Hand logging of the British Columbia Coast

Transcribed by Dalys Barney, Vancouver Island University – September 22, 2015

[William Barraclough?]
This recorded address was presented by Mr. Don Schon before Nanaimo Historical Society, Tuesday, April the 15th 1969. The subject: hand logging of the British Columbia coast. Mr. Schon was introduced to the gathering by the President, Mr. J.G. Parker. And a vote of thanks was tended on behalf of all present by Dr. R.E. Forrester for the excellent address.

Don Schon
You know when you speak, I think, because it adds a little interest, and this isn't part of the pub crawl, Mrs. McGirr. Does anyone recognize what it is?

[unidentified male]
I'm wondering if it oiled the saws.

Don Schon
Anyone else?

It's a faller's oil bottle, yeah, that's right. You get a Lifesaver. [laughter]

It's quite a familiar thing in its day, but today it's very hard to find any of them and to find the hand forged hooks, they are very hard to find. I set out about 10 years ago.

[male voice]
They used coal oil didn't they?

Don Schon
Yeah, stove oil or coal oil, diesel. They hung on the tree beside the faller or the bucker and was used to keep the saw running. It was easily made up. A blacksmith made up the fitting and there was always lots of beer bottles around, so it was no problem, from keeping you in business. But it is hard to find these things now. I set out to try to collect a few of these things a few years ago, and I got to thinking about oil bottle hooks and I travel around to our logging camps quite a bit and I tried to find some, and bless me, it took me about two years to actually find some. And I finally did find a box of them out behind an old filing shed. And I have some now. And the springboards and all the other hand falling equipment is very hard to come by.

And surprising, in a logging camp, you know, I guess it's 20 years ago now, but 20 years ago, this was all standard equipment, it was everywhere. Saws, every set of fallers had four, six saws. They had two saws for the fallers in the woods, two saws for the bucker in the woods, and one saw each for in the filing shed. So, then they had the axes, wedges, all
this equipment, and yet now, you try to find these things, all the thousands of saws there must have been along the BC coast, now it's very hard to find any. Very hard to find any at all.

Well, we're going to talk about hand logging tonight. And if you don't mind, I'd like to read it, because, I don't know, I think it probably would be more interesting than me trying to babble on. Maybe get through it quicker too, you know, you never can tell.

The hand logger was one of the most interesting phenomena of BC's colourful logging history. First, let's understand what is meant by hand logging. Hand logging was the practice of felling and wrestling huge west coast timber into the coastal waters by no other than human muscular power. The use of power machinery was forbidden. Now refer back to the Act, and it's clearly stated in the Forest Act, Section 22: "The holder of a license granted under this Section shall not use any machinery propelled other than or operated otherwise than by muscular power in carrying out lumbering operations under this license." So, there it was, brute strength.

The unique coast line of BC permitted hand logging as few places in the world could. And led to its natural evolution. Firstly, our coast line is sheltered. I want you to look at these maps that I've got together here. They're not the best, but when you ... They show the water in blue and the silvery part is land. And I want you to, as I speak, just look at this and you'll see why hand logging was truly a unique BC commodity.

Firstly, our coast line is sheltered. Islands, bays, and long inlets provide quiet waters where logs can be easily watered and collected for booming. With little or no artificial shelter required. The second feature of our coast line favouring hand logging is its steepness. The hand logger's silent partner was gravity, and without steep slopes, rising directly from the beach, it would have been impossible to move the logs to water by hand.

Looks at the inlets. Thousands of miles of inlets. All sheltered. Down in through here. Bute, Knights [Knight], Kingcome, Wakeman, Toba, Jervis Inlet, Howe Sound, Indian Arm, and all around the Gulf of Georgia was pretty well sheltered. All through these islands. All through the Inland Passage up here. Right up through to the Alaskan Panhandle. All sheltered waters. Essentially every bay a booming ground.

