

THE LUMBER STORY

When one seeks the key to the prosperity of Shasta County, it readily becomes apparent that the lumber industry is a major factor in this development. On the public roads plied by trucks carrying logs or lumber, and in the mills manned by a large percentage of the local working citizenry, this industry's importance to the area is amply proven.

The beginning of the lumber business in Shasta County dates back to 1844 when P. B. Readings's friend, Sam Hensley, was using the Ball's Ferry area as a launching point for logs he had cut in eastern Shasta County and was sending to Sutter's Fort. Permanent lumbering, however, followed the gold rush and the subsequent demand for lumber for buildings. The first mills were the McCumber and the Old Dry Mills in the Shingletown plateau section, and the ill-fated Bowles and Rogers venture in the Fall River Valley, all in the 1850's. During the late fifties and into the sixties, mills began to appear through the county, and by the decade of eighties, lumbering was a permanent business in the region.

This initial period in the local lumber picture, which lasted approximately half a century from 1860 to 1910, saw the development of the forest area around Shingletown as the primary timber supply section. By 1885, there were eight sawmills in this region, and lumber could be purchased at one of these mills for \$10 - \$12 per thousand. Shakes, shingles and fence posts were also available from these companies. In addition, during the eighties, both Anderson and Cottonwood began to serve as shipping points for the lumber from northeastern Shasta County. In the Fall River section the decade of the eighties was also a lumber era. The Florin Brothers' mill near Fall River Mills and the Hawkins Mills at Dana were the leading producers in this region. Throughout this period before the turn of the century, timber was a fairly substantial factor in the Shasta County economy. An article in an 1882 Shasta *Courier* revealed:

Timber lands of northern California are now attracting great attention; one of our exchanges has published about 300 applications to purchase the timber lands of Shasta County, of which there are immense quantities. The government price for timber land is the same as for mineral—\$2.50 per acre.

During this era in the lumber story, yellow and sugar pine provided the bulk of the timber supply. Since timber was available either for the cutting or at very low prices, only the finest, most mature trees were secured. After being carried to the mill by horse teams, or large traction engines, the boards were sent to the valley shipping points usually by large horse drawn wagons. These horse powered conveyances were aided by the introduction of traction engines in the 1890's which could pull several wagons. In addition, lumber was also transported from the Shingletown area by flume. One shortlived venture (mid 70's to 80's) was attempted by the Sierra Lumber Company to assist its Eureka mill in the Shingletown area. Another flume, built by the Terry Lumber Company, was extended from Hatchet Mountain to Bella Vista in 1897.

Over 300 teamsters hauled lumber to Cottonwood and Anderson during this period for wages up to \$65 per month. From four to sixteen horses might be used in front of a wagon loaded with nearly 8,000 board feet of lumber. Good horses were at a premium; a well matched team's value reaching as high as \$500. A one way haul took one to three days, and the teamsters stopped overnight at several of the ranches on the road, including the Dersches and Hawes east of Anderson. During this period as high as three and one-half million feet of lumber was cut in a single seven month season by the Shingletown mills. In addition, rail connections with Anderson were established by the Terry Lumber Company of Bella Vista. In 1910 this company built a box factory in Anderson which employed about fifty men. However, this plant burned in the same year.

After 1912 the first era in Shasta County lumbering came to a near standstill. The principal cause for this decline was the purchase of most of the northeast Shasta County timberland by the Red River Lumber Company. This concern, which had its lumber processing plant at Westwood, bought out most of the timber holdings and equipment of the small concerns which had shipped lumber to Anderson and Cottonwood. Since the company had no way to transport its timber supply across the mountains to Westwood, its vast holdings in Shasta County became inactive until the World War II period. In addition, government establishment of forest reserves had withdrawn much

additional timber from private use by this time. Only a few small operators remained, and these often resorted to poorer qualities of timber to maintain their supply.

The second major period of Shasta County lumbering activity began around the time of World War II. This phase of the lumber story is still in progress. In 1925 total lumber production in the county was approximately twelve and one-half million board feet. By 1939 the figure was forty-five million feet; a year later it had nearly doubled to seventy-three million feet, and by 1948 had reached two hundred and three million board feet. In 1955 the major plants in Shasta County annually produced wood products from around four hundred and twenty million board feet of logs.

Northeastern Shasta County led the way in the resurrection of the lumber industry. In 1936 the Burney Lumber Company was begun by Carl Phelps, while two years later the Scott Lumber Company was incorporated. The Scott Company opened its Burney operation in 1940. In addition, the mid-30's witnessed the building of several small mills in the Shingletown section.

