

The footings were poured by Historical Society members in June of 1971, and the Steiner Arch shell was erected shortly thereafter. Then followed a hiatus of several months—we were running out of money. All sorts of expedients were resorted to in order to raise more cash. During the winter 1971–1972 we rented the building to Evans Products for a storage space. There was another minor walkathon, winter-skatethons, auctions of donated gifts that were not artifacts or antiques, donations from service clubs, plus sales of Historical Society publications such as *Kinbasket*. Eventually the floor of the museum was poured in November of 1972. Now, only the innards had to be installed, plus wiring and plumbing.

We were fortunate to get two Local Initiatives Program (LIP) construction grants to help us out. One was in the winter of 1972–1973 and the other was in the winter of 1973–1974. Neither covered major material costs, but they both covered the cost of some badly

needed labour. In both, the construction was supervised by Uwe Soerensen while I looked after the paperwork and the payroll. The first grant completed most of the interior design work, together with wiring and plumbing. The second one put the finishing touches to the interior but was mostly devoted to cabinet. These cabinets incidentally, were designed by my wife. Eventually everything was painted and ready for operation.

There was only one sour note during the LIP construction. During the winter of 1972–1973, an employee, a recent arrival in Canada, turned out to be a good talker but a poor worker. He started coming late and leaving early, and was agitating for more pay. This the Society could not afford; all we could give were the official LIP rates. Things got to such a point that Mr. Soerensen fired him. He wouldn't accept this: "You can't fire me. This is a government job!" Anyway, I went over to the site and with great difficulty convinced this gentleman that he was fired. He was so hostile he almost took a swing at me. Nor did he stop there. He went home and wrote letters all over the country: to Vancouver and Ottawa, cursing the project and the people who were running it. For his efforts this fellow came very close to being deported. He escaped this fate by leaving town very shortly after.

After my two years as president, Mrs. Margaret Olson took over the chair for a year.

She was then succeeded by Mrs. Ethel King, and it was under Ethel's presidency that construction was finalized and the museum put into operation. I had remained as a director all this time so I could remain in control of the cost aspects of the construction and have the necessary authority to deal with outside groups and agencies. But I believed then, as I do now, that there should be a two-year limit on executive tenure in any group or club, as nothing kills a group more quickly than having the same people continuously occupying the same executive positions for years on end.

The Museum was officially opened to the public on 1 June 1974. The opening was performed by Mayor Walter Zazullak, with Bill Wenman and Cecil Parson assisting in the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Music was provided by the Golden Secondary School Band under John Mutter. The guest speaker was John Kyte, the Provincial Museums Advisor, and among the honoured guests at the banquet that evening, were Edgar Dunning of radio fame and James Chabot, the MLA for Columbia River. All in all it was a very satisfactory day—a fitting conclusion to a job well done thanks to the efforts of many, many people. Along with Society members many local volunteer non-members gave freely of their time and labour, including a group of Pakistanis which Mr. Virk brought over to help us pour cement.

Was it all worth it? Yes. Could it be done again? I doubt it. Most of the artifacts came from the collections of Mr. Bill Wenman and Mr. Cecil Parson, but many valuable pieces were donated by other local people such as souvenirs of the Swiss Guides. About this time the price of antiques started to rise out of sight, and I doubt very much if the same number of artifacts would be donated today as were done at the time. And some of the artifacts are literally priceless—they cannot be replaced. The total final material cost of the museum was just under \$23,000, including heating, plumbing, and the display cabinets. What could one do with that amount today?

The Town of Golden should be proud of their museum. Visitors from Texas to Germany have been favourably impressed. And it was built entirely by local effort—it is all paid for. Your children and grandchildren will not have to pay taxes for decades in order to pay for it. ~

Book Reviews

Books for review and book reviews should be sent to:

Anne Yandle, Book Review Editor BC Historical News, 3450 West 20th Avenue, Vancouver BC V6S 1E4

Robert A. Campbell

*Sit Down and Drink Your Beer:
Regulating Vancouver's Beer Parlours,
1925–1954,*

reviewed by Ian Kennedy.

Terrence Cole and Elemer E. Rasmusen

*Banking on Alaska: The Story of the
National Bank of Alaska,*

reviewed by Donald Steele.

Cliff Armstrong

Sternwheelers on the Skeena,

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*Old Square-Toes and His Lady: The Life
of James and Amelia Douglas,*

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Overlanders,

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*Pilots to Presidents: British Columbia
Aviation Pioneers and Leaders, 1930–
1960,*

reviewed by Robert W. Allen.

Betty O'Keefe and Ian Macdonald

*Merchant Prince: The Story of
Alexander Duncan McRae,*

reviewed by Phyllis Reeve.

Sit Down and Drink Your Beer: Regulating Vancouver's Beer Parlours, 1925–1954

Robert A. Campbell.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
183 pp. Illus. \$50 hardcover; \$19.95
paperback.

REVIEWED BY IAN KENNEDY.

When asked for his key to effective speechmaking, Tommy Douglas, the late Premier of Saskatchewan—an orator supreme—replied: “First tell them what you intend saying; tell them; then tell them what you’ve just said!”

In his well researched and academic study, Robert A. Campbell, a history instructor at Capilano College, follows Douglas’ advice to the letter by outlining his own thesis in his introduction, expanding on it in each of his five body chapters, and then reiterating it as a conclusion. Following the same pattern in each chapter leaves the reader in no doubt of Campbell’s contention: the working man’s beer parlours of Vancouver and the liquor policy of the province of British Columbia together created “a prism through which to view society.” The University of Toronto Press in 2001 published this study of BC’s paternalistic and restrictive liquor policy and the resultant beer parlours, the first title in a series called “Studies in Gender and History.” Considered fifty years later, that prism does not reflect a pretty picture.

Before Prohibition in 1917 Vancouver boasted 69 stand-up bars, which served every kind of liquor and boasted entertainment and gambling. With the end of Prohibition in 1921, beer parlours replaced those old saloons and almost exclusively admitted white heterosexual working-class patrons to sit and drink nothing but beer in a sterile, entertainment-free environment. Blacks, Natives, or anyone who “looked or acted like an Indian,” Asians, or mixed-race couples could not buy a drink, nor, of course, could minors—at that time anyone under the age of 21. Gays and lesbians were not welcomed in these “canteens” and women in general could only enter through doors marked “Ladies” or “Ladies and Escorts.” Once inside,

all patrons were expected to “drink moderately and maintain appropriate comportment.” To make certain they did so, “Parlour workers and operators were charged with much of the regulatory enforcement.”

After visiting a beer parlour in 1949, British journalist Noel Monk commented, “Canada is a tremendous, virile country and I know from personal experience that your fighting men can match the finest in the world. Yet you’ve apparently let yourselves be legislated into a state of adolescence when it comes to the use of alcohol.” The partitioned and segregated drinking establishments continued to flourish unabated from 1925 until 1954 when the Liquor Control Board finally allowed middle-class “cocktail lounges” in selected hotels.

Campbell came to Vancouver from California in 1976 to do a master’s degree at UBC. Fascinated with what made Canada different from his birthplace, he struck on BC’s liquor policies as a point at which to begin his study of the differences. His first work, *Demon Rum and Easy Money*, explored the BC government’s role in the liquor business, and *Sit Down and Drink Your Beer* is supposedly a closer examination of why the provincial government viewed the consumption of alcohol as a sin. One problem for readers is that the book lays out no real background to the years before 1925. There might be many reasons for seeing a relationship between alcohol and sin, but this volume does not really point them out. One reason might have been that only two “czars,” as the newspapers liked to call them, headed and controlled the Liquor Control Board (LCB) from 1932 until 1969, William F. Kennedy and Lt. Col. Donald McGugan. Another reason might have been a class problem, of the power group facing the growth of socialist thought. Dave Barrett’s New Democratic Party lowered the drinking age to 19 and introduced neighbourhood pubs, pleasanter places that served food, promoted entertainment and provided something other than beer to drink. When such liberalizing did not cause the sky to fall, and with the world coming to visit Expo in 1986, Bill Bennett’s Social Credit



Government allowed drink to be served on Sunday even without food. More recently some Vancouver drinking establishments are seeking permission to open 24 hours a day. Will the sky now fall?

The book's catchy title hints at a lighter treatment of the topic but through relying almost exclusively on LCB files and reports, and thirteen pages worth of bibliographic materials, and by sticking firmly to his academic roots, Campbell fails to really flesh out the atmosphere and personality of the classic beer parlour. For example, that lonely man sitting alone at his terry-towelled island of isolation in a vast beer hall with two mandatory beers in front of him. What lonelier sight? Remember the domestic disputes, the harsh words often overheard on a Friday night when a wife entered the beer parlour to claim the housekeeping money? And, who permitted such establishments to act as banks by setting up wickets right there near the bar for cashing pay cheques and thus enabling men to spend that house-keeping money? What about student drinking at the Fraser Arms or the Georgia? What of "red-eye"—tomato juice and beer—, Canada's contribution to drink mixology? Where are the bar-room brawls, the horribly cut faces from the broken beer glasses used as weapons? Where the local characters? Where the tall tales? For a book with such a catchy title, I longed for more than the dry academic approach that really failed to cover the reason for accepting Prohibition in the first instance, one that skimmed over the later plebiscites, the problems of rum-running and bootlegging, the power of the beer barons and hotel owner, and the world of individuals like Rev. A.E. Cooke who preached against liquor sales of any kind.

One interesting and amusing diversion relates that two minors were arrested in a beer parlour in 1932, were duly fined the maximum \$300 or three months in jail. Neither the boys nor their parents could pay; one was supporting his widowed mother. The Attorney-General reduced the fine to \$50, but the boys still could not pay. The Attorney-General then remitted the fine on the agreement that, under police supervision, the boys would be spanked by their parents "in the place provided by Nature". As a newspaper put it: "The spanking was meant not to hurt them but to humiliate them for prematurely overstepping the boundary from youth to manhood. Spanking, an uncomfortable symbol of childhood, put

them back in their proper place." An interesting solution, that probably wouldn't work today.

Reviewer Ian Kennedy co-authored two guide books to BC's neighbourhood pubs.

Banking on Alaska; the story of the National Bank of Alaska

Terrence Cole and Elmer E. Rasmuson.
Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 2000.
Two volumes. Illus. US \$25 paperback

REVIEWED BY DONALD STEELE.

The first volume relates to the history of the National Bank of Alaska and the second records events and stories largely taken from Elmer Rasmuson's memories of his childhood and his role as a businessman and leader in Alaska. Both volumes are beautifully presented, using quality paper, with many historic photographs and documents to illustrate the stories.

