

Chapter Six: Logging at Cowichan

Lumber Business

“I am a lumberman by inheritance, rather than by choice or profession. My father was a lumberman and I inherited his interest.” This is how Will Sutton, in January 1914, began his submission to the Forestry and Conservation Convention in Vancouver.

In fact, Will had little choice but to get involved in his father’s lumber business: in 1877 his first attempt at setting up an assaying shop in Victoria was unsuccessful; meanwhile, his father had already invested about \$4,000 in developing a lumber business that appeared to be going nowhere – Sheriff Sutton, over in Bruce County, needed someone on the spot.

Despite owning a grist mill, a sawmill, a substantial part of Kincardine AND being sheriff of Bruce County, clearly not satisfied, William Sutton was looking for other ways to invest his money. Timber was the staple economic diet of Canada in the 19th century and William Sutton would already have had experience of harvesting white pine but this was running out in Eastern Canada, so the timber trade, and William Sutton, turned to the Douglas fir in Western Canada.

Will Sutton was still at university when his father first visited Vancouver Island. William Sutton travelled over 2,600 miles from Walkerton to Vancouver Island using various modes of transport in particular the Transcontinental Railroad to San Francisco which was completed six years earlier, then by steam ship to Tacoma where he boarded SS Northern Pacific arriving in Victoria on 29th May 1875. It would have taken him just under a month to get there and he would make this journey at least four more times (1877, 1878, 1883, 1885) before finally moving to Victoria in 1893.

Land Lease and Partnership

In 1874-75 William Archibald Robertson represented Victoria in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. He had found “*magnificent timberland*” near Cowichan Lake and river, surveyed it and applied for a lease from the government but was unable to meet the requirements of the lease, to build a sawmill. Robertson met William Sutton in Kincardine and heard that he was looking to invest money so the two Williams struck up a business partnership.

Shortly after arriving in Victoria, William Sutton was taking a trip up the Cowichan River with his surveyors and Robertson, to locate his “*20,000 acres of timberland.*” *The Colonist* informs us, “*Logs are to come down the river and a steam sawmill to be built near the mouth. Success to the enterprise.*” Was the newspaper exaggerating the acreage or had William pre-empted the land? Certainly there was no official lease for that amount. But the newspaper extracts make clear William Sutton’s expectations and show that he was in a hurry to get started. In fact, machinery for the sawmill, made at the Guelph Iron Works in Ontario, was imported the same month.

William Sutton never left any memoirs but William Archibald Robertson did. He relates his side of the story,

Mr. Sutton professed to be a friend and assured me that if the timber was what I represented it to be he would stand by me and put in the necessary Capital to develop it and put it on the market. I was to cruise the timber and apply for a lease of it from the government all of which I succeeded and got a lease of 7170 acres of the pick of the timber for 21 years at one cent an acre per annum as I happened to be on friendly terms with the government. And timber land at that time was very easy to be had. I

surveyed the land at my own expense. As Mr. Sutton kept backing and filling so that I did not know what to make of him. He came out here and started to survey and after a few days he paid of his survey party and quit and started back home and told me to do what I liked with the timber by this time he had a lot of machinery here in my charge which he valued at \$4000.00 and told me if I could sell it and the timber lease and get him the 4000.00 that was all he wanted I therefor offered the lease of the timber and machinery to W.P. Sayward for \$8000.00 he asked for three days to consider it and then turned it down and thereby lost what was worth a short time after wards \$100,000.00 that was the time I was a fool if I had gone east to Michigan and shown the Mill men there was such an opening here I would have got a good figure for it that would put me on my feet. My lease called for a sawmill that would cut 10,000 feet a day and was to be kept running 9 months in the year and that was what beat me I had not the capital to do so.ⁱ

Hindsight is a wonderful thing but the situation was not as straight forward as Robertson implies. Identifying good timberland and getting a lease for it was one thing but finding and acquiring a site for the sawmill, building the sawmill and, more important, getting logs to the sawmill was quite another matter.

