The Walhachin Myth: A Study in Settlement Abandonment

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In most "ghost town" studies, settlement abandonment is generally attributed to one major variable such as resource depletion or drought. In the case of the British settlement of Walhachin in British Columbia's interior, abandonment resulted from the interplay of a host of such variables.[1] *In toto* they created an environment in which the settlement could no longer continue. Enduring for only twelve years after its founding in 1910, Walhachin's failure as a settlement, in the popular myth, has been attributed largely to casualties suffered by Walhachin volunteers during World War I. This single factor explanation of the settlement's abandonment presented by Ormsby, Hutchison, Borthwick and others, is not only inaccurate but also inadequate in that it ignores the most crucial factors.[2] A more complete explanation is offered by an examination of cultural and environmental factors. These include such variables as level of expectation, relevant experience, relative location, quality and quantity of land, and availability of capital. The purpose of this paper is to identify a number of these factors and to explain their role in the failure of Walhachin and to add to a more complete understanding of the many failures in British Columbia's settlement process.

Walhachin may be regarded as a microcosm of British Columbia's settlement process since it embodies a number of major themes associated with the province's development. It may be viewed as a search for a type of utopia, and also as part of the agricultural frontier. It is also possible to view Walhachin as an ethnic group settlement and as an example of unbridled land speculation.

Walhachin is located in the Thompson River Valley in the southern

[1] Walhachin (pronounced Wall′-uh-sheen) was the name given to the C.P.R. station in 1909. In this paper the name refers not only to the station and townsite but also to the adjacent lands purchased for horticulture.

[2] For a discussion of the myth associated with the abandonment of Walhachin see D. Borthwick, "Settlement in British Columbia," *Transactions of the 8th British Columbia Natural Resources Conference*, (Victoria, 1955), 97-108; B. Hutchison, *The Fraser*, (Toronto, 1950), Ch. 18; M. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, (Toronto, 1958), Ch. 13.

part of the Interior Plateau of British Columbia. The area, approximately 5,000 acres, stretches in a seven-mile belt along the river, about one and one half miles wide. The north and south boundary is largely physiographic while the longitudinal limits of Walhachin are determined by the Deadman's Creek Indian Reserve to the east and private property on the west. Although the settlement was abandoned more than fifty years ago, its extent may still be seen by the relics left on the landscape: irrigation flumes along the valley walls, derelict stone fences, fruit tree skeletons and the "ghost town" of Walhachin. Located thirty-five miles west of Kamloops, the landscape is one which would stir the imagination and interest of any traveller and certainly anyone interested in the development and settlement of British Columbia.

The area in which Walhachin was located had been an attractive one for cattlemen since the 1860's with its bunch grass stretching for mile upon mile. In 1870, Charles Pennie pre-empted 160 acres adjacent to the Thompson River and it was on this ranch that the Walhachin scheme began. Charles Pennie had complete water rights on a nearby creek for domestic water as well as water to irrigate two acres of apple orchard near the ranchstead.[3] He had chosen the orchard site well as the soil was the most fertile in the area, virtually stone free, suitable for furrow irrigation and protected by a natural windbreak. In 1906, this productive orchard was misinterpreted by C. E. Barnes, an American land surveyor working out of Ashcroft, as being representative of the agricultural potential of the entire valley. Since fruit farming was just beginning in the Okanagan Valley and British Columbia was caught in an immigration boom, it is not surprising that Barnes saw an opportunity for a speculative venture.

The years 1905 to 1912 were boom years in British Columbia and a spirit of optimism prevailed in the province.[4] For those attempting some agricultural pursuit in the interior of the province this optimism is easily understood, since no accurate information relating to agriculture was available. What was available for the intending settler was an abundance of promotional literature expounding the excellent potential of virtually every interior valley. Kamloops was advertised as the Los Angeles of Canada and brochures announced that there were "ten railways building or chartered . . . some surveyed . . . all heading to Fort George."[5]

[3] Having an orchard as an adjunct to a ranch was not uncommon. One of the first activities usually undertaken by settlers was to plant a few apple trees to provide much needed fresh fruit during the winter months.

[4] Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 341.

[5] *Ibid.*, 359.

The literature distributed by the office of the Agent-General in London was so persuasive that even the Governor-General of Canada, Earl Grey, fell victim to the promise of high profits awaiting clever cultivators. He stated that the fruit farmer was "*par excellence*, nature's gentleman"[6] and upon opening the New Westminster Fruit Exhibition in London in 1911, described fruit farming as an art, and went on to describe British Columbia saying, "Gentlemen, here is a state of things which appears to offer the opportunity of living under such ideal conditions as struggling humanity has only succeeded in reaching in one or two of the most favourite parts of the earth."[7] Walhachin then was merely part of a much larger process occurring at the time and it is only in this context of settlement activity and excitement that Walhachin's short history can be satisfactorily explained.

In 1907, C. E. Barnes persuaded Sir William Bass, a baronet of "ale fame" in England and a Director of the British Columbia Development Association, to view the property at Walhachin.[8] The B.C.D.A. Ltd. was a company formed in 1895 in London, England. Its aim may be stated briefly by quoting from the company's objectives, stated in its Memorandum of Association. They read as follows:

1. To develop the resources of British Columbia, and therein to promote commercial and financial enterprise.
2. To develop property and estates . . . by promoting immigration, selling, leasing, establishing villages and settlements.
3. To carry on among other things the business of farmers, graziers, meat and fruit preserves, brewers . . . and any other businesses which seem calculated to develop the Company's property, or benefit its interests.[9]

The company, founded by the Duke of Teak, Mr. J. S. D. deKnevett, Agent-General for British Columbia and Northern Europe, and Mr. H. C. Beeton, Agent-General in England for British Columbia, with shareholders in European centres such as Paris, Munich, Milan and Brussels, had considerable interest in British Columbia prior to 1908. They owned, at one time or another, such enterprises as the 111 Mile House Ranch and Hotel on the Cariboo Road, the Nicola Land Company Ltd. (Beaver Ranch), and held shares in the White Pass and Yukon Railway Co. Ltd., and the North Pacific Wharves and Trading Co.

[6] *Ibid.*, 354.

[7] F. Fairford, *British Columbia.* (London, 1914), 64.

[8] Hereafter to be referred to as the B.C.D.A.

[9] Great Britain, Public Records office, *Memorandum of the Association of the British Columbia Development Association Ltd.*, (London, December 14, 1895), 1, 2.

