

History Of Baldy Hughes

BY
LIEUTENANT - COLONEL
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BALDY HUGHES

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Canadian Forces Station
Baldy Hughes was estab-
lished in 1952 and
ceased operations on
March 31, 1988 (along
with 17 other northern
Canadian Stations).
Removal of equipment
and final closure was
on Aug. 1, 1988. Baldy
Hughes employed 106
military and 59
civilian personnel
at the time of closure.
For more information,
see P.G. Citizen
Newspaper; in
particular stories
appearing in March 1988.



Presented to the library of the College of New
Caledonia with best wishes for your continuing local history
research.

June 1981

Lieutenant-Colonel W. R. Scott
Commanding Officer
CFS Baldy Hughes



This historical album is intended for display on the station and is therefore presented in the popular versus academic style. A second copy is held by the Chief Administrative Officer, CFS Baldy Hughes, as a backup and reference copy. The reference copy contains a duplicate of the contents of the display album plus the main research notes, related material and a list of sources and references. Researchers can view the reference copy on the station by making application to the Chief Administrative Officer.

Persons able to correct or add to this account are encouraged to contact the Chief Administrative Officer, CFS Baldy Hughes, Baldy Hughes, B.C. V0J 1C0 (Telephone: 562-1141).



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FOREWORD

The seed for the project that led to this historical account was probably sown the day I received the telephone call announcing "Your new posting's in. You're going to Baldy Hughes." The reply went something like: "Baldy Who?"

No doubt, countless other servicemen who have passed through this station can recall making a similar expression upon learning of their new assignment or when they came home to tell their families. CFS Baldy Hughes unquestionably has the most colourful name of all the stations in the Canadian Forces. It is also the only station named for an individual.

Then, just who ... was ... "Baldy Hughes?" The research trail to answer that question led in many directions. While the centerpiece of the work is Baldy Hughes, the story evolves around an area forming a broad triangle centered on the station - bounded on the north by Prince George, the south by Quesnel and the west by Fraser Lake/Vanderhoof. It soon became necessary to place limits on the project if there was to be any hope of seeing a final project within the available time. The emphasis has been placed on events along the Blackwater Road in the vicinity of the station.

Despite the legwork, as any historian (amateur or professional) soon learns, the one thing that is most impressive as you sit down with pen and paper to bring it all together is not how great a story you have to tell. Rather, it is how much of it you are uncertain about or simply don't know.

Regrettably, there is very little written historical record of the interior of the province. The old expression "The south thinks B.C. stops at Hope" is most apropos to northern history. With few notable exceptions (such as the Barkerville Gold Rush and the Cariboo Wagon Road), little of the rich northern B.C. history has been put to paper. Leaving the main events to examine local detail thins the already sparse written record to near non-existence. Thus much of this account has been pieced together from the tales of numerous old timers eager to recount the past but with memories sometimes faded with the passage of time. Most of those who lived the main events to be described have passed on without having their story directly committed to paper. There lies hopefully a lesson for the future. Consequently, while the main events of this account are factual, there are undoubtedly some errors in the detail.



For those who follow me to serve at this station, particularly those of the military who come and go in a relatively brief space of time, I hope that this account brings to life some of the rich history that surrounds you. The ubiquitous spruce and poplar rapidly claim the uncared for remains of the past. Yet all around, within scant kilometers of the station, can still be found the traces left by our determined and colourful predecessors in this country.

Of interest to a unit such as ours primarily concerned with modern day electronics and communications, there passes to the west within easy view from the mountain the path of a telecommunications project over a century old of truly staggering scale and daring. Past the base of the mountain lies a route that was one of the main means of transportation into historic Fort George for a brief period of time.

It is hoped this project is not the end but just a beginning, others will offer constructive criticism, the research task will be continued, new sources will be found and this initial account will see revisions and expansions.

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Lieutenant-Colonel W. R. Scott
Commanding Officer



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While gratefully acknowledging the above assistance, I accept full responsibility for any errors in the final manuscript.

June 1981

Lieutenant-Colonel W. R. Scott
Commanding Officer



INTRODUCTION

Through the history of this area are woven several themes: exploration, fur trade, communications, gold rushes, transportation, settlement, forestry and military operations. These themes are the history of the white man and his impact on the country, most of it compressed into little more than a century. Regretfully missing from this account is the heritage of the Indian of the northern interior, the original inhabitant. There exists little written record of it today and the present day Indian population is in number but a shadow of what it once was. Evidence exists of several large Indian communities in this vicinity. Villages were almost entirely exterminated by small pox epidemics around the turn of the century, from which the Indian population has never completely recovered.

Two main lines of communications and transportation by land dominate the area: Quesnel to Fraser Lake via the Telegraph Trail and Quesnel to Fort George (later Prince George) via the Blackwater Road. These land-bound routes seem at first to ignore the dominant features of the topography, the Fraser and Nechako Rivers.

The Indian of the interior plateau region of the western mountains never developed the skill and dependence on the canoe as a means of transportation to the same level as his eastern brothers. Even the Upper Fraser was comparatively little used by the Indian traveller. He came to the river yearly to fish during the great salmon migration but otherwise kept mainly to an extensive network of trails in the interior. It is known that a main trail followed the course of the Blackwater River towards the west to facilitate trade with the coastal tribes. Another trail proceeded from the junction of the Quesnel and Fraser Rivers (present site of town of Quesnel) to the vicinity of Blackwater Crossing. It is entirely reasonable to assume that other trails proceeded from Blackwater Crossing to the Fraser Lake and Prince George areas and that the early white travellers merely followed and progressively improved these trails until they evolved into the present routes along the Telegraph Trail and Blackwater Road.



EXPLORATION AND THE FUR TRADE

More Canadian than the maple leaf, the beaver was the main resource that drove the Europeans to explore and later settle our great country. Poor conservation practices soon depleted the population of fur bearing animals in the east. This, plus the growing independence of the Americans, led a push to the west and north in Canada for the richer trapping grounds and better quality pelts of the northlands. The Rocky Mountains posed a formidable barrier to the fur trade's main means of transportation - the canoe. While the mountain barrier was eventually penetrated with trade routes in several locations (notably the Peace River) the steep river gradients, tumultuous rapids, already over extended trade routes, short travel season and the wealthy, fiercely independent coastal tribes kept the trade in check so that it never reached the volume achieved north and east of the Rockies.

In 1793, Alexander MacKenzie made his historic trip to the Pacific via the river system flowing past the doorstep of Baldy Hughes. To gain a head start on the short summer season for his trip, he departed Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca in October 1792 to winter at the junction of the Peace and Smokey Rivers where he built a new post, Fort Fork. With his second in charge, Alexander McKay, six Canadian Voyageurs and two Indian hunters, he set out on May 9th, 1793 in two heavily loaded canoes in search of a viable trade route to the Pacific Ocean.

His route took him by canoe up the Peace River, past the Rocky Mountain Portage (near the site of the present WAC Bennet dam), south on the Parsnip River, over the continental divide northeast of Prince George and hence by smaller streams into the McGregor and Fraser. Repairing badly damaged canoes, he proceeded west and south on the Fraser. The site of Prince George was passed without noting the confluence of a major tributary, the Nechako, flowing in from the west through shoals and a maze of small islands. Passing our location, he proceeded through the Fort George and Cottonwood Canyons, reaching as far south as the site of Alexandria, where a fort was later established in 1821 and named after him. Throughout, he was plagued by an anxious crew and uncertain relations with local Indians.



Fearful of the lower Fraser, his Indian guides likely overstated the hazards of the river and underestimated the distances to the sea via the network of trails overland. MacKenzie incorrectly deduced that the "Great River" he was on was the Columbia from which he reasoned that the river mouth could not be reached and a return made in a single season, especially with the canyons and rapids described to him by the Indians. Thus, with time a critical factor, MacKenzie turned back northward, renegotiated the canyons once more and shortly reached the mouth of the river now known locally as the Blackwater, to which he gave the name "West Road River." Caching his canoes and non-essential goods a few miles north of the river's mouth near the spot where the Fraser river turns abruptly from east to south, MacKenzie and his crew set out by foot on July 4th. They followed their Indian guides up the side of the river valley passing by Punchaw and Cleswuncut Lakes before joining the main, well worn Indian trail along the north bank of the valley of the West Road River near the present site of Blackwater Crossing. Their route took them up the valley of the West Road River, on to the Euchiniko River, back to the chain of lakes on the upper West Road River, across the Dean River, through the Coastal Range and via the Bella Coola River to the sea, which was reached on July 19th. After exploring the upper sections of the Dean and Burke Channels and after some tense encounters with the coastal tribes, MacKenzie and his crew departed on the return journey on July 26th. Spurred by concern over their safety, meagre provisions and an advancing season, they retraced their steps quickly, reaching the Fraser on Aug 4th and Fort Fork on Aug 24th, proceeding later to winter in Fort Chipewyan.

Only a few years later, trading posts for the Northwest Company were established in the region of new Caledonia by Simon Fraser: Fort McLeod in 1805, Fort St James and Fort Fraser in 1806 and Fort George in 1807. A year later in 1808, Simon Fraser made his epic journey by canoe down the river now bearing his name. He departed on May 28th from Fort George with four canoes and a party of twenty-four: two clerks, nineteen voyageurs, and two Indians. John Stuart and Jules Quesnel, his two faithful clerks, were to have major interior waterways named after them. Like MacKenzie before him, Fraser also believed the river to be the Columbia and was bitterly disappointed to discover his error upon reaching the coast. His safe passage through the hazards of the lower Fraser and then the territory of suspicious and hostile coastal tribes was a remarkable feat of survival. The many canyons of the river were only passed by trading canoes with the Indians, numerous arduous portages and the passage of hair raising whitewater chutes. Even the steel-nerved Fraser was forced to note that while important geographic linkages were now made, the lower Fraser was not a practical fur trade canoe route. His exhausted crew finally returned to their point of departure, Fort George, on August 6th, 1808.



Shortly after, the Crooked River, Summit Lake and the Giscome Portage replaced the upper Parsnip and MacKenzie's "Bad River" as a far more practical route joining the Peace and Fraser river systems.

Despite the formidable geographic barriers of the mountain chain, fur trade in the interior survived and a network of trade routes was established. In the south, the Company turned from the water to use horse brigades on land much as they used the more customary canoe brigades by water where river conditions were favourable to canoe travel.

The fur trade brought with it a trickle of European settlers who gradually dotted the land. Later gold rushes raised the trickle to occasional floods. From the early days of Northwest Company and HBC exploration to the beginning decades of the twentieth century, almost all settlers relied on the fur trade for all or part of their livelihood. For many, it was one of the few ways to earn a cash income. Trapping was, and in many cases still is, an important primary or secondary activity of settlers in the Baldy Hughes area. Almost all the ranchers, stump farmers, linemen and stage remount operators ran a trap line during the winter months. To the part time amateurs were added the full time trappers whose lines covered much greater distances. Thus it is that the forest around the station is dotted with the remnants of blazed trees along old trap lines and old trappers' cabins, some of them remarkably built.



COLLINS OVERLAND TELEGRAPH LINE

The race to connect Europe and North America with telegraph service in the middle of the 19th century led to one of the most remarkable engineering endeavours of modern times. It was to follow a path within scant miles of Mount Baldy Hughes.

The first attempts to link Europe and the United States with telecommunications were by the new technology of under sea cables. Sponsored by Cyrus W. Field, the first trans-atlantic cable effort in 1857 failed after only 300 miles had been laid. A second attempt in 1858 bridged the Atlantic but the cable failed after only a few messages had been sent.

The 1858 failure led many in the business to conclude that sea bed cables were impractical for the wide, deep and stormy Atlantic. The consequence was the instigation of a project financed entirely by private capital to link New York and Europe by land! This incredible scheme was to be an extension of the Western Union Line between New York and San Francisco. The driving force behind the project was Perry McDonough Collins and it became known as the "Collins Overland Telegraph to Europe and Asia" or "The Russian - American Telegraph Line."

Undaunted by formidable geographic obstacles, the line was to proceed by land from San Francisco northward through British Columbia, the Yukon, Alaska, across the Bering Straits by undersea cable, hence by land to Europe via Siberia with a branch to China. The junction of the Russian and Western Union Lines was to be at the mouth of the Amoor River. Complex negotiations between the Russian, British and American Governments resulted in a treaty covering the project in time for work to commence in 1865.

In less than two years, the line was extended well into northern B.C., passing via Quesnel, Fraser Lake and heading north from Hazelton. For much of its length, the line was merely an improvement on the earlier Indian trails and horse trails of the fur trade era.

Even after receipt of the heart breaking news that a trans-atlantic cable had been successfully laid, work continued into 1866. When the predicted failure did not occur, the Collins Overland Telegraph Line was finally terminated later that year. The wire and its fifty foot wide clearance through the forest had reached Fort Stager north of Hazelton in the Kispieux Range, although surveying and clearance had been done much further north in places.



Supplies which could not be economically recovered were left in place in vast quantities, soon to pass into the hands of settlers and others. The Indians soon lost their early fear of the strange whiteman's project and learned to make use of the wire and other material left behind. The wire was put to widespread use throughout the north including the remarkable Indian suspension bridges in the Hazelton area.

While the initial telegraph disappeared as a means of communication, it left in its wake a primitive but much improved trail northwest into the interior of the province. As a consequence, for many years this early route, which became known as the Telegraph Trail, carried traffic directly between Quesnel and Fraser Lake, cutting off development of the otherwise attractive junction of the Nechako and Fraser Rivers.

Artifacts of the line, including sections of the heavy gauge wire and old ceramic insulators can still be found today in many places, including the section passing to the west of the station through Punchaw and along Bobtail Lake.



THE BLACKWATER ROAD

There are two main sections to the road now known as the "Blackwater." Each had a related but distinct history: Quesnel to Blackwater Crossing and Blackwater Crossing to Prince George. Both sections are most likely the descendants of the original Indian footpaths and horsetrails through this part of the interior. Early use of the road in the late 1800's was mainly due to successive gold rushes, the fur trade and settlers heading for the Nechako Valley. Later, the Fort George settlement boom after the turn of the century brought the period of the greatest use and development of the road.

For many years, Quesnel remained the northernmost outpost of "civilization" in the province. The Barkerville Gold Rush of 1862 brought a substantial influx of people. It also spurred development of the Cariboo Wagon Road which was the first practical means of transportation past the unnavigable canyons of the lower Fraser. The Cariboo Road passed through Quesnel and turned sharply eastward to service the gold mining camps. Settlement further north was sparse and based almost entirely on the fur trade. Until the early 1900's, the location of Fort George at the junction of the Nechako and Fraser Rivers was little more than a small Indian village and a trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Throughout the early period (until about 1910), the Quesnel to Blackwater Crossing section was the dominant part of the road. In fact, it was just the initial leg of the "Telegraph Trail" from Quesnel to Fort Fraser, Hazelton and beyond. The Collins Overland Telegraph Line passed by this route in 1865, no doubt straightening out the original Indian trail in places, and adding a fifty foot wide right-of-way for the wire. While improved by the work on the telegraph line, the trail was never-the-less suitable only for pack trains and rough going for freight wagons. The crossing point of the Blackwater River (West Road River) became a relay and repair station on the telegraph line which continued to the northwest towards Fraser Lake. Although work on the line had progressed at a remarkable rate, it was terminated hardly after it had started. While the telegraph wire fell silent, a rough trail now led northwest into the interior from Quesnel. A few prospectors, settlers and Indians were the main users of the trail during the next few years.

The Omineca Gold Rush of 1871 brought a new spurt of activity and the Telegraph Trail became a major route to the discovery area north of Fort St James. The heavy traffic led the government to upgrade the pack trail.



A freighter, G.B. Wright, was given the contract. By 1871, the Quesnel to Blackwater Crossing portion had been improved to the status of a still crude but usable freight road and carried much of the freight to the Omineca by way of Vanderhoof. Many of the early government survey parties also passed by this route.

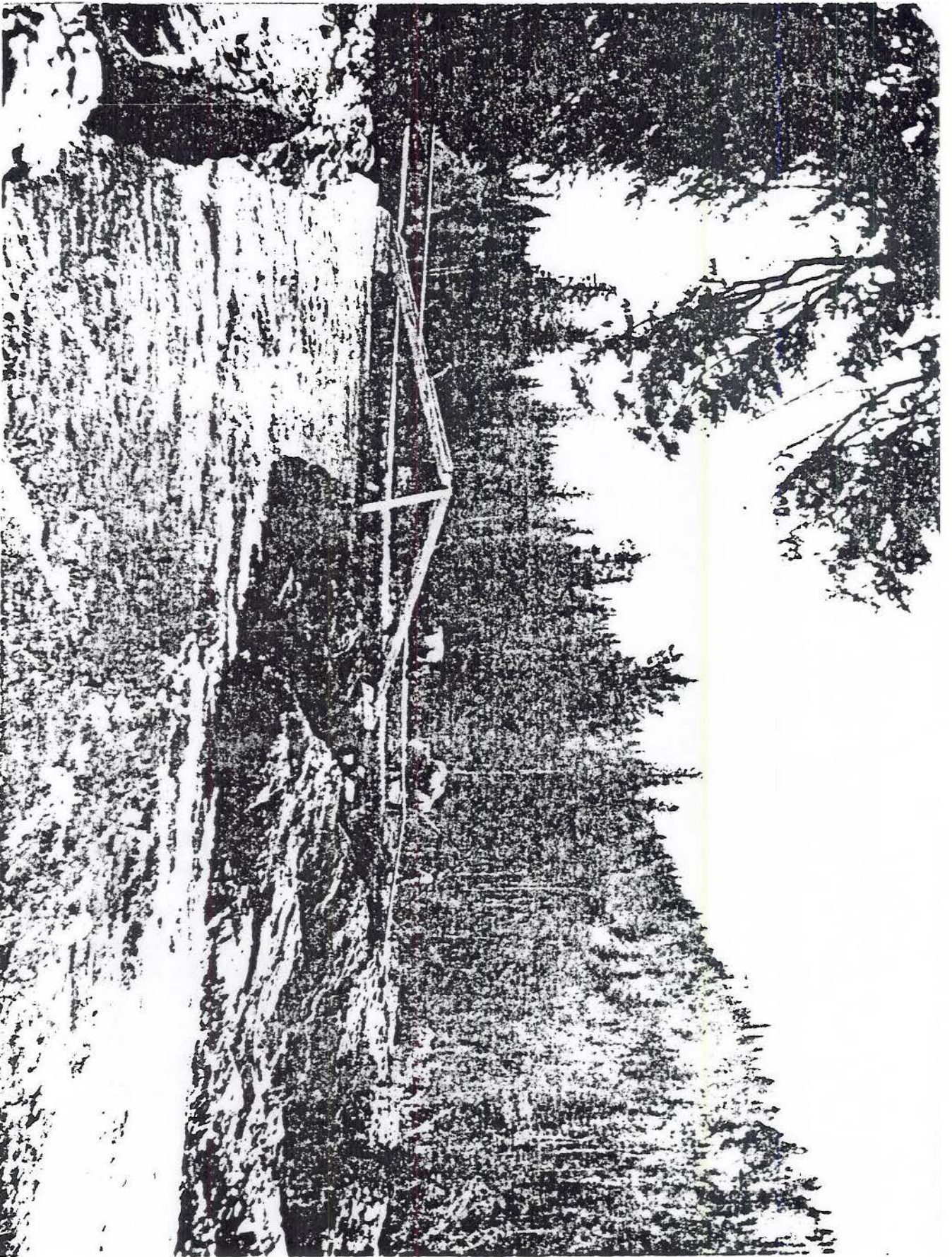
The biggest gold rush of them all, the Klondike, led to further surge of usage starting in 1898. Fortune seekers from every walk of life and every corner of the western world poured into the north by a multitude of routes. Most passed by Skagway and the White Pass but many others came along every major river and trail in the north. One of the routes was the Telegraph Trail, used by some goldseekers all the way from its starting point in Quesnel. Others followed it farther on, starting from Hazelton on the Skeena River or Telegraph Creek on the Stikine River. They then travelled northward along the old telegraph right of way, on what was often referred to as the Teslin Trail in those days. The Telegraph Trail was one of the most arduous among the many difficult routes they could have chosen and a large number of the ill prepared and bush-naive starters failed to reach their destination.

Driven by the need to exert sovereignty and control in the north around the burgeoning sites of Dawson and Atlin, the Dominion Government installed a telegraph line along the old Collins Overland route, connecting Dawson City with Quesnel by 1902. The Telegraph Trail saw greatly increased traffic to service the line and as a route northward to the gold fields.

