History of Logging in the Bella Coola Valley

Pre contact to 2000

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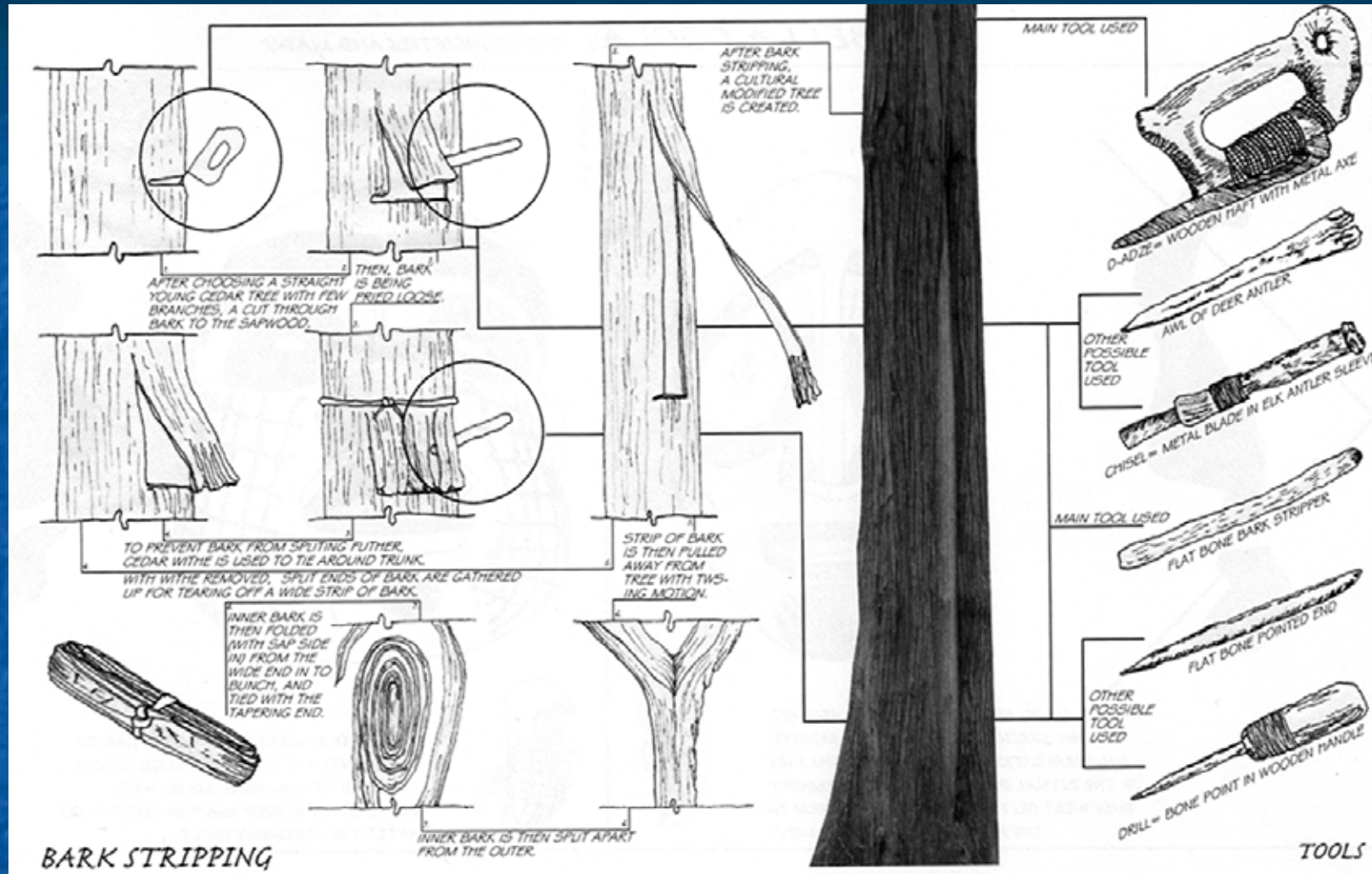Canadian Council of Archives

Irving K. Barber Learning Centre

Q'umk'wts (Bella Coola) Village - 1890

Accession # 2000.205.001P

- The First Nations people were the first to log the Bella Coola Valley. The Cedar tree was used for many items of every day living including mats, utensils, baskets and clothing.