During his visit to the property at Walhachin, Sir William Bass was accompanied by Messrs. Palmer and Ashcroft, an agriculturalist and engineer respectively, from Lord Aberdeen's Estates.[10] Bass was convinced of the area's speculative value and advised the B.C.D.A. to invest in a land colonization scheme to be built around the Pennie ranch, with Barnes as manager. On January 21, 1908, the London-based company purchased the Pennie ranch and some adjacent acreage for $200 per acre including buildings, livestock and leased land.[11]

The B.C.D.A. immediately formed two subsidiary companies: The British Columbia Horticultural Estates Ltd. to deal with all the agricultural development, and the Dry Belt Settlement Utilities Ltd. to oversee the development of the Walhachin townsite. Both companies began work immediately. A temporary irrigation system was quickly installed to service the hastily prepared crop lands, and the townsite, comprising one hundred and fifty town lots, was surveyed during the summer of 1908 with construction following immediately. The settlement was significantly different from the common frontier pattern of isolated holdings as well as from the segregated town farm type, both of which were the norm throughout the province. At Walhachin the settlers lived together in a central village and owned properties located some distance from their homes.[12]

By the autumn of 1909, much of the preparatory work on the land had been completed, permitting an extensive advertising campaign to be initiated in England. The company's office was first located on High Holborn Street in London but was moved in 1916 adjacent to British Columbia House in Waterloo Place. From these bases an extremely selective promotional campaign was launched, fulfilling one of the objects of the B.C.D.A. as stated in its memorandum. "To promote, organize and conduct the colonization of British Columbia by the introduction of suitable immigrants from Great Britain. . . ."[13] Those considered to be potential settlers were either sons of wealthy British families who were finishing their public schooling, or military and government personnel about to retire on pension. Consequently a good deal of the promotion occurred

[10] John Campbell Gordon, the 7th Earl of Aberdeen, acquired extensive properties near Vernon in 1891, the Coldstream Ranch, and was one of the first to attempt commercial orchards. He was later to become Governor General of Canada.

[11] *Ashcroft Journal*, (January 18, 1908), 1.

[12] With such a form, the settlement had many similarities with traditional agricultural settlements in northern Europe.

[13] Great Britain, Public Record Office, *Memorandum of the Association of the British Columbia Development Association Ltd.*, (London, 1985), 2.

at social functions and through business and government contacts of the company's directors and shareholders. Indicative of the company's selective recruitment is the fact that it made virtually no use of newspapers to advertise the colonization scheme.

For promotional purposes the B.C.D.A. decided to adopt the Indian name for the area, "Walhassen," which was later changed to Walhachin. Although the direct translation means "land of round rocks," likely in reference to the large concentrations of cobble gravel capping the terraces, the company gave and published the translation as "abundance of the earth" or "bountiful valley" to facilitate their promotional descriptions of the valley.[14] Elaborate brochures and photographs of the Wenatchee Valley orchards in the United States and the Coldstream Ranch's orchards in the Okanagan were displayed in the company's office to supplement the very capable salesmanship of the company representatives.

J. S. Redmayne, a company promoter wrote a book entitled, *Fruit Farming in the Dry Belt of B.C.* It was published by the Times Book Club in 1909 and distributed to selected individuals throughout England. An examination of five statements in this book reveals encouragement to settle not only in British Columbia's dry belt but specifically in Walhachin:

a. Fruit farming has acquired the distinction of being a beautiful art as well as a most profitable industry.
b. Ten acres should yield 600 pounds from apples plus 400 pounds additional from intermediate crops.
c. Fruit farming in the dry belt of British Columbia is the best paying investment in the world.
d. Those that take up fruit farming in the British Columbia dry belt are . . . men of better class, people of education and refinement.
e. The best location is where conditions are similar to the Wenatchee and Yakima valleys . . . somewhere in the Thompson River district between Kamloops and Lytton.[15]

An inclusion at the end of the book described the B.C.D.A. settlement scheme at a location between Kamloops and Lytton. Anticipating that many parents might be reluctant to send their sons to the dry belt with no agricultural experience, the author included a description of the Resi-

[14] The terraces have a top layer of cobble gravel varying from eighteen inches to many feet thick, which was deposited while the river was down-cutting, swinging laterally to form the terraces.

[15] J. S. Redmayne, *Fruit Farming in the Dry Belt of British Columbia*, (London, 1909), 10, 50, 79, 82, 94.

dential Practical Training School the company planned to establish at Walhachin to teach horticulture.[16]

Sales occurred remarkably quickly with many completed by cablegram with army officers on overseas assignments in India and the Sudan. Most purchased the land sight unseen. The company quoted exorbitant figures in newspaper reports and in brochures as to the number of workmen employed at Walhachin, failing to mention that two-thirds were transients working on railroad installation for the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian Northern Pacific Railway in the area. Proposals such as a monorail system to link all of the orchard lands, and the fact that Prime Minister Laurier officially opened the Walhachin Hotel, encouraged rapid settlement.[17]

To establish a sense of permanency about the settlement, the company began publishing a weekly newspaper entitled *The Walhachin Chronicle* and it even went so far as to purchase ginger ale and lemonade from London in bottles designed only for sale in Walhachin. Development occurred on a relatively large scale, both financially and spatially. C. E. Barnes, on behalf of the B.C.D.A., purchased a block of land totaling 3,265 acres within the Railway Belt from the dominion government at a cost of $1.00 per acre with the stipulation that Barnes would provide water for its total development.[18]

By the autumn of 1910, a number of settlers had begun to develop their own estates by cultivating and planting fruit trees. Immediate settlement was not necessary, however, because once the orchard was purchased, planting and tending could be done by the company's horticulturists.[19] During the following years the orchard acreage expanded by approximately 250 acres yearly until 1,246 acres had been planted by 1914. The crops attempted at Walhachin were numerous and varied. Over the years most of the common orchard species were planted as well as more exotic crops such as tobacco. Various vegetables thrived, and

[16] It is interesting to note that no reference to the Training School was found in any company correspondence or documents.

[17] Another example to indicate the extent to which the B.C.D.A. would go in their promotional efforts was that Walhachin won a bronze medal for her fruit exhibit at the 1910 Colonial Fruit Exhibit in London although the trees had just been planted as saplings that very year.

[18] Data obtained from a detailed map of Walhachin in the Kamloops Land Registry Office, dated 1911. This property, on the north side of the Thompson River, was often referred to as the Barnes Estate.

