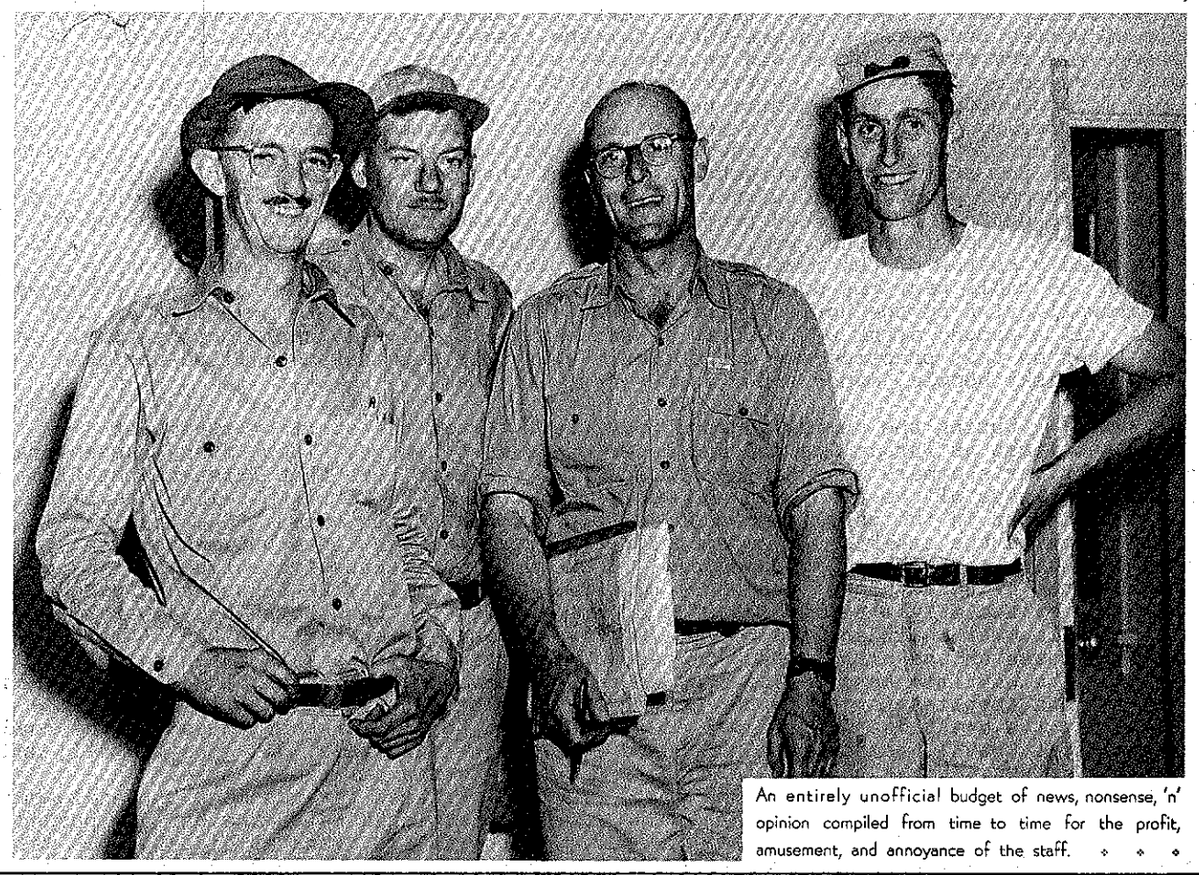
FOREST SERVICE NEWSLETTER



An entirely unofficial budget of news, nonsense, 'n' opinion compiled from time to time for the profit, amusement, and annoyance of the staff. ◆ ◆ ◆

No. 98 VICTORIA, B.C. SEPTEMBER, 1951.

ON THE OLD CARIBOO ROAD

By W.N. (Rusty) Campbell.