- Wood was harvested for housing, canoes and ceremonial items.

- The largest use of wood at this time would have been for heating and cooking fuel.

Nuxalk - Tools

- The diagram above illustrates how the bark of cedar trees was harvested for use as clothing and weaving. This produced what is now referred to as a culturally modified tree.
- Recommended reading for more information. "Cedar" by Hilary Stewart
- See reference page for source of diagram.

Culturally Modified Tree

Accession # 2009.001.003P

- This cedar tree is an example of a culturally modified tree probably done by explorers in the 1800's.

Spoon Canoe

Accession # 2002.001.041P

- Logs would have been processed with hand tools right at the cutting site.
- These canoes were designed for river transportation and fishing the Eulichon.

1893

These two men are using broadaxes to hew timbers for building homes.

Accession #2007.007.007.017P

- With the coming of the Norwegian settlers, land clearing for farming and building began in earnest.
- Logging became a way of making money when farming wasn't enough.

Image #g 00977 courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives

Manually Felled Trees

Accession #2006.029.001P

- Trees of this size would take several hours to fall.
- Manually falling trees is still done today with power tools making the job much faster.

Snootli Mill 1900-1920

Accession # 2003.016.091.002P

- Logs for the mills came from private lands in the immediate area.
- At this time lumber from these mills would most likely have been used locally rather than exported.

Stamp Hammer

Accession #003.001.002

Accession #991.001.009

Accession #003.001.001

- The stamp hammer was used on the end of logs to identify the owner.
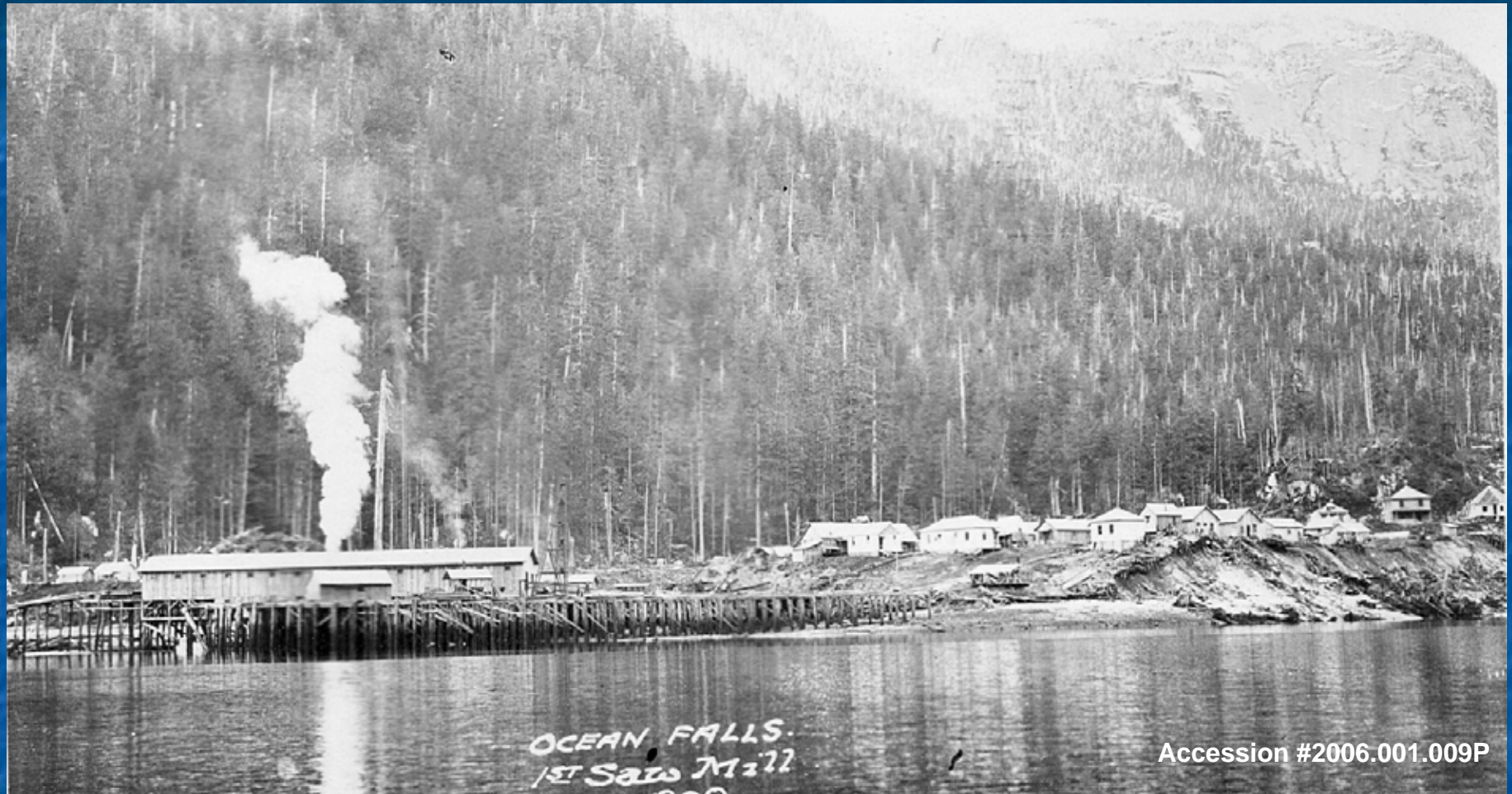- This was a government regulation used to collect stumpage fees.