[19] Although the term "Company horticulturists" appeared in the promotional brochures it is noteworthy that the most experienced fruit farmer at Walhachin was a young man who had visited for one year on an Australian sheep ranch and six months on a cattle ranch in the Cariboo region of British Columbia.

were grown in separate plots or used as filler crops in the orchards in an illogical attempt to reduce the amount of evaporation. After a long process of trial and error apples were found to be the only fruit that held any potential at all so that at the time of Walhachin's demise, less than one per cent of the total acreage was in fruit other than apples. Production from the land was extremely limited and few carloads of vegetables and fruit were shipped from the packing plant at Walhachin.

By July 1910 fifty-six English settlers had arrived at Walhachin with as many again having purchased property. The price of the homes as well as the five- and ten-acre estates was dependent upon how knowledgeable the prospective buyer was of conditions and land prices in the dry belt of British Columbia.[20] The population grew to one hundred and fifty permanent settlers by 1915 not including the fifty Chinese irrigators and domestic servants, and, depending on the season, as many as two hundred workmen. As with any frontier settlement the male-female ratio was extremely unbalanced, with a noticeable lack of women and young families. During the autumn, the male population was even further skewed with the influx of sportsmen from both England and Victoria to fish for salmon and trout and to participate in wild fowl shooting.

Sports and social functions, lures for sportsmen and settlers alike, were encouraged by the B.C.D.A. promoters and Walhachin entrepreneurs and became a way of life for most — a way of life to which many were already accustomed. Since most of the duties in the orchards and in the settlement were carried out by the large number of irrigators and workmen, the settlers had considerable time to engage in social and sporting events. Indeed the social life at Walhachin could only be described as extravagant. A company was formed with the sole purpose of organizing the community's social life, the nature of which is manifest in the company's hotel policy. The luxury hotel, designed largely as an interim residence for recently arrived settlers, was closed to the general public but had two beverage rooms to separate the properly attired from the *hoi polloi.*

To visitors, Walhachin gave the impression of being a thriving agricultural community, until August 27, 1914, when the Walhachin Squadron of the 31st British Columbia Horse left for Salisbury Plain where they remained in training for fourteen months before moving to the Front. The squadron included all but one of the single men in the settlement. This left a considerable number of the older and married men to oversee

[20] Five- and ten-acre estates were sold for prices ranging between $200.00 and $1,500.00 per acre.

work on the orchards of the Walhachin properties. As the war progressed, however, more men continued to leave for overseas and by 1918 the total British population was reduced to approximately fifty. Ironically, the war years were the only years that Walhachin was in a position to export any of its agricultural produce.

Men began returning to Walhachin during the spring of 1919. Many were accompanied by their families, who had returned to Britain during the war years, while others rejoined their families who had remained at Walhachin. Despite the myth, that most of the volunteers had been killed in combat, few had suffered casualties in the war and most, including the single men, returned, at least temporarily. Few of the settlers remained for any length of time. If they had not already made arrangements, while overseas, to pursue some other means of livelihood, most did so very quickly. By 1921, with the irrigation system in a state of disrepair, the orchards deteriorating, fruit prices declining, and a prevailing atmosphere of failure, most had departed. In July of the following year the irrigation system ceased to operate. Fields and orchards immediately fell into ruin and by the autumn of 1922 all of the original British settlers at Walhachin had abandoned their lands.[21]

As a distinct community, Walhachin existed for nearly thirteen years. During this time the fundamental agricultural resource base experienced little change. The period, however, was sufficient to allow for an interplay of factors which contributed to Walhachin's eventual failure and consequent abandonment.

During the years that Walhachin appeared to function as a successful settlement, the settlers either consciously or unconsciously attempted to adjust to their new environment. The adjustments they were required to make were many and varied, major and inconsequential, attempted as a group and individually, and were successful or unsuccessful to varying degrees.

The irrigation system was the most obvious adjustment made by the settlers to the dry belt conditions. Walhachin is one of the driest regions of Canada, receiving an average of only 7.55 inches of precipitation annually.[22] It is comparable to the Southern Okanagan Valley in mean

[21] The lands remained vacant until 1940, when cattleman Harry Ferguson leased 5,000 acres of the abandoned orchard land. While President of the University of Bangor, Wales, the 6th Marquis of Anglesey just prior to his death at his estate of Plas Neuydd on the Isle of Anglesey, sold the property to Ferguson in 1947.

[22] J. K. Mohr, Acting Officer in charge of the Ashcroft Meteorological Station stated that the temperatures and precipitation at Walhachin are equivalent to those at the Ashcroft Village Weather Station. The exact figure is from: British Columbia

summer temperatures (a July and August average mean temperature of 70.5°F).[23] Consequently the irrigation systems were the major life-lines upon which the settlement depended and their decline brought Walhachin's decline.

The orchards at Walhachin included acreages on the north as well as the south side of the Thompson River. The three-hundred acres of orchard and crop land on the south side required three and a half miles of flume, ditch and pipe to transport the water from three small drainage basins. The north side of the river required a much more elaborate system of waterworks since it was to service a much larger acreage as well as provide water to the south side to overcome water deficiencies in that area. In 1910 the Snohoosh Water, Light and Power Company Ltd., a subsidiary of the B.C.D.A., was granted the right to "sell, barter, or exchange water within a prescribed area" and to provide water for the 1049 acres belonging to the Savona Orchard Lands for an annual rental of $1,500.[24] Upon completion, the company's irrigation system (considering both the north and the south side of the river) comprised approximately 127 miles of irrigation works, largely supplying water from Snohoosh Lake to the individual orchard properties.

Theoretically, the gravity fed system could have provided an adequate water supply for irrigation and domestic purposes. The amount of water flowing through the canal across Bate's Flat was measured in 1910, 1911, 1912 and 1913.[25] It was enough to provide five acre-inches per week which is more than sufficient for this area. Although the source was sufficient, the system was inadequate and proved to be unreliable.

This unreliability is related to one of the most critical factors associated not only with the irrigation system but also with the entire settlement: the speculative factor. It reappears in various forms throughout this an-

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Department of Agriculture, *Climate of British Columbia,* Report for 1965, (Victoria, 1966), 38.

[23] *Ibid.*, 8-9.