The Government required William Sutton to “*pay for continuous survey, to bear the expense of making roads to the timber belts and to clear Cowichan river of jams.*” William refused to take all this on as there was only a small amount of timber land available, “*but he offered to bear one-half the expense if the Government would bear the other; or he would make such roads as he required for the purpose and survey the available blocks at his own expense, which*

was all that was required of the holders of leases in other parts of the Province.” Unable to reach an agreement William stored the machinery, “*for a large mill,*” in Victoria and returned home.ⁱⁱ

Early Explorations

Nothing much seems to have happened for a couple of years until August 1877 when William visits Vancouver Island again but this time with his son, Will. William goes home to Walkerton whilst Will takes off on his adventures with William Archibald Robertson, ostensibly looking for timberland but having some exciting times in the process, as exemplified in the following extract from his 1903 lecture,

We wanted to go up to Alberni and examine Barclay Sound and Alberni Canal. The old steamer Maude used to make bi-monthly trips to Comox, and we went up on her, intending to land at the mouth of the Qualicum, but it was so rough in the Gulf of Georgia they landed us at Deep Bay, and we had to tramp along the shore, covered with boulders, and it was worse than a treadmill.

Anyway, we reached Qualicum, and went over the trail and examined the country bordering Barclay Sound, and went down to Bamfield Creek where the Pacific cable has now its terminal. We intended to go up to Central Lake and cover that country, but it rained incessantly. We only had one fine day, and I believe that was Saturday, during all the time we were there, so we made up our minds to start back.

We started out with the intention of reaching the Qualicum and catching the Maude on her down trip. We had to start at five o'clock in the morning. We passed by the Alberni townsite. At that time there were only three

settlers there – old Mr. Clark, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Merriman. We stopped at Mr. Clark’s house and had some pea soup, and I have never forgotten that pea soup. It certainly stuck to my ribs that day.

We trudged over this weary trail, and it became very dark. I thought we would have to stop, but Mr. Robertson was equal to the occasion. He hunted around and got some gum-wood, with which we made torches, and we went on the rest of our journey with the torches made of this gum-wood.

Well, we reached Qualicum, and we had not had any supper, and I was a young man with a good appetite. When we started out we made a cache of some provisions in an old Indian house on the other side of the Qualicum, and whilst Mr. Robertson was making a fire I succeeded in swimming across the Qualicum, but in consequence, my matches had become wet, and when I got over to the Indian’s house he had been there and had nailed up the house. I was, however, determined to go in and get them, and I beat down the door and groped around in the dark in that dirty old Siwash house for the provisions which I expected would be there, but they were gone. I had to return supper-less, and again swim across this wild torrent at midnight.

I give this as an example of what pioneers have to do to master Vancouver Island. No-one but a man with tremendous determination can overcome the difficulties in the way.

Land for the Sawmill

Building a sawmill was a legal requirement for the lease: it would need to be near open water deep enough for boats to

anchor. This was identified at Snug Creek, Mahoney's Bay (now Genoa Bay).

The Provincial Government had sold 66 acres of land at Snug Creek to William Sutton for a dollar an acre and his men began clearing and building the sawmill: two carpenters and a millwright left Victoria for Cowichan to erect the mill at the end of March 1878 and by July about twenty men were working on the building. But it seems the land was not free for the Provincial Government to sell.

The Native Cowichan had many grievances, not least concerning land encroachment. Reserve Commissioner Sproat had been dealing with their complaints in 1877 and was shocked to learn, when he visited Cowichan again in 1878, the Provincial Government had sold the land to William Sutton as it had already been awarded to the Cowichan. Sproat blamed the *“unbusinesslike inaction”* of the Provincial Government who, he argued, had all the documentation and should have known the land was unavailable. Sproat was also worried about running logs down the Cowichan River which would affect the Native fishing weirs, especially as log runs were likely to happen at the same time the salmon were swimming upstream and being fished by the Cowichan.