In volume one, Terrence Cole, Professor of History at the University of Alaska has compiled a comprehensive record of the history of the bank from 1916, the history of Alaska, and the life stories of the personalities involved. He particularly documents the life of Andrew Stevenson, the first president and Edward A. Rasmuson, who assumed control of the bank on 13 July 1918 and was later succeeded by his son Elmer E. Rasmuson.

In reading this book, as a retired Canadian banker, I was impressed with the excellent explanation and rational defining of the differences between the American banking system and that of Canada. Branch banking as employed in Canada and seen as a strength, was perceived in Alaska as just the opposite and was resisted for many years.

Strangely enough, the history of the National Bank of Alaska and that of British Columbia are to some degree entwined. At one point the largest account held by the Bank of Alaska was a mining operation near Atlin BC—the Engineer Mine. The building of the Canol Pipeline from Norman Wells, in the Yukon Territory, was another important project in which the Bank of Alaska was involved through its office in Skagway. The expenditure of the American Government was some \$270 million, with much of it spent in Canada, and for them, one of the costliest blunders of the war.

In November 1950 the Bank of Alaska became the National Bank of Alaska in

Anchorage, changing from a territorial to a national charter, which placed the bank in a more competitive position in the state. On 3 January 1959, Alaska officially joined the Union and became the 49th state, and the National Bank of Alaska became the largest bank in the largest state. The year of the Prudhoe Bay oil discovery, 1968, and the Trans Alaska pipeline were also milestones in the development of Alaska and the bank.

Volume two is subtitled "Elmer's Memoirs" and contains anecdotes and vignettes covering more than 90 years for Elmer E. Rasmuson. This volume tells a lot about the Rasmuson family, their recreation, and the early days of the bank. About one third of this book is taken up with biographical material for some 62 personalities who were prominent in Alaska or associated with the bank.

Many of the stories in volume two show the involvement of Alaskan bankers in local, state and federal politics. In Canada this would have been not only unusual but impossible under rules established for Canadian bank officers. In any event, the Alaskan bankers played important roles in the State and accomplished much for the communities in which they served, as well as for their bank.

Although the two volumes are a long read, I enjoyed the work despite the considerable detail the authors have provided about the bank and times of the Bank of Alaska 1916–1950 and the National Bank of Alaska 1950–2000.

Reviewer Donald Steele is a retired banker, living in West Vancouver.

Sternwheelers on the Skeena

Cliff Armstrong.
Prince Rupert: Skeena River Heritage Trust, 2001. (Half Moon Communications, 5288 8th Ave. East, Prince Rupert, BC V8J 2M9) 48 pp. Illus. \$16.95 paperback.

REVIEWED BY TED AFFLECK.

A new book on the shallow-draught steamboat is always welcome. Full credit has yet to be granted this versatile economic invasion craft which did so much to get business rolling in so many parts of the interior of British Columbia during the late nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. Cliff Armstrong has carried out some diligent research and has provided a lucid chronology of the hectic days of

steamboating on what is generally conceded to be British Columbia's most wicked navigable river. Steamboat buffs in particular will be grateful for the wealth of detail on the activities of the various vessels in the Skeena River fleet not heretofore readily available in print. The author has also had the perspicacity to key his narrative to the underlying economic forces that drove men to build these sternwheelers and to work them on such treacherous waters. Steamboat skippers after all did not challenge the ruthless Skeena River just for the hell of it. The book is also informative on what was to be found at the downstream terminus of Port Simpson and the terminus of Hazelton 320 kilometres upstream, as well as what was to be encountered in the nature of wayside settlements and navigation hazards between the two ports. Maps and diagrams are relevant, and the book contains an abundance of illustrations not only of the steamboats in the Skeena River fleet, but also of the riverside settlements (some now long vanished), of the features of the terrain, and of artifacts from the steamboat days.

Sternwheelers on the Skeena, a happy outcome of co-operation among such regional groups as the Skeena River Heritage Trust, the Community Futures Development Corp, the Anglican Diocese of Caledonia, the Museum of Northern British Columbia, and Prince Rupert City and Regional Archives, has definite merit.

I wish I could express unalloyed enthusiasm for the work, but I am irked by what I consider to be three marked flaws which diminish its stature: (1) No index appears for this work, which deals in considerable detail with events extending back more than two decades prior to the First World War. The absence of footnotes I can forgive in a work for popular consumption, but the absence of an index impairs its general utility. (2) It would have been generous of the author to provide a bibliography to guide the reader to further reading on his subject. A number of interesting previous publications have dealt with steamboating on the Skeena River. The booklet *Steamboat Days on the Skeena River*, published in 1960 by old-timer Wiggs O'Neill contains a number of vivid accounts of steamboating, some of them first hand; R.G. Large, *The Skeena, River of Destiny*, Vancouver, Mitchell Press, 1957, and Norma V. Bennett, ed., *Pioneer Legacy: Chronicles of the Lower Skeena River*, Terrace, Dr. Lee

Hospital Foundation, 1997, stand out among other works touching on this subject. (3) An alphabetical list of the Skeena River fleet has been included, providing some detailed information on each steamboat, but the author has failed to set out consistently for each the registration number, the dimensions of the hull and tonnage (carrying capacity) of the vessel as well as the dimensions of the cylinders (the major component of the reciprocating engines powering a sternwheeler).

Names of steamboats tend to have been duplicated throughout the Northwest, but disclosure of a unique registration number assigned each vessel diminishes the chances of confusing one vessel with another. Hull dimensions and tonnage provide quick information on the scale of the vessel, while cylinder dimensions are the most salient item in estimating a vessel's potential speed and ability to negotiate rapid water. Such data can now be readily "lifted" from a couple of this critics' own steamboat publications. No one has a copyright on facts. Omitted from Armstrong's list, incidentally, is the Str. *Essington*, the Skeena River snag boat that ended its days as a beachside restaurant under Vancouver's Burrard Bridge.

Notwithstanding any defects, steamboat enthusiasts will definitely want to own this book. Others who have succumbed to the lure of the Lower Skeena Valley will also treasure the work.

Reviewer Ted Affleck's most recent publication is A Century of Paddlewheelers in the Pacific Northwest, the Yukon and Alaska. 2000.

Historical Portraits of Trail

Trail: Trail City Archives, 2001. (first published 1980). 125 pp. Illus. \$22.50 paperback.

REVIEWED BY ALICE GLANVILLE

This revised edition, published to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Trail, provides a good introduction to the history of a vibrant community. Trail is one of the best known cities in the interior and has been one of the most prosperous throughout its long history. The well-chosen pictures with detailed captions, along with the limited text, present a general history from the city's beginnings to the present day.

The very brief reference to the nomadic Lakes Indians is timely with the recent interest in this group, which has been declared officially extinct. The writers mention the

villages and campsites in the vicinity of Trail, but give no information regarding their interaction with the newcomers.

As in many other areas, gold was the lure that drew explorers to the Kootenays. A trade route had to be established through the area, and in the early days water was the first means of establishing such a route. With limited success, David Thompson and John Work attempted to follow the Pend D'Oreille to the Columbia. Then in 1859, John Sullivan of the Palliser Expedition became the first white man to traverse the Kootenay Pass to Kootenay Lake near Creston. This was the route later followed by Edgar Dewdney in the construction of the Dewdney Trail, from which Trail later took its name.

Trail Creek Landing (now Trail) on the Columbia became the merchandise depot for Rossland. In 1895, the Trail Creek townsite was established on land owned by Colonel Eugene Topping and Frank Hanna, thereby laying the foundation for Trail. Rapid growth in the next few years led to the incorporation of the City of Trail on 4 June 1901, with Colonel Topping acclaimed as the first mayor. The new council presided over the building of streets, bridges, hotels, hospitals, and schools. The street names, Spokane, Helena, Portland, reflect Trail's connection with American mining interests. The first bridge across the Columbia was built in 1912 to replace the ferry built in 1898 by Fritz Heinz. The City of Trail was taking shape.

Heinz was able to strike a land deal with Topping and by 1896 a small copper smelter had been established on the land above the Columbia River. In 1898 Heinz sold the smelter and railway to the CPR. The smelter was a success and the future looked bright. In 1932 a 10-million-dollar construction program was initiated to build a fertilizer plant in Warfield to use the smelter by-product sulphuric acid. The Company contributed to the war effort in the 1940s when it agreed to produce heavy water for the US Manhattan Research project, operating from 1943 to 1955. In the book, we witness the enormous growth of a tiny smelter in 1896 to the largest lead-zinc smelter in the world in the 1940s. To this day no picture of Trail seems complete without a smelter looking down on the town.

Trail had some of the features of a company town with a company store, a company union, and a company farm that supported the company's contention that a successful farm operation was possible close

to a smelter. In this town of smelter workers only two pictures in the book give some indication of the role of the unions. Ginger Goodwin led a strike in 1917 for the enforcement of an eight-hour work day. The strike was broken and Goodwin fled to Vancouver Island where he was eventually shot. In 1918 the short-lived Mine Mill Union was replaced by a company union, and we see CM&S General Manager S.G. Blaylock meeting with the "company union." In 1968 this union merged with the United Steel Workers of America.

The pictures of hospital, schools, and sports facilities throughout the years show a constant progression. The many recreation facilities laid the foundation for future success in the field of sports. Sports, always encouraged by the CM&S (later named Cominco), has played a significant role in the life of Trail people. In hockey they were winners of the Allan Cup, in curling they were the first in BC to win the Brier and in baseball their Little League garnered five Canadian championships.

No history of Trail would be complete without mention of the Italians and their settlement of the Gulch. The first immigrant, Isaco Georgette, came in 1897. The book doesn't deal specifically with their many contributions, but the Italian names under the captions do indicate the extensive participation of this group throughout the century.

The selective use of photos and text has resulted in an easy-to-read and interesting presentation. The book does not have an index, but it does contain a fairly adequate table of contents. This concise history, without the detail found in Elsie Turnbull's histories of Trail, but with its well researched text and many historic photographs, is a worthwhile addition to the collection of local history.

Reviewer Alice Glanville is co-author of *Life and Times of Grand Forks, 1997*.

Old Square-Toes and His Lady: The Life of James and Amelia Douglas

John Adams.

Victoria: Horsdal and Schubart, 2001. 243 pp. Illus., maps. \$18.95 paperback.

REVIEWED BY DAVE PARKER.

All too often the personal story of influential people in our history tends to be overwhelmed in the recording and retelling of events. Redressing the balance is

important—it can add a more human aspect to the history. While much has been written about James Douglas, adding personal detail and including the story of Amelia and their family gives a new and very appealing perspective. It enriches it.

