

# TRAILS & TALES

Newsletter of the Forest History Association of Alberta

## 100 years of Alberta forest history

### The Dominion Forests Reserves Act passed in 1906

More than 100 years ago the Government of Canada passed the Dominion Forest Reserves Act, authorizing forest reserves to be set up "for the maintenance and protection of the timber growing or which may hereafter grow thereon, for the protection of the animals and birds therein, and the fish in the waters therein, and for the maintenance of conditions favourable for a continuous water supply."

The three Forest Reserves in Alberta defined in this Act were the Cooking Lake Dominion Forest Reserve (114 square miles/ 295 km<sup>2</sup>), the Cypress Hills Dominion Forest Reserve (18 square miles/ 47 km<sup>2</sup>) and the Kootenay Lakes Dominion Forest Reserve (54 square miles/ 140 km<sup>2</sup>) – now part of Waterton Lakes National Park. The nucleus of the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve would not be defined until 1910.

Joseph Stauffer was forest ranger for southern Alberta, responsible for the area south of the Saskatchewan River. He described how the fall of snow was very light and fires began to run in the woods early in March. Fires burned between the Red Deer and James Rivers and between the Red Deer and Fallen Timber Creek. The Fallen Timber fire, "after desperate fighting by all the available men we could get, got beyond control on a very windy day, and burnt about 50 million [board] feet."

Stauffer noted the continual stream of land seekers going into the timber districts. "This makes it very difficult for a ranger to prevent fires being set out, as with the present staff of rangers it is impossible to keep track of travellers through timbered parts. In some cases I know of settlers squatting on timber berths."

He also added an observation about aboriginal burning: "I always understood that Indians would never set out fires in the forests, but this year I was convinced that they do; for hunting purposes, in season or out, in the Banff Park and out of it. They set out fires in the spring on their fishing and hunting trips in order to draw deer later for grazing."

And he signed off as usual: "Your obedient servant."

### AGM News

The Forestry History Association of Alberta's 3rd Annual General Meeting will be held Wednesday March 14, 2007 at the Coast Edmonton Plaza Hotel (10155 - 105 Street, Edmonton) from 7:00 - 10:00 p.m.

For more information contact Bruce Mayer at (780) 644-4656 or via e-mail at [bruce.mayer@gov.ab.ca](mailto:bruce.mayer@gov.ab.ca)

## 2007 FHAA memberships now being accepted!

Sign up today to be part of Alberta's only Association dedicated to preserving and promoting our unique forestry heritage.

Yearly membership fees are:

\$25 - Individual  
\$40 - Family  
\$250 - Corporate

Send your information and membership fees to:

Forest History Association of Alberta  
22 Hutchinson Place, St Albert, AB  
T8N 6R3.

For more info contact Bruce Mayer at  
(780) 644-4656 or via e-mail at  
[bruce.mayer@gov.ab.ca](mailto:bruce.mayer@gov.ab.ca)

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# Forestry program celebrates 40 years

## First advanced ranger course made up of 12 students



The August 2006 Trails & Tales newsletter celebrated 40 years of the first NAIT Forest Technology Class. 1966 was also the year that 12 Forest Rangers graduated from the first Advanced Ranger Course. This 6-month course provided an educational upgrading opportunity for Alberta Forest Service staff.