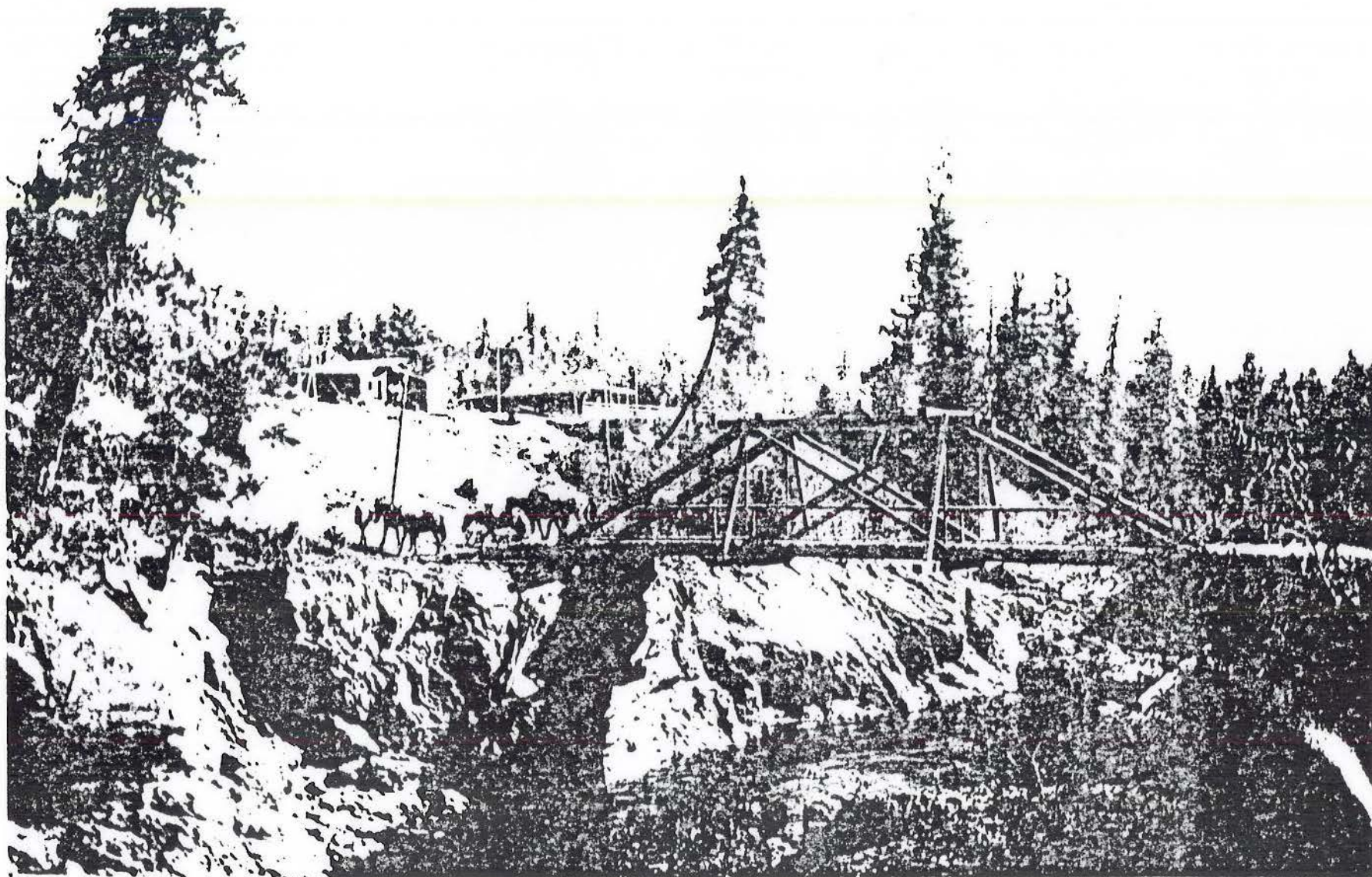
A stopping place soon appeared at Blackwater Crossing by the initiative of the enterprising operators and linesmen stationed at the relay point there. The new Dominion Telegraph Line operated through the Blackwater area until the late 40's (at least past 1947). Guy Lawrence was an operator at the Crossing in 1908 and Earl Baity spent a year there in 1940 as a lineman on the Quesnel to Vanderhoof leg.

Throughout this period (to 1910) the second leg of the modern Blackwater Road (Blackwater Crossing to Fort George) was merely a narrow footpath and horsetrail.

In 1903, a bill was presented in the House of Commons to incorporate the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company. The railway was to be built from Winnipeg through central BC to the Pacific Ocean. It was widely assumed that the railway would use the Yellowhead Pass, follow the Fraser River to Fort George and hence to the coast at Prince Rupert via the Nechako, Endako, Bulkley and Skeena valleys.



"Old Pack Trail Bridge over the Blackwater River - c 1908"



"A later Bridge over the Blackwater River with the Blackwater Crossing Telegraph Station in the Background."



When news of the go ahead for the railway reached BC, it kindled the imagination of settlers and entrepreneurs who saw vast new opportunities in the north. The site of Fort George suddenly took on a new importance, being situated at the cross roads of the natural north-south and east-west transportation routes in the northern interior. Within a few years, as settlers and enterprising businessmen poured in, the population mushroomed over the few dozen white homesteaders and HBC employees there at the turn of the century.

The rush of settlers to the Nechako Valley and Fort George peaked in the period 1909-1913 and led to the first major use and development of the northern half of the Blackwater Road. The obvious potential of Fort George as the transportation cross-roads of the northern interior was embellished by the aggressive promotion of real estate developers, notably A.G. Hamilton and G.J. Hammond. Along with the rising tide of settlers came the massive freight loads and itinerant work force to support construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway from Tete Jaune Cache westward to Fort George and then the coast. While most of the freight and human traffic came north from Quesnel by Fraser River sternwheelers, the overland route from Quesnel - Blackwater Crossing - Fort George took on growing importance, particularly as a means of communication and freighting in the winter.

The "New British Columbia Official Bulletin" of 1908 noted:

"There are feeding places on the road between Quesnel and Fort George as follows: Goose Lake, 25 miles; Swan Creek, 24 miles; Round Meadow, 23 miles; Long Meadow, 17 miles; Fort George, 21 miles. Blackwater Crossing, 60 miles from Fort George, is on this route."

The "feeding places" (at least for the Blackwater Crossing - Fort George segment) referred to grazing stops for horses rather than organized eating and resting establishments for humans. The northern half of the road was still little more than a horsetrail and footpath.

Two rival communities soon developed under the aggressive promotion activities of competing real estate developers. South Fort George was situated on the Fraser near the site of the new bridge across the river. A.G. Hamilton bought up and sub-divided great tracts of land around this location and promoted the sale of lots through the Northern Development Company. The rival community of Fort George was located to the northwest, adjoining the Nechako River in the area of Center Street. George J. Hammond similarly bought and sub-divided the land in Fort George which he promoted aggressively under the umbrella of the "Natural Resources Security Company."



Hammond's company placed advertisements in newspapers throughout North America and Europe making the most extravagant claims imaginable. For example, part of the advertisements claimed that Fort George was soon to be the crossroads of no fewer than eleven major railways, making it the Chicago of the North.

The BC Government actively promoted the development of the north throughout this period as well. The "New British Columbia Official Bulletin No 22" published in 1910, listed the distances by the Cariboo Wagon Road and Blackwater extension as:

Ashcroft to Quesnel (stage, wagon or automobile)	220m
Quesnel to Fort George (road and trail)	<u>110m</u>
	330m

Other travel routes described in these documents (aimed at attracting new immigrants to the province) included:

- a. Soda Creek to Fort George by steamboat,
- b. Tete Jaune Cache to Fort George by steamboat,
- c. Quesnel to Fort George by canoe or steamboat,
- d. Bella Coola to Blackwater via Indian trails along the Takia, Uhlgako and Euchiniko Rivers and then via the horsetrail from Blackwater to Fort George,
- e. Bella Coola to Quesnel via the Dean and Blackwater Rivers or trails along the same route (225m),
- f. Bella Coola to Quesnel via Lt Palmer's trail (235m). (Palmer's trail ran from the Bentinck North Arm along to the Bella Coola River to Palmer Mountain at Puntzer Lake, approximately direct to Quesnel. "Palmer Mountain" and "Puntzer Lake" likely are the same as the former location of a sister radar station "Puntzi Mountain" situated on a mountain and near a lake of the same name west of Williams Lake on the highway to Bella Coola).
- g. Ashcroft to Quesnel by stage, 220m
- Quesnel to Blackwater by Telegraph Trail, 40m
- Blackwater to Nechako (Tsinkut Lake) via the Tsinkut Trail, 55m



(Then presumably to Fort George by the Nechako. "Tsinkut Lake" is now spelled "Sinkut Lake" and the "Tsinkut Trail" was actually the route of the Telegraph Trail from Blackwater Crossing to Fraser Lake via Punchaw and the Naltesby (Bobtail) Lakes).

Each of the Fort George communities soon developed rival newspapers financed by their competing real estate promoters. These newspapers carried large circulations for brief periods, mainly in the major cities of southern Canada and the United States, even while the total population in the Fort George area numbered only in the tens and hundreds. The quality of the early newspapers, of which there were several in rapid succession, was surprisingly good in many cases. They provide interesting insights into life on what was then the frontier. Newspaper wars soon developed on a grand scale as the developers tried to obtain ascendancy for their community over their rival. Colourful and what would today be highly libelous allegations no doubt enlivened frontier life and certainly helped to provide copy when real news was scarce.

The developers knew that the location of the terminals for the major modes of transportation would be decisive. These were the Fraser River stern-wheelers, the stage and ultimately the railway. Hamilton and Hammond thus aggressively sought to have their community as the chosen terminal and each sought repeatedly to out manoeuvre the other. South Fort George had a natural advantage as a location for river boats because the river there was amply wide and deep. On the other hand, the Fort George location was impractical for large sternwheelers due to the difficulty in navigating the shallow sand bars at the junction of the Nechako and Fraser at other than spring time highwater.

The developers and the growing citizenry of Fort George and South Fort George now began to pressure the government for an improved land route to the communities via the trail from Blackwater Crossing. However, for another year or so, wagon traffic to Fort George had to pass northwestward along the Telegraph Trail and then back eastward along the Nechako. The Fort George Tribune held out the promise of a new road between Fort George and Blackwater Crossing.

20 Nov 1909

"The Nechako Valley can be reached over a wagon road that has been built from Quesnel via Blackwater Crossing to Stoney Creek, that is. The road is underway and should be completed this year. A wagon road is also underway between Fort George and Blackwater Crossing."



27 Nov 1909

"J.P. Cameron, road superintendent, was in Fort George on Thursday, coming from the Blackwater Road camp to help younger men break a trail. He shut down work on the trunk road at Stoney Creek, after building from Blackwater Crossing. He will stay with the men on the Fort George road until it is passable for sleighs to Blackwater Crossing. He has built over 75 miles of new road and repaired 50 miles of old road this year and has spent less than \$20,000. He has no loafers on his payrolls and most of those employed are settlers in the Nechako Valley."

In the same issue (27 Nov 1909), the Tribune announced a stage service between Quesnel and Fort George. Hamilton in Fort George was the driving force behind the venture while the Quesnel agent was J.A. Fraser.

"A.G. Hamilton of Fort George has made arrangements to operate a stage between Fort George and Quesnel which will make two trips a month. The stage will leave here the first and third Monday on each month; returning, will leave Quesnel on the following Saturdays. Mail, passengers and express will be carried. The distance is 100 miles."

Typically the announcement was rather premature as it was not until the summer of 1910 that the government construction crews had made the Blackwater Crossing to Fort George road adequate for stage travel. The initial privately contracted semi-monthly stage service ran for a year (1910 - 11).

Road houses now began to spring up along the road. In 1909, the operators and linemen at the Blackwater Crossing station of the Yukon Telegraph Line began to augment their government pay cheques by offering a cafe, bunk house and stable to travellers.

As Fort George could not normally be reached in a day from Blackwater Crossing with the road conditions prevailing at the time, Hamilton undertook to provide a mid-way stopping house. The event was recorded in the following entry in the Fort George Herald.

12 Nov 1910

"Last winter there were no road houses between Blackwater Crossing and South Fort George, a distance of sixty miles.



This year there is provision made for the weary traveller. John Bronger, the architect and contractor, who last week finished the erection of the Herald Swiss Chalet on fourth street, next to the proposed theatre building, also completed a road house exactly midway between Blackwater Crossing and here. Duncan MacKenzie has taken over the house and will run it all winter. Provision is made to accommodate eighteen people at one time and the stabling facilities are ample for eighteen horses. Good water is one of the features of this road house."

It takes only a few minutes for even the most casual traveller of the modern Blackwater Road to see the remnants of this road house, located at the junction of the Blackwater and MacKenzie logging roads. The partially collapsed structure still clearly visible was originally the road house referred to in the 1910 article and later became MacKenzie's barn.

The real estate developers used every trick in the book to hook customers for lot sales in their rival communities. It was common place, for example, to place salesmen on the river boats in the attempt to make a sale before the influence of the other community could be felt. Some of the road houses operated in the same fashion. The operators of the stopping places set up by the real estate developers would make ample use of their well-stocked liquor stores as the catalyst for real estate promotion. MacKenzie's was such an establishment. However, he was a terrible cook and a worse housekeeper with the result that his place soon became known as "Dirty MacKenzie's." As the reputation spread, travellers would go out of their way to avoid an overnight stay at his establishment which soon withered from a road house for the stage line to a remount station for the express stages and freight wagons.

In 1909, entrepreneurs from Fort George rapidly installed a jerry-rigged telephone line between Fort George and Blackwater Crossing and operated a commercial service under the name of "Fort George and Alberta Telephone Co." Telegraph messages were initially passed by voice and then relayed from the Yukon Telegraph Line relay post at Blackwater Crossing. The line generally followed the course of the road although in places a new very narrow right of way was cut through the forest a kilometer or so to the east.

The reason for this seems inexplicable as windfalls and difficult access must have hampered operations greatly and the path could not have been materially shortened. Within a year the line was converted to telegraphic service, passing heavy traffic until approximately 1914. The arrival of the railway brought its own telegraph service and the First World War spelled an end to the construction and settlement boom in Fort George. After the commercial telegraph venture closed down, telegraph service southward from Fort George was handled by the Grand Trunk Line to Vanderhoof and then southward on the Yukon Line.



When the lines folded, local settlers were quick to gather up the material left behind, particularly the heavy gauge soft steel wire. The wire was put to a hundred uses by resourceful settlers in fencing, door hinges, traps and other purposes. Examples of such improvisation can be found in most of the local homesteads and cabins.

Hamilton had great difficulty in maintaining an adequate semi-monthly mail service over the winter of 1910 - 11 due to equipment limitations and the still primitive road conditions. Fort George residents pressed Ottawa for a continuation of the mail, express and passenger service provided by the BC Express Company on the Cariboo Wagon Road between Ashcroft and Quesnel. The Postmaster-General finally agreed to these solicitations in the summer of 1911 and contracted with the BC Express Company for a weekly winter service over the Blackwater Road to complement the summer service provided by Fraser River sternwheelers. The Fort George Herald recorded the arrival in Fort George of the first BC Express Company stage driven by the legendary Al Young on October 19, 1911.

21 Oct 1911

"For the first time in history, the stages of the BC Express Company rolled into South Fort George on Thursday last. The big red coaches drawn by four splendid horses showed signs of the hard trip they had made over the rough and uncompleted road between here and Quesnel ... The stage brought in twenty-five bags of mail and seven passengers. The service will not be so difficult to run with the smaller sleighs the company will use in their winter service.

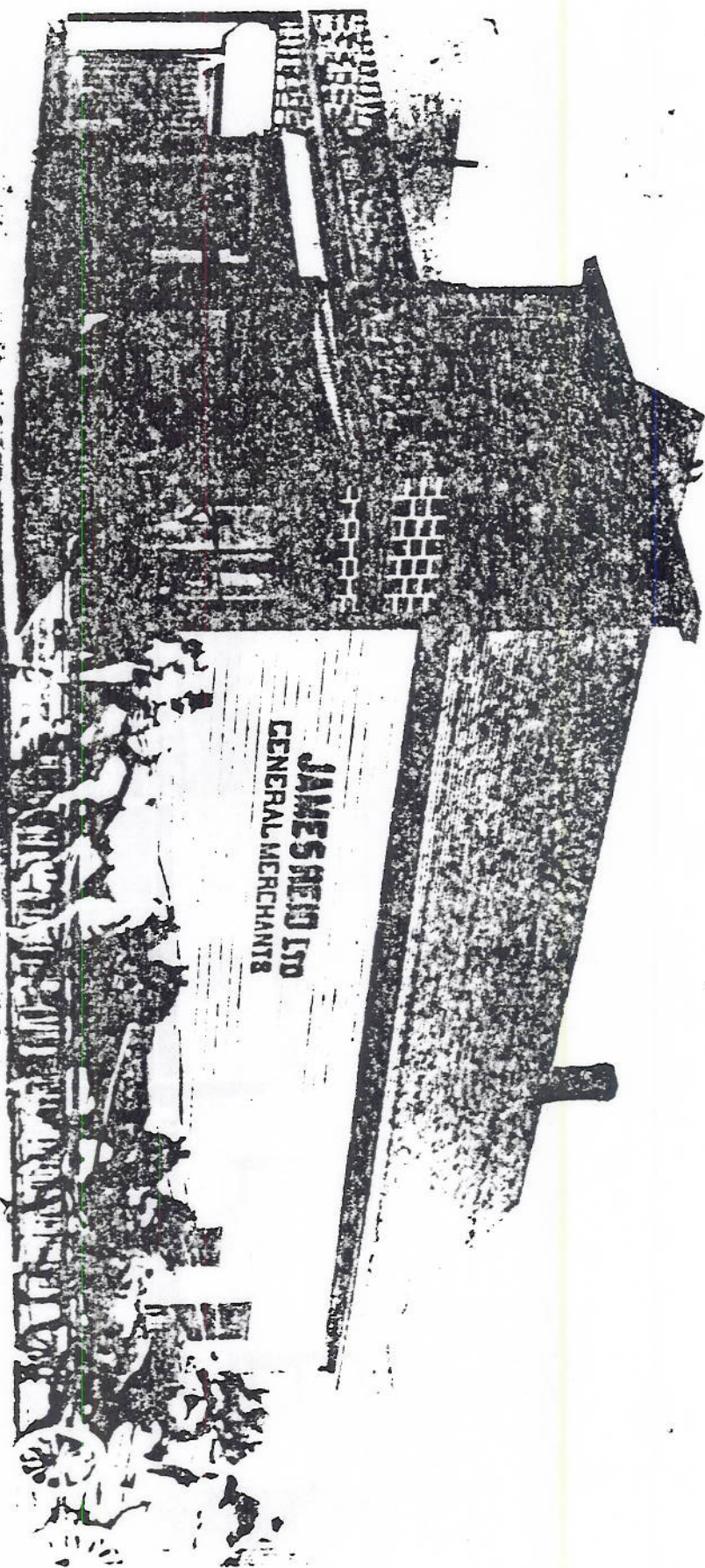
Willis J. West (1) described the procedure as follows:

"The stage leaving Ashcroft Monday morning at 4 o'clock would arrive at Quesnel on Wednesday night. Passengers for Fort George would leave Quesnel Thursday at 4 p.m., have lunch at Goose Lake, and then stop overnight at Blackwater. Then on Friday after an early start they would have a second breakfast at Round Meadow, and a late lunch at 21-Mile House, before reaching Fort George about 6 p.m. This Monday to Friday journey from Ashcroft to Fort George covered a distance of 330 miles. In 1912, the winter service between Quesnel and South Fort George was increased to a semi-weekly service and the Express Company was obliged to build at Blackwater a large stopping house as well as a large stable to provide for the rush of traffic over this route in the winter of 1912-13.



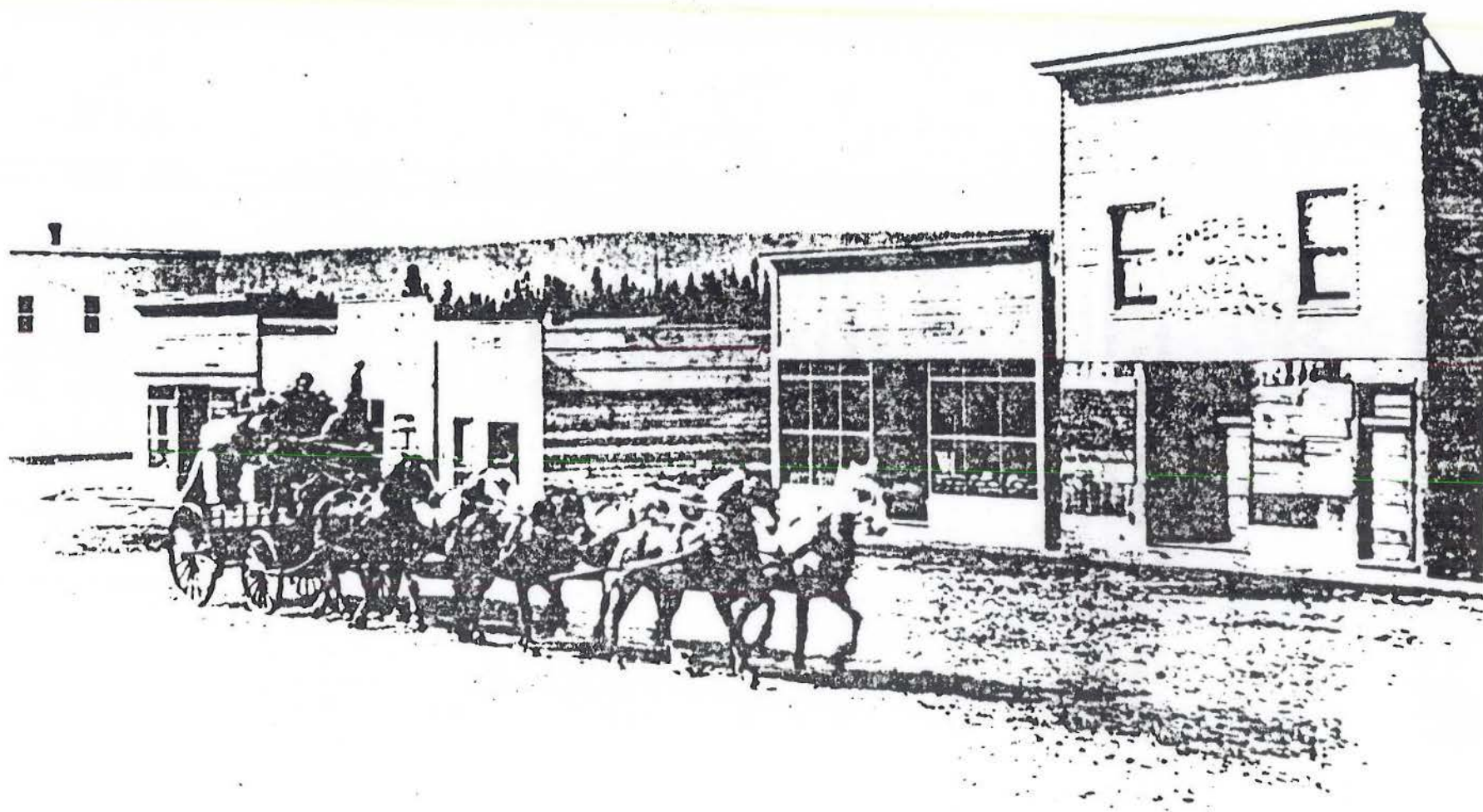
"Royal Mail near Fort George, B.C. Stage Coach in Difficulties." Public Archives Canada PA - 62005.

While not positively identified as the Blackwater Road, the conditions were typical of those faced by stage drivers on the Blackwater.



= 19110 -

"The Arrival of the Mail Stage at Quesnel, B.C. 1911"
BC Public Archives 46740



"Arrival of the Semi-Weekly Stage in Fort George - 1912. Al Young driving."