In reading John Adams's book you come to understand something of the hardship of life in the fur trade, and that of the families: long, often dangerous travel, extended separations, loneliness, isolation, and, on occasion, privation. The character of James, some of which confirms earlier impressions, comes through clearly as where Douglas's innate curiosity surfaced. He was an inveterate explorer, an investigator of oddities, minutiae, and trivia, and had a fascination with detail that bordered on a mania. For instance, when he was at Red River, he set out to visit, measure, and document the governor's house, to map the garden and to sketch a machine he saw there for tying up peas, and probably drove people nuts doing it. There are other insights as well, such as the fact that he always, even when travelling, took along a pillow with a tartan—probably Douglas Tartan—pillowcase.

Douglas' devotion to his family, and especially to his wife, is apparent throughout the book. The character of Amelia comes through as well, the impression being one of great courage and devotion to James and her family. Her native heritage, while a source of great pride to her, was the source of her loneliness at times: racial prejudice was common.

The author balances his account by recounting occasions when other less laudable aspects of Douglas' character came to the fore. One such incident mentioned was when Douglas first encountered his new son-in-law, Charles Good—this was shortly after that worthy's elopement with Alice. Straight to the point, Douglas "knocked him down". Perhaps he can't be blamed too much for that one. Some did like Sir James, however, and one of these, Arthur Thomas Bushby, referred to him as a "Jolly Brick".

One of the most interesting parts of the book deals with Douglas' retirement and his "Grand Tour." Adams has used Douglas' travel journals to full advantage, and this record of his thoughts during this period of his life is fascinating.

In short, *Old Square Toes and His Lady* should be in every BC history library.

Dave Parker is Esquimalt's Municipal Archivist.

Overlanders

Richard Thomas Wright.

Williams Lake, Winter Quarters Press, 2000. 316 pp. Illus., maps. \$27.95 paperback. (Winter Quarters Press, Box 15, Miocene, Williams Lake, BC V2G 2P3)

REVIEWED BY PHYLLIS REEVE

Subtitled on the cover, though not on the title page, "The Epic Cross-Canada Treks for Gold, 1858-1862", this book first appeared in 1985 as "Overlanders; 1858 Gold". Richard Thomas Wright has collected additional information, corrected errors and inadequacies, and raised some new questions. He makes it clear that this new edition is not to be regarded as definitive, but as a work in progress and a continuing quest.

In both waves of the Cariboo rush, in 1858 and 1862, most gold-seekers journeyed by sea from San Francisco and Seattle to Victoria and thence to the Fraser River. But three hundred and fifty contrary souls from eastern North America chose to travel by land. In so doing they took the first grudging, trudging steps towards binding together a something, perhaps a country, which could become "Canada."

Some of them knew they were doing this. John Jessop, a school teacher from Whitby, Canada West, appointed himself an agent for imperialism, "intending to go to British Columbia through British Territory, and by keeping a daily journal contribute something towards the opening up of a route on British soil, between the eastern and western colonies of the empire." But Jessop's expedition disintegrated by the time it reached Fort Garry, where he found himself waiting for an American group whose purpose was "to establish a route linking Minnesota and the North West in such a permanent commercial fashion as to make US absorption of the Red River settlement inevitable."

Like many others, Jessop railed against the monopolistic rule of the Hudson's Bay Company. Company agents, in turn, resented the unannounced arrival of too many dishevelled Overlanders expecting room and board at HBC posts, although some posts, especially Linklater's on the Kootenay River, provided life-saving haven.

Wright focuses on how the Overlanders did it, how they crossed the continent, setting out in trains and stagecoaches, and when those reached the end of their lines, resorting to various carts and trains of carts, rafts, canoes, "bull boats," and other exotic contraptions, and pitifully inadequate footgear.

They followed, more or less, two routes north of the forty-ninth parallel. The northern water route followed various rivers and crossed the Rocky Mountains via the Peace River. The other route led from Fort Garry to Fort Edmonton, then crossed the Athabasca River to the Columbia River HBC posts. The parties met, crisscrossed, divided, and regrouped. In Wright's words: "These small leapfrogging, overlapping parties of young men probed the plains and mountains for paths and passes like the fingers of a hand."

Such a setting had to witness hair-raising scenes of hardship, privation, and desperation, caused as much by ignorance and fear as by climate and terrain. The Aboriginal inhabitants guided and rescued Overlander groups, leaving with a horse or two as unauthorized bonus when they lost patience with the foolhardy adventurers, but cheating them no more frequently than did the white guides and traders. Rumoured "Indian wars" proved to be most often between rival Native nations.

Sometimes travellers lost their momentum for the goldfields once they had crossed the mountains and survived a winter; then they made as quickly as possible for the Washington coast or Victoria, finding jobs to pay their way to the Cariboo, or back home.

One of the few groups to remain tightly together to the journey's end came from the Canada East village of Huntingdon, which is on the Chateauguay River, not, as Wright has it, "on the eastern bank of the St. Lawrence." These nineteen anglophone Quebecers elected a leader, James Wattie, experienced in the California mines, and formed a hometown joint-stock company to meet costs. They set out by train to the Mississippi, then by steamship and stagecoach to the real beginning of the trek. The Huntingdon group joined up with other "hometown parties", as many as 150 men travelling under the leadership of Thomas McMicking, a merchant from Queenston, Canada West.

At least fourteen of the nineteen reached the Cariboo mines. Back in Huntingdon, the news of their modest success inspired others, among them my great-grandfather, to try their luck wherever in the world gold was beckoning. But the real influence of the Overlanders came over the next several generations. They had made the connection between east and west, and begun the dream of a railway and a big sprawling country. In

the early years of the twentieth century, more young men from Huntingdon, including four of my uncles, travelled west to homestead and open small businesses.

Wright's Epilogue gives capsule life-stories of the Overlanders. Not surprisingly, the biographies reveal much restlessness, with moves back and forth across the continent and up and down the west coast. Many eventually settled as citizens of the new communities.

From time to time the reader, like the Overlanders, loses track. Fortunately, several appendices and lists point us back to the trail. Some stories lack endings. Wright offers to provide access to more information than he could include within the book, and continues to search for new data.

Richard Wright has made the history of the Cariboo his career and his obsession. A recent *Victoria Times-Colonist* carried a photograph of him holding an autoharp, with his wife Cathryn Wellner wielding a fiddle, publicizing a performance, "Halfway to Horsefly," and a CD and book, *Rough but Honest Miner*.

Reviewer Phyllis Reeve lives on Gabriola Island and still has cousins in Huntingdon, Quebec.

Pilots to Presidents; British Columbia Aviation Pioneers and Leaders, 1930-1960

Peter Corley-Smith
Victoria BC: Sono Nis Press, 2001
\$29.95 paperback.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT W. ALLEN, BCLS, CLS

This is the second book I have reviewed on aviation in British Columbia and both have provided an excellent insight into this interesting portion of BC history.

Until about 1930, most of the flying from place to place was done on a contract basis with bush pilots. Through the Depression of the thirties, through the Second World War, and on to the prosperous 1950s, the need for flights from city to city was becoming more important and this brought about the birth of Canada's first big four airlines: Trans Canada Airlines, Pacific Western Airlines, Queen Charlotte Airlines, and Canadian Pacific Airlines.

This book is the story of the transition from bush pilots to those major airlines as well as the colourful people behind the stories. Corley-Smith delves into the "small

'p' politics" and the "capital 'P' politics" of forming and trying to keep an airline "in the air." Some of these people include "The Minister of Everything", C.D. Howe, the arrogant politician who helped establish Trans Canada Airlines, the forerunner of Air Canada and the quirky Jim Spilsbury with his awkward looking Stranraers and other second-hand aircraft forming Queen Charlotte Airlines. Others include the handsome Grant McConachie who became president of Canadian Pacific Airlines and Russ Baker who appears to have exaggerated some of his stories but helped establish Canadian Pacific Airlines. Hermann Peterson, the last of the real bush pilots; Margaret Rutledge, one of the first women in commercial flying; and Nina Morrison and Eleanore Moore, two of the first stewardesses, are among others also mentioned.

Peter Corley-Smith has done an incredible amount of research as is evidenced by the list in the acknowledgements of the people and institutions that assisted him. His endnotes and bibliography are also quite lengthy. All of this background work has allowed him to give us the real history of the people involved and to eliminate some of the myths.

The book is well laid out chronologically and contains many excellent photographs that give us an excellent view of life of years gone by. There are numerous maps that are also well done and well laid out. They make the stories that much easier to follow.

I read this book in my spare time over a period of three months and found that I could pick it up after not having read it for a week or two or three and carry on without fear of losing track of where I was. For anyone interested in aviation history or the general history of British Columbia in this important era of growth, I would recommend obtaining a copy of the book.

Reviewer Robert W. Allen lives in Sechelt, BC

Quo Vadis BC Archives?

BC Archives and the Royal BC Museum will take steps to merge as part of a new Crown Trust. Financial stability is the key element behind this transformation. It seems a deplorable development for all seriously interested in BC history. Money-making ventures, popular history, artifacts, and entertainment will no doubt take priority over archival matters.

—the editor

Merchant Prince; the Story of Alexander Duncan McRae

Betty O'Keefe and Ian Macdonald.
Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 2001.
240 pp. Illus. \$18.95 paperback.

REVIEWED BY PHYLLIS REEVE

We know Alexander Duncan McRae as the Man who Built Hycroft, arguably the most beautiful house in Vancouver, now ten years short of its centennial and still as graciously hospitable as ever. This book tells us the rest of his story: how he became a man who could imagine Hycroft and afford to build it, and how he contributed to the economics, politics, and character of his province and nation.

Born in 1874 on a farm in Ekfrid County, Ontario, McRae followed his older cousin, Andrew Davidson, into successful business ventures in Minnesota. In 1902, McRae and Davidson turned their attention back to Canada, becoming agents for all the lands acquired by the Canadian Northern Railway from Manitoba to British Columbia: farmland, townsites, and city lots, as well as infrastructure and buildings for larger centres. Blessed by the Midas touch, McRae was ready by 1907 to move on to the primary industries of British Columbia. By 1914 he was president of the Anacortes Lumber and Box Company, vice-president of Columbia River Lumber Company Ltd., vice-president of Canadian Collieries (Dunsmuir) Ltd., and president of Wallace Fisheries.

In a fascinating chapter, O'Keefe and Macdonald discuss the establishment of the French Canadian settlement at Maillardville, a gleam of light in a dark spot of history, the exclusion of Oriental labour. They do not gloss over the infamy, but neither do they attempt deep analysis; this is the way it was.

Hycroft has a chapter to itself, besides a role in all subsequent chapters. McRae saw it built to fit his dream of a home for himself, his American wife Blanche and their three daughters, and also as the perfect setting for welcoming guests. He and his architect (probably Thomas Hooper) achieved a work of art. The family moved into the house in 1911, and the parties began - including the legendary masquerade balls.