Indian Superintendent Powell wrote to William Sutton warning he was *“rendering himself liable to prosecution for trespass,”* and continues, *“so far I am not aware that any notice has been taken of my communication.”*ⁱⁱⁱ

Several letters passed between government departments about whether the mill was being built on government land or Indian reserve and pressure came from William Sutton

to resolve the issue as, he argued, by this time he had invested \$28,000. There were high-level debates and tricks:

The Indian superintendent for British Columbia, Israel Wood Powell, believed the Cowichan were unlikely to surrender the land. He suggested erasing the reserve grant from the reserve commissioner's Minutes of Decision; the land was of little value to the Cowichan, he argued, and with the mill they would be able to purchase lumber more cheaply. The provincial attorney general George A. Walkem approved, and Powell wondered whether Indian Affairs would consent as well? Sproat was astonished. Nothing was more certain, he argued, to reinforce distrust among Native people of white government than such duplicitous action and he pressed for a negotiated solution. The mill was likely useful to the Cowichan, but they were in the best position to judge its value and that of their land and fish weirs. Tact and maybe a little money would settle the conflict, but only 'if the people had confidence.' 'There has been,' he wrote, 'too much man of war business on the coast and too little plain kindly dealing.' The taking of Cowichan land, illegally and improperly, with no regard to the weir fishery was too much like the former and the honour of the Crown was at stake.^{iv}

Powell was instructed by Indian Affairs to negotiate; he visited the Cowichan reserve and convinced the Indian Chiefs to sell the 66 acres to William Sutton. An agreement was signed on 22nd October 1879: the chiefs of Comiakem, Quamichan, Clemclemeluts, Somenos, and Kenipsen villages, made their marks on the '*Agreement between the undersigned Chiefs of the Cowichan tribes of Indians resident in the Cowichan District and William Sutton of the same place. Gentleman.*' The agreement gave the land to William Sutton

on his payment of \$200. However, the Chiefs had expected lumber waggons instead of money. Eventually Indian Affairs agreed to pay the extra \$150 to provide waggons for the five groups.^v

Building the Mill

We turn again to William Archibald Robertson's memoirs. He tells us he began to build the mill, along with young Sutton (Will). He continues,

We started in to build the mill Sutton was to keep the books and I was to direct the work, and he sent a Millwright from Ontario, a man that might be good enough to build a small mill in that Province but he was utterly unfit to build a large mill such as was wanted in British Columbia and he was a man that in his own opinion knew it all and would not be advised and had no system in doing his work and directing his men in doing work to advantage and he did not have a fair opportunity even if he had been competent but I doubt if he even knew the deficiency in the machinery Sutton sent him for the Mill. We were only a few days started when young Sutton began interfering in my directing the men and I reminded him of the agreement that I was to direct the work and he promised to not interfere any more but it was only a few days when I found where I put men to work Sutton put them at something else and the men asked me who was boss as they did not know. I told them if Sutton wanted to be boss to let him be so, I would attend to the black-smithing. We had from 12 to 16 splendid men and if they had been right directed the mill should have been completed in three months, instead of that it was not completed in six months and when completed it was not as good as many a Sawmill that did not cost one fourth what it cost.

Robertson clearly believes he had a better knowledge and understanding of what was needed both with regard to building the sawmill and to the type of machinery that would be needed. It could be he was right. The Suttons had clearly ordered too much equipment as an advert in *The Colonist* for June and July 1879 has Will offering new sawmill equipment, including bottom and top saw rigs, steel mandrils, pulleys, steam pump, carriage, castings etc., for sale, and we are told they will be sold cheap! The advert also included sale of the schooner Juanita. It sounds like buying the schooner (and the machinery) was an expensive mistake. Steamers like the Leonora were used to tow booms of logs across Cowichan Bay to the sawmill; barques would then be hired to transport the final product to purchasers.



