

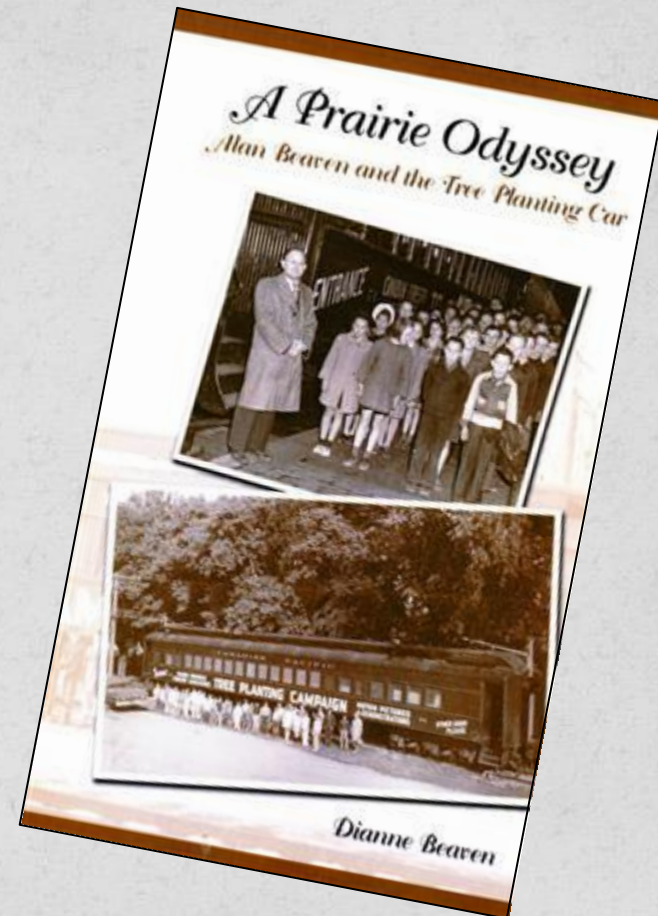
The Tree Planting Car: Changing the Prairie Landscape

Presented by Madelaine Kennedy



Outline

- Introduction
- Early Influences
- Setting up the Program
- TPC Lecturers
- The 'Dirty Thirties'
- Conservation Car
- The Later Years/Retirement



Introduction

- “Travelling classroom”
- 1920-1973
- Canadian Forestry Association (CFA), in co-operation with the Canadian Pacific (CP) and Canadian National (CN) Railways
- 53 consecutive years of service
- 424,000 km. of rail travelled
- Program delivered to over 1.5 million people from four generations across the Prairies
- ½ billion trees planted on approx. 100,000 farms



Early Influences

Early Settlement

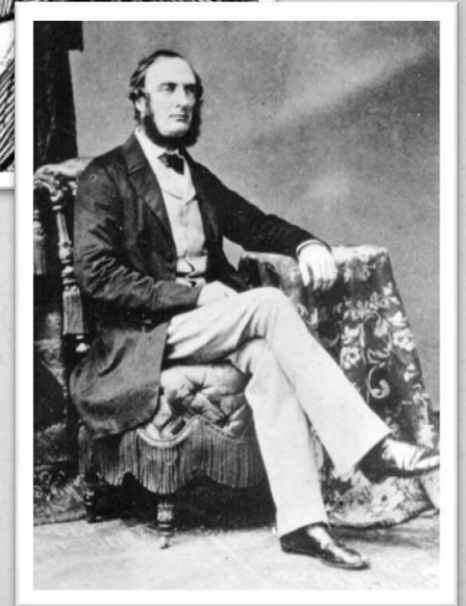
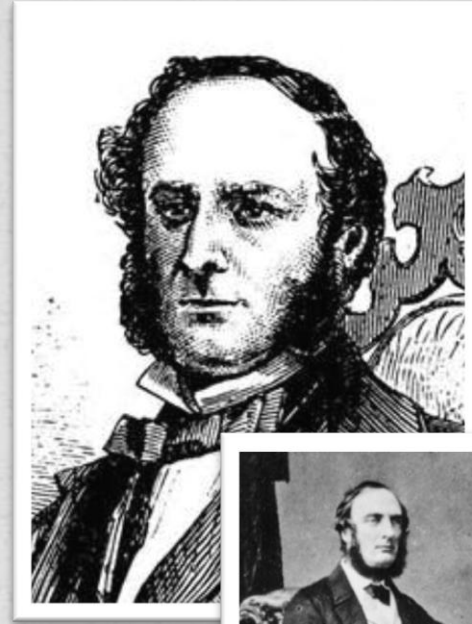
Experimental Farm Station Act