The volume of mail matter had expanded greatly and the company put a large number of its finest horses on this run in order to handle the extra stages necessary in providing an adequate service to the fast growing communities building along the route of the new railway."

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- (1) Willis J. West, "The 'BX' and the Rush to Fort George," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, XIII(1944), pp 182-183.

The BC Express Company stage service operated between Quesnel and South Fort George, thereby cementing the early ascendancy of the later community. Despite Hammond's formidable promotional activities, South Fort George generally grew at the expense of its rival in the early years. The community boasted "all the comforts for the travelling public," and quickly became a wide open town.

As the head of construction began to approach Fort George from the east around 1910, the Fraser River steamboat and Blackwater Road routes from Quesnel carried a very heavy load of men, equipment and supplies to fuel the hectic construction camps on the upper Fraser. The railway and townsite construction boom thus provided the impetus for the development of the Blackwater Road as a "year round" stage and freight route to supplement the greater cargo capacity of the steamboats in the summer and keep open a line of transportation and communication when winter ice closed the Fraser.

For some time the railway hesitated in selecting a final site for the railway terminal on its passage through Fort George, doing little to dampen the promotional activities of the rival real estate companies. In the end the chosen site required purchase of the Indian reservation at the junction of the Nechako and Fraser Rivers. The first railway - townsite lots, later to become the site of the city of Prince George, were offered for sale to the public in late 1913 which led a gradual drift from the old sites of Fort George and South Fort George.

Many of the men who came north to operate the extension of the stage and freight line had a strong attachment to the era of horse-drawn transport. While the horse was being eclipsed by the automobile in the south, the era was prolonged for a few more years in the north where travel conditions were still comparatively primitive. This was the attraction that drew men such as Al Young, a legendary stage driver on the Cariboo Wagon Road, north to work with horse drawn teams for a few more years.



While less well known, Baldy Hughes was a man of much the same background, having worked with horses all his life. He too was drawn northward to operate a remount station for the new extension to the BC Express Company stage and freight line.

The procedure with the stage and freight runs was different in regards to stopovers. The stages travelled relatively light and had to cater to the care of the passengers. As a rule then, they made fairly good distances each day. On the other hand, the freight wagons were heavily loaded. Twenty miles a day for them was good, whereas, when the road was OK, the passenger stages could sometimes make the run from Soda Creek to Fort George in two days. The main passenger stopping place was the Blackwater Crossing. Horses were changed there. Other spots, Goose Lake to the south, MacKenzie's, etc to the north were used by the stages only when travel conditions obliged it.

The pattern of stopping houses and remount stations on the Blackwater changed continually throughout the boom period as entrepreneurs came and went and the maintenance standard of the road improved. Not all of those described hereafter operated at the same time. Owners changed as did the function of the stopping place. Most settlers, while primarily engaged in farming or ranching, would offer travellers a bed and meal for a small price in order to gain a cash income.

Lack of time precluded indepth research of the stopping houses and remount stations on the Quesnel to Blackwater Crossing leg. However, some facts are known.

The first stopping place was a mere 3½ miles out of Quesnel near the present location of the golf course. This was the Cold Spring Ranch (also known as 3 Mile Place) operated by Tommy Fletcher and Johnny Holt, both Englishmen. The practice of the "Hudson Bay Start" meant the stopping house was still used despite its proximity to the town. Getting the teams across the river, wagons loaded and teams sorted out always took the better part of a day. As a consequence, it was common to travel only a short distance on the first day out.

In the early 1900's, the next place after the Cold Spring Ranch was 9 Mile Place operated briefly by Roy Dibbs, until he returned to the United States in 1912.

Later, Floyd Vernon ran a small stopping place 3 miles nearer to Quesnel at 6 Mile Corner from 1912 to 1913 and also kept boarders and occasional travellers well into the 1920's.



"Winter Freighting in the Prince George Area"

BC Public Archives 72022

Believed to be on the Blackwater Road



The main stopping places on the southern section of the road were at Goose Lake, shown on modern maps as Herkyelthtie Lake. Two establishments were operated within a mile of each other. Tom Blanche ran a stage stop about one mile to the Quesnel side of the lake. He had a small cabin and a large barn, keeping horses for the stage run. One mile further north, another larger establishment was also operated with stopping facilities for passengers and horses. The dining room here could handle fifty men at one sitting.

Little is known about the next stop but it is believed that one such place was operated at Carlson Creek (shown on modern maps as Charleson Creek).

Next was another main stop, Swan Creek, on the height of land immediately to the south of Blackwater Crossing. (The creek and lake are now named Pantage). Shanning was one of the operators.

Blackwater Crossing was the main telegraph relay station in the region throughout the period, first for the Collins Overland Telegraph and later for the Dominion Yukon Line. Various stopping places flourished, withered and were reborn here over the years on both sides of the river. Guy Lawrence (telegraph operator) and George Duclos (lineman) were typical of the telegraph crews serving here - offering a stable, bunk-house and meals to travellers during the period 1908 to 1910. Monty Montgomery replaced Duclos as lineman in 1909.

Travellers proceeding north from Blackwater Crossing were faced with a steep climb up the plateau through which the river makes its course. Shortly after cresting the hill, the road forked - the western branch being the continuation of the Telegraph Trail to Fort Fraser and the northern fork taking the traveller to Fort George via the second half of the Blackwater Road.

After continuing past the picturesque forests and ranch lands of the Punchaw area, the traveller next came upon a stopping place at Round Meadow. This was operated for many years by Ernie Levesque, mainly as a remount station but also for periods as a stopping place. Levesque was a solitary and pugnacious individual from whom most of his neighbours kept their distance. His main livelihood was gained from trapping, which he did well. The skill and versatility of his craftsmanship is well preserved in the fine sample of his main cabin located adjacent to the road. The roof is still watertight as are the walls. The rafters are as straight as the day they were laid, over seventy years ago.



Duncan MacKenzie's place, the next stop north, was located halfway between Blackwater Crossing and Fort George. Despite its strategic location and being the first stopping place to be established on the northern branch of the Blackwater, MacKenzie's place never flourished due to MacKenzie's reputation for unkempt housecleaning and unpalatable cooking. However, his place continued as a remount station for the freight runs for many years, although MacKenzie had a hard time making ends meet.

Another natural meadow, Moose Springs, was a mere five miles further north in the lee of Mount Baldy Hughes. The clear, cold and reliable flow of a spring attracted wild game and also became a regular watering and grazing spot for horse-drawn teams. Here Baldy Hughes made his homestead and operated a remount station for freight traffic on the road until the end of the pre-war Fort George settlement boom and the introduction of internal combustion engine powered trucks brought the stage era to an end.

The last major stop northward was Long Meadow or 21 Mile Place, located on the natural meadow on the east side of the road near the present turn off to the Clear Lake Sawmill. This establishment was run initially by Charlie Brooks from about 1911-12 until the early 1920's. Jim Hathaway later settled on the same meadow and occasionally supported freight traffic along the Blackwater during the 1920's. He was a quiet and meticulous man whose housekeeping was the complete opposite of MacKenzie's style. He augmented his income from the stopping place by raising sheep and keeping a garden.

While there were no further commercial stopping places on the Blackwater, the frontier ethics of the time meant that travellers often stopped at other farms and ranches along the way. The Henderson Farm, established in 1917 at the junction of Beverly and Blackwater Roads, was one place frequented by settlers on trips to and from Fort George in the early days.

Other resting places for the teams were located on the way northward after the Blackwater joined the Fort Fraser - Fort George Road (modern Highway 16). These were 3 Mile Meadow (bottom of Pedden Hill) and 6 Mile Meadow (Vanway).

The completion of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway to Fort George in 1913 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914 brought an end to the construction and settlement boom in the area. Large numbers of unemployed men drifted away to other fields. Stump farmers and trapping cabins sprung up briefly through the region, most to be abandoned as their owners sought other horizons or were drawn into the European war. The first Fort George boom was over and much of the earlier development withered. Traffic of all types between Quesnel and Fort George dwindled sharply including that by Fraser River sternwheeler and stage or freight wagon travel on the Blackwater Road.



A brief respite was offered by the commencement of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway (later BCR) from Vancouver to Fort George in 1913. However, construction was much slower, less wide open than the Grand Trunk and was soon halted with the outbreak of war. Early completion was always a dream on the horizon, but politics and construction problems along the side canyons on the east bank of the Fraser intervened to delay the railway's arrival in Prince George until 1957.

Numerous steamdriven sternwheelers plied the Fraser River between 1910 and 1921, most of them under the flag of the BC Express Company. Of these, the most successful and famous were the "BX" and "B.C. Express" which regularly plied the swift currents and hazardous Fort George and Cottonwood Canyons between Quesnel and Fort George.

The automobile also began to slowly replace horse-drawn vehicles in service with the B.C. Express Company. A pair of specially outfitted "Winton Six's" were introduced on the Ashcroft to Soda Creek run in 1910 for passenger travel although heavy freight was still carried by freight wagons. The first automobile in Fort George was brought in by sternwheeler in May 1912.

Automobiles were slow to be introduced on the Blackwater Road due to the poor conditions but they also contributed to bring to an end one of the last holdouts of the stage coach era. Horse drawn freight wagons continued to ply the Blackwater until well into the 1920's.

The final blow to the Blackwater Road came in 1921 with the completion of the new road (now Highway 97) on the east side of the Fraser between Quesnel and Prince George. Freight and passenger travel via river sternwheeler and the Blackwater Road abruptly halted and only local settlers travelled these routes over the next twenty years. With the passing of the stage, mail service along the Blackwater reverted to a monthly run made from Quesnel to Mud River during the 20's and 30's by Bill Broceous using a team and wagon in summer and a horse-drawn sleigh in winter.

Establishment of a Forestry Lookout on Mount Baldy Hughes in the mid 1940's brought a minor but significant increase in travel on the Blackwater which was still, however, in very rough shape south of West Lake. Increased forestry activity and the building of the radar station at Baldy Hughes in the early 1950's revived the importance of the road. Progressive improvements were made over the 50's and 60's with the road being paved from Highway 16 to the station in 1971 and 1972, much to the relief of those stationed at the site.

STOPPING PLACES ON THE BLACKWATER ROADQUESNEL TO PORT GEORGE

<u>PLACE (MAIN NAME)</u>	<u>OTHER NAMES*</u>	<u>PERIOD</u>	<u>OWNERS*</u>
Cold Spring Ranch	3 Mile Place	1902-1940's	Tommy Fletcher & Jo Holt
6 Mile Place	(Bouchie Lake)	1912-1913 (and into 1920's)	Floyd Vernon
9 Mile Place		?-1912	Roy Dibbs
Goose Lake	(Herkyelthtie Lake)	? about 1911 1912	Tom Blanche Fred Knuth Ernie Pinker
Carlson Creek	(Charleson Creek)	?	Original owner? (Also Floyd Kirkendall Ron Callis & George Allen)
Swan Creek	(Pantage Creek)		Guy Lawrence (Also Shanning & Chas Weymore)
Blackwater Crossing		1908-1909	Guy Lawrence & George Duclos
		1909-1910	Guy Lawrence & Monty Montgomery
		1910-1912	Monty Montgomery and?
		1912-1940's	?
Round Meadow	Levesque	1910-mid 10's mid 1910's - late 1930's	Adelard Goulet Ernie Levesque
MacKenzie's		1910 - mid 1920's	Duncan MacKenzie
Moose Springs	Baldy Hughes	about 1910-1924	Baldy Hughes



PLACE (MAIN NAME)

OTHER NAMES*

PERIOD

OWNERS*

21 Mile Place

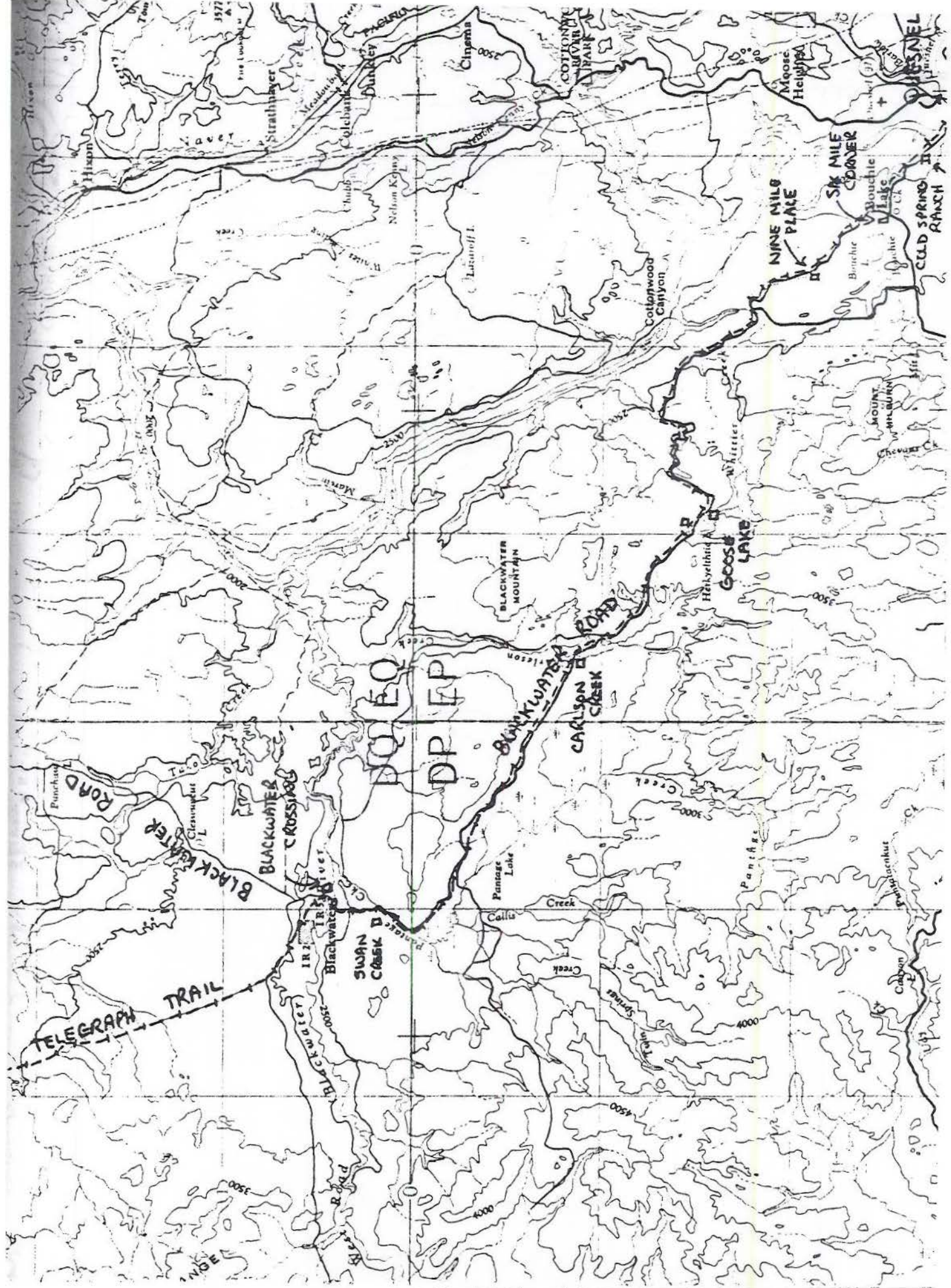
Long Meadow

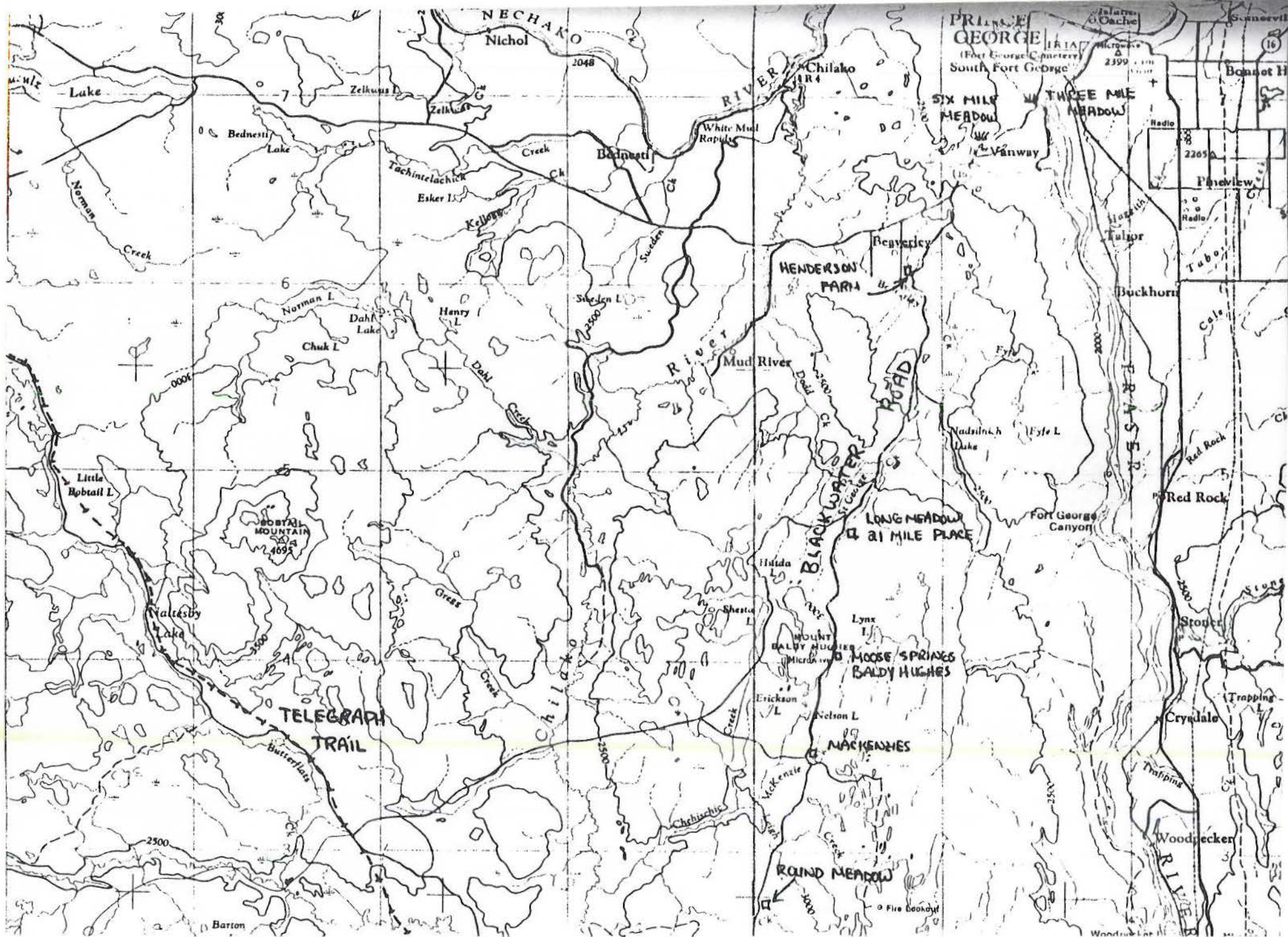
1910/11-mid
1920's
1920's

Charlie Brooks
Jim Hathaway

*NOTE

Modern place names and later period owners are in brackets.







BALDY HUGHES - THE MAN

Baldy Hughes' proper name, Owen Brian Hughes, was known by few and he was simply "Baldy" to most acquaintances. He was born in the northern US, in December 1871. His youth was spent as a cowboy in Montana. He told Julian Fry that "while in Montana, he had once ridden for several days showing cowponies for an eastern buyer who wanted to cash in on the demand for polo ponies among rich easterners. His orders were ride so far, then turn short and come back. If they could turn on a dime he took them."

Baldy moved north into BC and was a "mule skinner" for many years driving freight wagons on the Cariboo Wagon Road from Ashcroft to Soda Creek for the BC Express Company. He moved further north into the Blackwater country in the early 1900's (about 1910) with two other freighters, Bill Comstock and Everett Vandenburg. Comstock later homesteaded a ranch in the Batnuni area while Vandenburg settled in Punchaw. Baldy took a job with the stage company by keeping an exchange team of horses at Moose Springs for the stage run. He made progressive improvements to the property and took out the standard "pre-emptors" grant on lot 6213 of 160 acres in 1920.

The stage would stop at Moose Springs and change teams. Baldy had only a one room cabin with a few bunks. The stage rarely stayed overnight due to the cramped quarters unless caught out in bad travelling conditions. However, they would water and feed the horses or change the team as necessary. Freightage was slower progress, however, and freighters would stay over more often, although still only occasionally. River sternwheelers handled most of the traffic in the summer. The stage would still run in the winter when the river was frozen. The stage line operation on the Blackwater Road ceased when the road on the east side of the Fraser River opened in 1921.

Baldy just lived at his cabin, did some trapping, kept hay and the freight runs would stop occasionally there and the stage might stop rarely to feed the horses if travel conditions were poor. He ran a small trap line but didn't range too far on foot because he was becoming crippled by rheumatism.

In the late teen's and early 1920's, he also drove a freight wagon with supplies down the Blackwater and then across to Gilles Crossing at the junction of the Blackwater and Echiniko Rivers where there was a small store.

The Blackwater Road through Moose Springs generally followed its present course closely except at the north end of the property where a more round about route with gentler slopes was followed in the early years.



The old trail joins the new road about 200m north of the station sign, a short distance beyond the traffic sign on the east side of road. Despite the new growth, the old right-of-way can easily be seen branching off near the stand of birch trees. Wagon ruts can be traced through the cut until the creek is reached a short distance north of the location of the sewage plant. Here the trail forded the creek, turned south and crossed the meadow, passing by Baldy Hughes homestead to join the present route of the Blackwater at the south end of the property. In later years, this detour was eliminated and the road came up and over the hill directly down into Moose Springs.

Baldy Hughes' one room log cabin was located on the east side and near to the road. Putting many descriptions together, its estimated position is close to the site of Barrack Block 3 (Officers/WOs & Snr NCOs Quarters). The cabin had an overhanging extension of the roof over the entrance, much in the style of Joe Logger's cabin (photo later). Both the cabin and barn had cedar shake roofs which were also sodded. The barn was a good size, capable of holding about a dozen horses. Its location was west of and close to the road, about halfway between the Water Plant and the CE/Supply Building.