It is just possible that among the members of the Forest Service there may be a few for whom some little description of bygone modes of travel and road customs in the early Cariboo may hold a passing interest, especially if described by one who was fortunate enough to have experienced these conditions in their final phase.

As a 'teen-age lad I left Victoria and disappeared into the old Cariboo country while many of the characters now written into our history were still alive. I saw customs and manners in full flower that were of the old West and are now so much glamorized. Less than two years later we were to see the start of the change-over into modern modes and present customs, so I consider I was one of the few of my age given the opportunity to see the real old storied Cariboo, if only its ending.

At that time travel up the famous Cariboo Road was still done by the legendary Concord horse-stage, leathern sprung, with four to six horses. These stages carried the mail, passengers, and express packages into the gold fields and for the far north, and took the gold dust outside. Don't run away with the notion that this horse-stage line was a few wagons and coaches travelling up the Road for 300 miles or so in a hap-hazard, go-as-you-please way. Far from it. The B.X. Stage Line was a fully organized system with regular stages kept in spick and span condition and running on time with the Royal Mail, extras that followed, specials when necessary, and express freight, a lightly-covered rig with four or six horses that went at a gallop day and night.

Changes of horses were made at the staging points or road-houses, located at 15- or 20-mile intervals, sometimes halting just long enough for the fresh horses to be hooked in; the ostlers waiting with the new horses as we drove up. The driver threw his reins on the ground and, in a few minutes, the change was made and away went the stage again. These drivers were grand coachmen; their control of the horses wonderful. They generally galloped down the hills, lickety-split, and these hills in those days were plenty steep and narrow, make no mistake. Famous stage drivers like the late Al. Young - himself born in a staging road-house in old Colorado, and with whom I long enjoyed a warm friendship - handled four to eight galloping horses hooked to a swaying,loaded stage, passengers both in the cab and on top outside, with almost the ease that a car driver handles his speeding car today. These drivers always carried a long, leather thonged whip and were adept at cracking it over the ears of their horses. They rarely hit a horse with these whips, it was used for cracking an encouragement to them, not for punishment, despite the present day movies of stage coaches in full flight with the horses being wildly flayed by the driver. Express such as money packages were carried in a leather bag padlocked on the driver's side of the seat, the agent at way points holding the master key, not the driver, who generally was armed with a six-gun and, or a 30-30 Winchester carbine carried in a rifle boot beside him.

The stages pulled out very early in the morning, generally before dawn, coffee being taken when half asleep. A breakfast stop would be made 15 or 20 miles further on and the stop for the night made between 9 and 10 at night, a dinner stop having been made earlier in the evening. The road-house selected for the overnight stop

On the Old Cariboo Road (continued)

would generally have a huge cold roast of beef with bread and butter nearby, and also a bottle of whisky and glasses on the table for the traveller to help himself before retiring, all for free. These old road-houses were famous. Some are still standing, others in ruins or abandoned. Cottonwood - first stop out of Ashcroft for breakfast - the old Clinton Hotel, The 83, Chasm House, The 100, The 115, The 147, The 150, The Mountain House, Soda Creek, and The Australian Ranch, just to mention a very few. Most of them were cattle ranch houses, very large and well-built structures of hewn logs with large stables for stage horses attached. Most of them were provided with a fully stocked liquor bar - always in the common room and not hidden away in the basement - for in those days on the Cariboo Road people were not ashamed to be seen taking a drink or two at a bar if they felt that way. Before departure, in the grey dawn or earlier, it was the kindly custom of the road-house host to place a tray, glasses, and a bottle of whisky on the table near the door. Departing guests were at liberty to help themselves to a farewell drink on the house if they wished, and I am grieved to say, most of them wished. If a second drink was desired it was ethics to throw 25 cents on the tray. A little later on this practice was discontinued when outsiders began to flood the road. They took whisky bottle, money and glasses away with them.