Canadian Forestry Association

Canadian Pacific Railway

Early Settlement of Western Canada

- Henry Youle Hind (1823-1908) and Captain John Palliser (1817-1887) had a significant impact on early settlement of western Canada
- Both agreed that Palliser's Triangle was arid and unsuitable for agriculture
 - “a vast treeless region...not, in its present condition, fitted for the permanent habitation of the civilized man.”
- Trees might grow in specific areas, but would likely not survive due to prairie fires



Enter: John Macoun (1831-1920)

- Knowledgeable botanist
- Joined The Very Reverend Dr. George Munro Grant and Sir Sandford Fleming on their 1872 trans-continental journey to the Pacific Ocean to survey a route for the CPR
 - “I was astonished, for as far as the eye could reach stretched a grassy plain without a fence and nothing to be seen but grass and flowers. In less than an hour I found 32 new plants.”
- Optimism and enthusiasm about the potential for settlement in the southern prairies



The Experimental Farm Station Act

- 1884: Quebec Member of Parliament Georges Auguste Gigault headed a committee to investigate the need for agricultural improvement in the West
- Recommend that an experimental farm station be established
- Experimental Farm Station Act – June 2, 1886
- Based on William Saunders' report about his investigation of U.S. stations
- Sites: Nappan, Nova Scotia; Brandon, Manitoba; Indian Head, North-West Territories (later Saskatchewan); Agassiz, British Columbia
- Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa was the headquarters

The Canadian Forestry Association (CFA)

- 1900 – A group of businessmen were concerned about forest loss due to human-caused fires
- Identified a need for public education
- With this objective, CFA was founded
- For first 15 years, it operated entirely with volunteers
- Winter of 1915-1916, Robson Black became the first paid employee (secretary-manager)



The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR)

Railway Gardens

- David Hysop (insurance-claims adjuster for CPR) encouraged the planting of gardens at railway stations
- Demonstrated how good the soil was
- An integrated system
- Hysop later appointed superintendant of 44 gardens



CPR Cont'd

Nurseries

- Nursery at Wolsely, NWT (mid-1880s) – plants would help prevent soil and snow drifts on the tracks
- Second nursery in Springfield, MB (1907)
- Greenhouses established
- Tree culture practiced at 10 CPR experimental farms in southern Alberta
- 1912-1918 – began propagating nursery stock at Brooks, Alberta with seedlings distributed for shelterbelts
- Forestry department established in 1907

Setting Up The Program

Early Conception

A Tree Supply

Delivering the Program

Lecturers

Early Conception

- After WWI, the prairies were settling rapidly
- Business leaders agreed that planting shelterbelts could promote a more permanent population
- Canadian Chamber of Commerce and other groups approached CFA in 1917 to deliver a tree-planting message to people on the prairies
- Meeting of CFA directors in 1920: Robson Black outlines a plan
- Co-operation with CNR and CPR – free haulage

A Tree Supply

- The program would create a demand for trees, and required a sustained source of nursery stock
- The Dominion Forestry Branch was sending out 6-7 million trees/year – prairie demand would be almost equal to capacity
- Indian Head Tree Nursery (est. 1901) and Sutherland, Saskatchewan Nursery (est. 1913) were instrumental in securing the supply
- Morden Experimental Farm was key in developing prairie-hardy plants



Delivering the Program

- In the early years, the TPC occasionally teamed up with the Better Farming Trains
- A “travelling theatre and classroom”
- Dropped off at towns along the rail line (moved by both railways)
- Children would visit during the day, with a nightly program for adults
- Entertainment and education



SECTION OF BETTER FARMING TRAIN, SHOWING TREE PLANTING CAR
VIEWS OF BETTER FARMING TRAIN



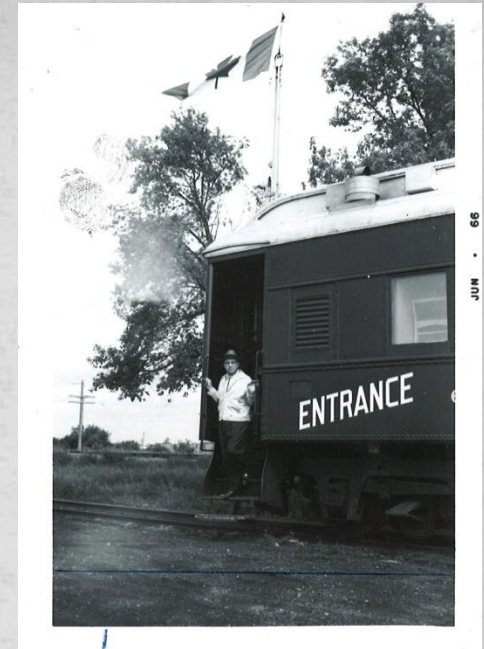
Lecturers

Main Lecturers

- Archibald Mitchell (first lecturer)
- Alex Charnetski (last lecturer)
- Alan Beaven (longest serving lecturer)

