

THE MINNESOTA SEASIDE STATION NEAR PORT RENFREW, BRITISH COLUMBIA:

A Photo Essay

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IN 1898, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA botanist Josephine Tilden, her sixty-year-old mother, and a field guide landed their canoe on Vancouver Island at the mouth of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. This concluded one journey – involving three thousand kilometres of travel westward from Minneapolis – and began another that filled a decade of Tilden’s life and that continues to echo in the present. Inspired by the unique flora and fauna of her landing place, Tilden secured a deed for four acres (1.6 hectares) along the coast at what came to be known as Botanical Beach in order to serve as the Minnesota Seaside Station (Figure 1).

Born in Davenport, Iowa, and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Josephine Tilden attended the University of Minnesota and completed her undergraduate degree in botany in 1895. She continued her graduate studies there, in the field of phycological botany, and was soon appointed to a faculty position (the first woman to hold such a post in the sciences) and became professor of botany in 1910. With the support of her department chair Conway MacMillan and others, Tilden’s research laboratory became the site of the Minnesota Seaside Station, a place for conducting morphological and physiological work upon the plants and animals of the west coast of North America. It was inaugurated in 1901, when some thirty people, including Tilden, MacMillan, departmental colleagues, and a researcher from Tokyo, spent the summer there.¹

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¹ Conway MacMillan, “A Marine Biological Station on the Straits of Fuca,” *Journal of Geography* 1 (June 1902): 263. For more about the Minnesota Botanical Seaside Station, situated in the “Marine Gardens of the North Pacific Coast,” see also George Nicholson, *Vancouver Island’s West Coast, 1762–1962* (Victoria: Morris Printing, 1962), 291.

A year later, MacMillan described the physical conditions of the laboratory as well as the natural landscape and availability of botanical specimens:

The log buildings of the Station stand in a small clearing and have an outlook upon the Straits and upon the Pacific. With the forest behind and ocean in front their situation is as perfect scenically as it is for the purpose of science. Miles of tide-pools, reefs and kelp covered rocks are easily accessible along the water front, while landward the hills rise to a height of nearly 3,000 feet ... Over the whole countryside spreads the primeval and well-nigh impenetrable forest of Vancouver [Island] with its gnarled yews, enormous cedars and towering spruces ... Altogether, the opportunity for the study of marine and coastal botany and zoology is magnificent, and there is no good reason why it should not be possible to maintain a thoroughly well-equipped international marine station ... The location is altogether admirable, rich and interesting, and practical work has begun.²

Undergraduate student Emily Crosby, who was at the station in the summer of 1906, was more succinct in capturing the enchantment of the place: “The wilderness claims you for its own, and you enter upon a new existence. Everything is on a huge scale out there. From the great spruces, some of them one hundred and fifty feet high, to the ocean itself.”³

Aware that research institutes in temperate countries had tropical field stations, and that humid zone researchers might benefit from work in the desert, Conway MacMillan had no doubt that a marine station could be “of the utmost value” to an inland botanical institute. At such a place, he argued, “advanced students will receive most vitalizing impressions and the problems of their own regions will come before them in new and interesting lights.”⁴ Between 1901 and 1907, most members of the

² MacMillan, “The Minnesota Seaside Station,” *Popular Science Monthly*, January 1902, 199. Six decades later, historian Nicholson described the tide pools in the sandstone “from bathtub to swimming pool in size,” home to sea urchins, abalone, crustacea, octopus, small cod, and rare seaweed. See Nicholson, *Vancouver Island’s West Coast*, 291.

³ *The Gopher: University of Minnesota Yearbook* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1908), 311. Both MacMillan’s and Crosby’s descriptions of the station depict a scene in which the wildness of nature is untouched and human activity is absent. This was not the case, and participants in the station were not unaware of the Indigenous population, the railways, the miners, the loggers, and the traders at Port Renfrew, as is evident in their correspondence, notes, and photographs. Their emphasis on the remoteness of the station is in juxtaposition to the activity that surrounded it. For a survey of settlement and economic activity on the Island’s outer coast in the booming Edwardian era, see Nicholson, *Vancouver Island’s West Coast*.

⁴ Conway MacMillan, “Pacific Botanical Station,” *Minneapolis Journal*, 18 May 1901.

University of Minnesota's Department of Botany spent a month at the Seaside Station. Through seven summers, approximately two hundred researchers and students lived in the bunkhouse known as "The Sea Palms." Two laboratory buildings, one for botanical studies and the other for zoology, completed the station's grounds (Figures 2 and 3).