Steam Donkey

Accession #2007.029.025P

- This is a steam donkey being used to yard timber.
- The Owens' brothers built a mill on the outskirts of "Old "Town" Bella Coola along the Necleetsconnay river that would have been powered by a converted steam donkey.

Ocean Falls Sawmill

OCEAN FALLS. 1ST Saw Mill

- Ocean Falls' first sawmill was built in 1909 by Ocean Falls Company.
- The Bella Coola Pulp and Paper Company organized and staked leases on approximately 80,000 acres which, ultimately provided the foundation for pulp and paper projects and the sawmill in Ocean Falls.

Native Logging Company

Accession #2002.001.457P

Accession #2003.014.029P

Accession #2009.016.021P

- In 1904 the Nuxalk Nation were logging the Native Reserve located on the large adjoining river flats between the Bella Coola and Necleetsconnay rivers.
- First Nations people devoted the fall and early winter to logging for local mills. This complemented their seasonal pursuits such as fishing and hunting.

1911 - South Bentick

Accession #2006.001.030P

- First logging outfit in South Bentick Arm.
- This steam powered barge would have been used to transport men, equipment and supplies to and from the logging site.

Logging with Oxen

Accession #2004.029.194P

- Olsen's oxen, affectionately called "The Boys" were used to clear and haul logs to the Mill.

Accession #2009.016.011P

Automation

Accession #2000.001.062P

- This is a gas powered drag saw. This equipment only needed one man to operate and replaced the two man cross cut saw for bucking up fallen timber.

Tidal Flats

Accession #2000.001.158

- Boat houses were built at the base of Mt Fougner on inlet tidal flats.
- The area shown here was mostly filled in by 1996 due to changes in the river flow.

Chain Saws

- The first gas powered chain saw was patented by A. Stihl in 1929.