[24] E. H. Treadcroft, *Conditions of Dams on Vidette Lake and Snohoosh Lake*: Department of Indian Affairs Report, Kamloops, Dominion Water Power and Reclamation Service, 1929, 19, and W. H. Moodie, *Report on the Anglesey Estate, Walhachin, B.C.*, (Kamloops Land Office, 1920), 3. (Mimeo).

Water companies were established in conjunction with most land companies in the dry belt since the law required anyone applying for water rights to describe the specific property to receive water. A company such as the Snohoosh Company, could apply for a license to irrigate a large tract of land and dispose of the water as it deemed necessary.

[25] Bate's Flat, named after an early pre-emptor, was a large terrace on the northeast edge of the Walhachin property over which all the water serving Barnes Estates flowed.

alysis of failure factors and is here associated with the irrigation system. Walhachin was the product of a land colonizing company which accounts in part for the poor planning and subsequent quality of the water system. Most of the system was built over a period of six months and was designed as only a "temporary structure to be reconstructed when the property got self supporting . . . to a permanent structure."[26] The developers were not interested in the system's long term capabilities and likely had little concern whether or not Walhachin would one day be self supporting. The B.C.D.A. was certainly not an anomaly. W. A. Carrothers, discussing various British settlement schemes attempted during the same period as Walhachin's inception, suggested that "perhaps it is not uncharitable to say that only a proportion of these were designed in the genuine interest of the emigrants."[27]

The haste in which the flume was constructed is evident from the neglect to assure solid footings and correct design. In some sections the flume was constructed of lumber too thin to be satisfactorily caulked. Combined with the settling resulting from inadequate footings, the result was considerable leakage, and maintenance beyond that normally required. The company failed to take the time to line the open ditches with concrete and since the soils at Walhachin are extremely sandy and gravelly, a conservative estimate was that "40% of water was lost in transportation through the ditches," as a result of seepage.[28] Furthermore, erosion occurred on the bottom and walls of the open earthern ditches and added more weight to the already over-burdened substructure with the result that to avoid extreme buckling throughout the flume system a depth of six inches was the maximum amount of water possible in a flume intended to support thirty inches of water.

Recognizing the inexperience of the settlers managing the construction of the irrigation works, and wishing to maximize profits, the lumber delivered for the flume from the Monarch Lumber Co. at Savona was not cut into standard lengths. Not recognizing the problem, and to save time, the builders interlinked the flume sections by using the varying board lengths, which resulted in the whole flume being essentially one unit. When small washouts occurred, rather than only one small section

[26] From the minutes of the Ashcroft Court House, Case of Steward vs. Indian Department — The Safety of Snohoosh Lake Dam, April 17, 1929 (in the files of the British Columbia Department of Lands, Water Rights Branch, Victoria, B.C.).

[27] W. A. Carrothers, *Emigration From The British Isles*, (London, 1929), 228.

[28] British Columbia, Report of the British Columbia Hydrographic Survey, *Sessional Paper*, No. 25F, (1913), 193.

breaking off the flume, a longer portion would be twisted down. One flume disaster in 1918 occurred when a rain storm washed out a small section but wrung down a section nearly one quarter of a mile in length.

The extensive lateral system was installed almost totally by the B.C.D.A. The company representative's lack of agricultural expertise resulted in a system being unnecessarily elaborate and extravagant. By failing to use a standard design for the small lateral flumes, excessive evaporation, construction, and maintenance costs were incurred. The lateral system continued to be a liability for most settlers since it necessitated the employment of more irrigators than normally required.

Since acreage south of the river had an inadequate water supply, an attempt was made to service the B.C. Horticultural Estates with water from Snohoosh Lake. A first attempt to siphon water across the river was made by laying a steel pipe through the river in April 1911. As a result of the debris and quantity of water occurring during the spring runoff, the pipe was washed out two months after its installation. A suspension bridge was then built across the river on which a six-inch steel pipe was slung. Unfortunately, the pipe was too small to provide an adequate water flow. In 1914 another attempt was made to replace the six-inch steel pipe with a twelve-inch wooden pipe.[29] Although it could carry an adequate water supply, the supporting suspension bridge was so low that when the pipe was filled with water, the added weight caused it to sag to such an extent that excessive leakage occurred and closure was necessary during the high water period in the Thompson River which continues well into the irrigation season.[30]

As a result of the poor planning and design, the extensive irrigation system became one of the settlement's most obvious liabilities. The B.C.D.A. expected to be paid in full for the costs incurred in developing the temporary irrigation system when the settlement became self supporting. The total capital expenditure of the system was in excess of one-third of a million dollars[31] and when, in 1919, Premier John Oliver evaluated Walhachin as a possible soldier resettlement area, a study assessed the cost "necessary to put the system in satisfactory working order . . ." to be $240,058.[32] The individual settler eventually would have

[29] British Columbia, Department of Lands, *Water Rights Branch Report*, No. 5243, (1915), 6.

[30] W. H. Moodie, *Report on the Anglesey Estate, Walhachin, B.C.*, (Kamloops Land Office, 1920), 7.

[31] W. C. Warren, *Snohoosh Lake Dam and Suggested Alterations*, A Report to the British Columbia Department of Lands Water Rights, (Victoria, 1927), 18.

[32] Moodie, *op. cit.*, 11

had to be responsible for these as well as the yearly maintenance costs, which made the expenditures for the water application completely uneconomical. In fact, irrigation costs remained excessively high in this area until late in the 1950's when technology had reached a stage sufficient to provide water at much lower rates for the crop lands.

Although the water system had potential in terms of providing an adequate water supply, it is interesting to note that the natural environment into which the water was being introduced had many agricultural limitations. Walhachin began during a period of great agricultural experiment in British Columbia. It was a time of empirical testing of the qualities of the land, farm by farm, district by district. There was no agricultural frontier line similar to those which were so easily defined in Australia and on the Great Plains, but only a series of valley bottoms of which few were suited for agriculture. The first settlers in these areas, almost of necessity, made false starts and it was only after a period of trial and error that the agricultural limits became known. Immigrants migrating into such areas were confronted at once with certain environmental conditions to which they had to adapt their agricultural practices or shape to their own uses. These environmental factors were difficult to overcome but usually not difficult to recognize and interpret. By innovation, by invention and by borrowing, techniques had to be adapted to cope with the new environment. On these techniques and the settler's ability, courage and ingenuity, depended the permanance and viability of their settlement and a standard of living which would permit the settler to make progress as he conceived progress.