Sutton mill at Snug Creek, c. 1880^v

In response to the situation, Robertson wrote to tell “*Old Sutton*” to “*come out*” and see for himself what was happening. He said,

...there was some underhanded correspondence going on between old and young Sutton as I had seen fragments of

the old man's letter laying round where the son was not careful enough to properly destroy them. Old Sutton came out late in the fall and the son and him had a great many secret confabs, and also with the Millwrights and then he wanted an account from me of what work I had done. I give him an account and then I withdrew it under an excuse I wanted to change some part of it. I then told him I would keep it until we had a final settlement, and we had a row over it. The reason I withdrew the account was when I give it in first he let out that there would have to be different arrangements made. So I went to Victoria and consulted a Lawyer named Rock Robertson and he told me when I showed him the different letters I had received from Sutton during our negotiations he could compel Sutton to carry out his agreement. But I came to the conclusion that the way the mill was built and the heavy interest to pay and young Sutton doing all he could in the interest of his father, and by this time I came to the conclusion that the old man was a rogue and unscrupulous that the best thing I could do was to get out of it as best I could and I did the best I could but he swindled me out of the finest 7170 acres of the finest timber in the Province, and some years afterwards Sold his pottering Sawmill which the purchasers valued at only \$5000.00 and the timber for \$135000.00. Which by the way did not do him much good as it was only a few years afterwards when I helped to pack him out to Rossbay Cemetery and it was not long after when his wife committed Suicide and was laid beside him.

Gosh, was he angry. But who is he angry at, William Sutton or himself? One thing is clear, Robertson did not care very much for William Sutton. It seems bizarre, therefore, that he was one of the pallbearers at William Sutton's funeral.

Will must have been in a dilemma – given their escapades it seems likely he got on well with Robertson but would have had to respond to his father’s wishes/instructions. If what Robertson says about William Sutton is true, it sounds very much like William Sutton was not a very nice man, was arrogant and possibly a bully. Yet despite the disagreement Robertson was later to log for the Suttons – needs must.

Felling

Kaatza, The Chronicles of Cowichan Lake by John F.T. Saywell, 1967, is a key resource for information about the timber business in Cowichan. Saywell tells us William Curren was the logger for the Suttons and John Burke the ox-teamster or ‘bull puncher.’ A few simple tools such as axe, saw and peavey or canthook were used in the early days with strong and skilled axemen,

standing on ‘chopping boards’ six or eight feet from the ground, one on either side of the tree...the crosscut saw was then made without ‘raker’ teeth, and was considered too slow for felling but was used to ‘buck’ or cut the logs into required lengths.

Trees nearest the river were felled first, once trees further away came down they needed to be moved to the river. Saywell describes the operation:

A log would be laboriously dragged from the spot where it had been felled and bucked to the skid-road by the straining bull teams pulling in unison under the skilful guidance of ...[the bull-puncher], with an assist from the complicated rigging of blocks, chains and hemp ropes. A skilled axeman called the “barker” would bark a strip on the side of the log called the “ride”, in order to lessen friction down the skid road to the water. In summer,

when the sap was running freely, the logs were completely barked...

Here is a photograph from Kaatza of a similar scene:



Logging with oxen near March's farm. Probably Angus Fraser, early 1890's.—(C. March photo).