**Back row (L to R):** Al Walker, Colin Campbell, Karl Altschwager, Harold Enfield, Ray Hill.

**Middle row:** Howard Morigeau, David Schenk, Dick Girardi, Oliver Glanfield.

**Front row:** Fred Facco, Harry Jeremy, Hyrum Baker

## 50 years ago - 1956

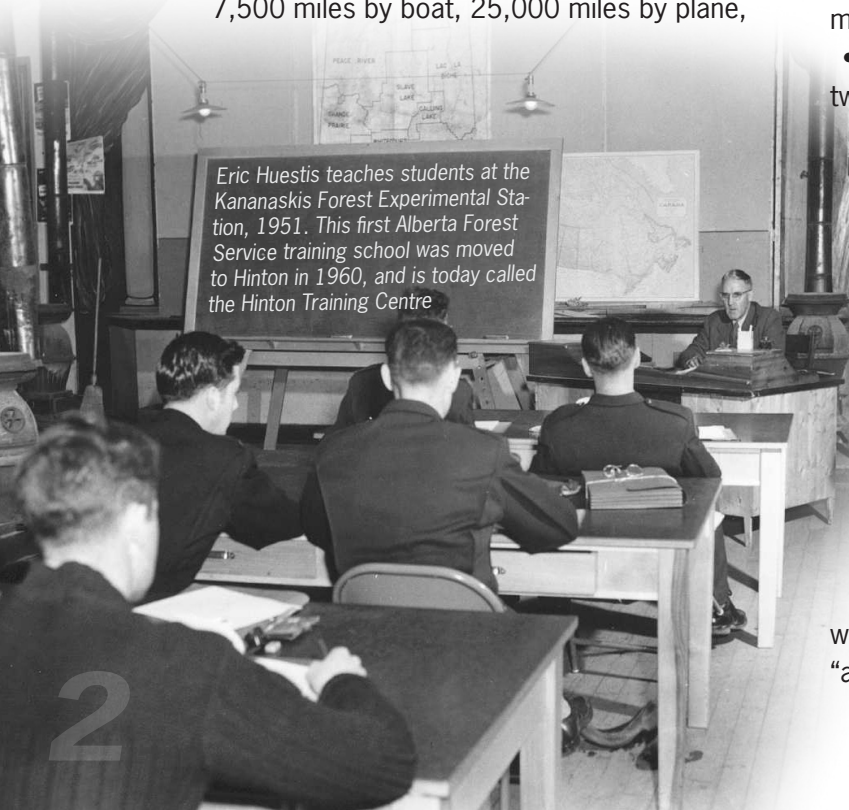
Eric Huestis was Director of Forestry; Norman Willmore was Minister of Lands and Forests. There were about 120 forest officers in the Northern Alberta Forest District (NAFD), not including the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve, which had about 48 forest officers. The summary from field diaries shows that these men (they were all males at that time) travelled 1.1 million miles on the job, including 29,000 miles on foot, 17,000 miles on horse, 5,000 miles by speeder, 7,500 miles by boat, 25,000 miles by plane,

16,000 miles by railway and 235 miles by bus. About 90 % was driving.

North Western Pulp and Power Ltd. (NWPP) had begun forestry operations in 1955; the mill was still under construction. The serious fire season that spring saw three fires burn in parts of the NWPP Lease Area. Whitecourt fire 36-1 burned south into the northern limits, a lightning fire started on the Berland and an oil-crew fire started in the Gregg River area. Although it was an inauspicious way to begin with the new company, Huestis encouraged an inclusive review of the fire season that finally got increased funding for fire control in the NAFD. Immediate improvements noted in the annual report included:

- Increase in heavy equipment included two D6 tractors, two bombardiers, 12 fire pumps.
- Improvement in fire suppression organization made by increasing permanent staff by four district Rangers and six assistants. Seasonal four-man standby fire crews used successfully in previous years were increased from six to eight this year.
- Heavy program of new construction and maintenance of roads and buildings carried out by field staff.

Among the major forest industries of the day were Imperial Lumber, Swanson Lumber, Grande Prairie Lumber and Chisholm Mills. Most lumber was rough-sawn by small mills in the bush then re-sawed and finished at central planer mills. Total harvest was about 2.7 million cubic metres produced by 1,071 "active operations".



Eric Huestis teaches students at the Kananaskis Forest Experimental Station, 1951. This first Alberta Forest Service training school was moved to Hinton in 1960, and is today called the Hinton Training Centre



# The tale of Mostowich Lumber Ltd.

Steve Mostowich moved his operations from Chip Lake to the Fox Creek area in the fall of 1956. On his arrival, Steve helped construct the first service road, levelled the Forestry site and began constructing a road north of town to the Meekwap Lake area.

Site clearing and construction took place on Mostowich's first Meekwap Lake mill in the fall of 1956, with logging and

milling commencing that December. This first open-air mill was located on the east side of Meekwap Lake, in 12-25-65-18-W5M.

In 1960, operations were moved six miles south of Meekwap Lake, to 16-18-64-18-W5M. This mill operated both summer and winter until the fall of 1962, when the mill was moved back to the east side of Meekwap Lake. At the same time, Steve began building a road north along the west side of Meekwap Lake.

In 1963, Mostowich Lumber began operations at their Meekwap Lake mill, north-west of the lake, in 13-3,16-4-66-18-W5M. This mill consisted of a sawmill and planer, and operated from 1963 to 1986, employing an average of thirty-five men.

Over the years, Mostowich has logged timber berths, quotas and a variety of wind damaged stands north of Fox Creek, in the Meekwap Lake area.

From 1967 to 1970, Mostowich Lumber logged on the north and east sides of Iosegun Lake. Two severe tornadoes swept through the Fox Creek area in 1965,



*Aerial view of Mostowich Lumber Meekwap Lake sawmill, mid 1970s  
Photo courtesy Steve Mostowich*

one on July 26 and the second on October 1. The severest one in July touched down just to the west of the Meekwap Lake mill. The mill watchman remembered seeing flying debris and lumber from the strong winds. Luckily no damage occurred at the mill.