Neither of these conditions are found across the border in the US, except in Puget Sound and along the Columbia River. For this reason hand logging was essentially a Canadian enterprise. And this is something that we should remember as I describe hand logging, because it was essentially a Canadian enterprise. The coast line of the United States is not sheltered. It's wide open, beautiful, sandy beaches nowadays. But in those days, nobody could use them. Who had time to swim or surf? So, it was, they needed, these pioneer people needed the shelter.
The practice of hand logging had its origins in the 1860s, when the first sawmills were establishing around the Gulf of Georgia. The first mills, of course, in Vancouver, Chemainus, down in this lower part of the Gulf of Georgia. There is no doubt that the first hand logging was conducted in Burrard Inlet to supply the BC Mills Timber & Trading Hastings Sawmill. Then, spread up the coast wherever suitable shows could be found.

From simple beginnings, the practice resembled the behaviour of a gold rush in slow motion. And no doubt a good many Cariboo and Klondike miners found their way into the ranks of the hand loggers when the mines played out. Hand loggers were first legally recognized by issuance of hand logger’s licenses in 1886. Which were legislated two years later in 1888 under the Lands Act. This was merely the legalizing of a well-established practice, no doubt an act to gain revenue by the government of the day. Typical of governments, whenever some enterprise gets going, they’ll tax it.

The itinerant loggers paid little attention to ownership when they selected their claim, as many a timber license or Crown grant owner will testify. Although perhaps, it would have been hand logged prior to the date the timber was alienated from the Crown, to the license holder.

The general procedure for selecting a claim was pretty simple. The hand logger just rode his boat along the coast until he found a good show. This consisted mainly of good timber, of the right species, and on a steep shoreline. The slope was important, as I’ve mentioned, as gravity was his main assist.

With the claim selected, he would find a nearby cove, in which to boom his logs. Here he would pitch his tent, or build a cedar shake shack, which would serve as home while he logged nearby. This deed legalized his claim to the area and woe betide anyone who infringed.

The logging method was at the same time simple and complex. Simple in what was done, but complex in how it was performed. Hand loggers usually worked as partners, with one or both holding licenses. They would select each tree with much care, and were reluctant to fall a tree unless they were pretty certain that its contents were free of defects and saleable on that very selective and demanding pioneer market.

No one in their right mind would want to fall a tree by hand unless he could sell it. And the market was very selective in those days, especially in the very early days, you couldn’t sell anything unless it had, unless it appeared to be at least fully clear on the outside.
Typically, the shore grown trees have most of their limbs, and knots, on the water side, which has the greatest sun exposure. If we look at the typical shoreline, the water, the hillside going up, 45 degrees is a very important number. Over 45 degrees, things will run once you start them, provided there isn't some major resistance in its way. Less than 45 degrees, you will have to always keep pushing it. The trees, with their crowns here, had the longest part of their crown on this side, in every case, because on the uphill side, there was another tree. So this side of the crown was essentially shaded. Here again, this would be clear, have more clear, on the uphill side. And this was quite a characteristic of trees, on the steep side hill.

The skillful hand logger would often use this to his advantage in raising the grade and value of this type of tree. The common practice for these one sided trees, which would normally float, exposing half clear side and half knotty side, was to suspend a weight under the log, holding the knotty side under water, and so out of the scaler's sight. [laughter] If you look at the water here, and a log like this, normally, there would be knots sticking out here. A scaler would see those. So the hand logger, he had lots of time, he had more time than we have today. He would suspend a weight here, and keep these knots under water. [laughter]

12:23

After the log had been in the water a month or so and had soaked up water in this position, the weight could be removed, and the log would not roll over. The log would then appear to be perfect, as the knots would all be under water. The late Les Bestwick told me a story of a hand logger near Ocean Falls who used an old cook stove for the weight. When he stowed his logs into a boom, the weighted log was included and forgotten. Until it hit the jack ladder at Ocean Falls. Then his secret was out, he had forgotten to cut the weight off before he'd shipped the boom. And needless to say, his next boom was more closely scrutinized by the scaler and the log buyer. [laughter] It's quite an interesting trick though, hey?

