



## Abernethy & Lougheed Logging Company

DURING THE 1920s Maple Ridge was home to the largest logging operation in British Columbia, and during the Abernethy & Lougheed Logging Company's peak years the venture employed 700 men. The operation comprised a 25,000-acre lease called Limit "W", which now constitutes most of the University of British Columbia Research Forest and Golden Ears Provincial Park.

The company's founders, George Gordon Abernethy and Nelson Seymour Lougheed, both moved to British Columbia in the early years of the 20th century. Abernethy, born in 1873 in Embro, Ontario, had grown up in the lumber industry, his father Robert and his uncle John having partnered with Perry A. Roe, the first reeve of Port Moody, to form the Canadian Pacific Lumber Company at the easterly end of Burrard Inlet in 1904. Robert Abernethy and Roe were brothers-in-law.

Lougheed, born in Collingwood, Ontario, in 1882 and thus 10 years younger than Abernethy, had come to Port Moody with his parents, two brothers, and a sister in 1905. He had already served in the South African Boer War, and his first job had been in the Roe-Abernethy sawmill in Port Moody.

After working in the Port Moody mill for a number of years, Lougheed partnered with George Abernethy and the two purchased the Tyner shingle mill in Port Haney in around 1912. They called their operation Abernethy and Lougheed Company Ltd. and were initially financially involved through Abernethy's family connections with the Eburne sawmill on the Fraser River right at the boundary between Burnaby and Vancouver. They obtained most of their logs from a logging operation at Matsqui and Mt. Lehman. Like the brothers Robert and Charles Tyner, they sold any slab or waste wood from the outside of the logs to fire the kilns at the Port Haney Brickyard.

Around 1915 Abernethy and Lougheed sold the Port Haney mill to the British Columbia Manufacturing company, owned by the McDonald family of New Westminster, who later changed the name to the Maple Ridge Lumber Company. Partners Abernethy and Lougheed kept their company name but switched from lumbering

**A principal partner in the ALLCO, Nelson Seymour Lougheed became the Reeve of Maple Ridge 1913–1916, Conservative Member of the Legislative Assembly 1928, and the Provincial Minister of Lands and Public Works 1928–1933. The Lougheed Highway was named in his honour, while Abernethy Way is named for his partner.**



to logging by acquiring control of the defunct Edward H. Heaps Logging Company at Stave Falls.

In the early 1920s the two entrepreneurs negotiated with the McCormick family to log timber Limit “W” of its vast inventory of some of the largest trees in the Province of British Columbia.

Timber berth “W” had originally been sold off at public auction through a Dominion of Canada timber agent to a group that flipped the lease to some Minnesota businessmen. They held on for a few years and then sold to the Lillooet Lumber Company of Minneapolis in 1906. In 1911 the lease was assigned to W.C. Niblack of Chicago, Illinois, who in 1918 sold the rights to the McCormick family of Chicago. The amounts paid are no longer on record. The McCormick family, owners of the McCormick-Deering Corporation of Chicago, was a farm machinery manufacturer in the eastern United States. As early as 1910/1911 a few men were employed on timber berth “W” to establish baselines, build trails, cruise and map, and to serve as a fire crew.

In 1921 the two partners sold their Stave Falls operation to Nels Lougheed’s brother David, and the two began organizing the financing and equipment for a large-scale railroad logging operation in Haney. By this time Lougheed had served as a Maple Ridge councillor in 1909 and reeve from 1913 through 1916. In 1911 he married Ruby Selkirk, a daughter of ex-reeve James Selkirk, an owner of the Selkirk-Pelletier sawmill at Webster’s Corners and the dominion chief fire ranger and forester. It was during this time that the two entrepreneurs had built two of the finest homes in Port Haney north of the Presbyterian Church. Lougheed’s wife died during the birth of her second child in 1919 due to her weakened state from influenza.