During the summer months, Soda Creek marked the start of steamboat navigation, first as far as Quesnel and later on to Fort George. Here stage passengers changed to river steamers when they operated. It was also here that I learned my first lesson in the ways of the then wild and woolly Cariboo. The little hotel on the river front had its bar in the usual manner on one side of the common room. Gambling tables chiefly occupied the other side. Covered freight wagons were lined up in the main street unloading north-bound merchandise. These covered wagons were rolled along (generally two or three hooked together) by strings of from 8 to 20 horses controlled by a jerk line by the driver sitting astride the wheel horse. Each horse had an arch of tinkling bells over their collars to give warning of the approach of the wagon train for passing purposes on the narrow road. These outfits plodded at a walk for hundreds of miles, all the way from Ashcroft to Quesnel and Barkerville, with tons of various classes of freight and supplies for the upper country. Just a stripling, I was sitting in the bar, against the dry side, when in rolled a roistering horse-freighter, just off the road after weeks of travel, complete with fringed chaps, jingling spurs, six guns and all, and called for drinks for the house. All present pushed to the bar except myself who remained meekly in my seat against the wall, till he swaggered towards me with handle-bar moustaches bristling. The bartender at the same time motioned me to the bar and pushed towards me a bottle he took from under the bar. I poured and drank as bidden. It was ginger ale. He told me then never to refuse to drink in a Cariboo saloon when bidden. It was either drink or fight. It was not important what you drank; it was important, however, if you refused to drink with a man.

Thus did I learn.

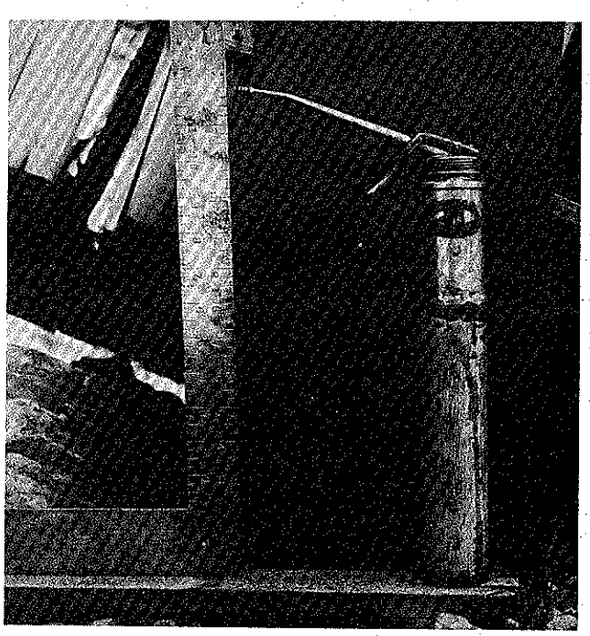
P.S. There may seem to be an awful lot of whisky mixed up in my story of the old Cariboo Road. It's not my fault, however, there was....

::: ::: ::: :::

JOERGENSEN MARKING GUN

It is probably only to be expected that the personnel of a department dedicated to the conservation of resources should themselves be of a resourceful type. Even in the face of this, we were still very impressed with Chris Joergensen's marking gun which he developed while working on the Research Division's commercial thinning operation at Cowichan Lake, Vancouver Island.

H.C. Joergensen demonstrating marking gun which works best at approx. 8 feet. Can mark 100 trees per hour.



Right...Marking Gun showing welded addition for extra capacity. Overall height, 14 inches. Total cost, approximately $1.25.

Joergensen Marking Gun (continued)

The "Joergensen Marking Gun" is actually an extended Wesco Oiler. Chris tells us that the total cost of welding on the extra length of the container and the additional lengths to be added to the pump itself came to about $1.25. The nozzle-diameter was considerably reduced so as to shoot a jet of paint very comfortably for a distance of 8 feet. When marking trees on his thinning operation, Chris averaged 100 trees per hour.

Additional and more detailed information on construction and performance can be obtained by writing direct to H.C. Joergensen, Ass't. Forester, Research Division, B.C.F.S., Victoria.