Moose Springs was named for a cold, clear spring which ran reliably from a gully on the east side of Mount Baldy Hughes. The spring ran year round, attracting wild game and became a regular watering stop for travellers on the Blackwater. Baldy Hughes made improvements by building a three-sided, roofed shed over the spring and placing log cribbing around the sides to keep it from filling up with debris. The spring was near the present Water Plant location, right on the west side of the road. Construction of the Water Plant presumably disrupted the surface flow of the spring which ran under the road in the old wooden culvert.

Contrary to popular belief, the barn-like building at the crest of the hill on the Blackwater Road overlooking the station was not associated with the early stage travel. Rather, it was one of the first structures put up by the contractor who built the station. Its use was mainly to shelter the contractor's caterpillar tractors and other heavy equipment while the station was being built.

The real origin of the nickname "Baldy" remains at least a partial mystery. Three popular theories can be put together from discussions with those who knew him personally:

- a. "Baldy" came from Hughes' lack of hair.
- b. He was named for the nearby "Baldheaded" volcanic mountain.
- c. He brought the name to the Blackwater with him with origins unknown.



All three theories have been advanced. The first can be discounted as there is ample evidence that he had a full head of hair. Those who thought he was bald were no doubt fooled by the fact that he was rarely seen without his large black felt hat. He had ample hair to produce a fringe of reddish curls under the brim of the hat. The hair turned grey as the years advanced.

Mount Baldy Hughes was known in the early days as "Baldy's Mountain" and several old timers felt that Hughes took his nickname from the barren, rocky crest of the mountain rather than vice versa. Yet others felt he had arrived here with the name already established from some other unknown reason. The real source of the nickname may never be known.

Julian Fry provided an interesting insight into Baldy Hughes in his account of a trip they made together to Batnuni in 1923:

"When I was working at West's Ranch on the Quesnel-Fort Fraser Road, 8 miles west of Punchaw Lake, I saw him if I happened to go to Prince George. On one occasion, I helped him pull porcupine quills out of an Airedale dog belonging to his partner Tom Cornell. That same Airedale later connected with a skunk. Baldy remarked that "if the son-of-a-bitch had met the skunk first he'd have had the quills left in him.

Baldy was a friend of Bill Comstock who lived at Batnuni Lake. I got the impression that they had known each other in Montana. Baldy was the only man I had ever heard to address Mrs. Comstock by her first name. Baldy told me he had driven tourist excursion outfits in Yellowstone Park - 6 horse outfits packed with tourist groups. He spoke once of a teacher's convention. Comstock had also worked at Yellowstone Parks.

Baldy had a partner named Tom Cornell, an American of French Canadian origin. It must have been a strange combination. In winter, Tom had a trap line at Batnuni near Comstock's. He spent the winter there and stayed awhile with Baldy, worked all summer at Giscome, stayed again with Baldy and on to Batnuni.

At Baldy's invitation, I went with him in the fall of 1923 to Comstock's at Batnuni Lake, he driving his wagon and I on horseback. From conversations on this trip, I gathered the little I knew of Baldy. He was a gruff man but good hearted. It must have been no small hazard for him to take on a green Englishman who doubtless asked a lot of foolish questions.



I'm sure Baldy had done a lot of driving horse-drawn stagecoaches. I once asked him how the large farm hitches of 10, 15 and 20 horses were driven. "Them fellows don't drive their horse, they herds them." Baldy could put a wagon wheel to within an inch of a stump or a rock without hitting it. His team were an ill matched pair with which he could achieve more than most men with more likely looking stock.

In September, when I went with Baldy to Batnuni, there were a lot of willow grouse which Baldy's little black spaniel "Tootsy" put up along the road. This was the drill. When Baldy stopped the wagon, I jumped off my horse, Baldy shot one or two of the coovy and I had to pick them up before that damn Tig could get to them - Tig, being the Airedale of the porcupine quills.

Baldy, like everyone else, carried a 30-30 rifle for which he had a reducer, a device which enabled one to use 32 Smith & Wesson revolver bullets in the carbine (cheaper ammunition and less damaging to small game). We just about lived on willow grouse which Baldy cooked expertly over a camp fire. At night the team and my saddle horse were hobbled out to graze and Baldy's saddle horse was picketed on a rope. In the morning, Baldy followed the tracks of the other horses until he heard their bells. My job was to be ready with the horses when they came into camp."

Baldy's health began to fail as Fry describes below and he was obliged to move to Fort George:

"I think Baldy must have been in worse health than he allowed anyone to realize. The very next year, 1924, Baldy gave up his place and sold what equipment he had. I bought his wagon which served me for a year or two. Like most of his gear it was in pretty run down condition, kept going by his ingenuity and improvising skill. The wheels were pretty shaky and the tires were held on with wire."

Baldy sold the possessions he wouldn't need (such as the wagons, horses and sleighs) and moved to town. Not all of the horses were sold immediately, however, as a fellow named Barnes stayed at MacKenzie's for a winter about 1930 looking after some of Baldy Hughes' horses.



Jim Hathaway also took care of them for awhile. The trap line and cabin were left to Tracy Wheeler to use. Wheeler worked for PG Motors as a mechanic. Violet Baxter's husband Bobby also worked on the trap line part time with Wheeler.

When he moved to town, Baldy set up residence in a small cabin in a shallow depression near the corner of 4th and George Streets behind what is now Martell's Chain Saw Shop. He lived there until his death in 1944 although he spent some of his summers at Moose Springs. It was a small, flat-roofed cabin, only about 12' x 14' and unpainted. There was just enough room for a bed, stove and Baldy's few material possessions. An orange crate nailed to the wall served for shelving and his old trunk was stored underneath the bed.

During the late 20's and early 30's, Baldy got jobs with government road crews to augment his income from another source to be described shortly.

Ed Arnett came to Prince George in 1926 from Saskatchewan and met Baldy Hughes in 1927-28. At the time, Ed was driving a Model T Ford pickup hauling gravel for work on the Willow River Road. Baldy Hughes was foreman of the road crew and they had a camp at Six Mile Lake. There was one woman in the camp, who came from California and was the camp cook. A truck would bring groceries from town once a week. However, Baldy Hughes and the lady cook would travel into town each day. Groceries kept disappearing and eventually they were found in Baldy's cabin where the two of them met. Eventually the woman and Baldy were "hauled into court." She didn't understand why there was such a fuss and her defence was that "the groceries were already paid for." After the trial she left town. Ed did not know what happened to Baldy Hughes as a result of his involvement.

Violet Baxter worked for the Department of Highways in Prince George as a clerk from 1928 - 1934 and it was there that she met Baldy Hughes. She recalled meeting him about 1931 when he was a foreman of a highway work gang working on the Salmon Valley Road. She helped him make out his payroll and the associated calculations about the costs of the road crew operation as he wasn't very good with paperwork. He also worked as a foreman at Camp Penny for awhile.

Ed Miller stayed in Baldy Hughes' cabin at Moose Springs for about six weeks during the winter of 1933 tending part of his uncle's cattle herd (Ed Erickson). It was also common for hunters and trappers to use the cabin for brief periods during the 30's and 40's.

When Baldy Hughes sold his property and moved to town, he virtually lived in the street. He would do anything within reason to make a dollar to augment a meager government pension.



B.C. Police were very lax during this period and turned a blind eye to the activities of about a half dozen crippled men who ran bootlegging operations to live off, provided they kept it low key and kept their noses clean. Baldy Hughes became one of these. Liquor was bought from the government store and then resold by the drink in his cabin at any hour of the day. Several old timers recalled having a drink with Baldy in the back of his cabin and spinning the yarn for hours. One remembered that he served an excellent hot rum for 50¢ and the "boys would talk and play cards."

David Williams, a local historian, has expressed the theory that George B. Williams (Ted William's father) was primarily responsible for seeing that Baldy Hughes and others were looked after in their old age. He recalls:

"George B. Williams was a leading pioneer of the area, being involved in many things including acting as a chief guide, a river man and others. He ran a grocery store in South Fort George for most of his time there, a store subsequently taken over by his son Ted. He was a very compassionate and concerned man, very active, with a big heart. He was an active and practical politician with considerable clout, the biggest of the big three Liberals who dominated politics in the area. George had a deep concern for all the old timers in the area, trappers, settlers, etc who had difficulty on their own in their declining years. He would be bitterly critical of the socialists with their fine ideals and would comment on the dozen's of grocery bills he had thrown into the fire over the years because various individuals could not pay."

Through the example of an old logging foreman, crippled and penniless, who had no success in getting help from the government and was subsequently brought into town and set up by George Williams, David was sure this was probably the case for Baldy Hughes as well. Given the nod by the local politicians and police, many of the old timers were put on a simple form of welfare by being allowed to run small scale, low key bootlegging operations from their cabins.

Baldy Hughes was a big man, about 200 lbs, strong and muscular. He was said to have been "as strong as an ox" even as an old man. He had a big round face with a blotchy complexion framed by reddish hair which faded and turned grey with age. He chewed tobacco constantly and was rarely seen without a big, floppy black hat. Frequently, this was set off by a long black coat.



In his later years, Baldy was quite heavy set and badly crippled, walking with the aid of two canes. He wore copper rings around his wrists in the futile hope it would ward off growing rheumatism. One knee would buckle out about 6" - 8" when he walked. He used the heavy end of a pool queue as a walking stick into which he had set an "eight-ball" for a hand grip. He said this served both as a walking stick and as a weapon should it be needed to defend his small cabin.

As an old man, the state of his disability grew worse, to the point where there seemed to be no connection between his brain and feet. He would shuffle down the street hunched over, fully engaged in conversation with his feet, first urging one and then the other to make a step forward. If encountered while in this state, it would take him a second or two of muttering at his feet to get them steady enough to stand still on. He'd then look up and, in his characteristically cheerful manner, engage the friend in conversation, never complaining about his affliction.

John Duncan, a carpenter in Prince George and a very close friend of Baldy, stayed for many years with the well known Coreless family. John Coreless recalls often taking them fishing to 6 Mile (Tabor) Lake. Between Baldy's size and his unsteady legs, it was quite a chore getting him seated in the boat without capsizing. Baldy would insist upon sitting in the middle and only wanted to row, which he would do for hours. John Duncan would sit in the stern and talk to Baldy while John Coreless would fly cast from the bow and catch enough trout for them all.

Baldy Hughes was known as quite a character in town. He was brash in conversation, had a loud mouth and an opinion on every subject. It was quite common for him to holler across the street when he recognized someone he knew. Being a known character, Baldy was considered a useful man at election time in terms of rounding up support for the candidate of his favour.

All of the old timers spoken to in this research project had kind words to say about Baldy Hughes' character. Samples were:

"He was a nice fellow concerned whenever things went wrong for a friend."

"A good man who would give a stranger the shirt off his back."

"He always had some grub and a drink ready for a weary traveller."

"Quiet, polite and a gentleman." (A lady's description)



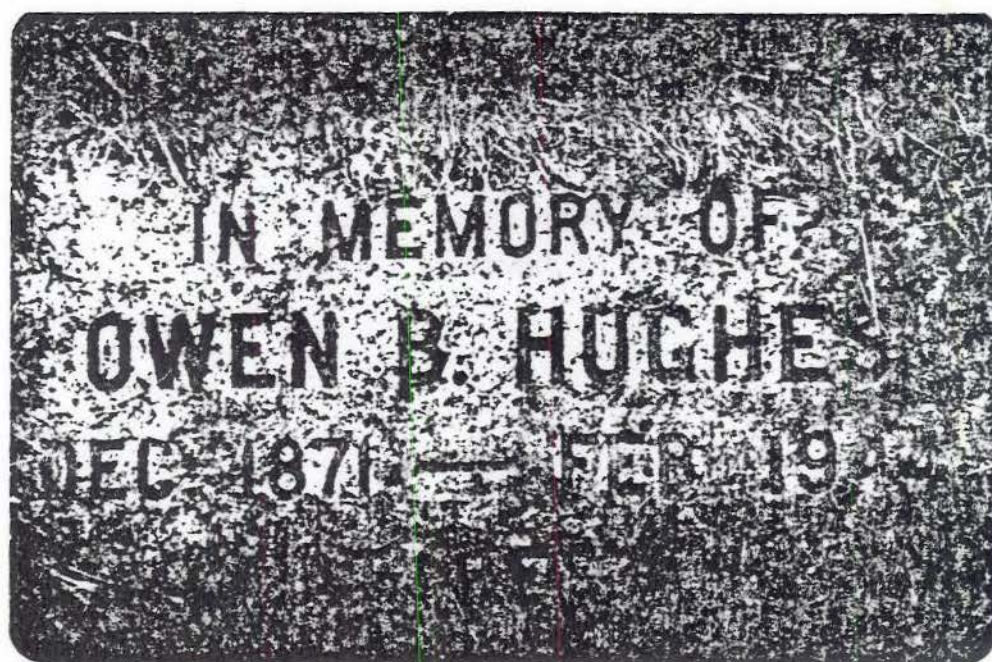
"His tone of voice was gruff and his conversation not at all on the speculative side nor did he initiate conversation or recall stories of his past experiences, which I for one would have listened to most attentively."

"Quite a good cook and a very pleasant person to talk to."

Title to the property at Moose Springs passed to John Duncan with Baldy Hughes' death on February 4, 1944. He clearly had no intent of "taking it with him" as the net value of his estate after expenses and taxes was \$73.00. On Duncan's death in 1951, the land was willed to Richard Coreless. Dick was himself a well known pioneer of the area, famous as a river freighter on the Parsnip, Crooked, Peace and Finlay Rivers. In turn, Dick turned over the property to his brother John in the same year for the ritual sum of \$1.00.

Shortly after, the USAF, RCAF and contractors arrived to start construction of the radar site. Perhaps thinking they were too far from anywhere to worry about land titles, they started construction without checking up on ownership of the property. When Coreless was travelling through the area one day in 1951, he stopped by to have a look. Construction of the domestic site was now well advanced. Walking over to a foreman supervising work on one of the barrack blocks, he commented that one of the windows was set in crooked. The foreman's impolite reply was to the effect "What concern was it of his?" To this, John replied: "Well, if I'm going to own these buildings, at least I'd like them put together right." Shortly thereafter all hell broke loose, construction ground to a halt while teams of lawyers and engineers scurried to the land title office where, sure enough, they discovered they had been busy building on land they didn't own. A few days later negotiations were over, Coreless turned over title of the land and walked away \$4500 richer while the contractor returned to his work on the domestic site.

In the process of moving a considerable volume of earth from the hillside to create a small plateau for the administrative area, bulldozers erased all direct sign of Baldy Hughes' settlement and his memory lives on only by other means. He died unmarried and left no known relations. After Baldy died, Bill Breeze stayed in his cabin in town for awhile. Owen B. Hughes last resting place is in the Prince George cemetery. His grave at section W, block 8, lot 10, is marked by a simple horizontal headstone recording the period of his life: Dec 1871 - Feb 1944.



"Baldy Hughes final resting place"

W. R. Scott 1981



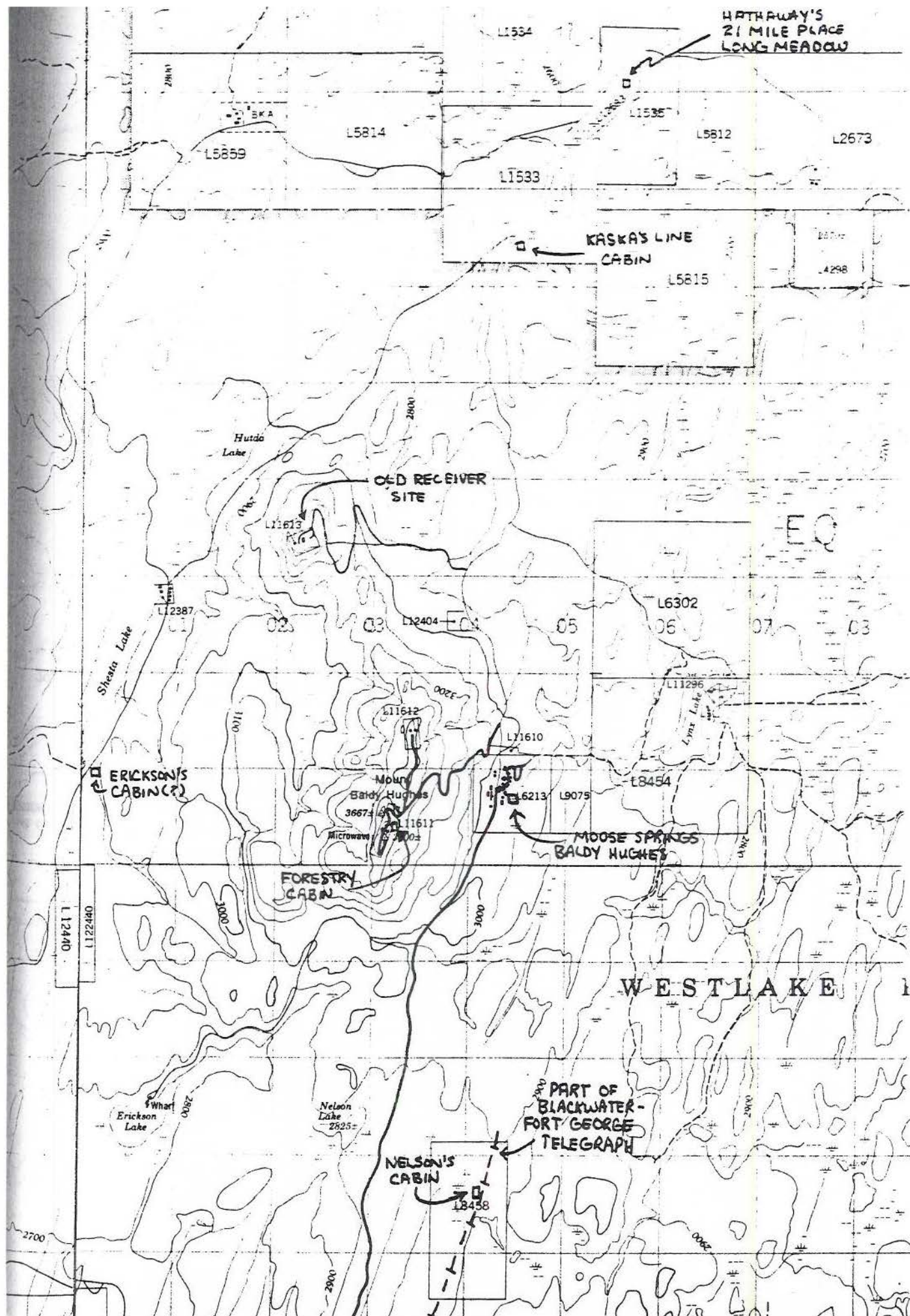
SETTLERS AND OTHER CHARACTERS OF THE BLACKWATER

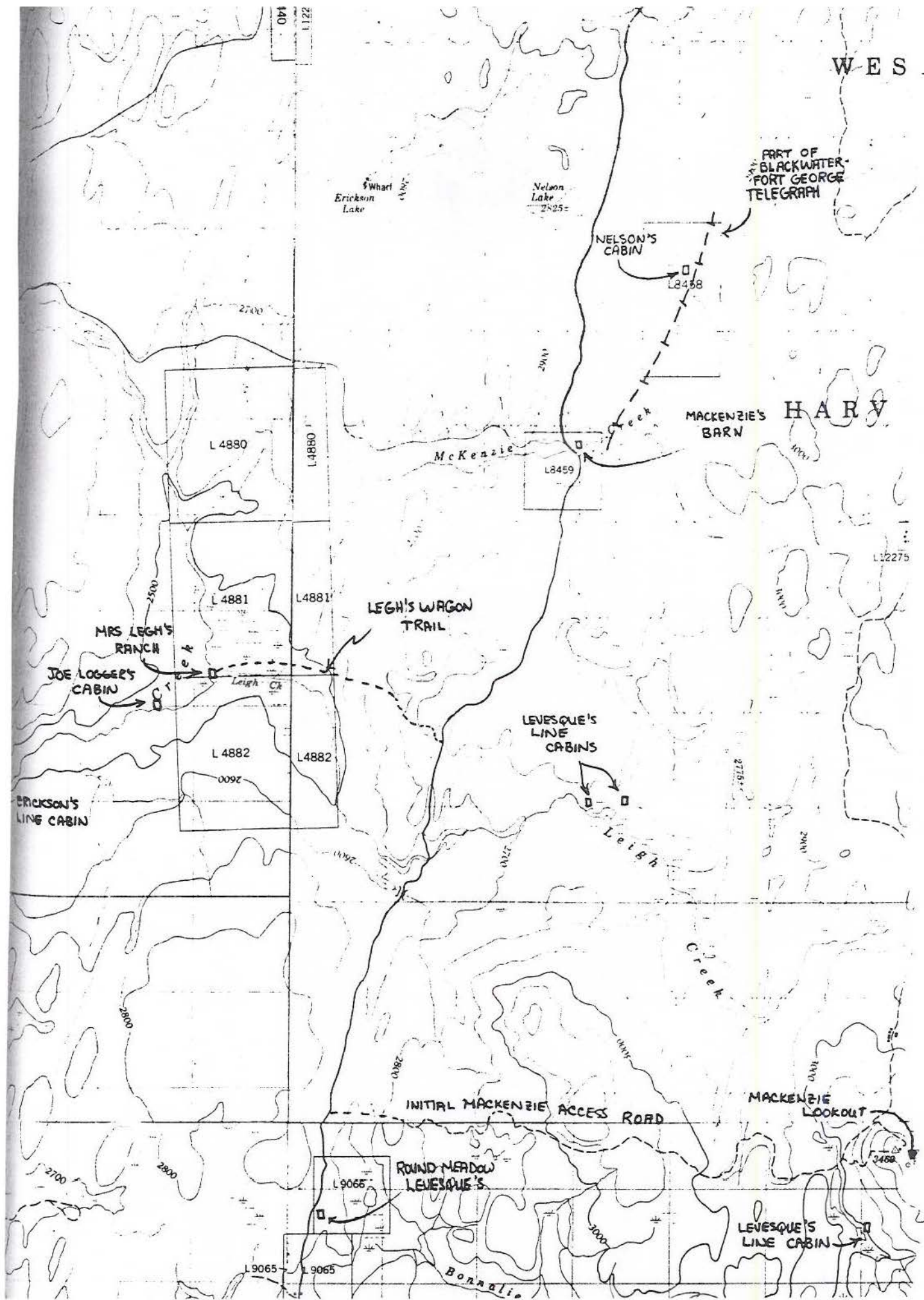
The following pages provide a brief description of some of the settlers and other individuals prominent in the early development of the area around Baldy Hughes.