The hand logger had to exercise considerable judgement in felling his trees. Before felling, the selected tree was sized up for lean and the best lay or direction was well planned. The trees on the shore were felled directly onto the beach. These ones down here were just felled straight onto the beach.

Those further up the hill, which would run, would slide or run directly onto the beach, were likewise felled directly down the hill. Anything that they could get, that they could fall that would take off down the hill and hit the beach, they tried to do that. Led to a lot of breakage, needless to say, but saved a lot of work if you could get that tree to run down the hill. But whatever they could figure that that tree would make it to the beach, they would fall it in that direction. These were called stumpers, and of course were sawed out first, as they required comparatively little effort to water the logs.
The trees further up the hills, and hand loggers were known to follow the timber on good, even slopes for over a quarter of a mile from the shore, were usually felled across the slope to facilitate bucking. The ones way back, they would fall across the slope. Now, if you've ever handled a cross cut saw, I imagine most of you have, you know that if a tree is laying down the hill, it's almost impossible to buck it across because you, if you're bucking by yourself, most of the bucking is done by one man, because the other end of the saw is going to whip, going to bend down the hill, and it's just about impossible to make an even cut.

Prior to felling, a bed of smaller trees were felled across its path to keep the tree off the ground and to serve as skids. Without a bed the large trees would sink into the forest soil when felled, making it difficult for the logs to be bucked. The bed also made it easier to buck the tree into logs, and to remove the bark from one side of the log. The tree was then limbed and debarked on the side next to the skids.

Where they fell the tree they had these trees, the smaller trees, would be felled down the hill more or less. And the larger tree would come down on top usually crushing them here, and the end of the log would be here. They would take the bark off. Whatever side they, once the log was bucked. They would take the bark off the log on the side they figured would run. And in other words, slide, and looking at the log this way, I'm not a very good artist as you can see, but, say this was the side they were going to roll, and slide down the hill. They stripped it, they knocked off all the bark off here. And then probably they would do what you call snipe, the end of the log. They'd take the corner of the log off all the way around. The log was at a sort of a bevel, almost sort of half way to sharpened, like you'd sharpen a pencil. And this would keep the end up a bit too.

The bucked log was slid down the skids. Whenever the log was stopped by a stump or rock, it was freed by rolling it with a peavvy, or by lifting the jammed end with a jack. The hand logger's jack was one of his most important tools, and it was his prime mover. In fact, his license forbade the use of any power machinery. There were many types of jacks, including the simple screw jack, the ratchet jack, and the gear and ratchet jacks. Some were homemade by local blacksmiths, some were made in Vancouver, and others were imported. The jack was the only real power tool that the hand logger had. A peavvy, yes, but most of the logs that he was dealing with were three feet in diameter or larger, and it's almost impossible to effect much force onto a log with a peavvy. So wherever, when he started the log running, and it happened to get run into a stump, and go where it shouldn't ought of, the only way to get it away from that, is to get a purchase here and jack the end over. And then watch out, because away it would go again. Or jam behind a rock. Or slip crossways onto the hill. The only way to get it started again was with the jack.
Two of the most popular were the Böker and the Gilchrist. I've got some pictures here. I'll just circulate that. That's a Gilchrist jack. And here's, this is a page from a McLennan, McFeely & Prior catalogue, and the bottom jack there is a Gilchrist. And it has the price tag attached to it.

The former was, the Böker, was made in Solingen, Germany. I was quite surprised to find this because it's quite a primitive looking jack. There's one in the Forest Museum at Duncan. They're very rare because the shell of the jack is made out of wood, and of course, if they're left lying around, as old things are, the shell would rot away and the moving parts don't move too much anymore. A jack like the Gilchrist, you can abuse it, all out of reason, because it's all steel, although it rusts a bit, it's still no problem, it still won't deteriorate too much.