By the time he was 40, in 1914, McRae began moving his attention from money-making to public service. During the first World War, he dedicated his business skills to his work as overseas director of supplies and transport for the Canadian Armed Forces.

After the war, he turned his enormous energy to politics. Disgusted with all existing parties—a common BC attitude—he formed a new Provincial Party. Later he returned to the Conservative Party, was active federally and in due course became a Senator.

In their later years, McRae and Blanche spent more and more time at Eaglecrest, their estate on Vancouver Island. Blanche's funeral in 1942 was the family's final function at Hycroft. Officially "sold" to the nation for one dollar, the house became an annex to the Shaughnessy Military Hospital. McRae died in 1946.

After the Veterans no longer needed the house, it languished until 1962, when it once again became the fulfilment of a dream. With much negotiation and effort, the University Women's Club of Vancouver was able to acquire Hycroft, and restore it to its intended comfortable glory, a place of action and hospitality, with a role in the community.

When I worked on a history of the Club in the early 1980s, I spent many hours among the archives, then occupying the space which had housed McRae's wine cellar, strategically situated between the ballroom and the 20-foot bar. Our mandate being the story of the Club, we had to leave the McRaes as important minor characters. I am delighted to see this book restoring the balance.

But with all the facts before us, we find McRae elusive. As the authors point out with regret, he left few personal papers, letters or journals. His genius for organization and management outshone characteristics which might have enlivened his biography. One tries without much success to warm to the McRae who, as he mourned his cousin and close associate Andrew Davidson, remembered "the thrill he felt during those train trips across the prairies, each car filled with millionaires ready to purchase land in the Canadian territory, or the pride he and Davidson shared in developing the biggest forest products company on the continent and making it profitable."

While recognizing McRae's role in the province's development, perhaps we had better continue to think of him as the Man who Built Hycroft.

Reviewed Phyllis Reeve, formerly a frequenter of Hycroft, now lives on Gabriola Island.

More Books

Books listed here may be reviewed at a later date. For further information please consult Book Review Editor Anne Yandle.

Bella Coola Man: The Life of a First Nations Elder. Clayton Mack. Madeira Park, Harbour Publishing, 2002. (first published in 1994) \$24.95 paperback.

Earth Elder Stories. Alexander Wolfe. Calgary, Fifth House, 2002. \$12.95 paperback.

Great Political Cartoons, 1915-1945. Charles and Cynthia Hou. Vancouver, Moody's Lookout Press, 2002. \$39.95. (3378 West 39th Ave., Vancouver, V6N 3A2) paperback.

Heavy Horses: An Illustrated History of the Draft Horse. Grant MacEwan. Calgary, Fifth House, 2001. \$21.95 paperback.

The Heritage of Salt Spring Island: A Map of Treasures. Island Pathways, Salt Spring Island, 2002. \$5.00 paperback. (Island Pathways, PO Box 684, Ganges, BC V8K 2W3)

The Journey: the Overlanders' Quest for Gold. Bill Gallaher. Victoria, Horsdal & Schubart, 2002. \$17.95 paperback.

Launching History: The Saga of Burrard Dry Dock. Francis Mansbridge. Madeira Park, Harbour Publishing, 2002. \$39.95 hardcover.

Our Equine Friends: Stories of Horses in History. Grant MacEwan. Calgary, Fifth House, 2002. \$21.95 paperback.

Scandal: 130 years of Damnable Deeds in Canada's Lotus Land. William Rayner. Surrey, Heritage House, 2001. \$19.95 paperback.

A Touch of Strange: Amazing Tales of the Coast. Dick Hammond. Madeira Park, Harbour Publishing, 2002. \$24.95 paperback.

Voyages of Hope: The Saga of the Bride-ships. Peter Johnson. Victoria, Horsdal and Schubart, 2002. \$17.95 paperback.

Where the River Runs: stories of the Saskatchewan and the People Drawn to its Shores. Victor Carl Friesen. Calgary, Fifth House, 2001. \$21.95 paperback.

The Yukon Relief Expedition and the Journal of Carl Johan Sakariassen. Ed. V.R. Rausch. Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press, 2002. \$55 paperback.

Token History

by Ronald Greene

The Grand Hotel of Nakusp

Right: John Hector, hotel owner.



THE token showing the words “John Hector” and “Grand Hotel” is brass, round, 25 mm in diameter. It was brought to my attention in September 2001. It was previously unknown. The denomination, 12½ cents, pointed to the west, and to a date probably before 1910.

A quick check of hotels in British Columbia named “Grand Hotel” showed that there were Grand Hotels in Creston, Nakusp, Nanaimo, Nelson, and Vancouver. There was a John Hector listed as a hotel proprietor in Vancouver and Nakusp. Since Nakusp was not known to have any early tokens I checked out the Vancouver entries first. There I found that John Hector was the proprietor of the Clarence Hotel from his first listing in 1907 until he retired in 1912. He was not shown with any involvement in the Grand Hotel in Vancouver. My attention then shifted to Nakusp. The Arrow Lakes Historical Society has published a series of large format histories, which are very good and detailed, but Nakusp’s history can be elusive as there were long periods in which there were no local newspapers and no city directories. While these histories mentioned much about the Grand Hotel there was no mention of John Hector being involved in it. I homed in on the period of 1901 to 1906, the years that John Hector was listed as a hotel keeper in the various directories, but without a specific hotel associated with his name. Some years in this period, but not every year, the Revelstoke newspapers had a monthly column that reported on Nakusp events. The first confirmation that our John Hector ran the Grand Hotel came after a couple of hours of going through the Revelstoke newspapers when I came across a small mention, which read: “At a meeting of the License Commissioners for Revelstoke riding, on Wednesday, a transfer of license was granted from John Hector for the Grand hotel, Nakusp.”¹

I also found an obituary for John Hector,² which showed that he was the John Hector who was in Nakusp and later operated the Clarence Hotel in Vancouver. I was able to contact a granddaughter, Rheta Skea, and had a long-dis-



Courtesy Rheta Skea

tance conversation. The Grand Hotel did not mean anything to her, but she otherwise knew quite a bit about her grandfather, and she promised to look through her photographs so that I might obtain a photograph of John Hector. When I managed to meet Ms. Skea in person, she produced to my delight a photograph of the Grand Hotel, with an inscription on the back referring to John Hector owning it until 1906. So here is the story of John Hector and the Grand Hotel.

John Hector was born in southern Sweden on 23 May 1863. He came to Canada in 1888³ and worked for the CPR. According to his granddaughter, Ms. Skea, his family name was Larson, but there were so many Larsons working for the railway they were told that, if they wished, they could change their names to avoid confusion. The name, John Hector, was selected, and Ms. Skea wondered if he took the name from James Hector, the member of the Palliser

¹ *Kootenay Mail*, 7 February 1906.

² *Vancouver Daily Province*, 16 May 1932.

³ Census of Canada 1901, microfilm T6430, gives his date of birth as 24 September 1849, his entry to Canada 1888, and his naturalization as 1896.

⁴ Milt Parent, *The Port of Nakusp*, Volume 2, Arrow Lakes Historical Society, Introduction.

⁵ GR0055, (Provincial Police Letters Inward), Box 37 Report of 17 June 1905.

⁶ Milt Parent, *The Port of Nakusp*, Volume 2, Arrow Lakes Historical Society, 43.



Expedition that had explored the Canadian prairies. By 1890 he was in British Columbia.

In the early years of railroading in the Kootenays the CPR built short railways along the north-south oriented valleys to the Kootenay and Arrow lakes and used steamers to transport goods and passengers along the lakes to meet with rail connections at another point on the lake where the tracks resumed. Building tracks along the lakes called for a greater investment and it was cheaper and quicker to put steamboats into operation. Successful mining depended upon the ability to get the ore to smelters, and the railways depended upon the mines to provide enough revenue-producing ore. It was the opening of a number of recently discovered mines in the Kootenays in the late 1880s and early 1890s that brought the railways. By 1891 some settlers had picked the area on the east side of the Upper Arrow Lake that was to become Nakusp as a likely transfer point from rail

to steamer, and therefore a good spot to settle. The name is the white man's pronunciation of the Indian name for the site. By 1892 Tref Nault was building a log hotel, which he called the Prospect House, and Hugh Madden, in partnership with William Cowan of Revelstoke, was building his hotel, called the Nakusp House. A second log hotel, the Columbia House, followed suit. The area was surveyed by 1893 and two blocks of land were granted to the CPR in exchange for their commitment to build a railway from Nakusp to Three Forks (near Sandon).⁴ One report mentions that eight hundred men were working on the construction of the railway and two hundred more were expected shortly. This population figure quickly dropped after the railway was completed and in 1900 the number was hovering around three hundred. The census for 1901 gave the population as 223, and the chief constable for the area gave the population in 1905 as 350.⁵

Above: "Hotel Grand" in Nakusp during James McNeil's tenure.

⁷ British Columbia, Marriage Registration 95-09-163143, microfilm B11386

⁸ *Kootenay Mail*, 1 May 1897.

⁹ *Kootenay Mail*, 21 October 1899. Selkirk was a short lived name for Thompson's Landing near Arrowhead at the head of Arrow Lake. According to the surviving licence records (GR0093 or GR0055) no licence was issued to anyone named Roman, for the year 1900. As the meeting was adjourned until 25 October without a

decision on the transfer, and there is no mention of a decision in the next issue of the *Kootenay Mail* or in its rival *Revelstoke Herald*, it may not have been allowed. The Henderson's *B.C. Directory for 1900-1901* does not mention Roman, Hector, or the Riverside Hotel in Thompson's Landing.

¹⁰ *Kootenay Mail*, 20 June 1902. Notice of a special meeting of the Board of License Commissioners ... "July 7th, 1902, to consider application and transfer from Thos Abriel to John Hector, Hotel Grande, [sic] Nakusp." Since the board had met only a week earlier the transfer must have taken place just that week.

¹¹ *Kootenay Mail*, 23 December 1905.

¹² *Kootenay Mail*, 27 January 1906.

¹³ This narrative of the subsequent ownership is based on details from *The Port of Nakusp*.

¹⁴ British Columbia Marriage Registration 07-09-178300, microfilm B11388

¹⁵ This according to *The Port of Nakusp*, but a list of licences written up 31 December 1904 (GR0055, Box 37, File Bi-Bg) mentions M. Antoya held a licence for the Rosebery Hotel until 1 September 1904. The 1905 *B.C. Directory* still lists Michael Antoya as a hotel keeper at Rosebery.

¹⁶ Possibly the Dominion Trust Company, which collapsed in October 1914.