YOUNG

Al Young drove the first stage over the Blackwater Road from Quesnel to Fort George in 1911. He was born in Kansas City in 1867, the son of a stage driver. Stage coach dust must have been in his blood as he drove stages for nine different companies in five states and in B.C. during his lifetime. Along with others attached to the horse and stage era, he moved north closer to the frontier as the automobile began to supplant stage travel in the south. For many years he was the best known driver for the B.C. Express Company on the Cariboo Wagon Road between Aschroft and Quesnel. Later he was a common figure for stage travellers on the Blackwater Road.

Young took up residence in Prince George in 1920 and drove a taxi until 1927 when he retired. In 1943 he moved to an 18 acre farm near Lillooet. He died in Lytton Hospital in 1947 at the age of 80.







HATHAWAY AND BROOKS

21 Mile Place (also known as Long Meadow) was a stopping place and remount station run and first operated by Charlie Brooks and later taken over by Jim Hathaway. Charlie Brooks came to the area about 1911-1912 and set up a stopping place on the southwest corner of Long Meadow (the long meadow on the east side of the Blackwater between the Clear Lake Sawmill Road and Helco/Pellican Lake Forestry Road). He had a large stable and stopping house and took out a Soldier's Settlement Board grant on the land in 1919. The place was operated until the early 1920's when Brooks moved into Prince George. Beavers have since flooded the meadow and obliterated the site of his stopping place.

Jim Hathaway moved into the area about 1918 and set up a small cabin at the north end of the meadow. Twin A-Frame structures mark the location of Hathaway's old place. Most of his old buildings and land development have succumbed to time and the work of an active beaver colony in the meadow. The land was re-granted to David and Shirley Hentges on July 10th, 1973.

Hathaway was a solitary bachelor who was fastidious in his housekeeping. He cleared land for a large garden and also ran a herd of sheep for many years. Ranchers often stopped there to graze their cattle while herding them on the way to town. As an old man, Hathaway was rather recluse and nervous. He was quick to pull out a gun if he felt the least threatened.

While used as a stopping place in the early years of stage travel, 21 Mile Place was mainly a remount station for the stages and freight wagons and later just a homestead. In his old age, Hathaway was moved to town and looked after by friends until his death. Bobby Baxter kept the key for the cabin after Hathaway passed on.

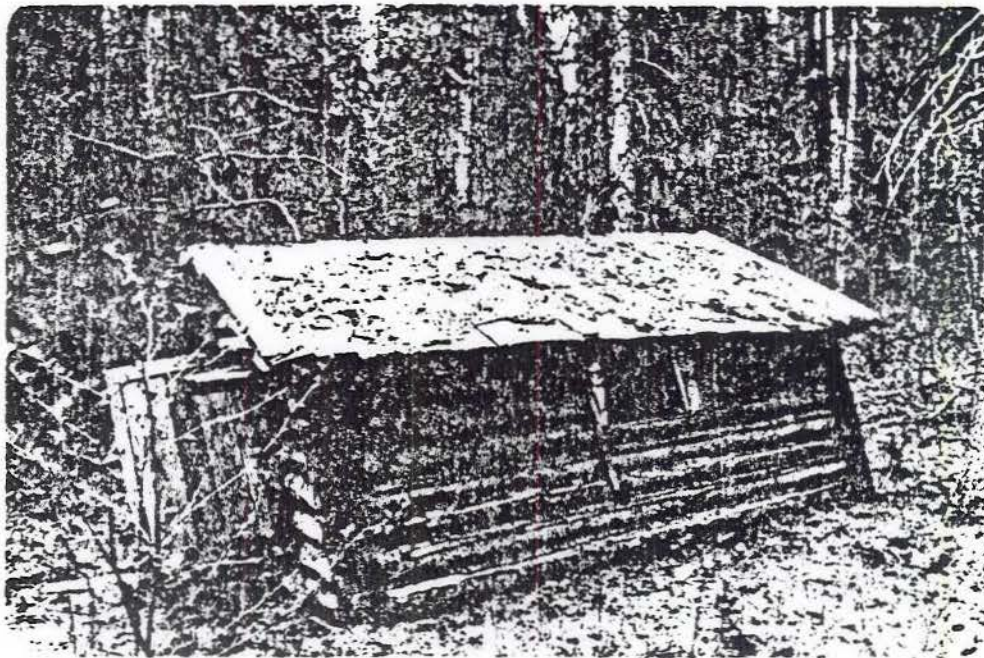
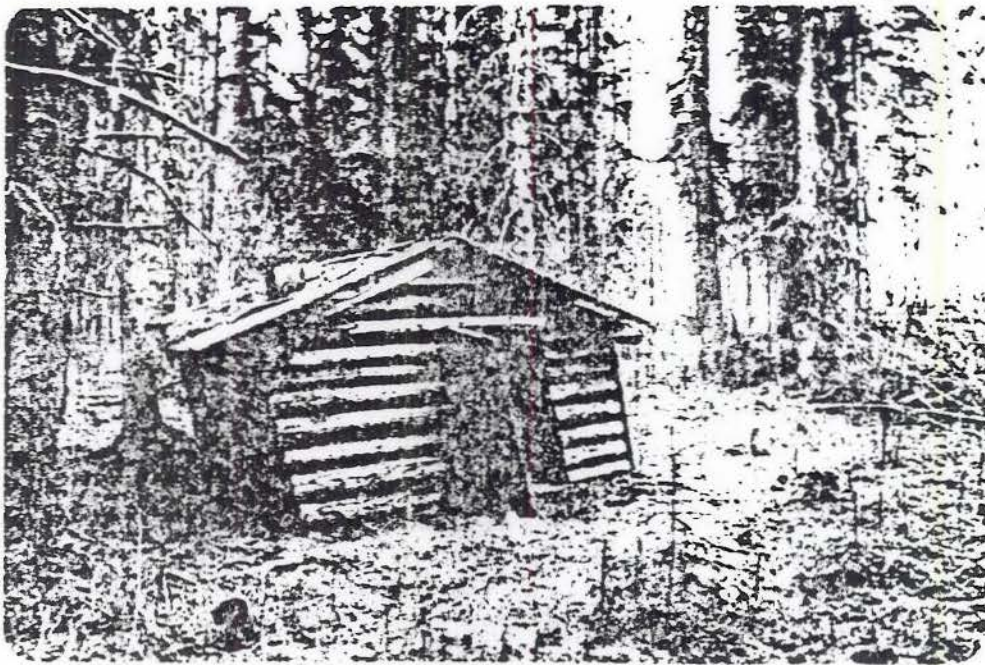


KASKA

Marvin Kaska came to Fort George in 1919 via Prince Rupert, one of three children whose parents had died. He homesteaded on the Mud (Chilako) River and ran an extensive trap line by horse and dog team for many years over an area which included much of the land around the station to the north, south and west. Marvin stayed in Baldy Hughes' cabin many times when working his trap line from Mud River, up Dodd Creek to Moose Springs, south to Punchaw and then back to Mud River via Butcher Flats.

Kaska built several line cabins in the area: including ones on Erickson Lake (now called Shasta) and south of MacKenzie II. The most noticeable is the small cabin at the south end of Hathaway's meadow opposite the turn off for the Pellican Lake Forestry Road. Despite a pronounced lean, the sod-roofed cabin is still in good shape. The style of construction was known as the "Hudson Bay Company Corner" for the ease of assembly. Strength and stability suffered for the convenience, however, and hence the marked lean as the cabin settles.

When Kaska retired from active trapping, he sold his trap line to David Hentges who settled on Hathaway's old homestead. The line was later passed on to Harry and Bill Schwartz of Mud River.



"Kaska's line cabin at the south end of 21 Mile Meadow."

W. R. Scott 1981



ERICKSON

CFS Baldy Hughes gets its domestic water supply from Erickson Lake. While the name recognizes one of the early settlers in the area, it does not correspond exactly with the usage of the original settlers. This has been found to be the case with other local geographic features.

There were in fact three lakes known collectively as the Erickson Lakes. The modern names for these are Shasta, Hudda and Erickson. These were named for Dave Erickson, a Swede who migrated to the area in 1910 by way of Minnesota. Erickson trapped the area to the west of the Blackwater near the station. His main trapping cabin was located on the north bank of Chehischic Creek a few kilometers west of the junctions of Chehischic, Legh and MacKenzie Creeks.

Today, a tall jack pine grows through the middle of the decayed ruins of what was once his cabin, testimony to the years that have passed since its use. He had another line cabin on the lake now known as Shasta. Erickson later settled in Punchaw and started a ranch. He died a bachelor in 1919 when he failed to regain consciousness after having been hit on the head by a branch which fell from a tree.

Dave's brother Ed immigrated to Canada in 1919 to take over the ranch after his brother died. His wife Julia had been a dairy maid in England and their marriage was likely a "mail order marriage," common in the frontier times. Their ranch was about a mile from that owned by the West family, well known in the Punchaw area. The old West Ranch is now called the Circle B and is run by Roy Patichuk. Dave Erickson's place is now run by Allan Patichuk.

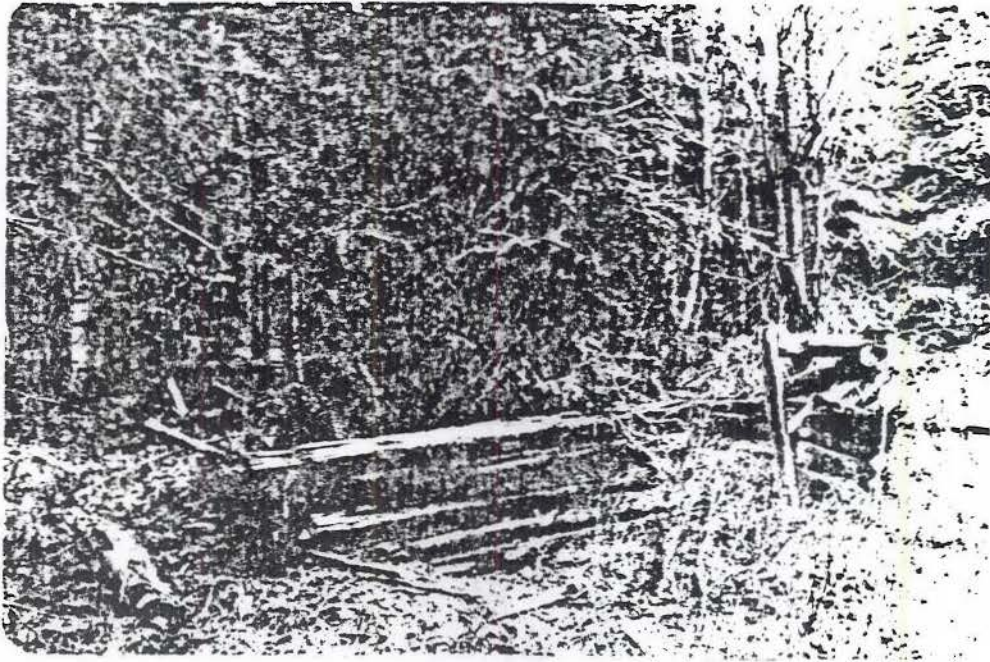
Ed had grown up in Minnesota and worked as a young man in the pinewoods of Michigan. He had a fund of knowledge of how to get along in the bush, such as the kind of trees to use for different purposes. He had little concern with time and, in consequence, was always late in starting to make hay and rarely had enough to feed his stock.

Ed Erickson was a blacksmith, among his many other abilities and made excellent sheep knives in the Swedish style from old files which he had hammered out, tempered and ground.



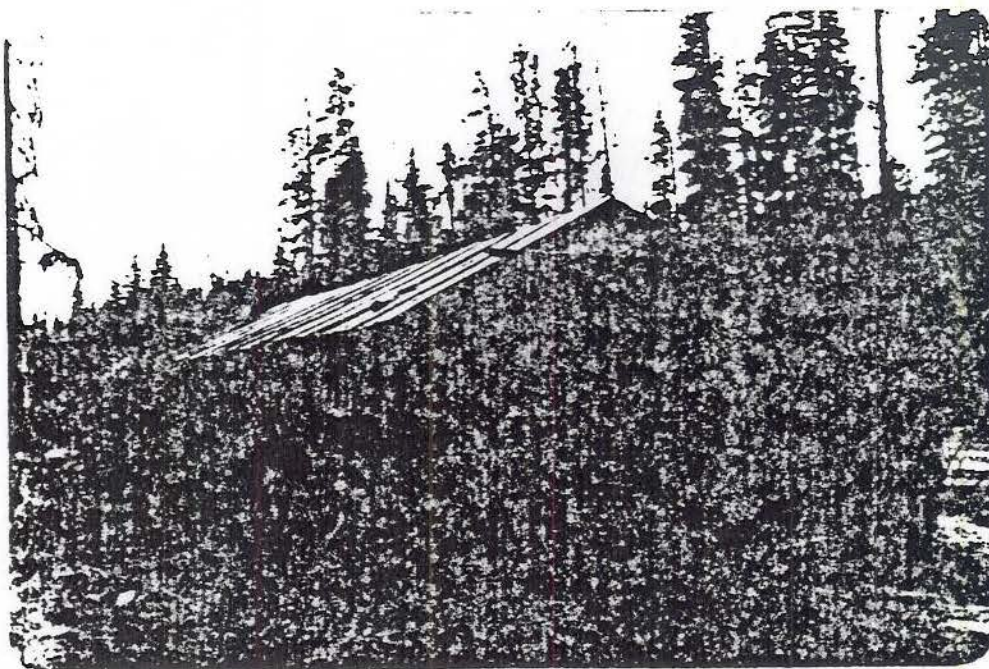
Ed and Julia had lived near Terrace when it was a very small settlement. Julian Fry, an Englishman who stayed several years with the Wests, recalled that Ed had many yarns to tell of his own experiences and those of others. Some came off quite pat and in others one could sense the slight hesitations as he improvised. Such men were valued in the winter logging camps where many were illiterate and there were no movies.

Mrs. Erickson's nephew, Ed Miller, came to live at their ranch in 1932 where he lived until starting to homestead on his own on the Mud River in 1937. Ed Erickson died in Quesnel and his wife Julia lived on there until her death in the fifties.



"Scant remains of Dave Erickson's main line cabin on Chehischic Creek west of the Legh Ranch."

W. R. Scott 1981



"Large cabin at outlet of Chehischic Creek from Shasta Lake."

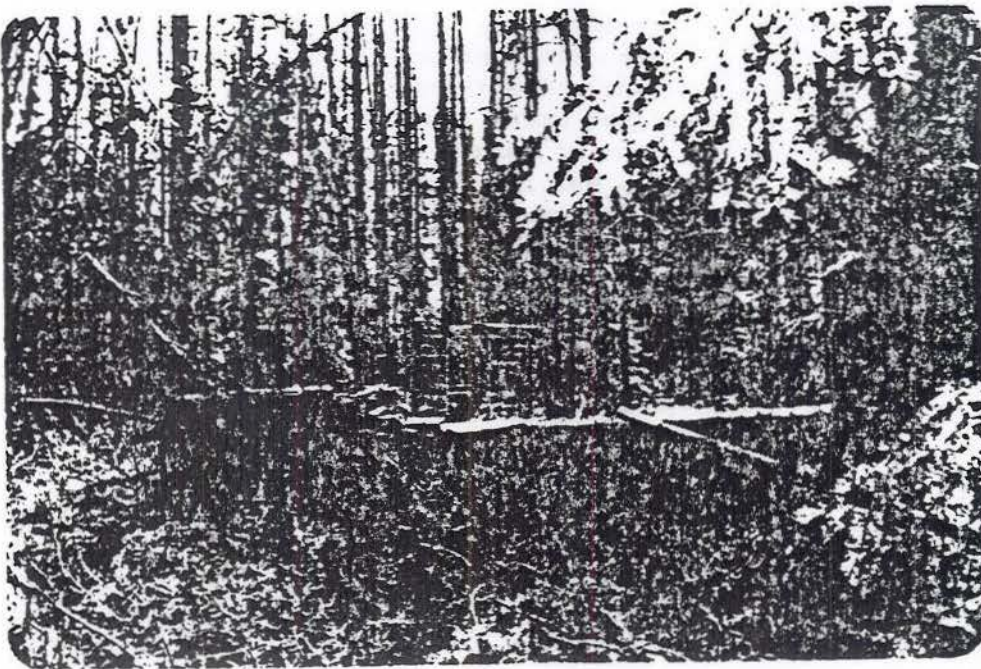
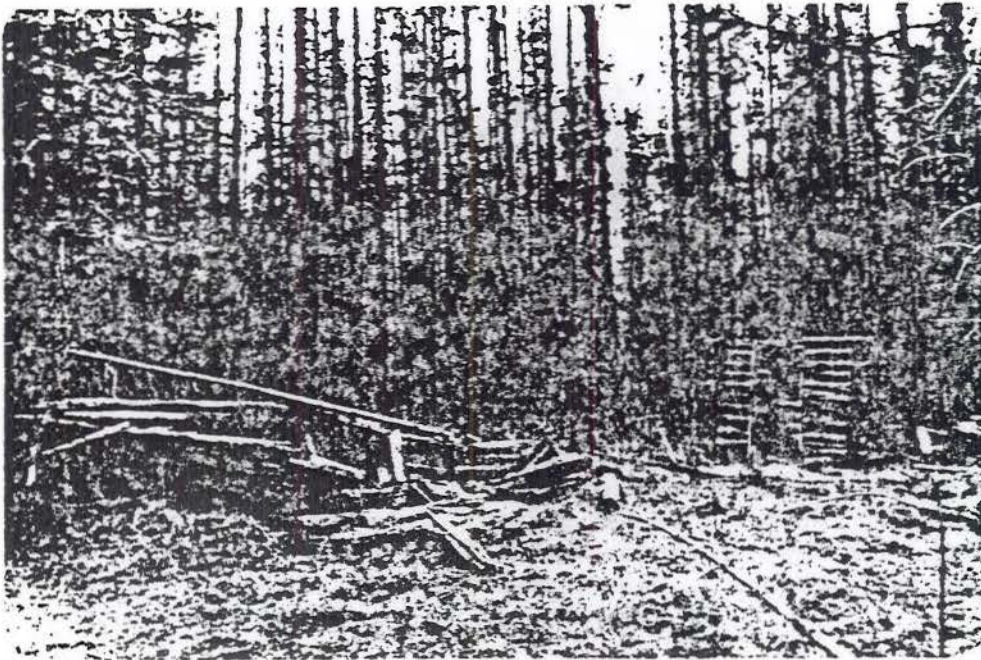
W. R. Scott 1981

Said to be one of Erickson's line cabins although this is unlikely due to its size.



NELSON

Relatively little is known of the Nelson for whom a local lake is named. His full name was Henry Victor Nelson and he homesteaded land on a meadow north of MacKenzie's, taking out a pre-emption in 1919. His land (lot 8458) was located about one kilometer east of the Blackwater Road behind the present station rifle range. The old Blackwater Crossing to Fort George Telephone and Telegraph Line ran only a few meters east of his cabin. From this, the type of structures he put up and artifacts found in the vicinity, it seems reasonable to deduce that Nelson's main occupation was that of lineman for the telegraph line. He also did work on the government road and ran a small trap line in the area.



"Looking eastward over Henry Nelson's cabin and shed."

W. R. Scott 1981

The right-of-way for the Fort George to Blackwater Crossing Telephone and Telegraph Line ran by about 20 meters to the east.



MACKENZIE

In 1910, A.G. Hamilton set up Duncan MacKenzie to operate a stopping place halfway between Blackwater Crossing and Fort George. Use of MacKenzie's as a stopping place was short lived as his reputation spread, however, a reputation aptly described in his two unfortunate nicknames: "Dirty MacKenzie" and "Sour Beans MacKenzie."

An early settler in the area summed it up as follows:

MacKenzie was known as "Dirty MacKenzie." He was always unkempt and unwashed. His place was always dirty and the food was terrible. Anyone who knew him never stopped there, just those who didn't or who got caught overnight in the vicinity by bad weather or road conditions. When people did stop, MacKenzie would ask them what they wanted to eat: "fresh pork or salt pork?" He would then par broil the salt pork if they wanted "fresh pork" or fry it if they wanted "salt pork."

His nickname of "Sour Beans MacKenzie" came from the practice of keeping a large pot of pork and beans simmering on the stove for days on end. When business was slow or when the fire went unattended, the mixture tended to go sour and hence was born the name. His attention was no doubt diverted to the many whiskey kegs supplied by the real estate developer and stored in the barn.