The Abernethy & Lougheed Logging Company had several camps. The company’s Number 1 Camp, called Allco, was located about a mile north of Dewdney Trunk Road and on the south side of the Alouette River at the southwest end of Alouette Lake. It had a roundhouse with pits for two locomotives, a car repair shop next door, a 50,000-gallon water tank for emergency fire fighting, and even its own post office. Camp 2 was located at Mike Lake. Camp 3 was a floating camp at the southwest end of Alouette Lake, and Camp 4 was at Jacobs Lake. Sam Edge, Frank Blackstock, and Nelson Howe built a large cabin on Jacobs Lake that was used for many years during the summer months by Marion and Chauncey McCormick,

**Ruby Selkirk photographed on her wedding day in 1911. The daughter of ex-reeve James Selkirk, the Dominion Fire Ranger and Forester, she married Nelson Seymour Lougheed, one of the principals in the Abernethy & Lougheed Logging Company Ltd.**



**The Abernethy & Lougheed sawmill, 1910. The Thomas Haney residence is visible in the center of the treeline.**

principals in the McCormick Corporation, with the result that the lake was renamed Marion Lake. Katherine, Gwendoline, and Eunice Lakes in the University of British Columbia's Research Forest were named for their daughters.

Camps 5, 6, 7, and 8 were all floating camps. Camp 9 was at Gold Creek. Camp 10 or Camp "L" was at the 3,000-foot level on the backside of the Golden Ears Mountains. The company also had a freight depot and storage sheds located at the juncture of the track and Dewdney Trunk Road. This depot served as a drop-off and pick-up point for the men coming and going into the work camps. The logistics of getting equipment, food, and men to the camps and the huge logs out was an enormous undertaking. For example, the cooks required 10 tons of potatoes and almost 3,000 dozen eggs a month, not to mention other food staples, to feed the men, whose number reached 700 at the peak of the operation.

The company paid their crews \$15,000 twice monthly, and on one memorable day Nels Lougheed wrote out \$1,000,000 in cheques in a single day. A & L was the first logging operation in BC to adopt the eight-hour day. The men rode in and out of the camp on company time.

The CPR allowed the A & L to hire Fraser River Pile Driving to build a trestle that passed over their tracks west of Kanaka Creek. The trestle bridge was the only instance in Canada where fully loaded cars of timber crossed over a CPR mainline. The A & L crews had to be constantly on the lookout that no transcontinental passenger trains were due to pass underneath the bridge while trains passed overhead.

The railroad logging operation had 55 miles of mainline with 23 spur lines. One spur line along the base of the Golden Ears reached the 3,200-foot level. The railway line from the Fraser River to Alouette Lake followed the lay of the land with the average grades between 8 to 12 %, but one particularly steep grade along the side of Iron Mountain was estimated at 15 % or more. The operation had five Climax and two Heisler locomotives. The Climax locomotives had been made in Corrie, Pennsylvania, and, operating under US and Canadian transportation laws, came out from the eastern United States and Ontario. The company had 150 steel railway cars to move heavy equipment and logs. Machinist George Sayers recalled in a 1972 taped interview: "The Climaxes would climb a telephone pole! Some of the grades on Iron Mountain on the north side of Alouette Lake had 15 to 17 % grades but the average grades were 8 to 12 %. It was not uncommon for one of the Climax engines to bring out 45 cars loaded with logs with 1,000,000 board feet of cedar worth \$20 per 1,000 board feet. The hemlock stands were not worth harvesting unless choice." In other words, a single load of lumber would be worth \$20,000 back in 1928.

The timber stands around the Golden Ears were as good as anywhere on the mainland, with fir and cedar trees being upwards of 12 feet and 14 feet at the butt respectively. Some of the huge fir trees stood 175 feet tall. Many of the cedar trees went to the Hammond Cedar mill in Port Hammond, while many fir trees went to the Eburne sawmill in Vancouver. Many logs were loaded onto steamers and shipped to every corner of the globe.

Two husky loggers with nothing more than an axe and

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**SOMETHING DIFFERENT**



Bill & Beryl Henderson left Saskatchewan in the spring of 1959 to open a DQ in Haney. It opened in April of that year and first day sales were \$54! In those days the DQ sold only ice cream products and closed for three months over winter. Several years later the hamburger section was added and then in 1977 a new Brazier store was built two doors down on the old Hubb Motors lot.