Annual announcements invited interested botanical researchers, students, and high school teachers from across the United States and Canada to attend lectures; take courses in botany, zoology, and geology; and to participate in research, observation, and collecting excursions. Botanical courses taught at the station by MacMillan, Tilden, and department faculty members Frederic Butters and Otto Rosendahl, mirrored offerings from the regular university catalogue, including General Algology, Morphology and Ecology of Kelps, and Taxonomy of Coniferae. Additional courses in zoology and geology allowed participants to cover a year's worth of coursework in a single month. In 1901 and 1906, attendees produced a collection of papers entitled *Postelsia: The Year Book of the Minnesota Seaside Station*. The papers were written accounts of "fireside talks" given at the station.

People interested in field photography were also encouraged to attend, and a dark room was available in the main building. In 1901, the Department of Botany brought along professional Minneapolis photographer C.J. Hibbard to photograph specimens and the Seaside Station environment. In 1903, as a recent University of Minnesota graduate, and again in 1906, as a newly appointed instructor in the department, Ned L. Huff attended the station and photographed research work and daily activities. Although others, including Rosendahl and Butters, took photographs and compiled scrapbooks of station activities, Hibbard and Huff created most of the surviving photographs.

Although important research was conducted at the Minnesota Seaside Station, and participants covered field season expenses themselves, the Board of Regents did not approve of the station. In 1906, MacMillan resigned over "political" dealings within the university administration. For the 1907 season, Tilden assumed management of the station, although she "deemed it inadvisable to continue maintaining it at such a loss of personal time, energy, and money – the University received all the benefit."⁵ At their 2 May 1907 meeting, the Regents voted to end the university's association with the station and that summer was its

⁵ Josephine Tilden, in response to a typed questionnaire from university president Guy Stanton Ford, in University of Minnesota Archives, Information Files Collection, "Tilden, Josephine Elizabeth," n.d.

last formal session.⁶ The station site is now located within Juan de Fuca Provincial Park.⁷

FINDING THE PACHEEDAHT IN MINNESOTA

For the past several years, the University of Minnesota Archives has been making digital surrogates of its collections in order to enable online discovery and delivery. In 2015, it held digital copies of approximately 1.5 million pages and photographs. In 2013, a grant from the State of Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund underwrote a twelve-month project to digitize the archival records of the Minnesota Geological and Natural History Survey, relating to the flora, fauna, geology, and natural environment of Minnesota between 1872 and the turn of the twentieth century. Materials in these collections include photographs, research notebooks, correspondence, and departmental records. Much of this material, especially the glass negatives, lantern slides, and photo albums, was inaccessible to researchers.

Interested in uncovering how the faculty at the University of Minnesota explored and surveyed their research interests, even if these extended beyond the state, the archives included a portion of the Department of Botany's records – a set of glass lantern slides attributed to faculty member Ned Huff and photographic prints made by C.J. Hibbard – in the digitization project. In March 2014, members of the Pacheedaht

⁶ Butters and Rosendahl continued to visit the Seaside Station through the summer of 1910. See Ernst Abbe, "Frederic King Butters, 1878-1945," *Rhodora* 50 (June 1948): 137. Despite the University of Minnesota's departure, the site continued to be in occasional use for many decades: biologists and students from the Provincial Museum of British Columbia (now the Royal British Columbia Museum), Victoria College (now the University of Victoria), the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the Friday Harbor Laboratories of the University of Washington continued to visit, camp, and collect specimens until the 1980s. In 1962, George Nicholson noted some of this activity: "Other groups, both American and Canadian, still come; but now they have to camp out, for the station buildings have long since disappeared and the site is completely overgrown with brush." See Nicholson, *Vancouver Island's West Coast*, 291. Two retired biologists from the University of Victoria, George Mackie and Arthur Fontaine, recalled this use: "He [Arthur Fontaine] told us about the marine station at Botanical Beach and *Postelsia* way back when I visited from Edmonton in 1958 and we went out to look at the site. Groups of Phycology students were going there from Friday Harbor to collect at the site until quite recently, but I don't know how long the 'lab' itself survived or if was used at all after the University of Minnesota left" (George Mackie to Richard Mackie, e-mail correspondence, 28 August 2015). "Marion [Fontaine] and I visited the site also, in 1957 with Cliff and Babs Carl [of the Provincial Museum of British Columbia], and a year or so later with Anne Blakeney, then a botany lecturer at Victoria College. We searched the site pretty thoroughly and found no traces of the Minnesota activities" (Arthur Fontaine to Richard Mackie, e-mail correspondence, 28 August 2015).