¹⁷ British Columbia Marriage Registration 19-09-201804, microfilm B11380. Elizabeth Antoya and Frank Frederick Hughes were the names entered. The marriage took place in Vancouver.

¹⁸ *Arrow Lakes News*, 31 July 1925.

¹⁹ *Arrow Lakes News*, 4 September 1925.

John Hector came to Nakusp about this time and was working as the bartender at the Prospect House in 1894. Some heavy drinking led to several fights, one resulting in John Hector receiving an ugly stab wound in his left shoulder,⁶ presumably while he was trying to break up the fight. On 6 May 1895 John Hector married Augusta Nilsson, also a native of Sweden, who had come to Nakusp in 1893. Their marriage registration shows Hector as a hotel keeper.⁷ The couple were to have two daughters: the first, Ruth Victoria Sophia, was born in Nakusp in 1896, and the second, Jean Louise, was born in Vancouver in 1906.

By 1897 Hector was the proprietor of the Columbia House, but he was also involved with Louis Sherrin as hotelkeepers in Burton City, a partnership that broke up 26 April 1897.⁸ Another liquor licence transfer was applied for in October 1899, for the Riverside Hotel in Selkirk, to transfer to N.P. Roman and John Hector.⁹ Whether this transfer went through is unknown, but Hector was operating the Columbia House in Nakusp and was issued a liquor licence for 1900.

Not long after Nakusp Hotel had opened in 1892 the partnership between Hugh Madden and William Cowan broke up, and the name of the hotel was changed to Madden House. However, within a year Madden had left for Beaton, another up-and-coming settlement, and sold Madden House to J. McGeary, who added James McNeil as a partner. By 1897 McNeil was the sole proprietor of the hotel and had made major improvements to it. With all the Victorian gingerbread trimming it was a very handsome building. McNeil felt the name, Madden House, just didn't do the hotel justice and changed the name to the Grand Hotel. In 1899 Tom Abriel took over the Grand Hotel and ran it until mid 1902 when John Hector took it over.¹⁰

The 12½ cent Grand Hotel token, with the name of John Hector on it, must have been issued between 1902 and 1905, as in December the hotel was sold again, with the transfer taking effect in January 1906.¹¹ "Mr & Mrs John Hector, and daughter Ruth left for Vancouver during January 1906."¹² The imminent birth of their second child, which took place in April 1906, or the need for better educational opportunities for Ruth, may well have influenced the decision to move to Vancouver. The Vancouver City Licence Registers show that John Hector

held a liquor licence for the Clarence Hotel in Vancouver from 1906. He sold the hotel and retired in 1912, passing away 15 May 1931.

The ownership history of the Grand Hotel, after John Hector sold it, is somewhat convoluted.¹³ In January 1907 Harry LaBrash married a widow named Adran Antoya,¹⁴ who had six daughters. Michael Antoya had been killed in an accident in 1903 at Rosebery¹⁵ where they had leased the Rosebery Hotel. The oldest Antoya daughter, Addie, had eloped with the station agent at Rosebery, Michael McCarthy. He bought the Grand Hotel from John Hector. Addie ran the hotel, commuting to Rosebery to be with her husband whenever she could. But Michael McCarthy was transferred to Chalk River, Ontario, where he died in an accident at work. Addie was devastated and felt she couldn't carry on managing the Grand Hotel, so her mother and step-father, Harry LaBrash, took over. The couple managed it for some years, then, by 1910 leased it to Haig & Dougal. In late 1910, Jack and Agnes Thew took it over and managed to tone down the rough nature that the hotel had acquired over years when Addie had run it. Then a Frank Hughes took it over in 1913.

Meanwhile Harry LaBrash lost thousands of dollars in a trust company failure¹⁶ and took the Grand Hotel back. In May 1919, another of Adran Antoya's daughters, Lila, married Hughes' son, also named Frank,¹⁷ and he assumed the management. Eastman and Swanson were the proprietors in 1925. Harry LaBrash was killed by lightning in July 1925 while contracting on the Queen's Bay to Ainsworth link of the Kaslo to Nelson road.¹⁸ Just over a month later, on the morning of 2 September 1925 a fire started in the cellar of the Grand Hotel and quickly burned through the thirty-year-old structure. The fire brigade worked valiantly, but while not able to save the Grand Hotel, managed to prevent the fire from spreading to nearby buildings.¹⁹ It was a total loss, but there was no loss of life. ~

Reports

Dedication of a Chinese Monument in Prince George

ON 4 August 2002, at the Prince George municipal cemetery, a dedication ceremony was held of a monument honouring the contributions of Chinese Canadians to the city of Prince George and surrounding areas. The monument is the result of a joint venture between the City of Prince George and the Chinese Heritage Preservation Committee. Supporters for this project include the Chinese Freemasons; the Chinese Benevolent Association, Chee Duck Tong; the Chinese Student and Professional Association; Prince George Canada–China Friendship Association; multicultural organizations, and many individuals and businesses in town.

The symbols on the monument reveal the identity of Chinese Canadians: maple leaf representing Canada and bamboo leaf, China. The dragon images and the stone lions indicate the Chinese culture. The monument marks the legacy of Chinese forefathers and the memory of many Chinese Canadians in this region. From the earliest years Chinese Canadians contributed to the development of the community by operating much needed restaurants, laundries, and grocery stores. In 1919 over five hundred Chinese labourers came to the city to build the Pacific Grand Trunk Railway in the region. In later years Chinese Canadians of different walks of life settled in Prince George.

At this historical event many out-of-town guests came to help the Chinese community celebrate, including the Chinese Consul General, Li Yuanming and his delegation; Chuck Chang, President of the Chinese Freemasons of Canada, National Head-



Above: In the background the monument still covered with a cloth. Cutting the ribbon are from left to right Don Basserman, acting mayor; Lily Chow, chairperson of the Prince George Canada–China Friendship Association; and Li Yaunming, Chinese consul general. The text to the right is part of the inscriptions on the monument and reads in translation: “Their deeds stay on although they have bid farewell to the future generations. Their spirit remains forever after saying farewell to this abundant world.”

永別兒孫功業在
長辭盛世遺風存

quarters; and members from various chapters of the Chinese Freemasons. Representatives from the City of Prince George and both the provincial and federal governments offered congratulations and good wishes to the Chinese Heritage Preservation Committee. Lion dance troupes from Edmonton and Vancouver came to venerate the event. To wrap up the day, the Prince George Chinese Freemasons and the Chinese Benevolent Association hosted a dinner for all the VIPs and guests. In honour of the unveiling of the monument the Two Rivers Gallery held an exhibition of Chinese art and crafts, which consisted of a selection of paintings, scrolls, and kites on loan from the Chinese Consulate in Vancouver. The Fraser–Fort George Regional Museum displayed photographs and items of early Chinese Canadians in Prince George.

—Lily Chow

The Zeballos Story

ZEBALLOS, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, is celebrating its 150th anniversary as an incorporated municipality but Zeballos has a history dating back much further, probably to 1791, when the Spaniards established a colony at Nootka. It is on record that a quantity of gold was shipped to Spain from Friendly Cove and it probably came from the Zeballos River since there is no other known source of gold in the area. The town and the inlet where it is situated were named *Cevallos* by the explorer Malaspina after one of his officers, Lieutenant Ciriaco Cevallos.

The valley of the Zeballos River was just one of many remote river valleys at the heads of inlets along the outer coast of Vancouver Island, almost unknown and unexplored until near the end of the nineteenth century when the first surge of prospecting activity took place along the coast. The iron deposits at the head of the valley were probably discovered at that time. Some of the first to pros-

pect this area were Scandinavian settlers from Quatsino. These people had come from places such as Minnesota and North Dakota, to settle at the northern end of Vancouver Island anticipating that big things would happen there. Earlier it had been proposed that the trans-continental railway would come onto Vancouver Island across Seymour Narrows and terminate on the north end of the Island, the nearest shipping point to the Orient. Even though this proposal had been scuttled it was still being promoted to attract settlers in the 1890s. When these developments didn't materialize, the duped settlers cast around for other opportunities, including prospecting for mineral deposits. Except for small quantities of placer gold recovered from the river, the first recorded gold production from Zeballos was in 1929. Two tons of high-grade ore was shipped to Tacoma Smelter that year from the *Tagore* prospect, owned by the partnership of Malberg and Nordstrom.

It was the Depression that brought others to the area. When fish prices collapsed, a few individuals built shacks at the beach and set about to eke out an existence trapping and prospecting for gold. Between 1932 and 1935, a group led by Andrew and John Donaldson manhandled 47 tons of ore down to tide-water from the *White Star* property on Spud Valley Creek. They used a canoe on the river part way and backpacked the remaining distance, slashing out a trail and falling trees for foot logs across side creeks. Shipped to Tacoma Smelter on the *Princess Maquinna*, the sacked ore yielded 650 ounces of gold with by-product silver and base metals. The success of the operation attracted others and even higher grade ore was found at the nearby *Privateer* where Raymond Pitre and his brother-in-law Herb Kevis from Port Alberni had a crew working on a half share-half wage basis.

Returns from spectacularly high-

grade ore shipped to the smelter proved the worth of the prospects and attracted investment, first from business people in Victoria to construct a road and mechanize the mining operations, and then from mining companies to construct mills and expand the operations. Conwest Exploration Company of Toronto purchased 25% interest in the *Privateer* mine and financed the construction of a mill, concentrator, and gold recovery plant. Other operations followed and, within a couple of years, six mills were operating in the valley, including *Spud Valley*, *Mount Zeballos*, *Central Zeballos*, *White Star*, and *CD or Rey Oro*. Nearly 400 men were employed on thirty properties in prospecting, development work, and production. The peak production year was 1940 when over seventy-thousand ounces of gold were produced from

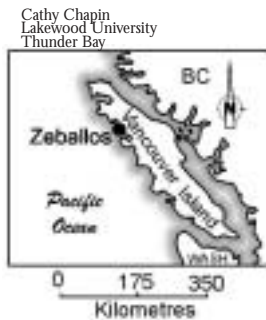
seven mines at Zeballos but two years later production dwindled as all but the *Privateer* and *Spud Valley* mines were closed by wartime shortages of manpower and essential supplies. These two remaining operations shut down also by the fall of 1942. The *Privateer* and *Central Zeballos* mines opened again in 1946 but, with the price of gold pegged and other costs rising, were soon shut down as being uneconomical to operate.

During this period, from the mid-thirties to the outbreak of war, Zeballos had mushroomed from a few shacks to a town with a population of about a thousand people. It had two hotels with beer parlours, a liquor store, a school, a hospital, and a house of prostitution. The resident police constable was supported by a patrol vessel that made frequent calls, and religious services, if required, were provided by missionaries who travelled up and down the coast from their mission at Esperanza. Prior to a hospital being established at Zeballos, these people also provided medical services for the area.