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Trestle bridge built by Fraser River Pile Drive northwest of Kanaka Creek.

## ALLCO

By Irene (Mrs. Raymond) Laity

Eventually Abernethy and Lougheed established a little town called Allco (Abernethy and Lougheed Logging Company). There was a roundhouse where the locomotives were serviced by George E. Sayers, a Post Office, and I think a store of sorts, but I am not positive about that. There were four large homes facing the river, referred to as the Four Hundred, and because the top brass resided there. There were many smaller homes to accommodate all the loggers and their families. The Pacific Stage had a regular service to Allco at least twice a week. This was an extremely busy road by this time. There was a high trestle bridge across the Alouette near here. On Sunday while it was under construction a bunch of us, Ansells, Lilleys, and Biggs, went down exploring. The pilings were nearly all in, and the pile driver was on the other side of the river. There were single 12" planks connecting the tops of the piling. Well, Mabel Biggs and I crossed over to the pile driver on those planks. The rest of the party crossed below on a double row of planks about ten feet down the river. There had been a suspension

bridge downriver a bit. This was washed out by one of the frequent floods that even at times changed the river's course.

As time went on I used to do housework at Allco. One of the Four Hundred at that time was a millionaire's son, of the Millbank Cigarette people. Evidently the father had money invested in the A & L Co. and wanted his son to learn the business. His wife said she came from nine generations of bankers. She also had graduated from the Boston School of Cookery. These were very nice people, but totally unsuited to this environment. Twice a week I went down to wash dishes. She did the other work herself, even cleaning out the fireplace. Well, the sink would be full of dishes, under the sink full, both sides of the counter piled high, and the table top and under, stacked with dirty dishes. It took all afternoon, then I walked home. On hot days it seemed like a long hill to climb, but very often Sam Saari Sr. would be driving home from his work of blacksmithing at the roundhouse, and he would stop anywhere on that hill and give me a ride home. George Sayers's father attended the lawns and gardens at Allco. There was also a guesthouse built in a secluded place on the river for the VIPs.

a 10-foot crosscut saw could bring down a 750-year-old tree in less than two hours. The men would cut notches for springboards on which to stand in order to make a cut that was 8 to 10 feet above ground in order to avoid cutting into the wider girth near the tree's butt and because the trunk was more prone to split.

By 1925 Miller Lougheed, Nels's brother, had taken over the operation of the mill and in a grand display of optimism authorized the laying out of a six-hole golf course near the mouth of Kanaka Creek.

During 1925/26 the company logged around the perimeter of Alouette Lake in preparation for both the damming and tunnelling projects by the British Columbia Electric Railway Company. The water power company's objectives were to build a dam at the southwest end of the lake to raise the lake's water level by 40 feet, while at the same time drilling a tunnel at the northwest end of the lake to connect with Stave Lake. Logs would be dumped into Alouette Lake for sorting and then loaded onto rail cars to be carried to a dumping ground at the confluence of Kanaka Creek and the Fraser River.

In 1927 the Capilano Timber Company of North Vancouver agreed to pay the provincial government a fee to remove many of the 12-foot tall cedar stumps left around Alouette Lake from the A&L operation. These huge stumps were cut up into shingle bolts and hauled out on A & L flat cars and dumped into Kanaka Creek. The government used the money from this venture to start building road access to Alouette Lake for the proposed Golden Ears Provincial park.