⁷ For more information, see Juan de Fuca Provincial Park, available at http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparqs/explore/parkpgs/juan_de_fuca/

Heritage Project of Vancouver Island contacted digitization project manager Rebecca Toov. While conducting online searches for material related to Botanical Beach and Josephine Tilden, they had discovered a blog post written by Toov on Tilden and the Minnesota Seaside Station. They asked about the extent of the university's holdings on these subjects. Soon thereafter another batch of lantern slides was digitized. These focused entirely on the Minnesota Seaside Station and included images of members of the Pacheedaht First Nation. These newly discovered images were shared immediately with the Pacheedaht Heritage Project. An accompanying request for help in identifying the content of the images produced an unexpected response:

The images you are sending to us are the earliest photographic records we have of Pacheedaht people, and of their main village. The only other photograph we have of the village, to date, is one taken in 1914 that is very blurry and shows only a part of the village. The most recent photograph you have sent us of the village at the mouth of the San Juan River is exceptionally valuable as it shows all the houses in the village [Figure 7], and also allows us to position the large framed house pictured in one of the earlier photographs you sent to us [Figure 8].⁸

Discoveries such as these raise difficult and challenging questions that touch the ethical and professional underpinnings of archival work. To whom do these images belong? How do we make them accessible? Can we make them available? Writing on postcolonialism and community archives, Jeannette Bastian observes that “providing access becomes an integral component of custody” in archival work.⁹ A “cohesive and reliable construction of collective memory by nations, communities, or groups of people depends upon their ability to access their own historical records in addition to the artifacts, traditions, folk histories, and other memorializations of their pasts.”¹⁰ As the holder of the materials, the University of Minnesota Archives is committed to ensuring this access for the Pacheedaht – and to others who may find their cultural history in the archival records.

⁸ E-mail message from Pacheedaht Heritage Project to Rebecca Toov, University of Minnesota Archives, 14 March 2014. The University of Minnesota Archives has developed its relationship with the Pacheedaht Heritage Project and provided it with high resolution copies of all items relating to the Pacheedaht and their history. Additional information about the images provided was, in turn, incorporated into the archival metadata.

⁹ Jeannette Bastian, “Taking Custody, Giving Access: A Postcustodial Role for a New Century,” *Archivaria* 53 (Spring 2002): 81.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.



Figure 1. Original caption: “Beach in front of the Minnesota Seaside Station,” July 1901. C.J. Hibbard, photographer. Today’s Botanical Beach is now within Juan de Fuca Provincial Park in British Columbia. *Source:* University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Department of Botany Print Photograph Collection, 1898-1903. Image ID: una363747. Available online at <http://purl.umn.edu/167931>.

Throughout this process, the University of Minnesota Archives has sought to follow the recommendations and suggestions found in the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials.¹¹ This is tremendously helpful in dealing with the challenges of managing archival materials that are either traditional cultural expressions of, or traditional knowledge held by, Native North Americans. The work is still in process. The University of Minnesota is forever tied to the collective cultural history of the First Nation whose traditional territory includes Botanical Beach on Vancouver Island at the mouth of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, three thousand kilometres away. In an almost uncanny echo of what Conway MacMillan saw as a reason for inland botanists to visit marine biomes, these newly digitized archival collections further our understanding of the paired histories of the Pacheedaht and the University of Minnesota by placing them “in new and interesting lights.” Ultimately, we seek to achieve – in our digitization and curatorial work as well as through this photo essay – what Kay Mathiesen describes in a recent *American Archivist* article as a “collaborative and mutually respectful relationship” between a Canadian First Nation – the Pacheedaht – and the archives.¹²

¹¹ See Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, available at <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html>.

¹² Kay Mathiesen, “A Defense of Native Americans’ Rights over Their Traditional Cultural Expressions,” *American Archivist* 75 (Fall/Winter 2012): 457.



TOP: Figure 2. Original caption: "Class working on the rocks near the Minnesota Seaside Station buildings at low tide," circa 1906. Ned L. Huff, photographer. The station's facilities were built with the assistance of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian government. *Source:* University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Ned L. Huff Lantern Slide Collection, 1900-1952. Image ID: una508701. Available online at <http://purl.umn.edu/177661>.