Guest Lecturers

- Prof. Broderick (1926)
- Prof. Jackson (1926)
- George Watt (1926-1928)
- George Harcourt (1927-1928)



The 'Dirty Thirties'

The Dust Bowl Struggles
Bonused Shelterbelts
The Conquest Project
The Conservation Car

The Dust Bowl Struggles

- A period of drought and relentless dust storms – severe agricultural damage
- CFA: Trouble securing funding for TPC
- Profits quickly decline in early 30s
- Partnership with Samuel Joseph Cohen played a key role in delivering the program through the 30s
- TPC program was enthusiastically received as people began to recognize the value of trees

Bonused Shelterbelts

- Throughout the drought, many were realizing the value of trees
- Alan Beaven introduced an idea in 1934 – farmers would receive financial assistance to establish shelterbelts
- Followed by many other government programs
 - Conquest Project
 - Earned Assistance Program



Shelterbelts near Conquest, Sask.

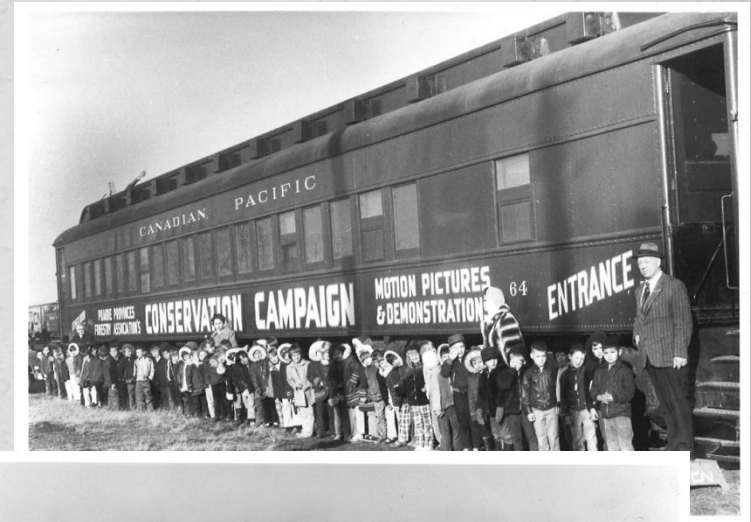
The Conquest Project

- Peter H. Kennedy “the father of field shelterbelts”
- Approached government in 1934 to get assistance in planting more shelterbelts on his land and adjoining farms – Dominion government agreed
- Conquest selected for large scale co-operative shelterbelt plantings
- 1935 – PFRA teams up with Dominion Department of Agriculture, Tree Planting Division (Indian Head, SK) to deliver the program over 25 years
- Conquest Field Shelterbelt Association is formed



The Conservation Car

- 1930s – a change of signage transforms the TPC into the Conservation Car
- Toured forested areas, presenting the program about the importance of *all* natural resources
 - Emphasis on human-caused forest fires
- Continued as a regular part of programming until 1973



The Later Years/Retirement

Re-organizing the CFA

Retiring the TPC

Looking Back on Successes

Re-organizing the CFA

- 1952: Association directors in the prairie provinces wanted the Prairies Provinces Division to assume responsibility of its financial affairs
 - Greater opportunity for local initiatives
 - More responsibility for securing financial support
- 1959: CFA re-organized to become a federation of provincial forestry associations – Prairie Provinces Division becomes Prairies Provinces Forestry Association (PPFA)
- 1971: Forestry associations in MB, SK, AB become autonomous

Retiring the TPC

- 1973: CFA decided to retire the TPC and donate to MFA
- Now displayed at the Sandilands Forest Discovery Centre in Hadashville, MB
 - Still used as a theatre to educate the public about the importance of trees and forests



Retiring the TPC (Cont'd)



Looking Back on Successes

- Early indications of success were attendance
 - Returning to towns years later, lecturers saw changes to the landscape
 - Lecturers began to observe and record success stories
 - By the 1940s, young people who had participated in the program began taking over farms
- “Young people taking over farms today are going to be tree planters, and are not going to make the mistake of waiting years for a start.”



For More Information...

- A Prairie Odyssey: Alan Beaven and the Tree Planting Car, by Dianne Beaven
 - Available from the MFA website
- Visit the Sandilands Forest Discovery Centre in Hadashville, MB
 - 2015 AGM pre-conference tour



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