The loggers slept in rough bunkhouses which had a stove in the middle. Cedar boughs were used to make a bed (the loggers brought their own blankets). There were often seven or nine men sleeping in the same bunkhouse. Their food consisted mostly of corned beef, cabbage or salt pork and potatoes from the nearest farm, with occasional venison if someone had managed to shoot a deer.^{vii}

Log Drives

Saywell believes the Suttons would have used the river to get the logs down to Cowichan Bay from their second camp at River Bottom. He gives an evocative description of the log drives after the Suttons had sold out. Although the log drives used by the Suttons would not have been as dramatic as they never used the whole length of the river, they are likely to have been similar:

The logs were barked in order to lessen the danger of being hung up. Barking made them more slippery and

they floated a little higher in the water. When the river was rolling high, a crew of seasoned loggers were distributed at strategic points along the river. The logs were then released steadily but not rapidly. Logs have been reported as going through to the salt chuck in eight hours. More often there were log jams and delays, as numerous obstacles stalled and endangered the success of the drive. Often the drive took many weeks, depending on the amount of timber and the number of obstacles.

Many of the logs were sixty feet and some as long as one hundred and ten feet. It was the longer ones which usually caused jams. Men went out in two canoes with a winch to try and remove the key logs in the jam; if this did not work dynamite was used. Many men took part in the drives, a third or more being Cowichan.

It was a cold, hard and dangerous job; always there was the threat of moving logs, floating debris and sometimes chunks of ice. The foreman was the river driver, then there was a walker, one who 'walked' the river, a tote wagon driver and a cook^{viii}.

Problems with the River Cowichan

According to Saywell, William Sutton had originally hoped to be able to transport his logs by railway but his plans were dashed as building the railway was delayed^{ix} and the spar lines came many years later. The only way to get logs from Honeymoon Bay on the shores of Lake Cowichan, which is where the original timber lease of 7070 acres was situated, to the sawmill at Snug Creek at this time was via Cowichan River.

The excellent timberland in Cowichan, and a need to clear the river, had been identified as early as 1864 when Dr

Robert Brown led an exploration party up the Cowichan River to Cowichan Lake, guided by Cowichan chief Kakalatza. Brown described the river as “*a most tortuous stream,*” adding,

it is exceedingly rapid, there being hardly any smooth water with the exception of short distances in the canyon, and about two miles at the height of the river before joining the lake.

Brown suggested clearing the river of obstructions and deepening the shallow parts which would then allow logs to be “*floated down in ‘cribs.’*” He concluded,

The whole of the spar lands are excellent soil, and it would abundantly pay to clear them for the value of the timber alone. Deer abound all along the track and salmon ascend the River to the lakes.^x

Saywell tells us Cowichan River drops five hundred and fifty feet from the lake to the bay and within its winding thirty-five miles there are one hundred and thirty rapids plus about thirty falls, some of which are from six to fifteen feet high. Transporting the logs down Cowichan River to the bay was clearly going to be a major task.

In a photograph album,^{xi} donated to the Royal British Columbia Archive in 1933 by Will’s sister-in-law, there are a series of photographs showing some of the hazards on the Cowichan. It is probably because of the hazards that the Sutton’s first logging camp^{xii} was situated at Koksilah River, South Cowichan which joins part of the Cowichan River before flowing into Cowichan Bay. They no doubt began felling here as it would have been relatively easy to get logs across Cowichan Bay to the mill.

In 1877 the Provincial Government agreed to spend \$1,500 to remove obstructions on the river. But the Minister for Public Works decided not to implement this as he believed the river was non-navigable. The local MPP^{xiii} argued it was navigable with small crafts and suggested the sum expended would quickly be recovered with revenues from the lumber industry. In February 1878 it was decided to go ahead with the clearance.

The location of the second Sutton camp suggests the problems of floating logs down the upper reaches of the Cowichan River had not been resolved. The camp was about twelve miles from Duncan, around River Bottom just below Skutz Falls but even this site did not remove all the problems.

We know that logging first began along the Cowichan river in the summer of 1878 because of complaints from settlers of erosion damage caused by logs hitting the river banks. The complaints were that lumbermen did not watch the logs progressing down the river.^{xiv}

Will Sutton wrote to the Commissioner of Land and Works in May 1878^{xv} seeking a further 500 acres of timberland at Port Neville on the mainland, near salt water. Will says,

We find, that in order to be able to compete successfully with other sawmills in this Province and Puget Sound, it is necessary for us to have a Spar claim near the Salt water.