Accession #2000.004.067P

This 1940's model of chain saw weighed approximately 50 lbs. and was operated by two men.
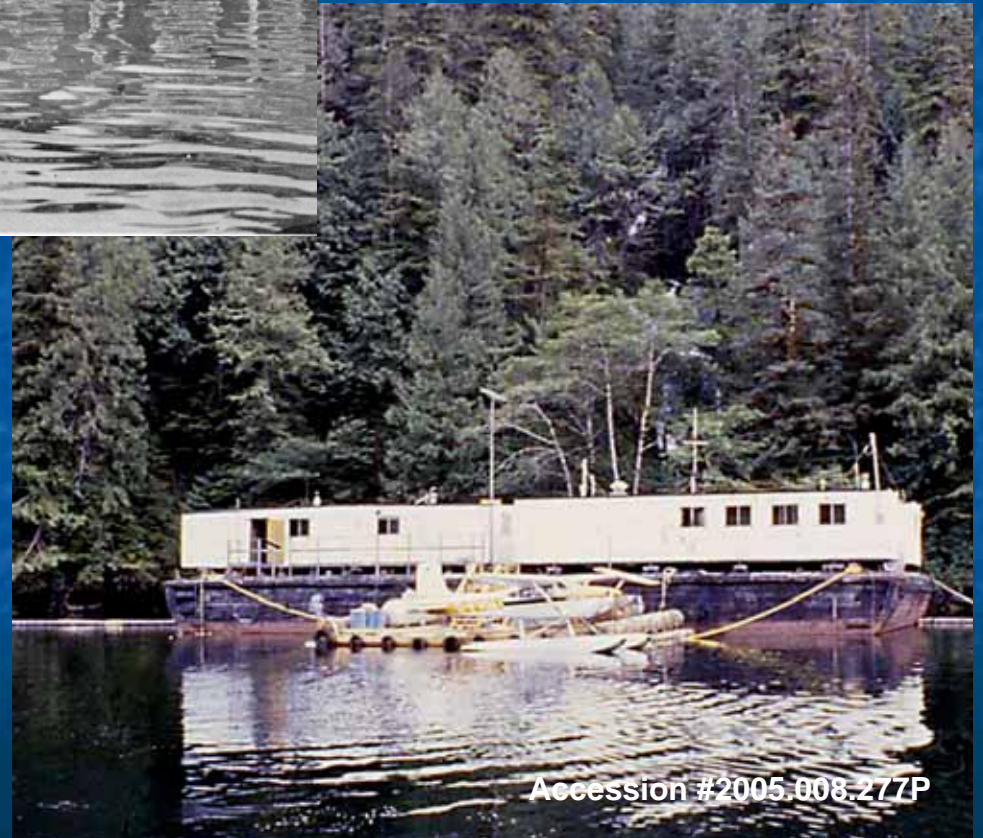
Accession #2007.007.020

This 2000's model of chain saw has a 48 inch bar and weighs approximately 20-30 lbs.

Accession #2009.016.002P

Float Camps

Accession #2000.001.029P

- Float Camps were used to house the loggers in areas being logged close to the shore. This is an easy way to move the camp around the coast.
- Supplies and man power were boated or, as is more common today, flown in.

Accession #2005.008.277P

Road Building

Accession # 2006.001.035P

Accession # 2005.008.293P

- Temporary roads were built to skid out logs to a collection point.
- Some of these log roads would later be graveled over and used for local roads.

- Modern machines and equipment make road building faster and more permanent.
- When an area is logged out the roads are often decommissioned so that vehicle traffic can no longer access the area.

Spar Tree

Accession #2005.008.059P

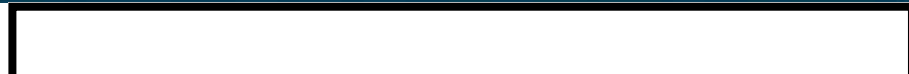Accession #2007.029.058P

- This spar tree is powered by two Steam Donkey's that yard the logs to a central area.

- This is a steel tower yarder. The method is similar to the original spar tree.
- It is now a two in one operation. It yards the logs off the site and then loads the logs onto waiting trucks.