BOTTOM: Figure 3. Original caption: "Minnesota Seaside Station Laboratory," July 1901. C.J. Hibbard, photographer. This is the zoological laboratory. Courses were offered in general marine invertebrate zoology and embryology. *Source:* University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Department of Botany Print Photograph Collection, 1898-1903. Image ID: una363598. Available online at <http://purl.umn.edu/167773>.



TOP: Figure 4. Original caption: "Costaria, Alaria, and other kelps, low tide," circa 1906. Ned L. Huff, photographer. Unidentified woman collecting specimens along the coast. The Minnesota Seaside Station is visible in the left-hand corner. *Source:* University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Ned L. Huff Lantern Slide Collection, 1900-1952. Image ID: una495781. Available online at <http://purl.umn.edu/177404>.

BOTTOM: Figure 5. Original caption: "Nereocystis plant held by nine men," July 1901. C.J. Hibbard, photographer. This image of kelp was used to demonstrate the extensive botanical resources available to the researchers in Minnesota Seaside Station announcements. *Source:* University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Department of Botany Print Photograph Collection, 1898-1903. Image ID: una363678. Available online at <http://purl.umn.edu/167641>.



TOP: Figure 6. Mining camp, circa 1901-1906. Unidentified photographer. The mining activities were located near Port Renfrew and represent the commercial interests of the Gordon River Iron Ore Company. (Nicholson, *Vancouver Island's West Coast*, 289.) The camp depicted is no longer in operation and is overgrown with new foliage. *Source*: University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Minnesota Seaside Station, Negatives, circa 1901-1906. Image ID: una541283. Available online at <http://purl.umn.edu/i86875>.

BOTTOM: Figure 7. Original caption: "Returning from Pachina the Indian Village," 1903. Ned L. Huff, photographer. Additional information provided in 2014 by the Pacheedaht Heritage Project suggested that this is the earliest known photograph of the Pacheedaht village. It provides new information regarding the layout of the village as well as the location of the large house depicted in Figure 8. *Source*: University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Minnesota Seaside Station, Photo book of Seaside Laboratory at Port Renfrew, British Columbia, 1903. Image ID: una540961. Available online at <http://purl.umn.edu/i86882>.



Figure 8. Original caption: "Tribal house of the Indians at Port Renfrew," circa 1906. Ned L. Huff, photographer. Additional information provided in 2014 by the Pacheedaht Heritage Project indicated that the image was likely taken in the Pacheedaht village at the mouth of the San Juan River in Port San Juan, next to Port Renfrew. This large house was not occupied at the time of the photograph, likely during the summertime, as the house planks are not in place. The architectural features of the house are significant. A traditional dugout canoe sits on the house floor. *Source:* University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Ned L. Huff Lantern Slide Collection, 1900-1952. Image ID: una495773. Available online at <http://purl.umn.edu/177389>.



Figure 9. Original caption: "Drift wood for the boat," circa 1906. Ned L. Huff, photographer. Image depicts a member of the Pacheedaht First Nation. *Source:* University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Ned L. Huff Lantern Slide Collection, 1900-1952. Image ID: una495775. Available online at <http://purl.umn.edu/177393>.



Figure 10. Original caption: "Loading the boat with drift-wood," circa 1906. Ned L. Huff, photographer. Image depicts members of the Pacheedaht First Nation. *Source:* University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Ned L. Huff Lantern Slide Collection, 1900-1952. Image ID: una495776. Available online at <http://purl.um.edu/177394>.



Figure 11. Original caption: "Kluchman on the trail near Minnesota Seaside Station," July 1901. C.J. Hibbard, photographer. Additional information provided in 2014 by the Pacheedaht Heritage Project noted that "Kluchman" or "Klootchman" was the name for a native woman in the Chinook trade jargon. *Source:* University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Department of Botany Print Photograph Collection, 1898-1903. Image ID: una363635. Available online at <http://purl.um.edu/167722>.



Figure 12. Original caption: "Indian women with baskets," 1903. Ned L. Huff, photographer. Both the individual participant of the Seaside Station and the four members of the Pacheedaht First Nation are unidentified. *Source:* University of Minnesota Archives, Department of Botany Records, 1893-1989, Series Minnesota Seaside Station, Photo book of Seaside Laboratory at Port Renfrew, British Columbia, 1903. Image ID: un4540960. Available online at <http://purl.umn.edu/186882>.