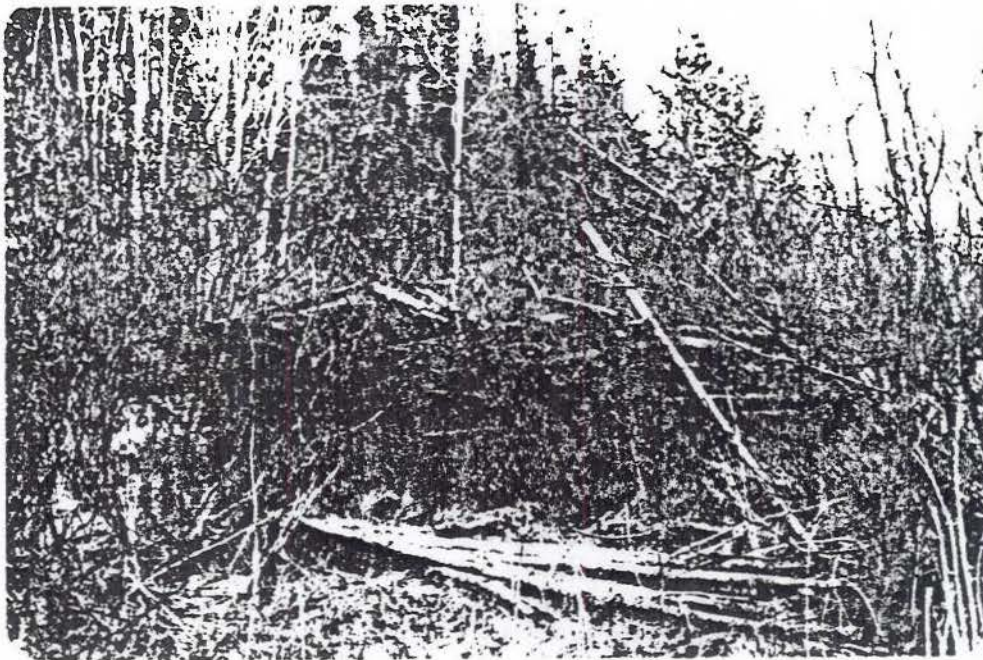
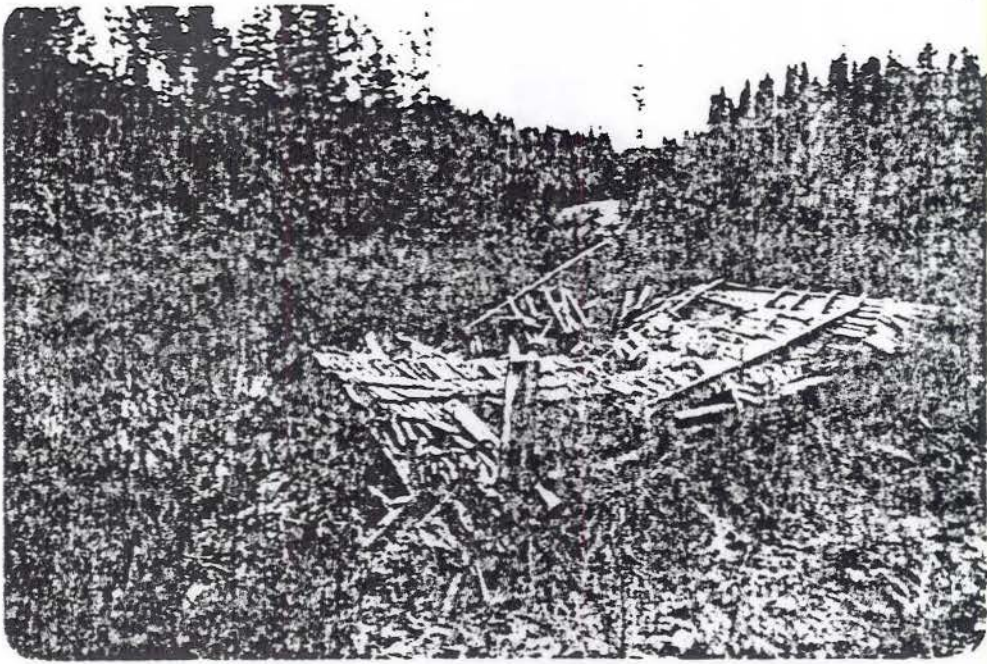
MacKenzie came from Owen Sound and used to boast that Sir John MacDonald came from there too. He had no time for "them ignorant young fellows who disputed with one who grew up with the country." Julius Fry recalled MacKenzie as "a shrewd and intelligent man whom drink and solitude had made cross-tempered."

The old log structure at MacKenzie's was the original stopping house. When business failed to materialize, MacKenzie converted it to a barn and used a smaller cabin (since burned down) for accommodation. This was a small, dark and dirty little cabin built into the side of the hill beside the present MacKenzie Logging road. An early lady traveller on the Blackwater recalled getting caught overnight in 1918 at MacKenzie's by road and weather conditions. She and the other passengers shivered fully dressed all night by candle light waiting for dawn in the cold, dark recesses of MacKenzie's cabin.



MacKenzie ran horses and had an area fenced off in the valley with excellent grass. Parts of the fence are still intact. The area of rich soil where many fishermen now go for worms owes its present state to the manure from MacKenzie's horses. He also kept straw and grain for the freight wagons and stage teams.

MacKenzie's eyesight was poor and he was a poor shot so that he lived poorly with barely enough to subsist on. In their later years, both he and Hathaway were taken into town and looked after by citizens there.



"Duncan MacKenzie's barn at the crossing of the Blackwater Road and MacKenzie Creek"

W. R. Scott 1981



LEGH

Mrs. Legh emmigrated from England to California seeking a healthy climate to cure the ill health of her son who suffered from several bouts of pneumonia as a child. However, the California heat was too extreme for them so they moved north, settling finally in the Fort George area in 1912. In 1913, she took up land at Murch Lake, Legh Creek and also built a cabin in South Fort George.

Mrs. Legh homesteaded a large, beautiful meadow along the banks of Chehischic Creek, just north of the junction with MacKenzie and Leigh Creeks. On her property were built several structures: a large ranch house, a stable and a shed. Mrs. Legh, who designed and supervised construction of the buildings, had real talent as they are by far the most artistic in style and manner of construction of any of the old buildings located in this immediate area. For example, the house was very large relative to normal homesteading cabins, with several large rooms on the main and second storeys. Some of the window glass is still intact. The house was capped by a small cupola or lookout. A short mast supported a radio antenna and several boxes of old C-cells were found in the cabin wired together, although these were brought in later by another occupant and not used by the Legh's. Other artifacts abound. A sheltered foyer was provided at both of the main entrances, one to the west and the other on the east side. A second large cabin was built nearby by another son, Tom, who only stayed a year. The cabin was later converted into another barn.

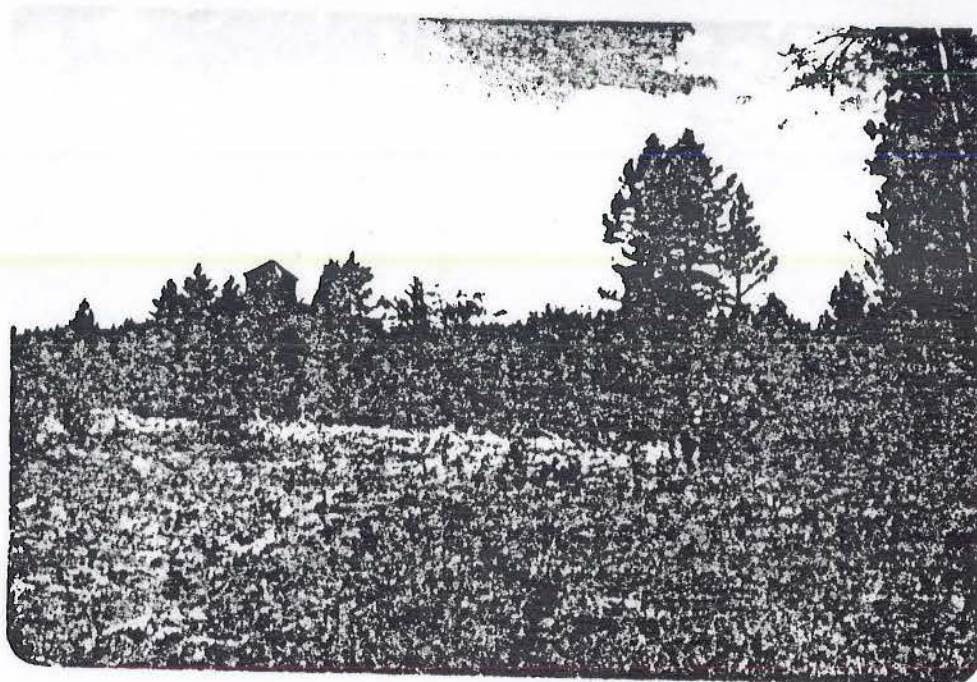
Mrs. Legh's old wagon trail to her ranch can still be traced through the woods from the Blackwater. Although overgrown in many places and littered with dead fall, the ruts left by the wagon wheels, old blazes and the clearing can be followed, if care is taken, as far as the crossing of MacKenzie Creek. There marshy conditions and the work of beavers has obliterated the trail until it can be picked up once more on the ridge of high ground encountered when the meadow is reached further west. When the Legh's first arrived, the beavers had been completely trapped out and the land was dry in comparison to today. They built a bridge across MacKenzie Creek.

Mrs. Legh later moved into town and her son Billy lived for many years in a two storey log house on Houston Lane in South Fort George. He still comes to town each summer from Vancouver. The Leigh Creek property was abandoned in 1922.



Joe Logger lived on the Legh Ranch for about a year after the Legh's moved to town and then built his own cabin a short distance to the west along Chehischic Creek.

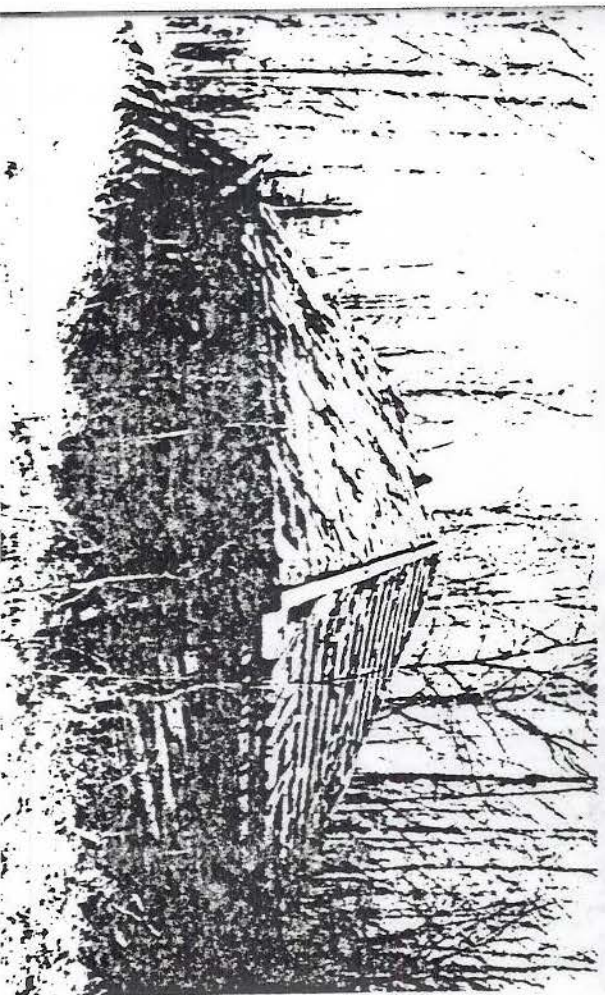
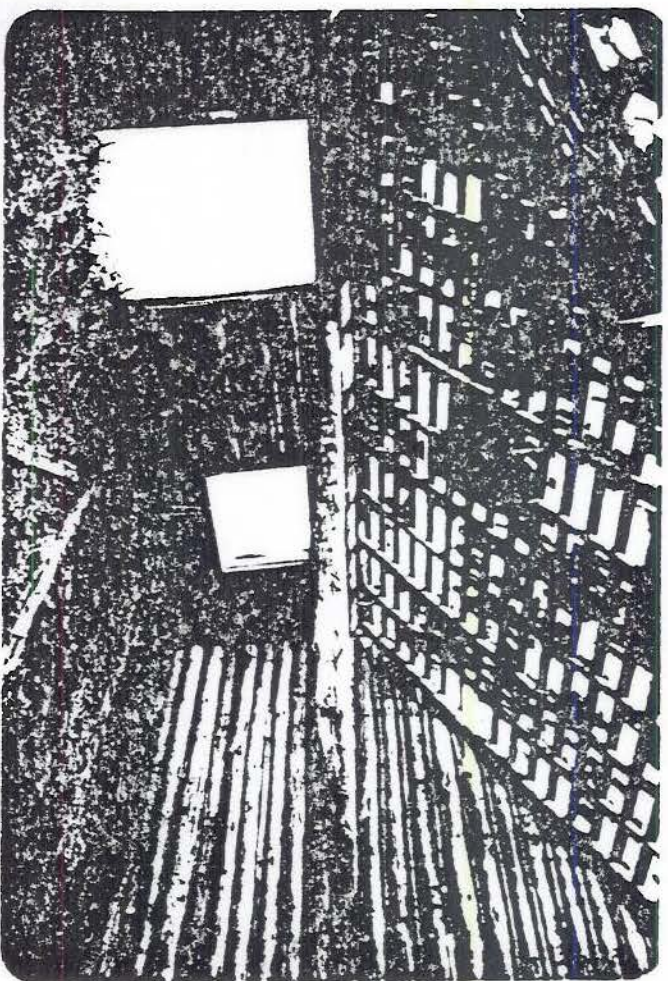
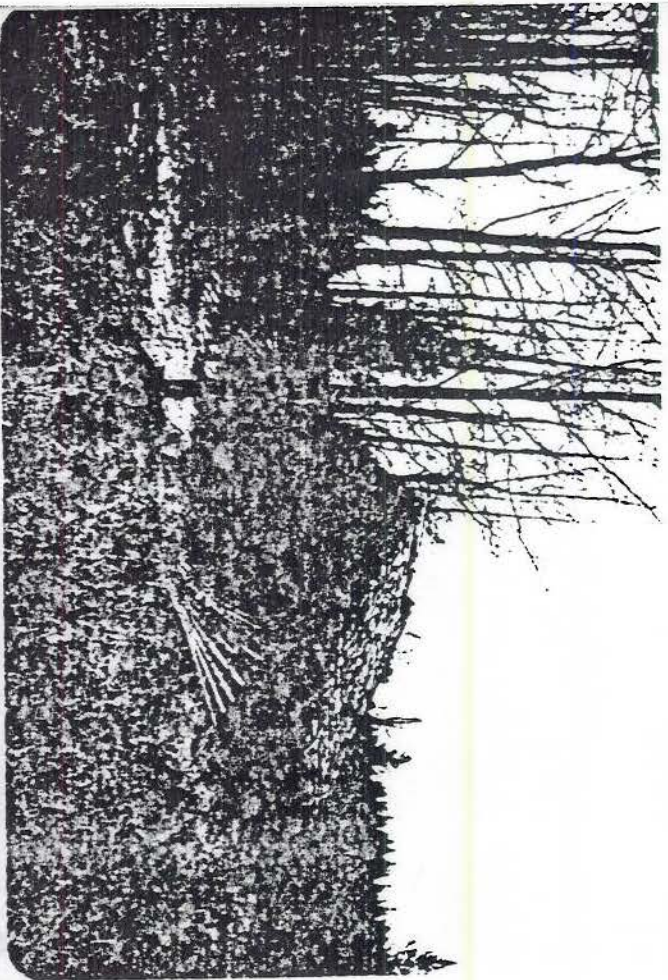
The Leigh Creek of modern maps is named for Mrs. Legh but, as seems common, does not reflect the original spelling.



"Views of the ranch house on the Legh Ranch at the junction of Leigh and Chehischic Creeks."

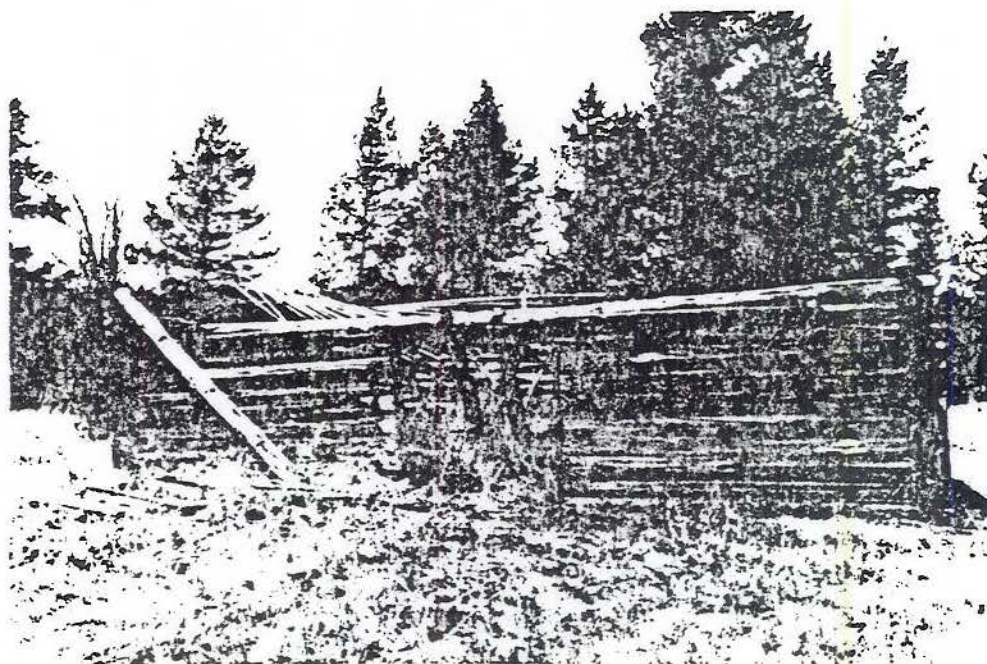
W. R. Scott 1981





"Views of the main barn of the Legh Ranch, located close to the ranch house."

W. R. Scott 1981



"Second barn at the Legh Ranch"

W. R. Scott 1981



LEVESQUE

Ernest Levesque homesteaded two quarter sections at Round Meadow a few kilometers south of MacKenzie's. While he farmed a bit, raised hay, horses, cattle and kept a garden, his main occupation was trapping. He also owned a dog team for use in winter time. He operated a stopping house briefly during the peak of the stage travel.

Levesque's character made him probably the greatest legend in the area. Descriptions from old timers range from "peculiar," "crackpot," "not a man to cross," to "a man who would give you the shirt off his back."

Ernie was a French Canadian from New Brunswick, heavy set and of average height. He told Julius Fry that his father had been advised by the parish priest not to send him to school. Levesque never forgave the church for that. His inability to read or write probably contributed to the making of a testy character. However, those who treated Levesque kindly soon found the other side of his nature and made in him a warm and considerate friend for life. An incident recalled by Julius Fry illustrates the point:

"We always took any mail which might be at the Post Office in Prince George for people living along the road. On one occasion, I had a letter for Levesque which he handed back to me to read. I opened it and began to read. It was in French which I could speak well. Levesque's pleasure at receiving a letter from his favourite neice and hearing it read in his own language made a friend for me of a very solitary and suspicious man. The letter had been written in both French and English so that it could be read to Levesque no matter who read it. A truly thoughtful idea. It was my great good luck to open the French pages first. The last time I saw him was in 1925 when he took a day to show me a short cut through the woods from his place, Round Meadow to the Mud River."

Levesque was a versatile craftsman and quite self reliant. These qualities can be seen in his main two storey cabin at Round Meadow abutting the road on the west side. It is in remarkable condition. The chimney of handmade bricks is still in place, the roof of handcut shakes remains intact and the well chinked walls are weather proof.



The roof beams are still straight as arrows. Only the floor over the root cellar on the ground level has partially collapsed. He also did his own blacksmithing, making all his own axes and other tools. He evidently kept himself very busy, running 25 head of cattle in the summer and tending his large trap line in the winter. Even his trap lines do not compare with others in the area, for his trails were all laboriously cut out by hand with a Swede saw to facilitate using a dog team.

Trapping was Levesque's main occupation and with it he covered a large tract of land mainly east of the Blackwater north to the MacKenzie Lakes and south to Punchaw. He kept several line cabins in the area including one on Punchaw Lake, one on the first lake south of MacKenzie Mountain and others on the upper Legh Meadow. He frequently had squabbles with other trappers in the area and was always talking of someone stealing his traps and furs. He was reputed to have set up ambushes in the woods around his traps and more than once officials had to step in to settle disputes. Another trapper, Joe Logger, trapped the area to the west of Levesque and it was said the two came into frequent conflict and carried rifles mainly with the threat of the other in mind. Logger disappeared in the woods about the end of the war. Although a search was organized, no trace of him was ever found.

Levesque kept his furs and other valuables stored on the upper floor of his cabin. Whenever he left the area he would wire up a loaded shotgun inside the main entrance and leave a note to that effect posted on the door. Those who knew him never doubted that the warning was backed up in fact.

Squabbles with his neighbours seemed to be one of Levesque's trademarks. One with Dave Erickson over the loan of an adze almost came to blows. Ed Miller recalled another involving Ernie and Baldy Hughes:

"Ernie Levesque was in a store on George St. when Baldy Hughes came in. Ernie Levesque promptly picked up a wooden handle in the store and knocked Baldy out cold, presumably in retribution for some old grudge."