You are aware that all our timber limits are upon the Cowichan river and lake; where it will be impossible to run Spars of any length on account of the narrowness

and windings of the stream. Therefore we are under the necessity of applying for a Spar claim of five hundred acres at Port Nevill.^{xvi}

As we do not hear of a camp being set up here it seems unlikely the application was successful.

The Public Works Department cleared the river in 1880 which resulted in the river altering its course and large sections of the Cowichan Reserve being washed away. A complaint was made by the Cowichan Indians the following summer. Indian Agent Lomas warned that if something was not done to remedy this, by straightening the channel, ***“many of the Indians will experience considerable loss next winter in both land and improvements.”*** In his report to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Indian Superintendent Powell pointed out that William Sutton was also ***“interested in seeing the river straightened.”*** There does not appear to be any official response to Powell’s letter apart from a note on the top of the letter, ***“to remove the obstructions in the old channel by burning the drift wood...”***^{xvii}

A third Sutton camp was established at Honeymoon Bay (the original land grant) on Cowichan Lake but, Saywell tells us, ***“there is little indication that much if any timber was felled.”***

It looks like the Suttons never logged at Honeymoon Bay because they realised it was impossible to get the logs from Cowichan Lake down the river.

Output 1879-1885

W.P. Jaynes was tallyman at the mill when it opened and it is in operation by 27th May 1879 as *The Colonist* says,

The steamer Leonora will leave here at 3 o'clock this morning for Cowichan to tow a boom of logs from Mr. W.A. Robertson's logging camp to Sutton and Co's mill. Thence she will proceed with a boom of piles in tow for the wharf of the South Wellington colliery.

The Colonist is a good source to give an idea of how busy the Sutton sawmill was – although maybe not every shipment is recorded? We know the mill had begun operations by 1879 but we hear nothing about logging shipments for the period 1880-1881. Things pick up in 1882:

- in April the *Mary Winckleman* was laden with railroad ties from the mill bound for San Francisco;
- in August, *“the barque City of Halifax arrived at Victoria in tow of the Pilot, lumber laden from Sutton’s Mill, Cowichan”*;
- in October, *“the Pilot leaves Victoria with the barque, Starlight, for Sutton’s Mill to load lumber and piles for San Francisco;”*
- in December, *“the barque Halifax arrived at Victoria in tow of the Pilot with lumber laden from Sutton’s mill, Cowichan.”*

Output probably increased when the Suttons developed a fourth logging camp near open water making it easier to transport logs to the sawmill. This was at Fulford Harbour, on the southeast side of Salt Spring Island, where, we are told, *“the gang are getting out ties for the Central Pacific Railway.”*^{viii} But a letter was sent to the Premier of British Columbia from the Reeve of Salt Spring Island complaining about the Suttons cutting timber on government land which would deter settlers *“coming in our midst as no person would like to settle on a piece of land after the timber has been culled out and taken from the land.”* A letter was

sent to Mr. Sutton telling him not to cut timber on Government land.^{xix}

At the end of December 1882 the Suttons have begun exporting to Australia: the barque City of Halifax, laden with 571,228 feet of lumber, set sail for Sydney, Australia. However, according to another source,^{xx} it would appear the Suttons lost heavily through their agents in Australia.

Two Other Events at the Mill in 1882

The year 1882 was significant for two other events that occurred at the sawmill. In April Will is involved with a fracas between the captain and first mate of the barque, The Winckleman:

Supt. Todd and Sergeant Bloomfield returned last night from Sutton's mill, Cowichan. They report that the difficulty occurred between the captain and mate, on Sunday afternoon, who, from high words and abusive language, got to threatening to take each other's lives, the one with a pistol and the other with a mallet. The combatants were eventually parted by the second mate and Mr. Sutton with considerable difficulty, but not till repeated blows had been struck, and the cabin in which the fracas occurred was bespattered with blood from floor to ceiling. The telegrams were then forwarded to this city for police assistance. When the officers arrived – about 10 o'clock on Monday night – they found that the captain had locked himself up in the cabin, but the mate was at large. This officer came down with the supt. and sergeant, and on Friday the captain and his witnesses will also arrive by the regular steamer.