Logging saved Zeballos from becom-

ing a ghost town and it was logging operations that built the road connection to the outside world. A lot of credit must go to the people who had faith in the future of the community and had it incorporated as a municipality in 1952. Later, the iron mine gave the economy of the area another boost but this operation was short-lived, running out of ore and closing in 1969. However, with an established community and harbour facilities, Zeballos is here to stay and there is still "gold in them thar hills".

—Walter Guppy



Post-1901 Census Release Moves One Step Closer To Reality

IN February 2002, at the Quebec City conference of Provincial and Territorial Historical Societies (PATHS), organized by Canada's National History Society and Historica, delegates from thirteen historical societies, including the British Columbia Historical Federation, unanimously passed a resolution with regard to access to historic census data ending with the words "...Consequently, the PATHS Quebec propose to ask the federal government to take all legislative and regulatory measures possible to allow the National Archivist to grant public access to censuses, 92 years after the collection of data, and proposes that the PATHS, their members and their sister affiliations send their deputies and senators a petition letter to that effect."

As one of tens of thousands of Canadians researching family history, you will be interested to learn that the Liberal government has announced plans to introduce legislation in Parliament this fall to allow researchers access to post-1901 historic census records. Bills supporting release, introduced in the last Parliament by Senator Milne and MP Calder, were extinguished when Parliament prorogued this fall.

The controversy surrounding release of this historic treasure trove is detailed

in my article "Trapped in Amber or Placed on the Pyre: Will researchers Ever See Original Post-1901 Canada Census Data?" (*BC Historical News* 34:4). On the Global Gazette Web site, you can also review the four-year campaign for release conducted by the Post-1901 Census Project. Despite the precedent of full release at 92 years from the date of collection, Statistics Canada still refuses to transfer custody of later primary data to the National Archives.

In February 2002, on behalf of eleven plaintiffs from across Canada, Calgary lawyer Lois Sparling applied for a judicial review of Statistics Canada's decision to withhold post-1901 census schedules. The application is ongoing, but only refers to immediate release of the 1906 census, with the hope that a successful outcome will set a precedent for full release of the 1911 and all subsequent censuses.

It is up to all historians to inform our representatives in Parliament about the need for full release. See the Post-1901 Census Parliamentary Scoreboard <<http://globalgenealogy.com/Census>> to determine whether your Member of Parliament and Senator support full release. Then write a letter advising each of your interests in this important matter.

—Brenda L. Smith

Fort Langley: Outpost of Empire

ONE hundred and seventy-five years ago, in 1827, Fort Langley was established on the lower Fraser. In 1839 a new fort was built two and one half miles upstream at the mouth of the Salmon River and in 1958 the process of preservation and reconstruction of that fort was begun. This historic site is now operated by Parks Canada, and it was here that about fifty people gathered for a two-day Northwest Coast Fur Trade Symposium in August.

Papers presented on the first day explored Native perspectives, geographical connections, some aspects of the

maritime fur trade, and fur trade personalities. In the late afternoon guests chose to tour the fort or visit the cemetery at St. George's Anglican church where a number of former Hudson's Bay Company employees are buried. Prepared by Sto:lo caterers, a banquet of barbecued salmon and bannock with suitable accompaniments brought an end to an interesting and informative day. The second day was devoted to concerns about research and interpretation at fur trade posts and information about descendants of people employed in the trade. Jean Cole, a direct descendant of Archibald McDonald, who was in charge of Fort Langley from 1828 till 1833, was available to sign copies of her latest book, *This Blessed Wilderness*, a collection of McDonald's letters. A tour of the site of the original fort brought a very successful symposium to an end. Earlier conferences have been held at Sidney on Vancouver Island and at Fort Vancouver, Washington. This cross border collaboration has been beneficial to people on both sides of the 49th parallel interested in the fur trade period on the Pacific slope.

—Morag Maclachlan

Songs of the Nisga'a: A Wonderful Piece of BC History

FOR half a century Quebec-born Rhodes Scholar and ethnologist, Marius Barbeau, a champion for Ottawa's National Museum, traveled extensively through Canada with his 40-pound "portable" Edison machine and recorded many of our oldest songs and stories. Between 1914 and 1930 he visited now-vanished villages along the Skeena and Nass Rivers and the Edison wax cylinders on which he made his recordings in Aboriginal villages of north-west British Columbia are an important part of the massive collection he assembled for the National Museum.

Only a small fraction of the recordings has been transcribed into music or original language because each playing eats into the wax surface of the cylinders affecting the sound quality. Recently the National Library has purchased an "Archeophone" that instantly converts wax cylinders into digital data which can be stored in computers and duplicated on CDs for museums and researchers.



John Cross

Above: Jean Cole signing copies of her book *This Blessed Wilderness*, a collection of McDonald's letters, at the *Outpost of Empire* Conference held at Fort Langley in August. Jean Cole is a direct descendant of Archibald McDonald who was in charge of Fort Langley from 1827 till 1833.

The National Library of Canada and the Canadian Museum of Civilization have received some funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage to assist with preservation, digitalization, and Web projects. The Canadian Museum of Civilization has also received some funds to start digitizing the Marius Barbeau collections (which include the Nisga'a wax cylinders), but these funds are for specific short-term projects.

The BC Historical Federation is encouraging associated member societies and other historical groups, as well as interested readers to write to their local MP and Heritage Minister expressing their desire that a permanent commitment be made to continued funding for this historically important restoration project.

For further information please contact Ron Hyde, Secretary of the BCHF, #20-12880 Railway Ave., Richmond, BC V7E 6G2 or e-mail <rbhyde@shaw.ca>.

Steamboat Round the Bend

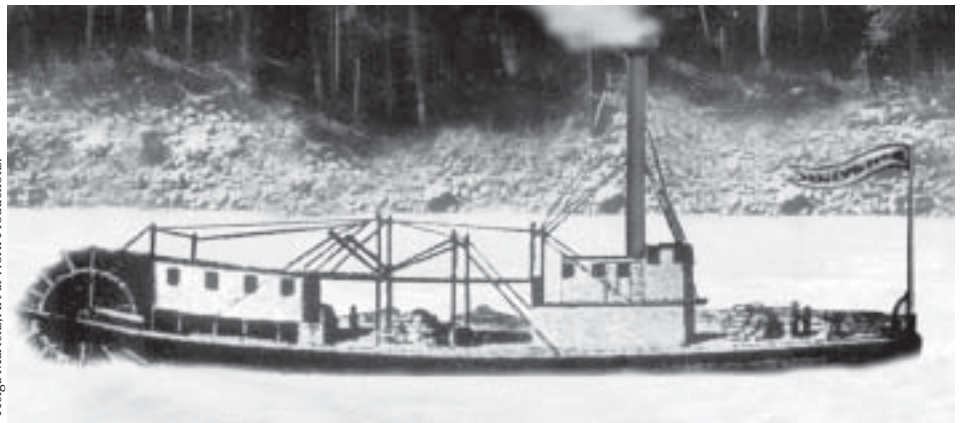
by Edward Affleck

The Port Douglas–Lillooet Route to the Cariboo

HAVING conquered the lower Fraser River in 1858, the shallow-draft paddlewheeler soon appeared on navigable bodies of water of any size on the route to the Cariboo goldfields. The paddlewheeler was infinitely more efficient as a carrier than a horse, and also was to be preferred to the horse and wagon since money did not have to be invested in wagon-road construction. Furthermore, while the horse consumed fodder whether or not engaged in hauling, a boat would consume fuel only when working.

From 1859 to 1864 the Port Douglas–Lillooet Route from the head of Harrison Lake through the Lillooet–Anderson–Seton Lakes portage system to Lillooet was a favoured route to the Cariboo goldfields. One of the many to travel this route in 1859 was the pioneer Victoria merchant and public accountant Frank Sylvester. Frank Sylvester, born in New York City in 1836, travelled to San Francisco, presumably by stagecoach, at the age of twenty. On 11 July 1858 he embarked for Victoria on the coastal steamer *Pack* and arrived in Esquimalt harbour on 17 July. After operating a store near Wharf and Bastion streets in Victoria in 1858, Sylvester elected to head for the gold diggings and set up in merchandising. After five or six years of a nomadic merchandising life in the Cariboo, Sylvester re-established himself in Victoria. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Sylvester gave a series of talks to Victoria history buffs about his experiences on the trail. The transcripts of these talks, on file in archival collections in the University of Victoria Library, provide many interesting details of life on the trail to the Cariboo, and from the Sylvester file we draw the following comments on steamboating on the Port Douglas–Lillooet Route:

...I only remained [in Fort Langley] a few hours, just long enough to transfer our freight on to a small stern-wheel steamer called the *Maria*, Capt. J. R. Fleming, and left for Port Douglas....I opened a store in Port Douglas, meeting with a fair success, but the unrest was on me, I felt dis-



Above: Lady of the Lake.

satisfied and soon concluded to move onward. So I loaded all my goods as freight on Uriah Nelson's pack train, paying him 30 cents per pound delivered in Lillooet and departed about April, 1859 for Lillooet.

The narrow mule trail leading up the Lillooet River valley to Lillooet Lake was not such as to recommend itself to Sylvester, nor did the other portage trails between the various lakes take his fancy. Such accommodation as existed did not whet his fancy either. Steam-powered vessels had not yet reached any of Lillooet, Anderson, or Seton lakes by the spring of 1859, so Sylvester took passage on these lakes in row boats, and considered some of the fares charged to be scandalously high. Later in 1859, the portage roads between the lakes were improved to wagon-road standard, and in the following year, steam-powered vessels appeared on all three lakes. Sylvester acknowledged these improvements to the trail but was not overly impressed with the steam-powered vessels. The first, the *Marzelle*, on Lillooet Lake, he describes as "...a small clumsy side wheeler just able to get out on her way..." The Seton Lake sternwheeler *Champion* Sylvester describes as a "...fair little boat," while the Anderson Lake sternwheeler *Lady of the Lake* he simply mentions by name, but since she appears to have worked without competition from a successor steamboat, one hazards that she was a reasonably successful vessel. Goulding & Company, owners of the *Marzelle*, replaced her with the sternwheeler *Prince of Wales* in 1863, while Taylor & Co., owners of the *Cham-*

pion, replaced her with the sidewheeler *Seton* in the same year. The completion in 1864 of the suspension bridge across the Fraser River above Spuzzum prompted the Fraser Canyon wagon road above Yale to become a more popular route to Lillooet and the Cariboo, so it seems unlikely that any steam-propelled boat was worked on the Port Douglas–Lillooet system after 1866.