Norman Dukes recalled the story that:

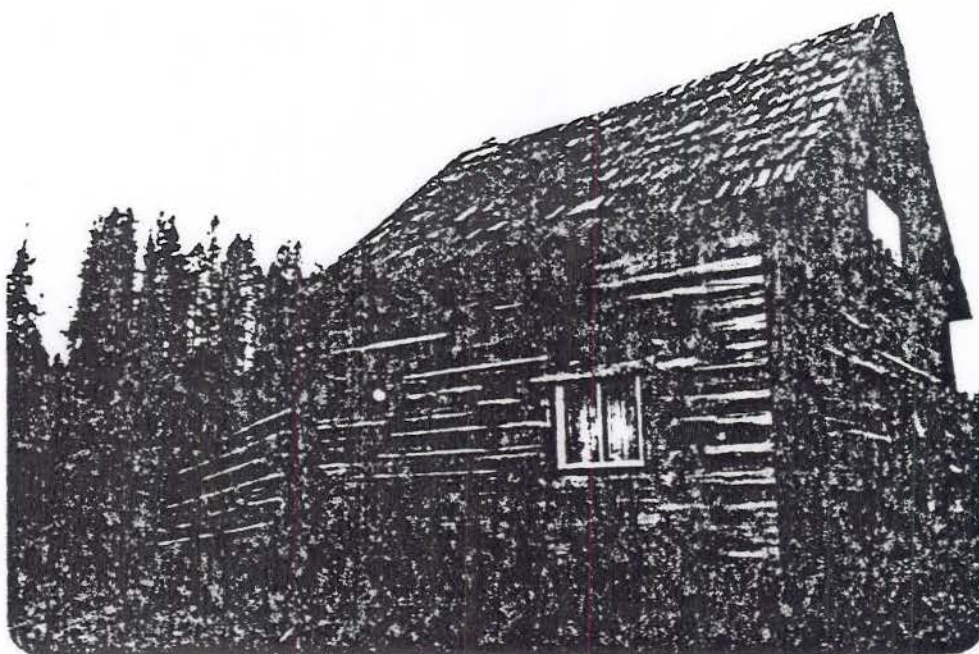
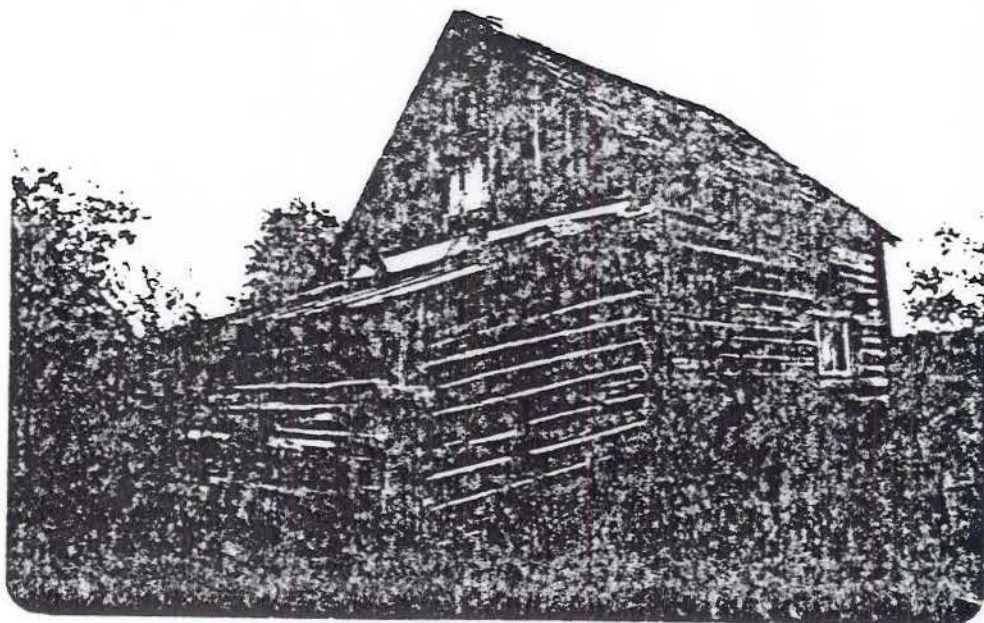
"whenever Levesque was a little short of money, he would start a fire in the bush and offer his services to put it out. This got a little too regular, causing the Forestry to put a watch on him and finally getting a photograph of him starting a fire, which resulted in him appearing in court at Prince George."



A friend of his told me, that on coming out of court, Levesque told him they would regret doing that to him. That night one of the biggest fires in the district at that time, broke out near West Lake in good prime timber."

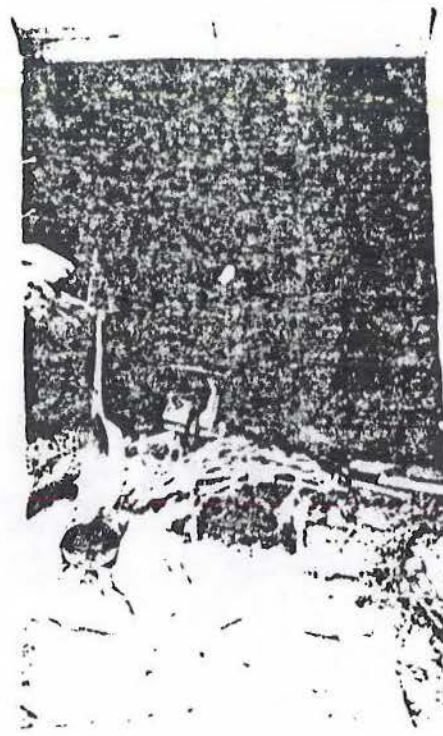
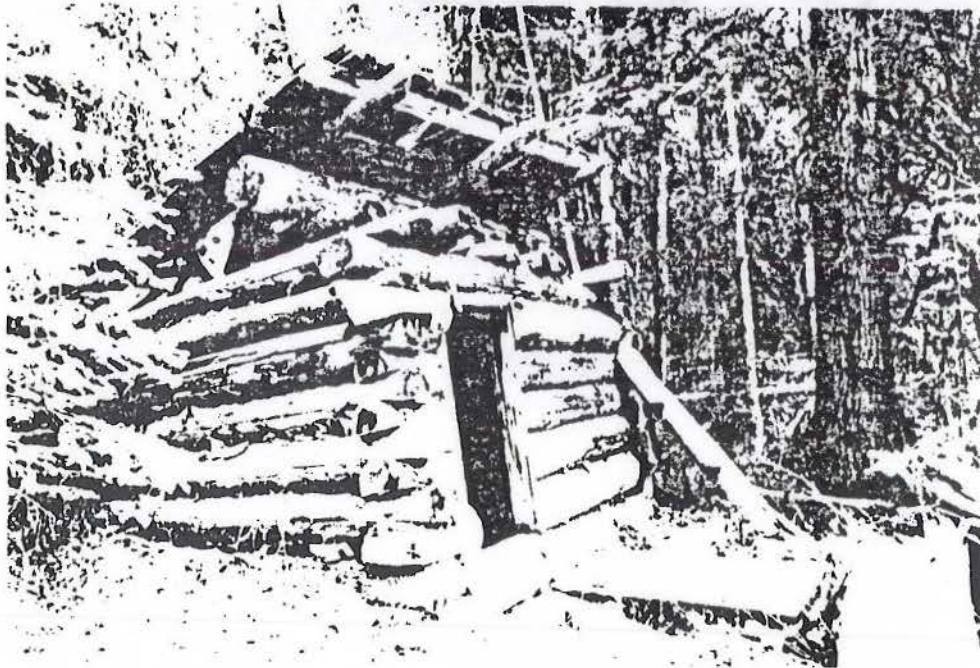
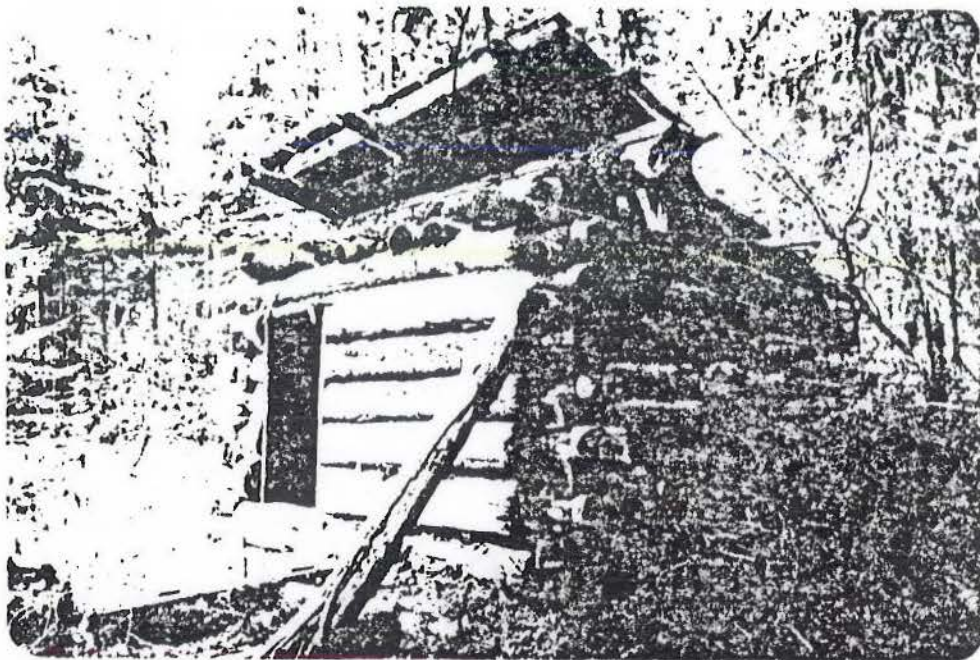
Round Meadow was first homesteaded by a farmer, Adelard Goulet, who obtained a land grant from the province in 1910. Levesque later purchased the land in 1920 although he is believed to have settled the land before that time. He later sold the land to the Cornell brothers, trappers, in 1945. He moved into Prince George at the end of the war and died there in the late 40's. Title to the land later reverted to the crown. Norman Dukes, trapper and farmer, purchased the land in 1966 and sold it in 1980 to the present owners: Clayton and Neva Richtik and Allan & Teresa Waterhouse, ranchers.

Kaska said that Levesque talked of finding gold somewhere in the area but died with the secret rather than passing it on.



"Levesque's main cabin at Round Meadow"

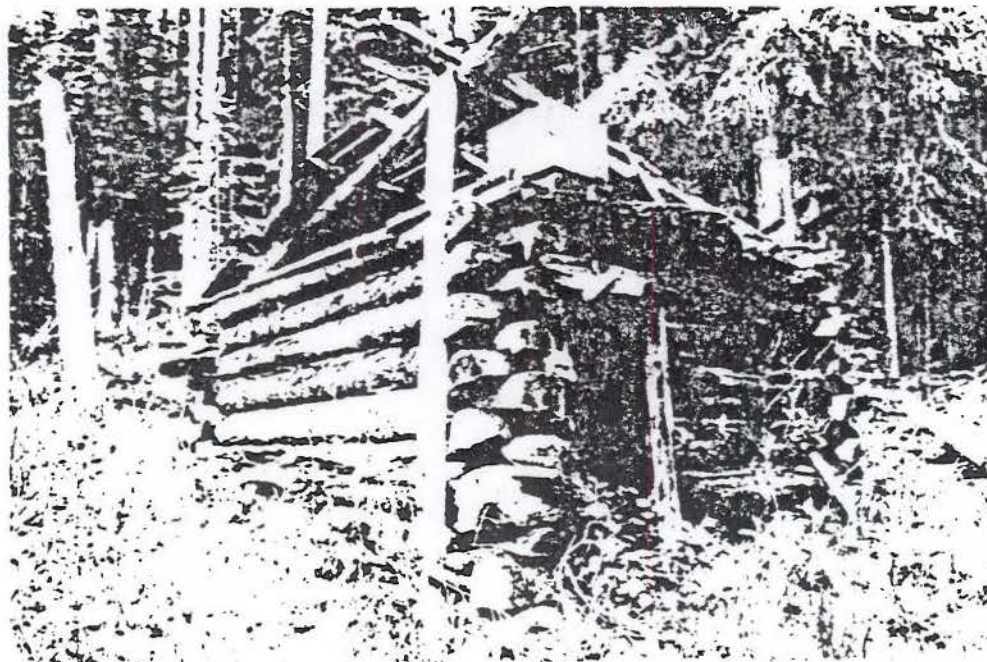
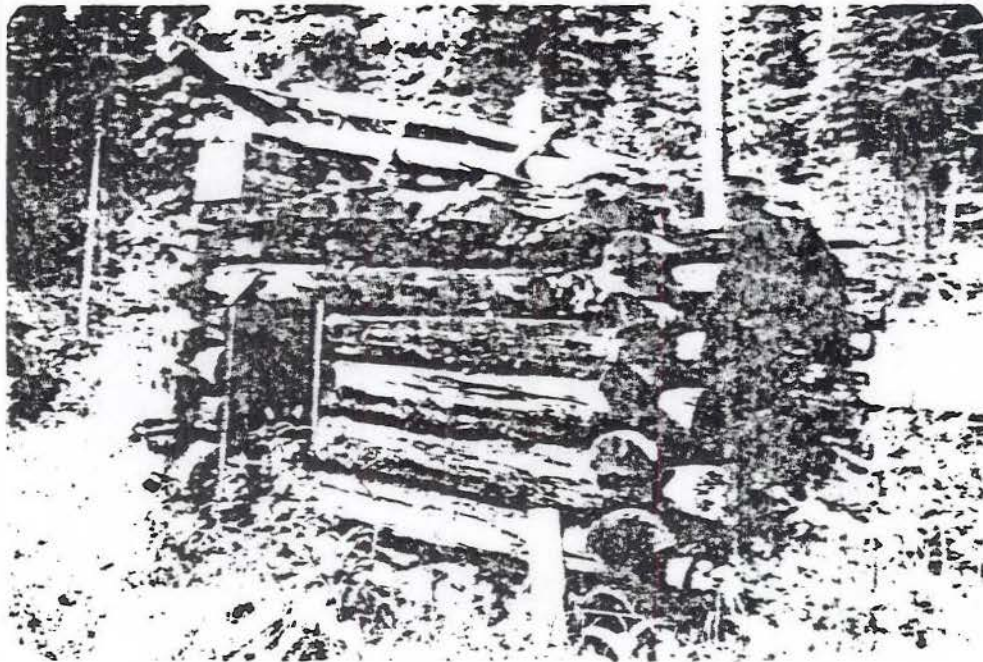
W.R. Scott 1981



"Scenes of Levesque's Line Cabin south of Mount MacKenzie."

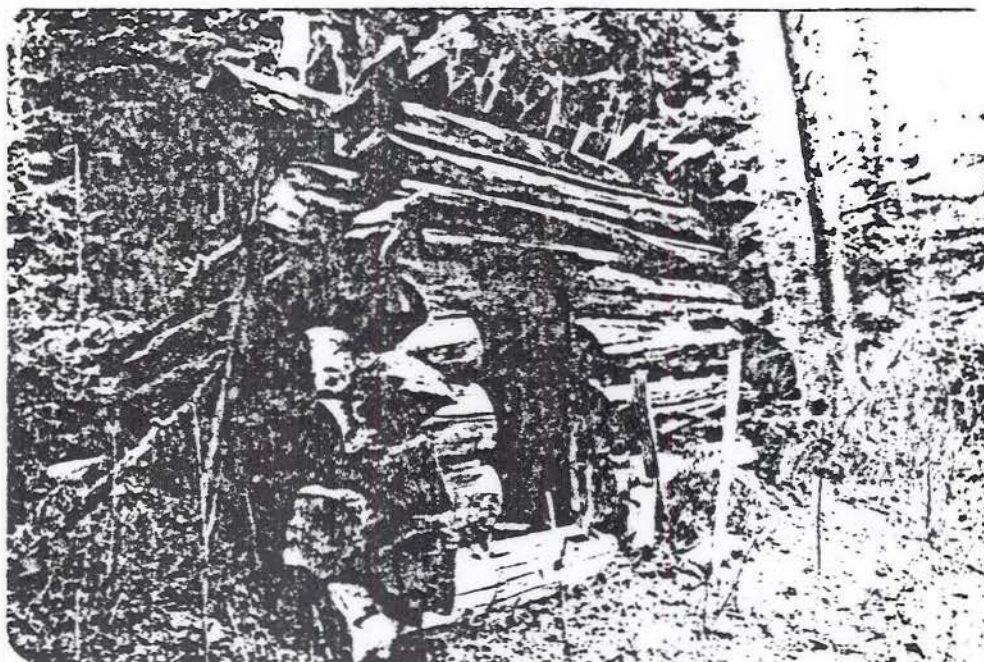
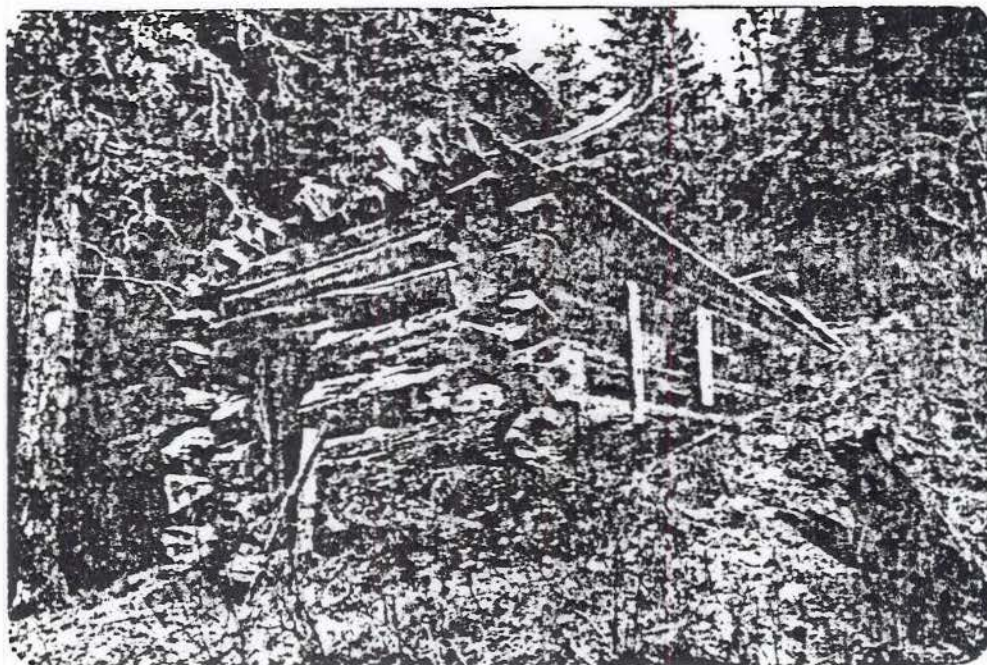
W. R. Scott 1981

The cabin is typical of Levesque's style, small with a double roof, with shakes and sodding. Inside are a small trapper's bed, stove and supplies dating from 1938 including honey and dried beans. An inscription on the wall inside reads B. Smith & Levesque, Nov/Dec 1937, Jan/Mar 38, and Oct 1939.



"Levesque's newer line cabin beside the creek
from MacKenzie II on the upper Leigh Meadow."

W. R. Scott 1981



"Views of Levesque's oldest line cabin on the upper meadow on Leigh Creek."

W. R. Scott 1981

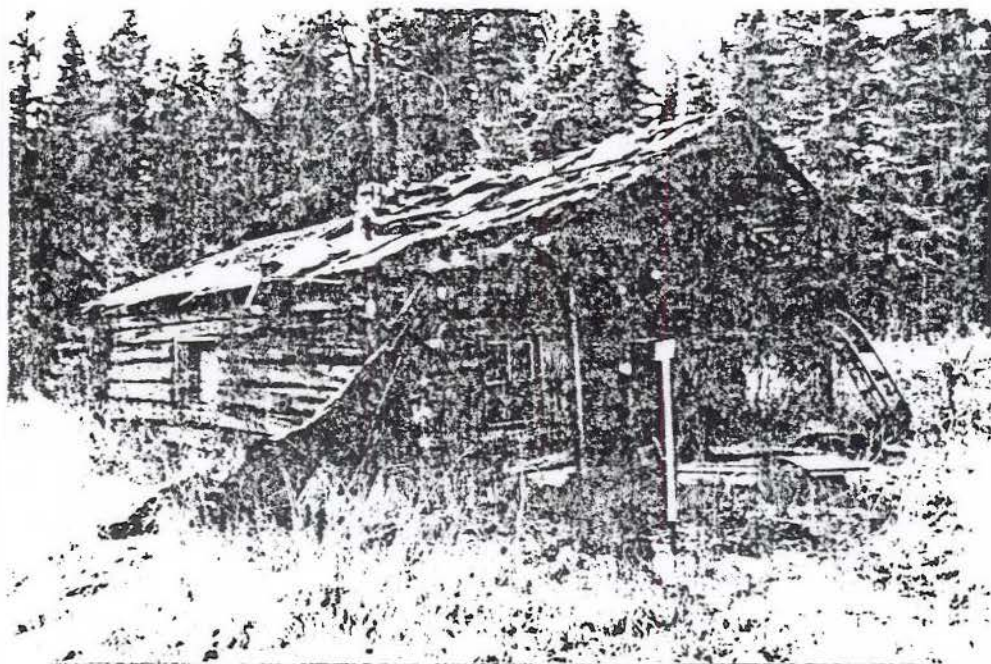
Inscription on the wall inside reads "D.S. & Joe L."



LOGGER

Joe Logger was a trapper whose territory covered the area to the west of Levesque's i.e. from Punchaw north to Baldy Hughes and west of the Blackwater Road. He and Levesque were at odds over the years and it was said that they each carried a gun while working their trap lines more for protection from each other than for any other reason.

Logger's well built cabin was situated on the north edge of the meadow on Leigh Creek, about 0.5 km west of Mrs. Legh's Ranch. He set out to visit Ed Miller in Mud River one day late in the war years but never arrived. Although a search was organized no trace was ever discovered. An old calendar in his cabin for January 1944 bears silent witness to the month of his disappearance. Other evidence in the cabin shows it was later used by other trappers (Roger Annis, Danny Mycock, and Randy Houghtaling) in 1956, 58 and 79.



"Joe Logger's well constructed cabin on Chehischic Creek west of the Legh Ranch."

W. R. Scott 1981



FORESTRY

Forestry has been a dominant industry in the province from the earliest days of settlement. In the mid and late 40's, a major push was made by the Forestry Service to improve fire protection service in the Prince George area. Several forestry lookouts were installed on prominent mountains. One of these was Mount Baldy Hughes.

The lookout on Mount Baldy Hughes was built in 1944, the year Baldy Hughes died. The mountain was a prime location for forestry purposes, high and steep-sided with a clear view on all sides. It is in fact an extinct volcano. The main vent is now concealed by a small lake filled by rainwater and the output of a spring below the main summit. Secondary vent holes can be found in numerous locations, notably at the present communications (GATR) site on the lower ridge to the north. The barren rocky top of the mountain offered an ideal foundation for tower structures. A photocopy of a forestry survey conducted in June 1949 by D. McDonald and D. Munro shows the eight-foot square cupola on a comparatively short twenty-foot tower. From the panoramic horizon photograph, key features in the area can be seen and the tower's approximate position can be determined as being in the area of the FPS 26 and FPS 27 radar towers.

A comfortable 14' x 20' cabin for the lookout operator was sited just below the cliff on the west face of the mountain, well sheltered by trees. The cabin is still in place and is in good condition. It is now used by the station Ground Search and Rescue Team.

In 1944, and for some years after, the road from Prince George was in bad shape, particularly the section past West Lake. It was a full day's work to make the trip out and back. Chains, jacks and muscle power were required to get through the frequent bog holes and washouts. Groceries and other supplies were carried out to the lookout every two weeks.

Curiously, water was a problem for the early lookout operators and it was regularly trucked in from the city in the mid summer days when the stagnant waters of the lake became unpalatable. Several years evidently passed by before the spring now used by the radar site was discovered. This is rather strange as the spring is located only a few tens of meters from the cabin. Forestry personnel later chiseled out a reservoir in the rock near the spring.