The case will then come before the police magistrate for adjudication. The probabilities are that charges and

counter charges will be laid when the parties are all in town.

The second event happened in August 1882, when Peter Green from Montreal, a workman at the mill, accidentally drowned.

Ups and Downs of Running a Lumber Business

The lumber business clearly has its ups and downs and perhaps Will is getting frustrated? Alongside the business he sets up an assay office at Cowichan which he advertises in March, April and May, 1883.

In September that year the Suttons bought the Carpenter logging camp at Deep Bay on the East Coast south of Denman Island and north of Qualicum; at a price which *“exceeded expectations.”* Like the camp at Fulford Harbour, this was also close to the open sea which meant it was easier to get logs to the sawmill.^{xxi}

Perhaps the Deep Bay logging camp is responsible for new activity? We learn the steamer Beaver is towing logs for the sawmill at the end of September whilst in late November there are adverts for *“the preparation of every description of lumber.”* In the same advert it says William J. Sutton has ceased to run the mill on his own accord. We do not know for certain who he has gone into partnership with but it is likely to have been his brother James Edward who is now 21 years old.

Nothing more appears in the newspaper regarding the Sutton logging business until 1st January 1885 when we hear they have opened a lumber yard in Victoria.

If *The Colonist* includes all of the shipments made to and from Sutton's Cowichan Mill then it looks like business was sporadic (dependent on either acquiring logging camps near the sea or the rise and fall of Cowichan river – when the river was low it was impossible to float logs) with 1882 being the busiest year; it is worth noting Will's father visited the West Coast at least twice during this period, in May 1883, and again in May 1885 – does this mean there might have been problems?

Family Tragedy

The Sutton sawmill and lumber business in Cowichan was a family affair: William Sutton owned and controlled it from Walkerton, Ontario whilst his eldest son Will, took over managing the business after the fallout with William Archibald Robertson (remember, Will is still only twenty years old at this point). Will's second cousin Alfred (son of Richard, Will's father's nephew who emigrated to Canada with him in 1850 and who is three years older than Will), was probably there from the start. Later Will's brother, James Edward, joined them. It is unlikely William's youngest son, Richard Keyworth, had much to do with the business as he was to remain in Walkerton even when his parents moved to Victoria.

Will would have been close to his cousin Alfred who, at 24, married Margaret Alexander at St Peter's Quamichan on 29th June 1880.^{xxii} We know that Will is living near Alfred and Margaret as they built their homes near the mill at Snug Creek. They are next to each other in the 1881 census: Will is a mill owner whilst Alfred is a carpenter. Margaret Sutton was, according to Saywell, for some time the only white woman there and at one point she was cook at one of the camp sites.

Whilst out hunting on 23rd September 1886, Alfred, who had been a foreman at the Sutton mill for many years,

...was accidentally shot dead by Dan Mahoney in a mistake for a deer. Neither party knew the other was out, and Mahoney seeing Sutton moving in the bush, and thinking he was a deer, raised his gun and fired. The ball went through Sutton's heart, killing him instantly. He leaves a wife and 2 children and many friends to mourn his loss.^{xxiii}

The Coroner's inquest came up with a verdict of accidental death. At first sight this appears suspicious, especially as Alfred was shot through the heart. But according to local story-teller, T.W. Paterson, Dan Mahoney was Will's friend and was so overcome with grief and guilt he became depressed and died shortly after the incident.^{xxiv}

Alfred is buried at St. Peter's Quamichan cemetery; the wording on his gravestone, "***But let our hearts in every woe Still say thy will be done.***" It is worth pointing out the date on the gravestone is wrong, the stonemason chiselled 1887 instead of 1886. Margaret and her two children went to live with her parents at Oak Bank Farm; and the sawmill at Snug Creek was closed down.