But I was quite surprised to find, that this one jack, the one with the wooden shell, was made in Solingen, Germany. And employed the principle of a gear and ratchet and rack-and-pinion. It was [motivated] by means of a crank, which one turned around in such fashion, which turned two reduction pinions, which in turn lifted a rack. The mechanism was housed in a wooden frame.

The most famous hand logger's jack was the Gilchrist, which was made in Vancouver, BC. Force was applied to a ratchet by a pump handle about four feet long which moved up and down to turn a pinion, which lifted the rack. And in both of these jacks, the force ends up on a rack that is raised. One of the main advantages incorporated in both of these jacks was a dog, which protruded from the lower end of the jack. And you'll see it, in that jack. From the bottom of the jack, here's the face plate, and the rack is in here, just sticking out the face. But there was a, the bottom of this rack here, has got this dog on it. And that was a very important thing for lifting logs. This permitted the lift to be applied to within three inches of the ground level. Another advantage of the mechanical jacks was that they could be used in any position. The hydraulic jack as we have now, you can only use it in the vertical position, or near vertical. But with the mechanical jack, of course, you could jack sideways, upside down, or anyway you wanted.

The lifting capacity of these jacks ranged from about eight to 15 tons, depending on who was applying the force, of course. And these logs of course were very heavy, so these jacks, they were rated as a 12 ton jack, the Gilchrist, and I imagine, the Böker, could at least lift that.

Initially, in 1888, the hand logger's license cost $10 per year, and was granted to Indians or persons on the provincial voters list. It was granted for the period of one year and was non-transferable. It permitted the licensee to hand log on any vacant Crown land on the coast. But in 1908, hand logging was restricted to the North Coast. That is above Cape
Caution, from here north. Up to that time, one could go anywhere they wanted on the coast, wherever they could find Crown land, where no timber license or any other homesteader or anybody had moved in to take up property. And fell timber on their license. And all they paid was this $10 fee. That's before 1908.

But in 1908, hand logging was restricted to the North Coast. This restriction was lifted under pressure from the labour groups almost immediately. But, a further restriction limited each hand logger to an area defined on a map by a forest officer. The license was thereafter applicable to the specified area only. Also in 1908, the fee was raised to $25. This is a copy of the last license that was ever granted, and there's the type of map that showed where the hand logger could work. This is Toba Inlet here, and there's the North Shore outlined here for the hand logger.

This is right there. Oh, pardon me. Right here.

That was where the last license was granted. Probably that ground had been hand logged two, three times before that. I'll circulate this here, it may be of interest.

[unidentified male]
[unintelligible] ... 1965

Don Schon
Right, right. That's the last one that was granted.

The hand logger paid full royalty for the timber scale, but no stumpage. The timber mark for hand loggers consisted of a number and one of the letters X, Y, or Z. This one here, this fellow's mark was 14Y, and that's what he branded his logs with. And when we speak of timber marks, that's what it is. When you look at the end of a log, you'll see usually there's some kind of a number or letter configuration, well, this tells where the log, or who cut the log, and where the log came from. It tells what type of land it came off of, and also what royalty is due to the Crown on those logs. So, those were the marks that were assigned to hand loggers.

The greatest issuance of hand logging licenses occurred in 1907, when 573 licenses were sold. This coincided with a boom year in the lumber industry, which is colourfully chronicled by M.A. Grainger in an article appearing in The Times of London in 1908. He writes, "hand loggers were strung out along every fjord, along every island shore, putting in logs against time. They could make six to seven dollars a day per man, even on slopes that had been hand logged, and re-hand logged in days before the boom." As the years advanced, hand logging progressed northward, Grainger comments that by 1900, they had reached Knights Inlet, which is right here.
Reference to the annual reports of the Forest Branch, as the Forest Service was then called, shows that the bulk of hand logger production, about 80 to 90%, emanated from the Prince Rupert Forest District after 1914. Now Prince Rupert Forest District starts right in here. This is called Prince Rupert Forest District, and there's Prince Rupert, and that's called Prince Rupert Forest District, including the Queen Charlotte Islands. And the Vancouver Forest District is from Cape Caution south. And out to somewhere about, between Hope and Lytton. This area here essentially is the Vancouver Forest District, and this is the Prince Rupert, goes into somewhere in here.