::: ::: ::: :::

TOUR ON ROAD AGAIN

By the time you read this, the combined Forest Service-Canadian Forestry Association school lecture and film tour will be a month into its second year of operation.

This year the Service has three lecturers in the field instead of two as was the case during the 1950-51 school year. W.N. (Rusty) Campbell will again be back to the northern Forest Districts - Prince Rupert and Prince George; Rex Mills will cover Vancouver Island and part of Vancouver City and the Fraser Valley; and Tegid Jones, who, up until now has been on the administrative end of the tour in connection with running the film library, will probably do a week or so on Vancouver Island and then jump into the Nelson District. The Canadian Forestry Association is covering the Kamloops District.

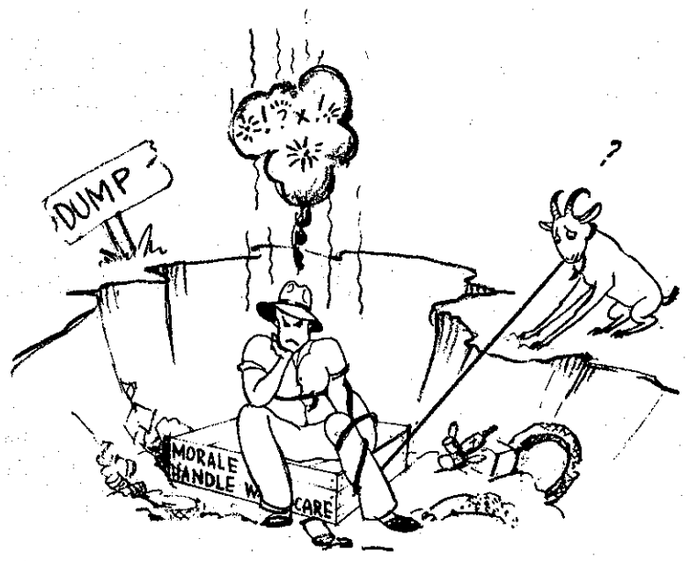
Last year the Forest Service lecturers gave a total of 469 separate film showings and talks to approximately 69,000 pupils. This year, with senior high schools added to the schedules, the total may well be even higher.

::: ::: ::: :::

WHAT EVERY FOREST OFFICER SHOULD KNOW

PART VI WHEN A FORESTER NEEDS A FRIEND

"To look up and not down,
"To look forward and not back,
"To look out and not in - and
"To lend a hand."



The main trouble with all books or rules and instructions is that they never make allowance for your feelings. Take the "Army Rules and Regulations" for example - it doesn't tell you what to do when you get scared stiff. Our own Manual, with its hundreds of pages, is full of Do's and Don'ts, but you wouldn't call it a human document. You couldn't find an ounce of comfort in a truck load of them.

What we mean is, there is liable to come a time along about the middle of the fire season when we get that "What's the use" feeling, due to too much field work and fire fighting. That's the time when your feet feel like you are walking on two chunks of red-hot iron; when you have to lick your lips and swallow twice to spit once; when that last few feet of fire line seem miles long; when you feel sort of squeamish inside; when you think you have the fire corraled and it gets away from you, and you know you have to do the whole darn thing over again.

This "sunk" complex comes from taking the count of nine too many times and working too long on your nerve. When your muscles are dead tired and your head begins to swim, then the old nerves get frazzled and let the gloom in. The high-brow name for all this is "morale".

When you're fagged out and down in the dumps, that's the time you need a little old fashioned word of comfort like our Grandmas and Grandpas used to get out of the family Bible. Now, those same messages are still in the Good Book for you to read if you feel like it, but maybe your copy of it is a long way off and what you want is cheer and inspiration right on the spot.

Just step off by yourself, climb a hill and take a look over the forest that the people of British Columbia have placed in your trust. Stop a minute, rest and think - and just as sure as you wear a Forest Service badge, you'll get back to your job with your chest out and your head up.