One fundamental factor which hindered the progress of Walhachin was the area's climate. While temperature variability and frost conditions are important to all farmers, they were of special significance for those at Walhachin. When one is dependent on hard and soft fruit crops, these conditions are abnormally critical since one extreme climatic variation not only results in the failure of one season's crop but perhaps many. Perennial crops, such as those at Walhachin, require years of maturation before they approach a bearing state. An apple orchard normally begins paying something to its owner after five years and after seven to nine years a profit will normally occur. Consequently, any reference to average or normal temperature at Walhachin is of little significance. What is important is the temperature extremes.

Walhachin was less fortunate than the orchard areas of the Okanagan Valley in that it had no lake to act as a moderating influence on the cold air masses which found easy access to the Walhachin terraces. Much of

the adjacent landscape is composed of draws and gulleys opening onto the large lowland terraces allowing cold air masses to move easily downward from the high plateaus to collect and lie over the orchard terraces. Also, considering the wide range of daily temperatures, the area was susceptible to inversion frost.[33] The area's susceptibility to serious frost made Walhachin marginal as a fruit producing area. A comparison of temperature extremes for Walhachin and various points in the Okanagan suggests that Walhachin's potential based on a tree fruit economy was extremely limited since only the most hardy strains could survive. The area's marginality is demonstrated by the fact that over the past sixty years, growers throughout the province have adjusted to the climate so that today, less than one per cent of British Columbia's orchards are located in the Thompson Valley region.[34]

As with the climatic conditions, the Walhachin settlers had little knowledge of soil conditions in the area, and it was not until 1921 in the Okanagan and as late as 1934 in the Thompson Valley, that government experimental farms were founded to provide such relevant data. Most information available to prospective settlers (government reports and maps, promotional literature) was so inaccurate and/or biased that it usually rendered any judgment based on it unreliable. Indicative of this kind of information was a government report which stated that "it is now an established fact that apples of excellent quality will grow as far north as Hazelton, on the Skeena River, between 55 and 56 degrees north."[35]

In 1953 when the British Columbia Department of Agriculture finally began to test soil conditions at Walachin it found that none of the soils tested were suitable for tree fruits and that less than 160 acres at Walhachin were suitable for vegetable cultivation.[36]

In 1962 a comprehensive classification of soils in the Walhachin area was made by the Soil Survey Branch of the Department of Agriculture in order to determine the arable acreage and its suitability for irrigation.

[33] This is frost which occurs when already cool air comes into contact with supercooled earth (typical of arid regions at night) and is subsequently cooled below freezing. Also, the excessive summer temperatures, combined with low humidity, often resulted in heat scalding of the fruit, a condition practically unique to the area of Walhachin.

[34] R. R. Krueger, "The Geography of the Orchard Industry of Kelowna, Canada," *Geographical Bulletin*, Vol. 7, (1965), 62.

[35] British Columbia, *Handbook of British Columbia, Canada*, (Victoria, Bureau of Public Information, Bulletin No. 23, 1913), 3.

[36] British Columbia, Department of Agriculture, Proceedings of the Reclamation Committee, Brief No. 23 (March 1953), 3.

It was determined that the most economical use of the valley lands would be to restore them to grazing.[37] Although there were small areas that could produce vegetables the original survey grid system imposed on the landscape created problems. When the orchards were surveyed in 1908 little attention was paid to the obvious soil differences and little acknowledgement was given to the varied topography. Consequently varying portions of orchards were totally unarable. Therefore, considering the production potential, the variance of soils over any one estate, and the costs which the sales would have had to meet, the return from vegetables would have been inadequate to provide an acceptable standard of living.

If the land at Walhachin had been capable of producing fruit equivalent to the average production in the Okanagan, its annual production during the most productive years would have amounted to 146 packed boxes per acre. With an average price of just less than two dollars per box the result would have been a gross return of approximately $290 per acre.[38] The average operating costs of the Okanagan's most efficient operation in 1919 was $226.03 per acre with water costs amounting to only 2% of the total.[39] Assuming that water costs were equivalent at Walhachin, that orchardists did most of their own work, and that the orchards averaged 95% production level (acreage), this would have yielded an annual profit of about $640.00 for the average Walhachin estate.[40] However, considering the assumptions made, the profit would have been extremely difficult to attain.

In addition to the aforementioned factors which influenced the settlement's decline there are others less tangible which permit a more complete explanation of Walhachin's demise. The settlers obviously did not recognize the Walhachin reality but rather relied on some exaggerated mental images of what Walhachin was, or more accurately, what they wished it to be. They saw the positive aspects of the environment and negated the harsh realities such as isolation and poor site conditions.

[37] P. N. Sprout and C. C. Kelley, *Soil Survey of the Ashcroft-Savona Area, Thompson River Valley, British Columbia*, British Columbia Department of Agriculture, Interim Report, Kelowna, (March 1963), 59.

[38] W. A. Middleton, *Cost of Producing Apples in the Okanagan and Average Yields and Prices for Leading Varieties*, British Columbia Department of Agriculture, Circular No. 38, (1921), 10.

[39] *Ibid.*, 5.

[40] The average size of holding in the Okanagan Valley in 1920 was 22.8 acres, whereas at Walhachin it was 10 acres. See D. E. Lee, "Some Factors Making for the Success or Failure of Agriculture." (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1925), 53.

They were abetted in their biased perceptions by company promoters who emphasized a scene of activity, prosperity, and growth. Many were introduced to Walhachin, and others made their final decision to settle at Walhachin, through reading *Fruit Farming in the Dry Belt of B.C.* written only for promotional purposes. Indeed, the role played by the promoter and land speculator at Walhachin was a critical one.

Walhachin was a land settlement scheme designed primarily to make money for the shareholders of the London-based B.C.D.A. On June 7, 1912, the B.C.D.A. was ordered to wind up on the petition of the debenture holders of the loans on which the company had developed the Walhachin properties.[41] Therefore, even to the debenture holders and the major stock holders in the B.C.D.A., Walhachin was a failure as an investment. Control of Walhachin fell into the hands of the 6th Marquis of Anglesey, who assumed control of all the subsidiary companies of the B.C.D.A.[42] This change in settlement control through land ownership had disastrous effects since the Marquis of Anglesey replaced C. E. Barnes by R. Chetwynd as director of Walhachin. Chetwynd lacked Barnes' ability, charm and general leadership qualities and was unable to keep the settlement unified.[43] Barnes was older and more respected for his background, experience and ability. Chetwynd in contrast was simply chosen from the rank and file of young men at Walhachin whose main qualification for the position was his relationship with the Marquis.[44] As a weak leader, Chetwynd found it difficult to organize and motivate the settlers to care for the irrigation system as a whole. Each was satisfied provided that adequate water reached his property. It was partly due to this attitude and partly to Chetwynd's limitations as an organizer, that the entire system rapidly deteriorated after 1919.