So, by 1914, 80 to 90% of the hand logging was going on in this area of the coast. And less than 20% in the Vancouver Forest District. This coincides with the building of the Ocean Falls paper mill. So, a good proportion of its log supply must have come from this source in early years. And Ocean Falls is in here. And you can see by the blue, I don't know whether it shows up too well from where you're sitting, but you can see by the amount of blue compared to silver that there was a fantastic shoreline exposed. And anyone who has been in this country knows what the shoreline is like. It's a very steep shore, rising straight out of the water. Excellent country for hand logging. And this is where the hand logging was moving from 1914 on.

28:07

It is rather difficult to determine just how much wood hand loggers produced over the years as records are incomplete and sometimes did not show hand logger production separately. Whitford and Craig in their Commission of Conservation report on the Forests of BC in 1917, estimated hand logger production to 1915 to have been about 500 million feet board measure. That is, they took a wild guess at what had been produced prior to the issuance of licenses. And took a pretty good guess, I guess also on what had been produced after. And they came up with a figure of 500 million feet. Reports of the Forest Branch and Forest Service thereafter show an additional 285 million feet. Giving a total of 785 million board. I'll just write those on the board so you can see them.

That's before 1915. 500 million. And after, 285. 785 million board feet, that's up to 1966. This is no inconsiderable volume considering that most of this volume was produced before 1915. So the greater part of this volume was produced before 1915, so a good proportion of the timber cut in those days, especially before 1900, must have come from hand loggers.

Revenue to the Crown from hand loggers was never great. Before 1905, it was only in the form of the $10 fee for licenses. After 1905, the Crown imposed royalty, which was applicable to all timber alienated thereafter, including the production of hand loggers. Well, maybe I could explain what royalty is. Royalty is simply a political term. It's something that the government of the day says, that no timber shall be worth less than. So that for lands where royalty is applicable, they say that timber, the Crown never divests itself of a portion
of the value of timber grown on that land. And royalty since it started in 1905 has increased. It started off being something like 25 cents a thousand board feet, and now, we measure wood now in cubic feet and it's something like a dollar and a half a 100 cubic feet. No, it's more than that, it's $1.85, about $1.85 average per 100 cubic feet. And that, 200 cubic feet is roughly equivalent to a thousand board feet. So if you look at it something like $4 a thousand board feet, which is roughly what royalty is now.

Now, if you buy timber from the Crown in a timber sale, you have to pay what is called stumpage. And stumpage includes royalty, and of course the value goes up to something like $12 to $15 per 100 cubic feet. But before 1905, the hand logger paid nothing for his timber at all, other than his $10 fee.

32:21

My best estimate of revenue is $834,000 over the years, made up of $568,000 in royalties and $166,000 in fees. Fees being this $10 or $25 fee. This is insignificant in terms of today's provincial revenues. And even in its day was barely worthy of comment.

Section 22 of the Forest Act, which permitted the issuance of hand logger's licenses, was repealed in 1966 after 78 years. However, many Royal Commissions studying the forest scene in British Columbia had recommended its abolishment. The Commission in 1910 so recommended, as did Whitford and Craig in 1917. Commissioner Sloan in 1956 pointed out its previous significance and the lack of use in recent years.

The last hand logger's license, the one I'm circulating there now, number 2310, was granted in 1965 to a Mr. J.W. Stapleton. And his address was in Toba Inlet, for a claim on the north shore of Toba Inlet. The last of a skillful breed. He was, at least he has, as Mr. Carruthers has here the distinction of being the last coal miner, he has the distinction of being the last hand logger.