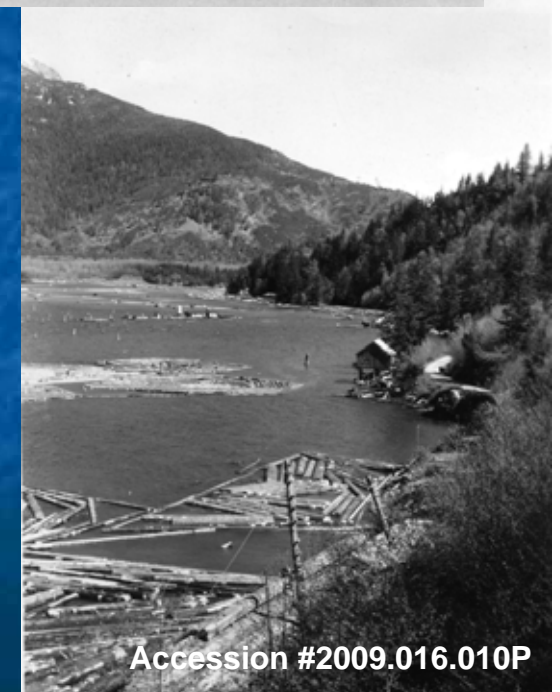# Spar Tree

Accession #2007.029.098P

- Here the Spar tree was used to yard fallen logs off of the hill side and down to the water.
- A Steam Donkey would have powered the yarding lines.

1932 Log Dump

Accession #2000_004_009P

- Logs would also be trucked to the log dump site.

- The logs are collected in the water to later be boomed for shipping to the mills.

Accession #2009.016.010P

A-Frames

- An A-frame was used to elevate the logs and then slide the load out to deep water on cables running out to a smaller A-frame.
- This system was last used in 1990.

Accession #2007.029.083P

Accession #2009.017.004P

Accession #2009.017.005P

High Rigger

Accession #2007.029.009P

Accession #2005.008.016P

Accession #2005.008.018P

- Loggers were employed to climb the tallest trees and remove the limbs and top the trees.
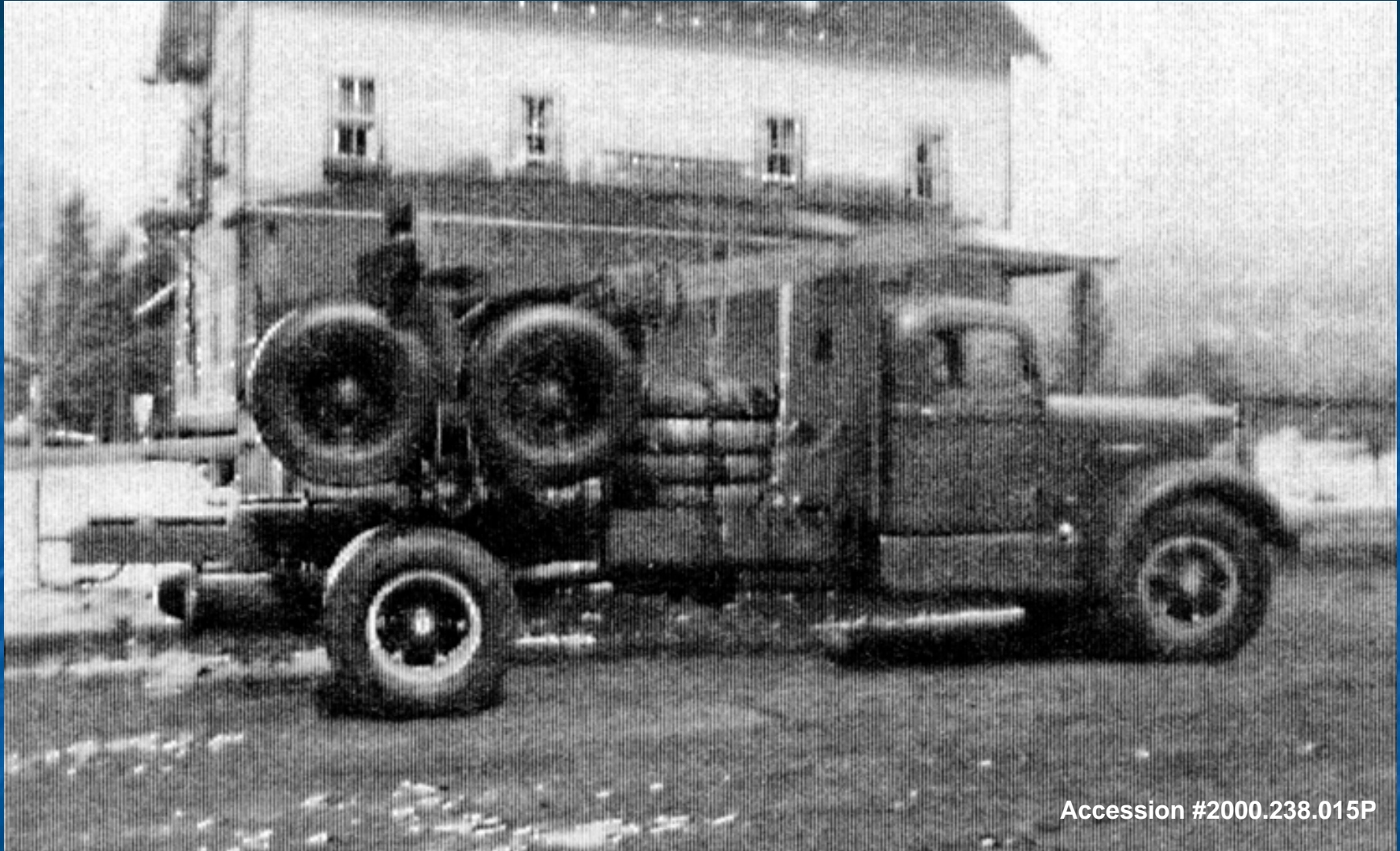- This tree would then be used as a spar tree.