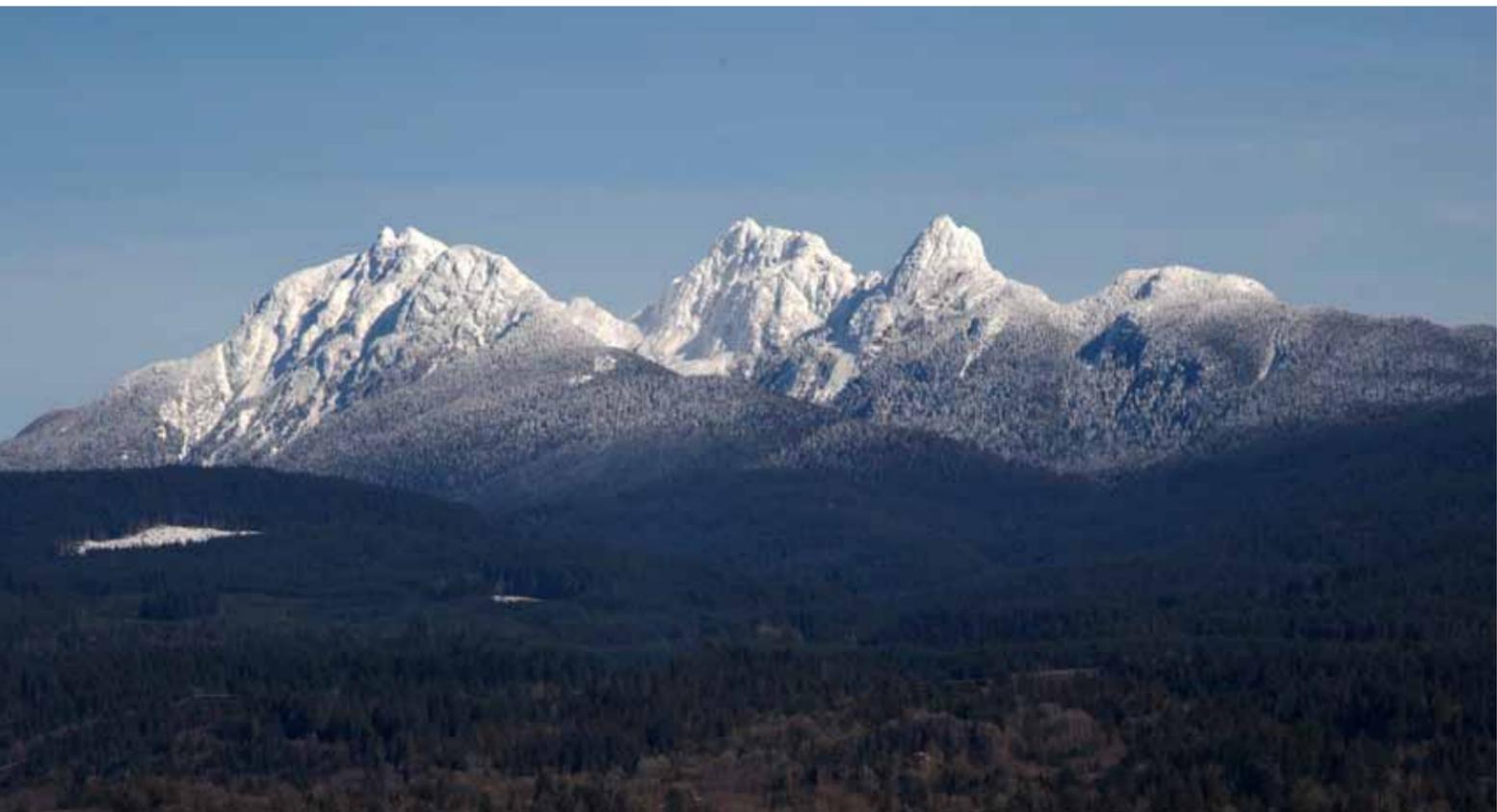
At Mike Lake the A & L railroad builders put in a spur line, called the "Incline," that connected with the railroad higher up the mountain. It was meant to be a shortcut to get the logs down to a rail line down below. Single cars, loaded with logs, would be lowered by a



A&L senior partner George G. Abernethy poses with the butt end of the largest Western Red Cedar harvested in timber berth "W." The cut portion of the tree measured 114 inches in diameter. The huge slab was shipped to the Wembley World's Fair in England in 1925.

pulley system with cable by a steam donkey from above. Unfortunately, the project didn't work very well and was later abandoned.