At best, hand logging could be considered as a selection cut. But it amounted to simple high grading, and a very wasteful high grading at that. Whitford and Craig in 1917, estimated that about 40% of the timber felled was wasted through breakage and by being left, being felled and left in non-recoverable situations. Trees were dropped, and they didn't go where they were supposed to go, and got in behind things that they couldn't jack the logs out from behind, and so on. They had no power machinery, and so they had to, the tree had to be felled in such a situation that the logs could be got out by hand, or lots of the timber was felled where they could never recover the logs.

And of course, as I mentioned, especially when they were falling down the hill, the tree went through such an arc, that by the time it actually hit the ground, it was going at a terrific velocity, and the impact when a tree hits past the horizontal is terrific. Even with Douglas fir, it is very difficult to prevent breakage when you get trees going beyond the horizontal.
Looking at the positive side, most of the hand logging shows were steep and rocky. Having only a fringe of merchantable trees along the shoreline. The timber left standing often continued to grow to be logged at a later date as the market broadened to accept lower grades of logs. And this was pointed out by Grainger in this article in *The Times*. That even in 1908 the market had picked up sufficient that, permitted hand loggers to go back and re-hand log areas that had been logged a few years previously. The market had improved that much. Well of course in terms of today's market, why the things they left behind were just dandy on today's market. In fact, we've never had such a market, as we've had since last fall.

[unidentified male]
Should we be hand logging again now?

Don Schon
As long as you can get them in the water, they're worth money. They certainly are. We've never had a market like it is right now.

36:35

The practice provided work for the itinerant logger with an independent spirit. Any modern logger and successful business man can trace his success back to the skills learned during hand logging, or to having successful hand logging ancestors. One of the best written accounts of the hand logger personalities can be found in M.A. Grainger's classic on early BC logging, *Woodsman of the West*. His Carter probably typified the bull headed individualists of the day. But he did not relate the skill of the profession, and the skill was really an essential ingredient.

I've referred to this fellow Grainger several times. Grainger was a very interesting man. I don't know whether many of you are familiar with him. He was an Englishman. Came out here about 1905, I guess. He was a graduate from Cambridge I believe. And he was a graduate forester, came out here, of course there was nothing going on except logging. No forestry as it was practiced in England. And he worked in the logging camps. And he went to Knight's Inlet and one of the camps he worked at was a ground logging, ground lead, steam donkey show, at Knight's Inlet. And he, one of his associates there came from SaltSpring Island. And he visited with him on one of his excursions down and met his sister.

Well, the sister was alright. And when he went back up later on, he found out that the sister was going to England. And he wasn't going to have any Englishman marry his girl that he had lined up for himself, so he took off. He had no money. And somehow he got across North America and he worked feeding cattle, going over to England. And he finally caught up with her and he toured around England with her. I don't know how he lived, because he
certainly didn't have very much money. And one of his associates over there, that he had known in school, suggested that he write a few things, because he was a pretty colourful person. He was a person that used to run around in buckskins and moccasins, in England, when he went back to England. This was the kind of person he was. He would be down the street with long hair and, so I guess we would call them hippies today [laughter].

But, anyhow, he was convinced that he should write something. So he wrote this article in *The Times*, I'm sure, it doesn't say his name. It just says, "By a correspondent" but, the content of it is, I'm dead sure it was Grainger. And he wrote this book, and I think he got a thousand dollars for writing this book. There was only a thousand copies published and they are each worth about $75 a piece right now. They weren't worth that then. But this got Grainger back steerage on the boat that his fiancée came back on. She came back first class. And she married him when they came back here. And he did all right. When he came back he was a technical assistant and secretary to the Royal Commission on Forestry in 1910. Which, along with H.R. MacMillan, drafted the organization of the Forest Service. And was one of the original staff of the Forest Service when it was set up in 1912. And in 1915 to 1919, he was Chief Forester of British Columbia.

So he did all right, but he was really a colourful person. And I know from people who have known him, he died in 1943, that he really was a quite a colourful person. From 1919 until the time he died, he was in private practice as a consultant. I guess one of the first in BC.