::: ::: ::: :::

VANCOUVER DISTRICT

Edinburgh Piping Contest

Norman McLeod, "Piper" -- also head man of the filing staff in the Vancouver District Office, is at work again after a trip to the Old Country and back by plane. A personable member of the Seaforth Pipe Band - Norman gave us a blow by blow account of the great piping contest in which his band placed third - "Somebody changed the motif in piping", (then follows a technical explanation involving tempo, chanters, drones, and drumbeats) which, of course, is why other contestants caught the judges approval ahead of the Seaforths.

There was a grand parade down Princess Street in Edinburgh. An estimated 500,000 people lined the sidewalks, hung out of windows, and otherwise took up positions of advantage. The order of march called for 500 pipers and 250 drummers to be followed by 500 pipers and 250 drummers, marching 16 abreast and all giving out with "Blue Bonnets Over The Border" and "The 79th's Farewell To Gibralter".

Everything started well although the police were evidently in for a rough session. The pipes, even in moderate doses, have a strong emotional appeal to clansmen, or maybe Sassenachs among the spectators were guilty but, in any case, after the first section had squeezed through with some semblance of formation, the crowd closed in behind them and became part of the parade. The second section of 500 pipers and 250 drummers, unable to march 16 abreast, tried to hold ranks at 8, were squeezed to 4's, later 2's, and finished up as individuals. Somewhere in that second section the Seaforth Pipe Band was simply swept along with the crowd and Norman, still piping, had a woman clinging to his belt, another to his shoulder plaid, and a conga line forming and reforming behind him.

The good people of Edinburgh are now hopelessly divided as to whether it was a disgrace and a reflection on the authorities for not lining Princess Street with soldiers instead of leaving it to the police, or if it wasn't just about the finest demonstration of spontaneous and unrehearsed affection for their sons and brethren that ever hit the old town. Norm says, "it was alright", which settles it as far as we're concerned.

Other fleeting impressions which he has brought back include the gracious hospitality of their hosts, the beauty of the British country-side from Balmoral where the Seaforths played, to Buckingham Palace which they visited, -- a side trip to "The Isles", -- of pubs and darts, fried fish and chips, historic shrines, and the dampness of the August weather, of the use of sterling and other quaint customs, and finally, a new and abiding appreciation of his own home town, Vancouver.

::: ::: :::

Picnic

Those who attended the Association's mainland picnic, at which this office was fairly well represented, say they had a good time. There was the usual pink lemonade, ice cream, balloons, and games for the children, together with certain attractions for those of more mature years. The place was White Rock, and the date, August 19.

::: ::: :::

Fiscal

August Pay Day, with its retroactive extra cheque, was an event of more than ordinary interest to all of us. We heard of one man who was considering using his additional wealth to make a down payment on a power lawn mower as a present for his wife. Nothing like putting money to good use, of course.

::: ::: :::

Closure

Last month we referred to a new record which had come, unsolicited, to the Vancouver Forest District in the form of a forest closure. It seems fitting, therefore, to note that not only has the closure persisted for a further full calendar month since our last issue, but that field and office have risen to the occasion, and taken the increased load of responsibility in stride.

::: ::: :::

Obituary

With regret we report the death of John Alexander McRae in his 77th year, at Vancouver.

Mr. McRae was appointed an official scaler on July 1, 1911, bringing to twelve the number who, under a supervisor, comprised the Scaling Staff at that time.

He became Recorder of Scaling in the year 1918 and retired in 1935.

::: ::: ::: :::

THE MASTHEAD STORY

On the Masthead of this issue are just four of the many members of the Service's field staff who have put in one of the worst fire seasons on record in the Vancouver District. These and others like them are our front line troops. Pictured from left to right - Rory Flanagan, Fire Research & Planning, Victoria; Harold Ferguson, Ass't. Supt. of Radio; Ranger Chuck Haddon, and Ass't. Ranger Jack Mellander, Campbell River.

::: ::: ::: :::