In 1986 Steve Mostowich opened a new sawmill, planer and kiln complex 6.5 kilometres east of Fox

Creek, in 5/6-18-62-18-W5M. Steve's two sons Ronald and Arnold now look after the operations. Steve purchased his first Meekwap timber berth through public auction, paying \$17.05 per thousand board feet. Of this, \$6.00 per thousand was for timber dues and \$11.05 per thousand was the bid price. In the early 1960's, manufactured lumber was sold in Edmonton for \$45.00 per thousand.



*Mostowich Lumber mill near Fox Creek, late 1980s  
Photo courtesy Bruce Mayer*

## FHAA receives charity tax status

Good news - the Forest History Association of Alberta has received Charitable Tax Status. The FHAA qualified for tax-exempt status as a registered charity because it 'advances education and benefits to the community by gathering, collecting and preserving artifacts about the history of forestry in Alberta and educating the public on their value'. Payments that do not qualify as tax-exempt are:

membership fees; basic fees for admission to an event or program; or purchase price of a ticket to win a prize.

Donations will be used to complete projects such as interviewing individuals about forest history in the province; scanning, cataloging and inventorying photographs; and inventorying historical artifacts. Individuals, families or companies wishing to donate to the FHAA may do so by sending a cheque to the Treasurer, FHAA, 22 Hutchinson Place, St. Albert, Alberta T8N 6R3.



# A brief history on Alberta's trail markers

## More than 100 years of history visible on the landscape

The Dominion Forestry Branch started building trails in the Forest Reserves around 1906. Rangers would use blazes, stone piles, posts and/or signs, to mark the mile distance (mileposts) as a way to describe locations before there were maps and surveys. Wooden posts were easy to make on site with just an axe - cutting them square with a beveled top made them easy to distinguish from other stumps or snags. The posts were inscribed with a keil-type crayon with a wax base that stayed legible for a long time. More important posts were inscribed with a 'scribe' - a 'U-shaped draw-type chisel' that left a clean

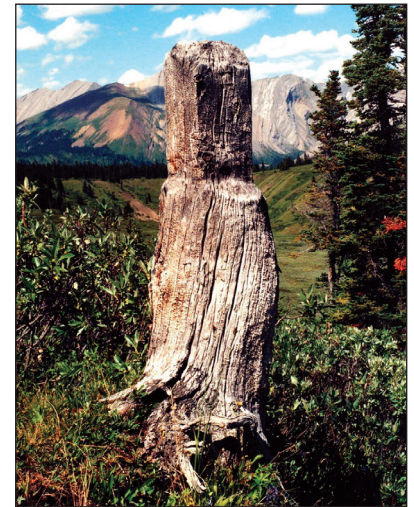
rounded groove that could be used to print letters, numbers and symbols.

When Peter Murphy attended the University of New Brunswick in the early 1950s, he remembers "being shown how to score a post and hew it with a 2 ½ pound axe to get a nice smooth finish. We made quite a few during the forest inventory here to show tie points and the start of cruise lines." Further Murphy says "the best looking mile post markers I have seen were the ones along the Mountain Trail from Entrance to Rock Lake. Someone, perhaps Jack Glen, cut boards which he numbered on two faces and mounted under a small roof-like structure that he fastened to a tree or post every mile. They stuck out so they could be read from either direction. Mile 14 was at the forks on Solomon Creek by the wooden forestry bridge - it was then (late 1950s) the forestry road to Rock Lake. Summit Cabin near the head of Rock Creek is still known as Mile 58 Cabin - 58 miles from Entrance Ranger Station."

Anyone with stories or photo's of trail markers they would like to share? Contact Bruce Mayer at (780) 644-4656

Newly constructed trail marker in the Ram District, Clearwater Forest, 1940s. This marker could have been made by Ranger Wally Richardson while he was the ranger in charge of the Ram District

Photo courtesy Jack Richardson



Remains of an old forestry trail marker along the Ram River, Clearwater Area, 2002

Photo courtesy Dave Ferster

## FHAA PHOTO CORNER

Tracked tractor and empty Estey trucks, McGillvray Creek. Turtle Mountain in left background (Frank, AB). June 1, 1926

Photo courtesy Van Camp family



Crew loading logs on two Estey trucks from skidway, McGillvray Creek. Crowsnest Pass, June 1, 1926

Photo courtesy Van Camp family



Portable sawmill in operation, T.S. 124, Brazeau Forest Reserve. February 23, 1927



## TRAILS & TALES

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Please send story ideas to  
Bruce Mayer at (780) 644-4656