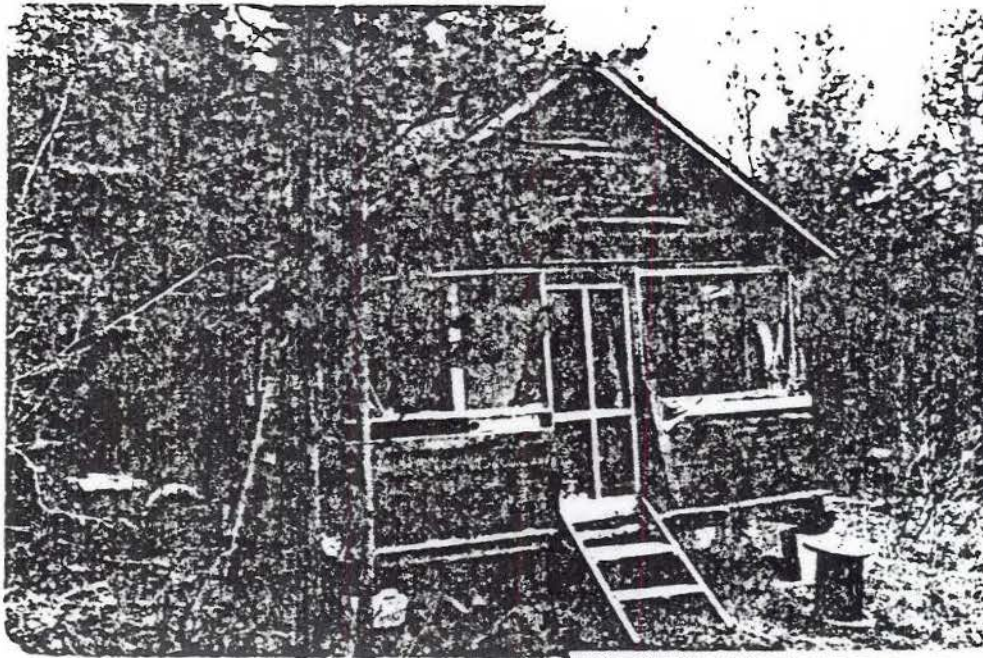
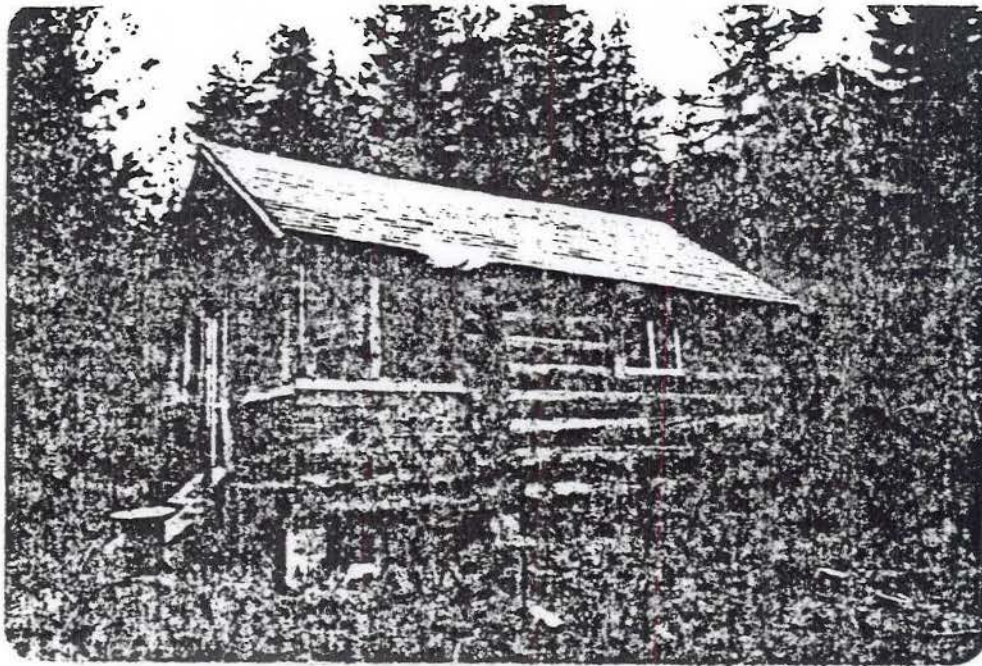
Two of the men who built the original tower were Jim Smith, later to become a Prince George policeman, and Frank Shires who stayed with the Forestry Service to become an Assistant Forest Ranger. Some of the lookout operators were:

1945/46	Johnny Nichols
1947/48	Ed (Charlie) Small
1949	Jack Abery

Not only forest fires kept the lookout operators awake. During these years, the mountain was reputed to be frequented by a ferocious species of bear. While apparently similar in appearance to grizzlies, they were probably of the black bear species which includes a wide range of colours from black through blue-black, brown, gold and yellow-browns. Tawny in colour, these bears gave the appearance of being bald which added the legend of "bald headed bears" to the mountain. At least one operator was chased into the tower by one of them.

The role of the mountain in fire protection was short lived, coming to an end with the arrival of the United States Air Force (USAF) in 1951 to start construction of a radar site in the NORAD Pine Tree Line. Military priorities in the post-WW II, (cold war period), took precedence and construction of the radar site proceeded quickly. In compensation the USAF moved the lookout operation to the next mountain south, MacKenzie Mountain, named for Duncan "Sour Beans" MacKenzie. They built the new lookout tower, cabin and an access road from the Blackwater. The road ran east-west from a point just north of Round Meadow. It is still passable to four wheel drive vehicles.

MacKenzie Mountain proved to be an inferior lookout location, however, being relatively broad and flat on top and requiring a high, knee-shaking 65' tower for adequate visibility. The MacKenzie Lookout received only intermittent use as the introduction of aircraft and better lookout locations took over more of the surveillance workload. Thus ended the brief role of Mount Baldy Hughes as a Forestry Lookout(1944-51).



"The Forestry cabin on the east face near the summit of Mount Baldy Hughes."

W. R. Scott 1981

The base of the FPS 26 Radar Tower can be seen on the sky line of the top photograph.



BALDY HUGHES

3700'
IPG-123J

53°36'48"N : 122°57'10"W

PR. GEORGE FOR. DIST.

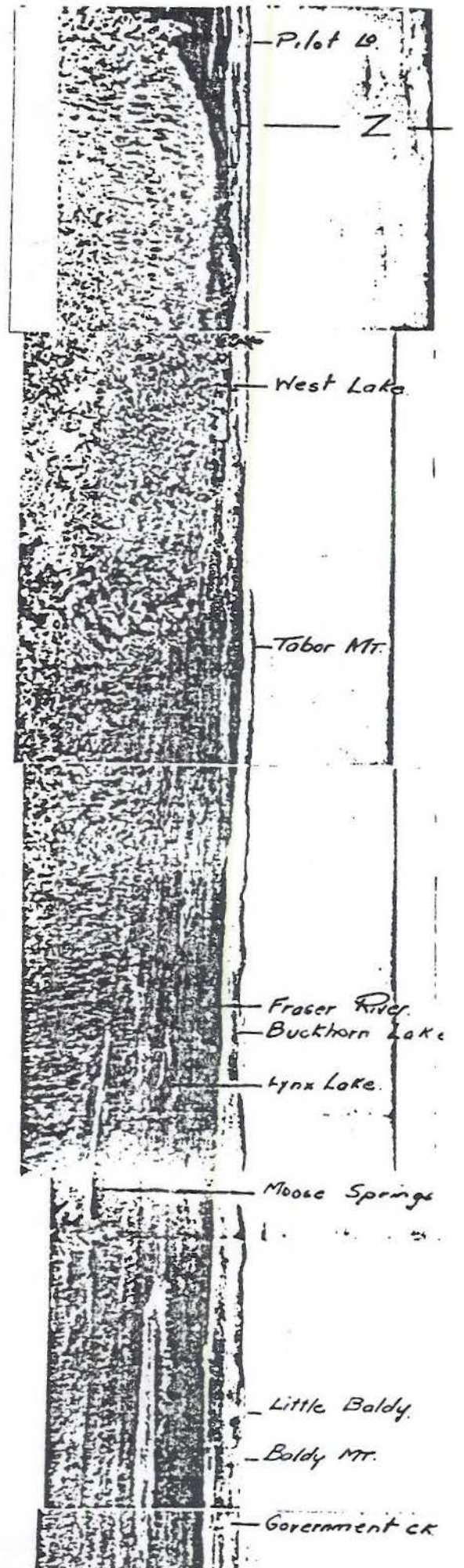
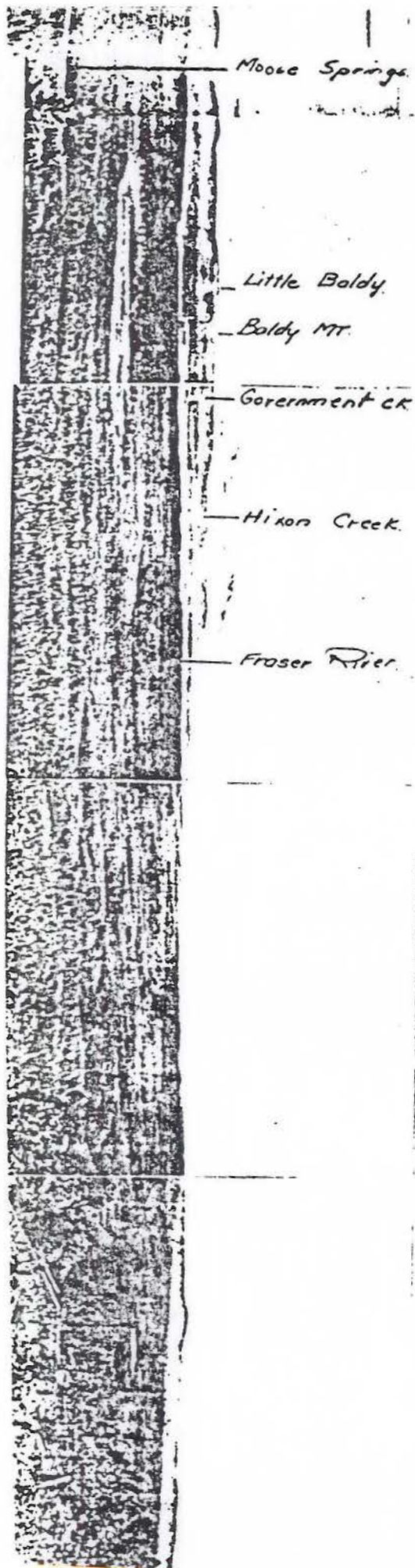
PR. GEORGE S. RANGER DIST.

14th June 1949 D. McDonald
D. Munro.

"The Forestry tower on Mount Baldy Hughes."

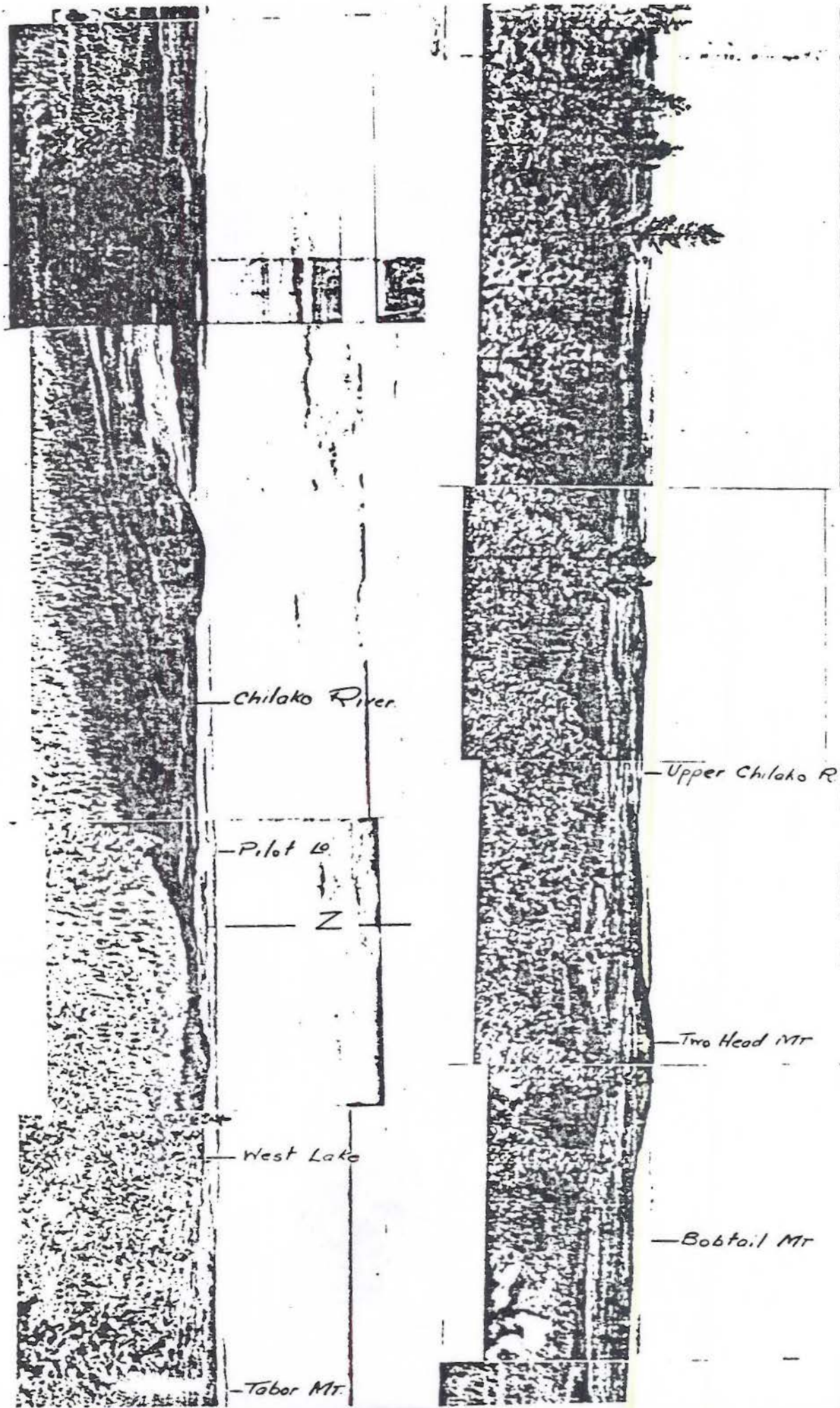
D. McDonald & D. Munro 14 June 1949

"Panoramic view from Mount Baldy Hughes"
D. McDonald & D. Munro June 1949



"Panoramic view from Mount Baldy Hughes"

D. McDonald & D. Munro June 1949





MILITARY

With the completion of station construction in 1952, Baldy Hughes was manned by the USAF and operated as a manual intercept control site under the designation 918th AC & W Sqn. The 918th was recalled from the National Guard to active service 16 Apr 52 at Geiger Field, Washington, USA. Transferred to Baldy Hughes, the 918th AC & W Sqn became operational 1 Apr 53.

The RCAF took over the station on 1 March 1963, just as it was about to be integrated into the SAGE system in the Seattle Sector, 25th NORAD Region. This integration was completed by the end of June 1963, at which time the USAF operations personnel returned to the United States. The unit was known as 54 AC & W Sqn while under RCAF control. With the integration of the RCN, RCA and RCAF in 1967, the unit was redesignated Canadian Forces Station Baldy Hughes.

The Domestic Site for the station is located at the eastern base of Mount Baldy Hughes on the land which was originally the Baldy Hughes homestead. Operational facilities have been located in three areas: the main Radar Complex on the summit of Mount Baldy Hughes, (Hill 1) a Transmit/Receive Air-Ground-Air (A/G/A) Communications Complex on a lower spur of the mountain about 0.5 km to the north (Hill 2) and a Receive A/G/A Communications Site (now abandoned) on another volcanic mountain peak a further 1 km to the north (Hill 3).



COMMANDING OFFICERS

918th Aircraft Control & Warning Squadron, USAF

<u>EFFECTIVE DATE</u>	<u>COMMANDING OFFICER</u>
16 Apr 52	2nd Lt Wesley W. McBride
29 May 52	Lt Col William E. Pitcher
23 Aug 52	Capt Theodore T. White
14 Oct 52	Capt Richard R. Calvin
1 Nov 52	Capt Robert E. Rice
Jun 54	Maj Harold E. Plain
Apr 55	Maj Ben M. Hagan
Feb 56	Maj Orvil G. Gransee
Dec 57	Maj James D. Lessley
2 Aug 59	Maj Kenneth Coleman
Apr-May 61	Maj (later Lt Col) Alfred J. Naigle

NOTE:

Records from 1953-1958 are incomplete



COMMANDING OFFICERS

54th Aircraft Control & Warning Squadron, RCAF

EFFECTIVE DATE

COMMANDING OFFICER

1 Mar 63

W/C R.D. Sloat

10 Sep 65

W/C D. Warren

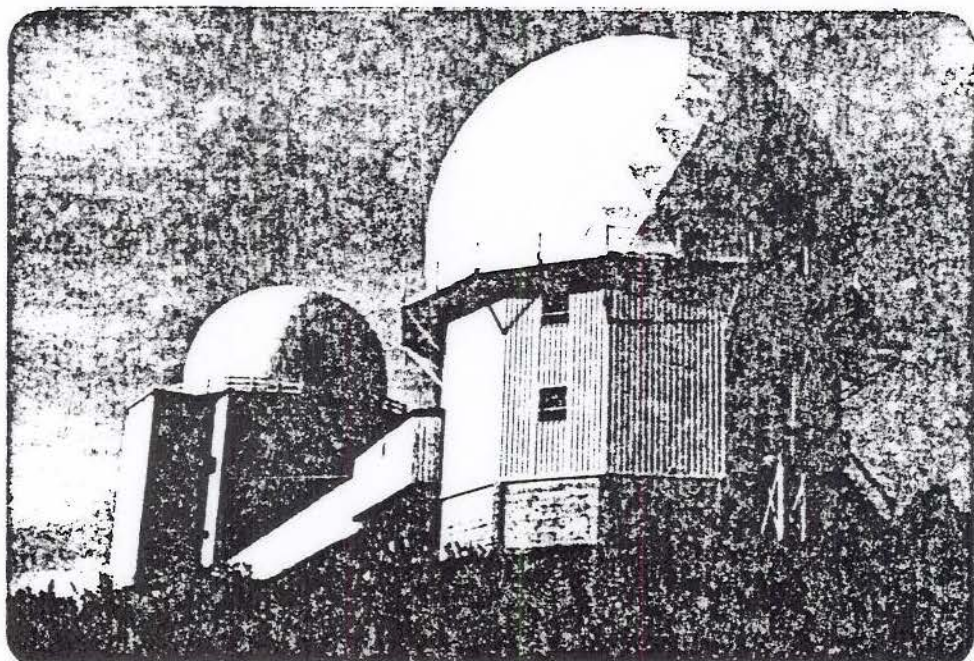
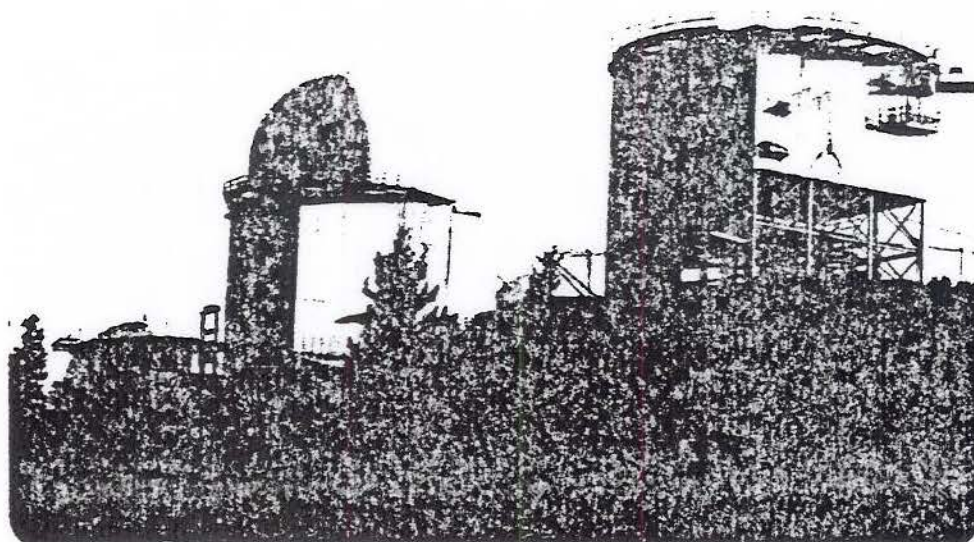
COMMANDING OFFICERSCanadian Forces Station Baldy Hughes

<u>EFFECTIVE DATE</u>	<u>COMMANDING OFFICER</u>
27 Jul 67	LCol D.J. Ackert
20 Aug 69	LCol J.F. Edwards
29 Aug 71	LCol G.W. Duguid
6 Jul 73	LCol H.K. Olsen
16 Jul 75	LCol D.F. McIntosh
28 Jul 77	LCol G.L. Walker
10 Jul 79	LCol W.R. Scott
3 Jul 81	Maj L.C. Stanners



MAJOR OPERATIONAL EQUIPMENTS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EQUIPMENT</u>
1952	FPS-3C Search Radar and TPS-502 Height Finder Radar installed
Mar 59	FPS-20 Search Radar installed to replace FPS-3. SIF also installed
Aug 59	A/G/A RX site closed down and both RX and TX A/G/A radios located on Hill 2
Jul 60	FPS 6 Height Finder Radar made operational, replacing TPS-502
Feb 61	Second FPS 6 Height Finder is operational
Dec 61	SAGE GATR facility is operational
Jul 62	FST 2 Data Processor is installed
May 63	FPS 27 Search Radar is installed
Jul 63	Unit is SAGE operational
Aug 63	FPS 26 Height Finder Radar is installed, replacing one FPS 6
Jul 64	UPX 14 Selective Identification Feature radar is operational
Dec 71	FYQ 47 Data Processor replaces the FST 2
Apr 75	FPS 26 Height Finder is shut down



"Radar Tower on Mount Baldy Hughes"

W. R. Scott 1981