It is unlikely that any of the Lillooet–Anderson–Seton Lake fleet would have captured prizes for design and construction. They were small vessels built in the wilds, far from any of the up-to-date Vancouver Island sawmills that enabled James Trahey to turn out such fine work in his Victoria shipyard. What this rustic fleet demonstrated, however, was the superiority of the shallow-draft steam-driven paddlewheeler, fuelled by cordwood cut on site, as a means of moving freight on the frontier. There was never any move to extend the portage wagon roads along any one of the lakes to replace the paddlewheeler during the time that the Port Douglas–Lillooet route to the Cariboo goldfields was in active use. Derelict remains of some of the vessels in this fleet can apparently still be found on site, a tempting lure for members of the Underwater Archaeological Society of BC. ∞

For particulars on the steamers mentioned consult Affleck's *A Century of Paddlewheelers in the Pacific Northwest, the Yukon and Alaska*.

Archives and Archivists

Editor Frances Gundry

Greater Vernon Museum and Archives

TRADITIONALLY, archives have been described as “dry and dusty.” At the Vernon archives, we try hard to dispel the familiar notion that archives hold nothing but boring paper items full of uninteresting facts. If you only knew what fascinating information some of those paper items hold. Let me tell you about some of them.

A descendant of the Cameron family allowed us to photocopy a small diary kept by Mary Cameron during a boat trip down Okanagan Lake in 1901. Mary and her uncle, W.F. Cameron, rowed from Okanagan Landing to a point past Peachland in seven days. She describes the dangers of skunks, rattlesnakes, and mosquitoes, and frequently complains about the hard beds. She had every right to complain as one night was spent sleeping on a wharf to avoid the snakes. Mary describes Kelowna as “not a very large place, with a sawmill, two or three nice stores, a druggist, and one doctor.” However, those stores provided the travellers with “steak, lemons, apples, peaches, claret, and lime juice,” a change from the diet of fresh fish provided by Mr. Cameron along the way. How many people today would contemplate rowing from Vernon to Peachland?

For that matter, how would you like to return to the Vernon of March 1893, described in a letter written by Judge Spinks to the Attorney General of BC? He writes:

...our water supply is from an irrigation ditch that runs through the town and which is fouled by animal and vegetable matter....Kitchen refuse is almost universally carried to the nearest vacant lot and there deposited and in some cases only thrown through the windows. General rubbish is thrown onto the street. Bed-room slops and kitchen water are just thrown outside the

houses....The Kalamalka Hotel keeps a large number, judging from the stink...of hogs running around the premises. Hogs are allowed to run at large and are, as a matter of fact, a necessity as scavengers.

At the time this letter was written, Vernon had been incorporated as a city for approximately two months. This colourful glimpse of the past makes any of our present problems pale in comparison to those of 1893.

Not all our accessions are related to a century ago. A collection of school class photos dating from 1945 to 1974 came in from a retired teacher's estate. These photos seem to be just a record of children's faces, but deserve a second look. Until 1967, the photos are high-quality black-and-whites taken by local commercial photographers. After 1967, the colour photographs, contracted out to National School Studios in Toronto, get progressively grainier and faded. As far as school photos are concerned, the good old days really were the good old days. The subject matter might be misunderstood as just rows of children until you really start to look at the details. Remember the braids, the Mary Jane shoes, the plaid shirts and dresses, the suspenders of the 1940s? Contrast those with the “ironed” hair, the jeans, and the joggers of the 1970s. These school photographs show thirty years of fashion history as well as photographic history.

Along with the preceding examples of “colour” in the archives comes the story of a very unusual research request. Leighton Tripp Jr., son of Osberta and Leighton Tripp of Vernon, died as a result of an earthquake in California. Almost immediately I had a phone call from a man who called himself an heir tracer. He was desperately trying to find any relatives of Leighton Tripp's because there was a large estate to be settled—apparently Leighton owned property here and in California. I gave him what

little information I had. Within two weeks, no less than four heir tracers were hot on the trail and were feeding me enough information that I was able to dig up obituaries and wedding announcements that mentioned relatives and where they lived. The estate must have been big enough to make it worth their while to keep phoning here—one was from Ontario, one from Washington, and two were from California. I never did hear if they finally located the relatives and what kind of a cut of the estate they received, but the experience revealed a whole new world to me of the frantic lives these people lead in an all but unknown profession.

So, who was it that said archives are dry and dusty? Not here in Vernon.

—Linda Wills

Linda Wills is archivist of the Greater Vernon Museum and Archives. At the BCHF conference in Revelstoke she presented a very successful workshop on the conservation of photographs at the Revelstoke conference. She agreed to repeat the course prior to the conference in Prince George.

Letter from a Reader

Jacqueline Murray (Moilliet) writes from Calgary, AB:

I just happened to read a past issue of *British Columbia Historical News* (33:4). My grandmother was featured in this issue, “Molly Moilliet of Aveley Ranch”. Thank you for printing Mrs. Dunford's article.

I would like to offer a small comment about the cover picture. The cut line says it is the operating room at Queen's Hospital at Rock Bay. Actually it is a picture from the St. Michael's Hospital that replaced the VON Queen's Hospital after it burned in 1910, as noted in the article. My mother nursed at Rock Bay in 1940 and we have the identical picture except the operating table and furniture is of a much newer vintage. However the same light bulb fixture still hung over the table. I also forwarded this comment to Ms. Barbara Bell head of the Vancouver Library Special Collections Division which you credited as the source of the picture.

Web Site Forays

by Christopher Garrish

INDISPENSABLE as the Internet has become for research, there is one basic feature that I always look for when visiting a Web site: content. In fact, when visiting a site, I am more inclined to form an impression based solely on content, rather than layout or accessibility, although these are very important considerations nonetheless.

I am still impressed by how much the Internet has changed the course and scope of historical study over the past ten years. When I first began taking college-level courses, the Internet was so inaccessible that few students had even logged on, let alone tried to conduct research through the Web. Now, as a recent Teacher's Assistant, I was required to place limits on the number of Internet sources my first year history students could use. Otherwise there was a real risk that none of them would become familiar with the University's library holdings.

My first column covers the site of the British Columbia Institute of Co-operative Studies (BCICS), <<http://web.uvic.ca/bcics>>, with a particular emphasis on their "Galleria." Founded in 2000 by Dr. Ian MacPherson, a Professor in the University of Victoria's History Department, BCICS's aim is to understand how the co-operative model functions within different contexts, and how it can contribute to meeting economic and social needs. The Institute's Web site is a wide-ranging affair with many sections that are of interest to historians.

One of the centrepieces of the Institute's Web presence is the Galleria project. The Galleria features information on grass-roots co-operatives in BC, the rationale behind their creation, and their function. The content has been broken down into four easily navigable "tours:" region, theme, sector, and timeline. Quick links, and drop-down menus have been provided on every page, allowing visitors to easily make their way through the site.

There are a wide variety of co-operatives profiled in the Galleria, ranging from credit unions, agricultural, consumer, and ethnic to First Nations co-operatives. What follows are just two of the links that caught my eye while I went through the pages.

The history of the Sointula Co-op Association is more than just that of a co-operative, it is the story of a group of Utopian Finns immigrating to an isolated community on Malcolm Island in 1905. Although the Utopian community disbanded a few years later, the co-operative principles they supported were maintained by the remaining members who started a co-operatively run store in 1909. Over the years, the store became more than a mere outlet for goods, it evolved into a "unifying organization" where residents discussed local issues, governance, and community development (in many instances even turning to the co-op for financial support of a library, cemetery, etc.). The store is still in operation today, making it one of the longest running consumer co-operatives in the province.

Another interesting story is that of the Vancouver Island Organic Vegetable Co-op. What I found particularly intriguing about this story was the time frame. My first inclination was to assume that this was a current co-operative, established within the last few years, most likely to take advantage of the growing popularity of organically grown produce. What I did not know was that the co-op had been established in 1954 when residents of Victoria purchased a Cowichan Valley farm in order to have organic vegetables delivered to their homes. Unfortunately, the co-op lasted a short two years before folding, but it is a very early example of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in BC.

The Galleria site is full of similar stories, too many for me to recount here, so I will leave it up to you to visit the site. I firmly believe that it will be time well spent. ~

Where Shall We Meet?

OKANAGAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The 2003 annual general meeting of the Okanagan Historical Society will be held in Oliver on Sunday, 27 April 2003, sponsored by the Oliver/Osoyoos Branch. For those arriving on Saturday possible activities could be a guided tour of the Osoyoos Desert Centre in the afternoon, an evening tour of the Jack Newton Observatory on Anarchist Mountain, followed by a dinner. Cost will be moderate. If you want to know more call Lionel Dallas at 250.495.3341. E-mail <dallas@vip.net>, or write him at PO Box 251, Osoyoos, BC, V0H 1V0.

ARCHIVES ASSOCIATION OF BC

For their annual conference and AGM the AABC will meet in Nanaimo from 24 to 26 April 2003. The theme of the conference will be "From Paper to PDF: Preserving the History Around Us." <aabc.bc.ca>.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST HISTORY CONFERENCE

The Washington State Historical Society, in conjunction with the Pacific Northwest Regional Conference of Phi Alpha Theta—will meet in Bellingham, WA, from 24 to 26 April 2003. The theme of the conference is "Historians' Tales and the Pacific Northwest." Contact Mark Vessey for information at 360.586.0219 or e-mail <mvessey@wshs.wa.gov>.

BC STUDIES

The "British Columbia: Rethinking Ourselves" conference will be held 1-3 May at the Liu Centre for the Study of Global Issues at the University of British Columbia. This interdisciplinary scholarly conference offers 24 sessions as well as two visual plenary evenings. For the program and registration see <bcstudies.com> or contact Jean Barman at <jean.barman@ubc.ca> or 604.822.5331.

HISTORICAL FEDERATION OF BC

From 8 to 11 May, the University of Northern BC and partnering institutions will host the annual conference and AGM of the Federation. The conference theme is "Work and Society: Perspectives on Northern BC History." Web site <bchistory.ca>.