Individual success must be judged in terms of some specific criteria. At Walhachin, the most important criterion was the ability to adjust to a new environment which related directly to the training or background of the individual settlers. For many, Walhachin served as a last or only alternative. For the older settlers, Walhachin was seen as an opportnity

[41] Great Britain, Public Record Office, *British Columbia Development Association, Company Records*, No. 81-013, (1931), 5.

[42] Hereafter to be referred to as the Marquis.

[43] Lands dependent upon hydraulic improvements are extraordinarily sensitive to variations in the natural and human environments. They depend upon strong centralized control and a high level of leadership.

[44] The Marquis' cousin, the 5th Marquis of Anglesey, had married the eldest daughter of Sir George Chetwynd, baronet.

for retirement as a gentleman farmer but, among the younger settlers, few had any choice in the decision to emigrate to Walhachin. The young men usually had one of three backgrounds: one of repeated failure and/or behavioural problems in schools such as Eton and Marlborough, one of personal scandal or legal "difficulties," or one of military or civil service expulsion. Generally their families were at a loss as to what to do with them so the boys were encouraged to go overseas to manage the family's newly acquired property at Walhachin.[45] Indeed, the quality of settler at Walhachin left much to be desired. There was often little willingness to work, a lack of useful skills, little motivation to succeed, or as one informant stated, "Walhachin was a catch-all for rejects."[46]

The viability of any settlement is related to its inhabitants' level of expectation. Expectations, including acceptable living standards, are relative: what one man accepts, another may reject.

Unlike the majority of British immigrants who emigrated to British Columbia after the Boer War from the working and middle classes, the Walhachin settlers were largely from the ranks of British aristocracy. Essentially urban in origin, they were members of some of the wealthiest families in Britain including those of Cecil Rhodes, Prime Minister Asquith, Lord Nelson and King George V. Their backgrounds reflected conservatism and elitism and their expected standard of living is reflected in the fact that the Marquis had his own swimming pool, Paderewski's piano was purchased for concerts held in the elaborate town hall, and fox hunts (more accurately, coyote hunts) were familiar events. Neighbouring settlers and communities accused the Walhachin settlers of riotous living, because they organized card nights, attended by both men and women, to raise money for schools and community facilities, a practice thought by many to be akin to saloon gambling.

The attitude of people in the area surrounding Walhachin is identified precisely by an author writing about group settlement schemes in West-

[45] Alternatives to managing the family's recently purchased property at Walhachin were usually to join the clergy, civil service or the army and many eventually chose one of these after experiencing failure at Walhachin. However, some had no alternative since they were sent as a disciplinary measure. An example of the latter would be a nephew of Cecil Rhodes who was sent to Walhachin after inciting a rebellion in Costa Rica.

[46] Interview with Walhachin settler, B. Footner, May 17, 1969. For others, Walhachin was regarded as little more than a retirement home. Many elderly settlers come to enjoy the wholesome climate. The air was thought to be extremely healthy due to its dryness and the promoters emphasized that the site had been chosen by the provincial government for a Consumptive Sanitorium but had been purchased by the B.C.D.A. first.

ern Canada about the time of Walhachin's development, who refers to, "... that special class of emigrant, the English gentleman's son, who as a group can be consigned to have had little lasting influence on the landscape since a great majority of them have failed and passed from active rural life. Canadians have no view of them collectively as settlers and ridicule them mercilessly. . . ."[47] As with most ethnic settlements, Walhachin was viewed as being different and unnatural. The surrounding communities viewed the settlement with skepticism, and although they felt the scheme was an interesting experiment, they recognized it as being nothing more. They were unwilling to respect men who did little of their own work and spent most of their time pursuing leisure activities. Walhachin's unofficial name, Little England, reflects its ethnocentric nature. With respect to attitudes, dress, and recreational activities, Walhachin was considerably closer to London and Victoria than to any of the neighbouring communities. The settlement was extremely self-centred and stood aloof from the frontier atmosphere which prevailed in the majority of other communities in British Columbia and was only partially susceptible to the play of forces which operated to break down the barriers that separated homogeneous groups from their neighbours.

The isolationist position taken by the settlers influenced development both directly and indirectly by creating a situation whereby assistance from neighbouring settlers was seldom sought or offered. Any study of a frontier region indicates the usefulness of co-operation with those more experienced. At Walhachin, the settlers were left alone to adjust to the new environment and had to depend essentially upon their own extremely limited experiences and very limited agricultural and business ability. This resulted in a host of blunders and in poor resource utilization and management. Fruit varieties were planted simply because they were grown in Britain, with little consideration as to their suitability to the region and to the varying market conditions. The major attempt at adjustment was to plant as many varieties as possible to see which thrived best. This resulted in a duplication of testing already done by their neighbours.

The settlers' successes as horticulturalists were minimal. Virtually none had any knowledge of farming practices and their unwillingness to learn is exemplified in the fact that only two men ever attended the winter courses in horticulture offered at the Pullman Technical College in Pull-

[47] Robert England, *The Colonization of Western Canada, A Study of Contemporary Land Settlement*, (London, 1936), 193.

man, Washington.[48] Most were quite content to receive their regular incomes from England and devote their energies to the social life available at Walhachin.

The overwhelming response of the single men at Walhachin to England's call for volunteers at the outbreak of World War I can be easily explained. They were linked very closely to England through families and finance and undoubtedly wished to contribute their share to the war cause. Along with this patriotic inducement was the opportunity to become involved in an actual combat situation. The troopers had been training for months in tri-weekly exercises at Walhachin as well as in field camps at the Vernon Training Camp. Consequently, they were anxious to put their training to the test. Most important, however, was the fact that the war provided an acceptable excuse to leave Walhachin. In 1914 there were forty single men living at Walhachin not including the labourers, and few women.[49] This extremely skewed sex proportion appeared to be altered even further since the settlers had little social contact with neighbouring communities. The young men had spent five years at Walhachin, had become somewhat disenchanted with the settlement's social life and were receptive to any opportunity for a change.