The A & L showcase logging operation resulted in many visits by celebrities and dignitaries, including the Prince of Wales, Mr. Winston Churchill, and the Crown Prince of Germany. George Sayers, the machinist at Allco who supervised the visit of Churchill and his sons John and Randolph in 1929, organized some logging demonstrations. Local historian Ed Villiers in his book *All Our Yesterdays: Stories from Maple Ridge* recounts what years later Randolph Churchill wrote in his autobiography about the event: "We drove about 30 miles out of Vancouver to visit a lumber camp. First we saw two men cut down a gigantic tree about two hundred feet high in about half an hour. Before it fell they showed us exactly what trees it would hit and what it would miss, and when it fell they were right to the identical inch."



**Covered with a fresh blanket of snow, the lower reaches of the Golden Ears have healed after 75 years of new growth.**

Randolph Churchill continues: “Then we saw what is known as a high rigger. A man put on a pair of steel spurs, tied himself to the tree with a rope, then climbed up the tree at a great pace, lopping off the branches as he went. This tree was even higher than the previous one—about three hundred feet—and was intended to be used as a rest on which to fix pulleys so that the other trees could be more easily handled. So when the man got up to about one hundred and eighty feet he cut off the top of the tree, which fell with an awe-inspiring crash. But for Papa’s admonition to the contrary, he would have stood on his head on the stump one hundred and eighty feet in the air.”

George Sayers also took some Hollywood movie stars into the woods to observe logging in action, but in contrast to the other dignitaries he found them to be rude and crude.

Although the A & L railroad logging operation was a modern facility for the time, 50 men were killed on the job over a 12-year period. Seven whistle blows was the signal for a bad accident. Dr. D. Garnet Morse, in the dual role of general practitioner and coroner, attended

**Opposite**  
**A derelict steam donkey at the entrance to the UBC Research Forest.**



An Abernethy & Lougheed Logging Company train stops on the northern end of the trestle bridge over the south Alouette River with a load of logs.





at the accident scenes to either administer first aid to the injured or pronounce death. Men with life-threatening injuries would be taken by train or boat to the Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster.

By 1928 the A & L operation was downsizing because all the easy-to-reach timber was becoming depleted with the result that the company began surveying other good timber limits on the north end of Vancouver Island. Nels Lougheed, having used municipal politics as a stepping-stone into provincial politics, became the Conservative Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Dewdney Riding with Premier Simon Fraser Tolmie's party and then later, between 1928 and 1933, the Minister of Lands and Public Works. His political career left little time for logging, which placed added stress on his partner and brothers. George Abernethy died of a sudden fatal heart attack in the spring of 1928 at the age of 55. He died in the arms of John L. Sayers on the porch of his palatial home in Port Haney.

During the crash of 1929 A & L quickly discovered that the company was asset-rich but money-poor. At the height of the stock market crash Nels Lougheed attempted to form a syndicate with British

**ALLCO headquarters photographed by machinist George E. Sayers.**

**Opposite Top**

**A steam donkey uses a spar tree to haul in logs at ALLCO's camp #3 on Alouette Lake, 1925. There was a trench running toward the lake that was used to haul up logs from the lake for loading onto railway cars for transport. In the background is the floating camp situated on Alouette Lake.**

**Opposite Bottom**

**Camp on Mike Lake, 1927.**

Sometimes chain straps had to be fastened to the two tongs at each end of a log in order to get around the ends of the log and position the log onto an awaiting flatcar. In this photo a logger stands posed on the log that is about to be loaded onto the flatcar. Immediately behind the flatcar is an outhouse while immediately to the left of the more visible steam donkey is the main camp. A second steam donkey is just visible to the left of logger standing right of the spar tree. It would appear from the number of cables that at least three donkeys were being used to load the flat car.