HERITAGE SOCIETY OF BC

The City of Richmond will host the annual conference of the HSBC on 30 and 31 May 2003. <islandnet.com/~hsbc>

BC MUSEUMS MEET IN RENO, NEVADA

The 2003 conference of The Western Museums Association and the British Columbia Museums Association will be hosted by the city of Reno, Nevada, where they will meet from 19 to 23 October. <museumsassn.bc.ca>

News and Notes

MARGARET ORMSBY ESSAY PRIZE 2002

There are two winners of the Margaret Ormsby Essay Prize this year. LiLynn Wan, Okanagan University College, won the prize for "Nkamaplix Okanagan Adoption of Agriculture, 1877-1881" and Anne Doré, University College of the Fraser Valley, for her paper "Japanese Canadian Sport History in the Fraser Valley: Judo and Baseball in the Interwar Years". No nominations were received this year from Cariboo or Malaspina

—John Lutz

PROJECT TO UPDATE THE BRITISH COLUMBIA LOCAL HISTORIES BIBLIOGRAPHY

To update and expand the *British Columbia Local Histories: a Bibliography* I am seeking assistance in identifying published local histories. The first edition of the Bibliography by Linda L. Hale and Jean Barman was published in 1991 and listed 1,044 local histories for 889 different communities in British Columbia. It appeared both in a loose-leaf format and as an online database. Assistance was received from the British Columbia Heritage Trust, British Columbia Library Association, and University of British Columbia Library. The main objective of my project is to update the *Bibliography* to include all local histories published since 1990 and to identify and add any missing pre-1990 titles. In addition, I will begin adding the histories of churches and schools in British Columbia, which were excluded from the first edition due to time constraints.

All titles listed in the bibliography must be published and accessible to the public in a library or archive.

Please send me information about local, church, and school histories that are not included in the first edition of the *British Columbia Local Histories: a Bibliography*. You can check the printed edition in your local library or search the online database on the Internet at: <<http://www.library.ubc.ca/home/catalogue/bibr.html>>

Please contact me if you have any questions or require further information. Thank you for your assistance. Brenda Peterson, Humanities & Social Sciences Division, Koerner Library, 1958 Main Mall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2, E-mail: <brendap@interchange.ubc.ca> Telephone: 604.822.4959. —Brenda Peterson

EVELYN SALISBURY SCHOLARSHIP 2002

The Burnaby Historical Society is pleased to announce the 2002 recipient of the scholarship given by Drs. Violet and Blythe Eagles in honour of Evelyn Salisbury. Six applications were received this year and the award, in the amount of \$1,000 was given to Katharine Rollwagen.

Katharine is a senior undergraduate history student entering her fourth year of study at the University of Victoria. Upon graduation she plans to pursue graduate studies at the university with a special interest in the development and decline of resource-based company towns in BC.

Margaret Matovich
Secretary of the Burnaby Historical Society

OKANAGAN HISTORY

Now available: *Okanagan History*, the 66th report of the Okanagan Historical Society, edited by Dorothy Zoellner. The OHS has promoted the recording of histories of their valleys since 1925. Their yearly reports, containing a great variety of information, deserve wide attention in and outside the Okanagan. You'll receive a copy of *Okanagan History* by sending a cheque for \$21 to the Okanagan Historical Society, PO Box 313, Vernon BC, V1T 6M3. On purchase you are registered as a member of the OHS for one year. Let it be known that the editor of *BC Historical News* admires this annual publication.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE PAST

The Riondel & Area Historical Society is publishing *Impressions of the Past: The Early History of the Settlements of Crawford Bay, Gray Creek, Kootenay Bay, Pilot Bay and Riondel on the East Shore of Kootenay Lake, British Columbia*. The book includes chapters on mining, fruit ranching, logging, hunting, fishing trapping, and transportation. It is authored by Susan Hulland and A. Terry Turner and is richly illustrated with 375 photographs, maps and graphics. The cost is \$35 per copy plus \$10 for postage and handling within Canada. Copies may be purchased from The Riondel & Area Historical Society, Box 201, Riondel BC, V0B 2B0. Contact A. Terry Turner at e-mail <aturner@netidea.com> or phone 250.225.3483. Publishing date is approximately 10 December 2002.

HISTORICAL ATLAS OF CANADA

In time for the festive season appeared Derek Hayes's latest book *Historical Atlas of Canada: Canada's History Illustrated with Original Maps*. This is a fascinating full-colour atlas containing more than four-hundred maps of Canada ranging from the time of the Vikings to recent history. Available in your favourite bookstores.

BRINGING CONSTANCE HOME...

In May 2003, a significant theatrical event will occur at the Jericho Arts Centre in Vancouver when Vital Spark Theatre and the United Players of Vancouver present, for the first time in Canada, a play by Constance Lindsay Skinner. In 1911, Constance Lindsay Skinner was described by the *Vancouver Province* as "Vancouver's First Playwright." Productions of her work were mounted in major US cities, including Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. She became so well known in the States that a major literary prize was named after her. Yet she is completely unknown here and her plays have never been performed in Canada.

It is thanks to historian Jean Barman that Skinner's work will be seen in British Columbia next May. *Birthright* is one of Skinner's most successful, and most controversial, plays. Deemed too daring for New York, *Birthright* opened in Chicago in 1912.

Birthright, adapted and directed by Joan Bryans, will run at the Jericho Arts Centre from 3-18 May 2003. For further information on the production see <www.unitedplayers.com>. Jean Barman's book on Skinner: *Constance Lindsay Skinner, Writing on the Frontier*, is being published by the University of Toronto Press, October, 2002.

BOOK GUY

"Howard Overend's sophisticated, humble memoir is important beyond the Peace River. *Book Guy* is an unexpected joy to read," writes Alan Twigg in *BC Bookworld*. That is just one of many published recommendations of *Book Guy: A Librarian in the Peace*, a book about the formation and growth of the library service in the Peace River region. Order the book, published by Horsdal & Schubart directly from the author, Howard Overend, 2780 17th Street, N.E., Salmon Arm BC V1E 3X6 for \$18.95 postpaid.

Federation News

Prince George is the Place to be in 2003

BE SURE to mark 8–11 May 2003 on your calendar to attend the conference in Prince George. The theme of the conference is “*Work and Society: Perspectives on Northern BC History.*” The program offers participants a unique look at BC’s industrial heritage and its economic, technological, social and cultural impact on communities in British Columbia’s North.

Your hosts will be the University of Northern BC in partnership with educational institutions and community organizations.

The conference will offer tours and presentations focusing on events that and people who have shaped the North. Included in the program are: a tour of former sawmill communities; a visit to the historic Carrier cemetery and church of the Lheidli T’enneh Nation; a walking tour of the downtown area; a slide show on urban planning history at the Prince George public library; a tour of the North’s industrial and transportation artifacts at the Prince George Railway and Forestry Museum; and a culinary evening at the College of New Caledonia.

A one-day book fair is also scheduled offering publications from local vendors and book publishers. The conference will conclude with an Awards Banquet at UNBC.

For more information contact:

Conference Chair, Ramona Rose c/o Northern BC Archives, UNBC, 3333 University Way, Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9 Phone: 250.960.6603; Fax: 250.960.6610 <roserm@unbc.ca>

To book a table at the Book Fair contact Ernie Kaesmodel, Book Fair Coordinator Ph: 250. 565.3444; <e_kaesmodel@telus.net>

For accommodations information or optional tour information contact Claudette Gouger, Hotel & Events Coordinator, UNBC, 250.960.6303, Fax 250.960.6330; Email <cgouger@unbc.ca>

MANUSCRIPTS submitted for publication in *BC Historical News* should be sent to the editor in Whonnock. Submissions should preferably not exceed 3,500 words. Submission by e-mail of the manuscript and illustrations is welcome. Otherwise please send a hard copy and if possible a digital copy of the manuscript by ordinary mail. All illustrations should have a caption and source information. It is understood that manuscripts published in *BC Historical News* will also appear in any electronic version of the journal.

Attention!

Fred Braches has notified the British Columbia Historical Federation Council that he will be resigning as editor of the *British Columbia Historical News* and that his last publication will be the Fall 2003 issue.

The Federation is very appreciative of Fred’s professional dedication to our flagship journal since his inaugural issue in the Spring of 1999. We fully realize that any editor who succeeds him has a very high standard to maintain with quarterly regularity, so we are grateful to him for giving the Federation sufficient notice to search for a suitable replacement.

The editor, appointed by the BCHF Council, is an officer of the Federation and, therefore, is automatically a member of the council. According to the BCHF regulations the editor (and, if necessary, a co-editor or assistant editor) “shall have the responsibility of preparing each issue through the completion of printing.” The editor may be assisted by a publishing committee.

Do you know of anyone who may have the required expertise to provide such a service to the Federation? Please let me know.

R.J. (Ron) Welwood, Past-President British Columbia Historical Federation 1806 Ridgewood Road, Nelson, BC V1L 6J9 Ph.250.825.4743 E-mail: <welwood@look.ca>

Prince George: Free Seminars

Thanks to a generous grant of Canada’s National History Society the Federation is again in a position to offer two free seminars in conjunction with the conference in Prince George. Linda Wills from Vernon agreed to repeat her very successful workshop on the conservation of photographs. The second workshop will be offered by Dr. Maja Bismanis and the topic will be marketing of your museum, historic site, or archives. Details will be published in the spring issue and on our Web site. —Melva Dwyer

W. KAYE LAMB Essay Scholarships

Deadline 15 May 2003

The British Columbia Historical Federation awards two scholarships annually for essays written by students at BC colleges or universities on a topic relating to British Columbia history. One scholarship (\$500) is for an essay written by a student in a first- or second-year course; the other (\$750) is for an essay written by a student in a third- or fourth-year course.

To apply for the scholarship, candidates must submit (1) a letter of application; (2) an essay of 1,500-3,000 words on a topic relating to the history of British Columbia; (3) a letter of recommendation from the professor for whom the essay was written.

Applications should be submitted before 15 May 2003 to: Robert Griffin, Chair BC Historical Federation Scholarship Committee, PO Box 5254, Station B, Victoria, BC V8R 6N4.

The winning essay submitted by a third- or fourth-year student will be published in *BC Historical News*. Other submissions may be published at the editor’s discretion.

BC History Web Site Prize

The British Columbia Historical Federation and David Mattison are jointly sponsoring a yearly cash award of \$250 to recognize Web sites that contribute to the understanding and appreciation of British Columbia’s past. The award honours individual initiative in writing and presentation.

Nominations for the BC History Web Site Prize for 2003 must be made to the British Columbia Historical Federation, Web Site Prize Committee, prior to 31 December 2003. Web site creators and authors may nominate their own sites.

Prize rules and the on-line nomination form can be found on The British Columbia History Web site: <<http://www.victoria.tc.ca/resources/bchistory-announcements.html>>.

Best Article Award

A CERTIFICATE OF MERIT and fifty dollars will be awarded annually to the author of the article, published in *BC Historical News*, that best enhances knowledge of British Columbia’s history and provides reading enjoyment. Judging will be based on subject development, writing skill, freshness of material, and appeal to a general readership interested in all aspects of BC history.

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by Melva Dwyer

* an article with illustrations

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