Responsibility for the orchards' maintenance was left to the older and the married men who managed to maintain as many as six ten-acre estates. Labour was difficult to obtain during the war years and work on the orchards depended primarily on Chinese and local Indian labourers. With the decline in funds from England, a weakening leadership and labour shortage, the orchards began to deteriorate. This led to a number of family men volunteering and as more men left, the settlement began to decline rapidly through neglect of homes, services, orchards, and the essential water system. By the end of the war, when most of the settlers were returning, the fate of Walhachin had become increasingly clear to most.

The B.C.D.A. had met the developmental costs at Walhachin and most of the residents received monthly sums of money from England in order to finance their estates and activities. However, after 1918 the financial responsibility of the Walhachin scheme became that of the 6th Marquis

[48] These two men received little financial support from England and, perhaps not surprisingly, were two of the very few who obtained any returns at all from their orchards.

[49] An examination of engagement announcements and the arrival dates of female settlers or visitors suggests that newly arrived single women did not usually retain that status long.

of Anglesey. Individuals were less willing to invest money in their estates after the war and after the B.C.D.A. had gone bankrupt. The B.C.D.A. had cajoled the Marquis into investing heavily in order that they could retrieve some of their expenses to pay off their shareholders. However, the Marquis found himself unable to make an investment substantial enough to revitalize the settlement. The Marquis had inherited not only the title from his cousin (Henry Cyril Paget, the 5th Marquis of Anglesey) but also his debts. Upon his cousin's death at Monte Carlo, his debts were reported to be in excess of £544,000.[50] As a result of these debts and the fact that the family (the Pagets) had a long history of scandal and financial blunders, various creditors had placed pressure on the Marquis to retrieve their monies. This pressure was heightened when the Marquis found, in 1920, that he had been a victim of a Turner Valley oil-field swindle. During his last visit to Walhachin prior to the war, the Marquis had invested heavily in one of the five hundred new oil companies formed in Calgary after the first Turner Valley naptha and natural gas well began producing in 1914. The company in which he invested never advanced beyond the paper stage and the financial losses experienced by the Marquis are indicated by the fact that in 1920 he was forced to sell the family ancestral home and properties at Beaudesert, in Staffordshire. He succeeded eventually in selling the mansion and its furnishings, as well as part of the 17,500 acres of estate to cover the family's outstanding debts.

In 1919, the Marquis made a plea to the provincial government for financial aid to revitalize the settlement, but was refused. The war had not only changed Walhachin but the province as well.

> Never again would the Province have the verve and the quality of life of the days of Sir Richard McBride. From this time forth, the relative proportion of British University graduates, remittance men and younger sons of noble families in its population would be diminished. In the country districts, a few families would try to keep alive their ritual of the weekly tennis and cricket matches, but now there were few who had the leisure or the means to indulge a taste for fox hunting or polo.[51]

John Oliver's Liberal party had replaced McBride's pro-British Conservative government and the new premier had little in common with

[50] G. E. Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage of England Scotland Ireland Great Britain and United Kingdom*, (London, 1910), Vol. I, 141.

[51] Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 402.

the Englishmen who were returning to Walhachin.[52] His attitude is indicated in his refusal of a later offer by the Marquis, to give his extensive property at Walhachin to the government to be used as a soldiers' settlement area; instead the premier chose property belonging to the South Okanagan Land Company.[53] The settlers then suspected an anti-British attitude on the part of the government but were also aware that Oliver was likely a shareholder in the South Okanagan Land Company. The suspicion that such a connection existed was increased when the land was sold for a much greater price than the company had originally asked.

At this point in time the ultimate adjustment was attempted: the settlers sold out or attempted to sell out. They recognized the futility of continuing, since after eight to twelve years of capital and personal investment, few returns had resulted and most of their properties had deteriorated significantly during the war. Facilitating this adjustment was the fact that many had received offers for rather lucrative positions and careers while overseas. Through renewed family and business contacts, positions had been offered to many, thus providing satisfactory incomes and prestige. Examples of positions which were eventually filled by Walhachin residents were: plantation director in Barbados, secretary of the Royal Agricultural Society, estate director in Malaya, police chief in the Sudan, member of parliament in England, and cabinet minister in British Columbia.

The alternatives available to most Walhachin settlers not on pension provided a relatively easy adjustment out of the endeavour at which they had failed. For most, their experiences represented lost years of their lives. They saw World War I, and the attitudes held by Oliver's government as the major reasons for their failures and that of Walhachin. Thus, even in retrospect the settlers were unable to determine the most fundamental problem and cause for failure — themselves!

By examining the processes of settlement in Walhachin and identifying and analyzing critical factors associated with the settlement's decline and eventual abandonment, three conclusions emerge. A settlement at that particular site, based on an agricultural economy, could never have en-

[52] Professor Ormsby describes this with great clarity by mentioning that Oliver had little formal education and was proud of the fact that he was a plain "dirt farmer" who had "dug ditches by the side of Chinamen"; see Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 398.

[53] S. L. Medland, "Economic Aspects of the Southern Okanagan Lands Project," *Transactions of the 7th British Columbia Natural Resources Conference*, (1954), 50.

This property became the South Okanagan Project which included 4,800 acres (Walhachin had 5,000) and cost $2.5 million to prepare.

dured as a self-supporting entity given the level of expectation held by its settlers. Walhachin's failure and subsequent abandonment cannot be fully explained by the single factor analysis which would suggest World War I as the sole cause of the settlement's eventual fate. A settler's behavioural pattern is crucial in evaluating his potential as a successful participant in the settlement process.

Walhachin should be recognized as paradigmatic of agricultural settlement failure. Figure 1, indicating variables which influenced the failure process in Walhachin could be used as a model to analyse other settlements since the determinants outlined will be found in virtually any settlement to a greater or lesser degree.[54]

The cultural factors in Figure 1 have been divided into two groups: the A set which remain relatively consistent over time and the B set which experienced alterations. Those in section A were all inadequate as they were introduced into Walhachin; in a negative state they remained so until the end. For example, the educational background of all the settlers was inadequate. They possessed no skills applicable to the endeavour with which they had become involved and over the years as a group they did little to improve themselves. In section B, the factors were originally positive but were subsequently transformed into factors detrimental to the success of the settlement. Leadership, which was so critical in a settlement dependent upon extensive irrigation, was largely responsible for the development that occurred before the "rejection mechanism" set in. As time progressed leadership weakened, to such an extent that many of the settlement functions ceased to operate effectively.