Well, that's all I really have to tell you about hand logging. I've got one other picture, it's very hard to find pictures of hand logging because it seems that nobody really thought much of anybody who went around putting logs in the water with just a Gilchrist jack. Of course if somebody did it today, there would be everybody and his dog would be out there with a camera taking pictures of him. But they were all running around taking pictures of these new-fangled steam donkeys, you know. Because the oxen were going out, and, but there are, this is a picture of a fairly recent hand logger up in on Redonda Island.

[unidentified male]
That's a Gilchrist jack there?

Don Schon
Yeah, he's got a Gilchrist jack in action. And in Grainger's book, *Woodsman of the West*, the original, there is about three pictures of hand loggers in there. And they are very good pictures. I would have liked to tear them out, but I didn't have the opportunity. But they are very hard pictures to come by. This is quite an interesting book, if you would like to have a look at it afterwards, it's just old pictures of logging. They're all quite spectacular type pictures.
So that's really all I've got to say about hand logging. It's a dead issue now. It was repealed in '66, so even if you wanted one now, you couldn't get one. If there's any questions, I'd be glad to answer them.

[unidentified male]
What was the use of the springboard? What was its ... [unintelligible]

Don Schon
Well, it was, the springboard. There's a tree, the lower portion of a tree. The springboard was, there was a small hole cut into the tree, and on the end of the springboard, was a little iron shoe. And looking down on it, there's the board, there was an iron plate put on here. And this had a little lip on it here. And that was put in the hole, and this lip caught on the upper part of the hole. And the man could stand on here, and it gave him a spring, you know, it wasn't solid like [unintelligible] it gave him a spring to the swing of his motion. If you've seen hand fallers work, it's a very rhythmical motion, they have, when there's two men working of course they have to be synchronized. And one fellow working on one side of the tree, and one on the other. And they're synchronized, and their swing is synchronized. The whole motion is a rhythmic motion, and the springboard can help them, it made their legs ...

[unidentified male]
Wasn't it so they could get up the tree further, so they wouldn't have so far to cut?

Don Schon
Oh yeah.

[unidentified male]
So they could get to the narrowest part, the butt of the tree was no good anyway.

Don Schon
Well, not necessarily. The butt was a problem, mainly, in the hand logging days of course, you couldn't handle a turn butt, for instance, like that. When it was off of centre that much, this just dug into the ground. The same with ground lead and ox logging days, they just, this turn butt would tear off the skids. And also, if there was any butt rotting here, they wanted to get rid of that. They didn't want to have to long butt the log after they got it on the ground.

But you know, fallers, strange it may seem, even when the ground was flat, they would turn the springboard over and stand on the back of it. I have some springboards at home and I puzzle over this, because I never observed this myself, anyone doing this, but I noticed that the backs of the springboards had almost as many calk boot marks as the upper side. And I asked one of our bullbuckers that had worked in the hand falling days about this. And he said that that's what they did if they, for instance, often, there would be a log here, you
know, a tree had been felled there, and maybe another one here, well, they would lay the
board across here, and the bottom of the board, looking [end?] of the board. The board
was always looking like this, they rounded, they cut this part away to make it lighter, this
was tapered. This end here was very thin, when you looked at the board, this was where
the top would be, flat. This would be quite thick here, tapered up here. The preferred wood
for springboards was yellow cedar. They would split them out of yellow cedar and then
chisel them down. And yellow cedar was quite good because it was a very strong wood
and yet it was light.

[unidentified male]
But wouldn't use the springboards to chop the next notch to get up ... tree down the hill ...
you want to cut roots you gotta ... get away from ... [unintelligible]

Don Schon
Sure, yeah.

[unidentified male]
Don, didn't they cut the notch in with the axe first and then put the springboard on and that's
where the [unintelligible] sawd from?

Don Schon
Yeah, of course, they had a ...

[unidentified male]
I've seen those springboards with, made of [horseshoes?] you know, down in the planking,
down in the ... [unintelligible] ... sink into the wood and then they could stand on and saw
from there.

Don Schon
Sure, yeah

[unidentified male]
[unintelligible]

[recording ends]