The Sutton family used this time to take stock of their business and must have decided the only way to make it a success and to access the 'magnificent timber' was to get roads built. It is probably with this in mind that Will decided to put himself forward for election as Member of the Provincial Parliament in 1887.

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- ⁱ Correspondence with Kathryn Kerby who is editing, with Doreen Kerby, the memoirs of William Archibald Robertson held at RBC Archives.
- ⁱⁱ *The Colonist*, 24th August 1875.
- ⁱⁱⁱ British Columbia Archives, GR-2982 box 1 file 36 Ministry of Lands and Parks, No 1363. Letter from J.W. Powell re William Sutton, 18 June 1878.
- ^{iv} Douglas Colebrook Harris, in *Fish, Law, and Colonialism: The Legal Capture of Salmon in British Columbia*, 2001.
- ^v *ibid.*
- ^{vi} From Hughitt Family Records via Neil Andrew Dirom
- ^{vii} John F.T. Saywell, Kaatza, 1967.
- ^{viii} Saywell, *ibid.*
- ^{ix} Will attended a big meeting in Cowichan in 1880 to discuss the lack of progress on the Island railway the Dominion Government had promised. *The Colonist*, 2nd December 1880.
- ^x Saywell, *ibid.*
- ^{xi} There appears to have been little work done on the photograph album which is held at the British Columbia Museum Archive. Thanks to Leona Taylor who very kindly took photographs of most of the album, I have been able to do some research on them and have been able to sort them into groups. In order to arrive at the groupings the numbers on the bottom of the photographs have been discounted as referring to any order – whoever wrote the numbers it was not Will Sutton nor his wife Annie Sutton (having examined their writing against the numbers on the photographs); it was likely an archivist. However, the numbers are helpful in being able to identify the individual photographs. A list of photographs in the album can be found in Appendix A.
- ^{xii} Saywell, *ibid.*
- ^{xiii} Member of the Provincial Parliament.
- ^{xiv} Brendan O'Donnell, Indian and Non-Native Use of the Cowichan and Koksilah Rivers, An Historical Perspective, Native Affairs Division Issue 8 Policy and Program Planning, July 1988, Fisheries and Oceans.
- ^{xv} British Columbia Archives, GR-0868 file 1185-78.
- ^{xvi} We do not know if this was successful but as Saywell does not mention it, it seems unlikely.
- ^{xvii} Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG10, Vol 8310, File 974/8-3-3-1(1). Microfilm C-13781, quoted in O'Donnell, *ibid.*
- ^{xviii} *Colonist*, 2nd July 1882
- ^{xix} GR-0868 Box 4 folder 41, B.C. Department of Lands and Works, Chief Commissioner Correspondence inward 1389/1882 TO 1619/1882.
- ^{xx} Norman Robertson, in the *History of the County of Bruce*.
- ^{xxi} *The Colonist*, 10th September 1883.

^{xxii} Margaret was the second daughter of David Alexander and his wife Margaret who lived at Oak Bank Farm, Somenos. David and Margaret were both born in Scotland and emigrated to Australia and then to Canada; their story is told in *Memories Never Lost, Stories of the Pioneer Women of the Cowichan Valley and a Brief History of the Valley 1850-1920*. Alfred and Margaret had three children, Alfred Allen, born 1881, Agate Maud, 1882 and Richard Brice, 1884 who died the same year at nine months of age.

^{xxiii} *The Colonist*, 24th September 1886.

^{xxiv} <http://twpaterson.com/old-cemetery-society-visits-cowichan-valley-cemeteries/>