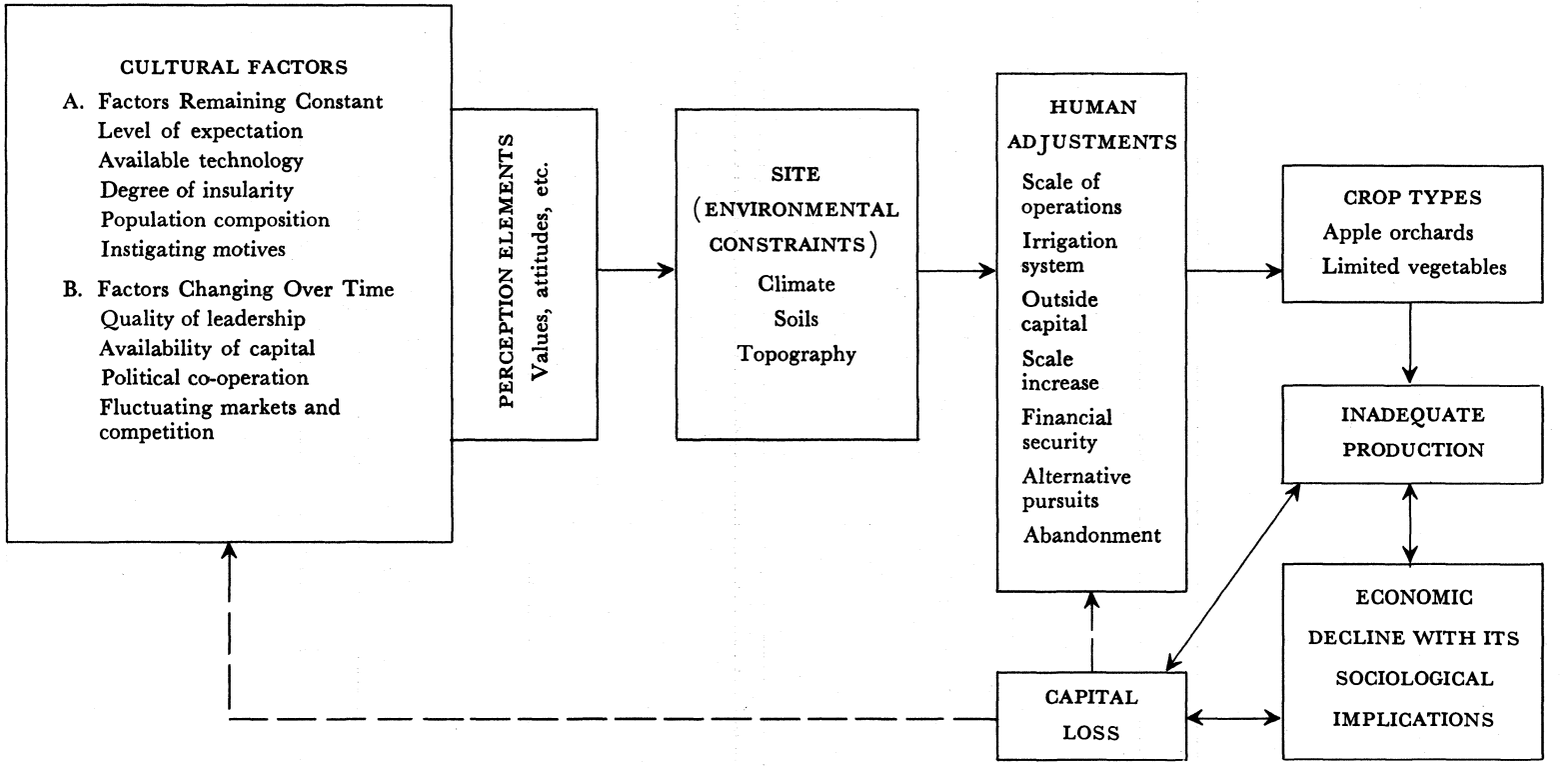
In any discussion of how factors transform the landscape and settlement process or are transformed by them, it is imperative to view these factors as being influenced by a perception screen. More specifically, values and attitudes serve as a filter through which the individual or group views the landscape and then proceeds to act upon it. Any study failing to recognize the influencing nature of the settler's perception would be incomplete.

As important as settlers' perceptions are site conditions, which at Walhachin were extremely poor. Neither the climate nor the soils were conducive to sustaining the community agriculturally. The crops most suitable to the existing conditions were similar to the natural vegetation

[54] The famous Barr Colony at Lloydminster and Cannington Manor (very similar to Walhachin) in southeastern Saskatchewan were both English settlements and eventually failed as a result of the variables presented in Figure I. Both are described by W. A. Carrothers, *Emigration From the British Isles*, (London, 1929), 239-247.

Figure 1

VARIABLES INFLUENCING THE FAILURE OF WALHACHIN



climax, namely feed crops for livestock which could, at best, support a limited number of people.

The category of human adjustments is most critical in an examination of frontier settlement. Adjustments are functions of the problems. The problems which confronted the settlers were of varying magnitude, and required a corresponding degree of adjustment. For example, the problem of an enterprise which was too small could have been easily overcome by an adjustment in the scale of operation. The climate presented a permanent drought condition which required a major adjustment in operations — an elaborate and costly irrigation system. Once the fate of Walhachin became evident, the obstacles created were nearly insurmountable and required the ultimate adjustment — abandonment. Had the cultural and environmental obstacles been less obstructive, the attempted adjustments might have been adequate to cope with them. Considering the circumstances, however, the settlers were left with little choice but to leave.

Repeatedly, inadequate production and overwhelming crop failure resulted in capital loss and subsequent decline in operations. Walhachin entered a pattern of perpetual failure. Normally, such a pattern will continue for varying periods of time depending on the individual settlement. At Walhachin, the settlers were not fully dependent on the settlement's production for their livelihood, so settlement continued for a longer period than would normally be expected. Twelve years of continual failure were needed to make some recognize the futility of their venture. Indeed, in an attempt to explain Walhachin's fate as a settlement scheme, one is encouraged to agree with the statement made by A. B. King when he summarized his inquiry into group colonization schemes by saying, "Yet of all emigrants . . . the Englishman is the last who should settle in groups."[55]

[55] A. P. King, *Horizons Abroad,* (London, 1922), 211.