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Seymour Evancic Gardner & Associates is a newly merged accounting firm with Maple Ridge roots. Kevin Evancic CGA has been a public accountant in Maple Ridge since 1978. He was with the firm Evancic Perrault Robertson for 23 years and a partner for 14 of those years until 1999. Evancic Perrault Robertson was founded by Kevin's father Roman Evancic FCGA. Kevin returned to local accounting practice in 2003 and recently merged his practice together with the New Westminister office of Ron Seymour FCGA and Jack Gardner CGA. Ron has been a Maple Ridge resident since 1994. Seymour Evancic Gardner & Associates has offices in Maple

Ridge and New Westminister, with three partners and a staff of six. Kevin and Ron are both active in the Maple Ridge Community. Kevin has been a member of the Kinsmen Club, Past Director and Chairman of the Maple Ridge Community Foundation, Past Director and President of Maple Ridge Christian School Society, Minor Hockey, Old Timers Hockey, and Minor Softball, a member of Maple Ridge Christian Reformed Church and currently Burnett Fellowship Baptist Church. Ron has been involved with the Golden Ears Curling Club, BC Family Care Foundation, Meadowridge School, and is a member of the Maple Ridge Community Church.

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capital in the amount of \$1,250,000 to acquire timber leases owned by the Ruskin Operations Limited and the Stave Falls Lumber Company. His plan was to erect a \$4,000,000 mill using a sulphate process to produce brown packing paper, cardboard, and cement bags for world markets. That venture died on the vine.

The *coup de grâce* to the A & L was not the many fires, as has often been reported, but rather the stock market crash of 1929. The company had initially estimated that it would take 30 years to log Limit "W," but with the improved machinery this estimate to harvest the large easy-to-reach trees was greatly shortened.

In July 1931, sparks caused by a line cable striking some rocks on a rival logging operation on Raven Creek on the Pitt Lake side of the Golden Ears Mountains dealt a devastating blow to the A & L operation. A fire started in their timber lease, swept east over the ridge, and took out A & L's construction camp "L" located on spurs 22 and 23 at the 3,000-foot level before sweeping down the mountain to Alouette Lake. The fire was fought all night and thought to be under control but it suddenly flared up, crowned, and travelled northward to Pitt Lake and southward to the A & L operations. Up to 2,500 men were employed for 33 days before the fire was brought under control.

Sam Edge, Frank Blackstock, and Nelson Howe dismantled the cabin they had built on Marion Lake, loaded it on a flatcar, and accompanied it back to Illinois, where they reassembled it on a lakeshore. A short time later the company sold most of their assets to International Timber at Youbou on Vancouver Island, and by 1933 even the tracks had been ripped out, leaving everything to revert back to nature. The Youbou mills had strong connections with Hammond Cedar.

No sooner had the track and bridge over the CPR tracks at Kanaka Creek been torn up, the Department of Highways began work on the building of the Lougheed Highway from the Vancouver-Burnaby boundary to Harrison Hot Springs.

Lougheed, in later life, married Ann Brown, the widow of an old Klondyker. Lougheed died in his West Vancouver home in 1944 at the age of 62.

**Opposite Top**

**ALLCO logging train ready to back up on the track leading to the log dump.**

**Opposite Bottom**

**The ALLCO log dump near the confluence of Kanaka Creek and the Fraser River. The trainloads of logs were unloaded by a cable mechanism that dumped the huge logs into the creek.**

**Following Pages**

**The accommodations for the principals and dignitaries were located directly across Marion Lake from the main camp #4.**

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**Abernethy & Lougheed Logging Company**

From 1919 to 1931 Maple Ridge was home to the largest logging operation in British Columbia, and during the logging company's peak years the enterprise employed 700 men. The enterprise's founders, George Gordon Abernethy and Nelson Seymour Lougheed, started the Abernethy & Lougheed Logging Co. Ltd. and began logging the 25,000-acre timber lease called Limit W (later most of the University of British Columbia Research Forest and Golden Ears Provincial Park). The McCormick Corporation of Chicago, Illinois, a farm machinery manufacturer, had managed to secure the huge timber rights from the Dominion Government. The logging company ran a railroad line up to Alouette Lake with spurs that reached the 3,200-foot level.

**Legend**

- 1 Floating Camps 7, 8 & 9
- 2 ALLCO Headquarters
- 3 Kanaka Creek Low Dump
- 4 Fraser River High Dump
- ~ ALLCO Railroad Route