Ground Skidding

Accession #2000.001.171P

- This was another method of getting logs out of the bush.
- The arch behind the tractor is used to raise the front of the log off the ground so it can then be dragged out of the bush.

Logging Companies

Accession #2000.238.015P

- Viking Timber Company was the first outside logging company to set up business in the Valley.
- The Company went bankrupt in 1940 and many of the unpaid workers joined together to form the Northern Co-operative Timber and Mills Association. Later re-organized as Northcop Logging Company Ltd.

Northcop Logging Company

Accession #2007.004.015

- The Northcop Logging Co sawmill was built in 1952.
- The sawmill actually began as a co-operative started in 1939 and in 1948 became a limited company.

Truck Logging

Accession #2000.238.007P

- In the late 1930's trucks took over the transportation of logs to the local mills or seaside log dump.
- Railway logging was done in areas such as Dean River, Green Bay, Quatna & Kimsquit but never in the Bella Coola Valley.

Bulk Processing 1960

Accession # 2005.008.119P

- Self loading/offloading barges were used for transportation of logs to the mills on Vancouver Island and the lower mainland.

Log Boom

Accession #2005.008.071P

- Bundles of logs were collected on land and then slid into the ocean and stored in boom grounds
- Stronger more solid booms called a "Davis raft' were used in order to tow the logs across the open ocean.

Grapple Yarder

Accession #2005.008.049P

Accession #2005.008.147P

- Grapple yarders' took over as the preferred high lead yarding machinery

Loaders

Accession #2005.008.277P

- This is a front end loader

Accession #2005.008.100P

- This is a hydraulic loader

Line Loaders

Accession #2005.008.122P

Accession #2005.008.148P

Small Scale Private Logging

Accession #2008.007.042P

- This is a Hand Logging operation.

- Hand falling operations are carried out to remove diseased and unsafe trees.

Accession #2008.007.027P

Helicopter Logging

Accession #2008.007.066P

Accession #2008.007.073P

- Helicopter logging was first introduce to the valley in 1993.
- It can be very expensive and is often used in sensitive areas where logging roads are not possible.

Competition

**Fall Fair 1972 –
Winner Tommy Gee
Log Bucking 17inch
log – 40 seconds**

Accession #2009.001.052P

- Competition between loggers was a great spectator sport and still is.

Off Loading

Image #i 2731 courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives

Image #i 2736 courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives

- Bundles of logs were brought by truck to the wharf where they would be off loaded into the water using an A-frame system and then boomed for transport.

Reference

- "Up Coast Forests and Industry on British Columbia's North Coast 1870-2005" by Richard A. Rajala
- "Naming and Claiming A Visual History of the Bella Coola Estuary" UBC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
- "Kimsquit Chronicles, Dean River, British Columbia" by James Sirois
- "Rhymes of a Western Logger", by Harbour Publishing

- Logger's Dictionary –

- For copies of any of the photos in this presentation please complete the forms found on our web site.

The End