In 1944 the first major step in the resumption of the southern Shasta County lumber industry took place. The Deschutes Lumber Company of Mowich, Oregon, announced the building of an Anderson operation in April, 1944. The first log was processed at the new plant located three miles south of Anderson a year later. The plant at that date consisted of a sawmill with one bandsaw and a storage yard. However, the company had purchased 110 acres of land and also had a timber asset of over twenty thousand acres. Ninety men were employed initially, but this figure was doubled in one year. At the end of 1946, Deschutes had cut twenty-five million feet of lumber in that year, and in June of the following year acquired 3,722 acres of timberland near Whitmore from the Southern Pacific Company.

In October, 1947, Deschutes sold out to the Ralph L. Smith Company with headquarters at Kansas City. This company immediately announced plans to double the mill's present capacity. Forthcoming in this growth was the addition of another band mill, the completing of a planing mill in 1949, the installation of two steam turbines, and the building of storage sheds and dry kilns. In addition, a two story office building was erected in 1948.

In October, 1947, a \$5,000,000 timber sale by the Red River Lumber Company affected the local lumber situation. The largest buyer was the Ralph Smith Company which gained a section of Red River's 190,000 acre timber holding for \$2,982,000. In the same year the U. S. Plywood Corporation announced plans to build a \$2,000,000 plant on the site of the Holt and Gregg Brick Yard north of Anderson. This plant, which President Lawrence Ottinger of U. S. Plywood declared would be the largest in the country, also relied on large purchases of timber from the Red River Company. Construction of the plant began in February, 1948. On August 16, the first production at Shasta Plywood took place.

Toward the end of this important year in local lumbering, Cottonwood received a new timber industry. The Gossett Brothers announced in December, 1947, that construction would soon begin on a planing mill projected to employ one hundred men on two shifts. Built on twenty-five acres in east Cottonwood, the Gossett Lumber and Remanufacturing Mill opened operations in April, 1948.

In 1948, the Del Loma Lumber Company began building on a forty acre tract north of Anderson. Their plant was completed in October. In addition, Kenneth Walker and Associates of Susanville in September, 1948, obtained 160 acres of land on the west side of the railroad tracks on the Panorama Point Road near Anderson and began to erect the Paul Bunyan Lumber Company mill. By this time, there were seven mills in the southern Shasta County area.

During the following decade these first mills continued to expand and others were added. In 1950, U. S. Plywood bought a sawmill in Shingletown, and in the following year the company built the first Novoply plant to be erected in the United States. A Swiss patented particle board which made use of sound pieces of left over wood, Novoply was first produced at Anderson in May, 1951. This lumbering innovation cost about \$2,000,000 and initially employed 125 men with an annual payroll of \$500,000. In addition, in 1954 a new boiler plant was built and Shasta Plywood's Shingletown sawmill was moved to Anderson. Between 1954 and 1957 the company bought out three smaller local operations and in October, 1957, a second sawmill was completed. By 1959 the total local plywood operation employed 850 men with an annual payroll in the neighbor-

hood of \$5,000,000. The company produced lumber products from an annual cut of approximately 10,000,000 board feet of lumber, and by 1960 expected to complete a new 100 man plywood sheathing plant.

Expansion was also apparent at the Ralph L. Smith plant. In the fall of 1952 a factory employing 135 men in the manufacturing of molding, cut-shook, glue-up stock, and box-shook was finished. Between 1953 and 1956 Smith purchased additional operations at Castella, Red Bluff, Wildwood, and Mt. Shasta. In 1948 a storage shed with an overhead crane and 10,000,000 foot capacity was built. In 1959 the Smith Company employed 750 men with a yearly payroll of \$3,700,000. The normal annual output of 105,000,000 board feet in the planing mill and processing of 20,000,000 board feet of lumber in the factory was being sent principally to the western and central states. Finally, in 1961, the Ralph L. Smith Company became a subsidiary of the Kimberly-Clark Corporation, manufacturer of Kleenex and other well-known paper products. This firm indicated that a pulp and paper mill would be completed near Anderson by the mid-60's.

Growth was also realized in the other mills in the area during this decade. Gossett's in Cottonwood had processed 20,000,000 feet of lumber in 1950. During the same year, Redding Pine Mills began an operation on a seventy-five acre site two miles south of Smith's mill. In 1953 this company leased Gossett's planing facilities in Cottonwood. In addition, the Anderson Moulding Company established in 1955 two miles south of Anderson, by 1957 employed thirty-two men with a payroll of \$120,000. In the same year the Paul Bunyan Lumber Company had fifty-five men. By 1959 the two Redding Pine Mill plants employed a total of eighty men with an annual payroll of approximately \$525,000. The Del Loma Company, after several changes of management, was sold in 1957 to a Trinity County firm, the Covington Lumber and Manufacturing Company. By 1959 this concern employed sixty-five men, with a payroll of about \$300,000.

In the Fall River Valley area a new firm, the Lorenz Lumber Company was begun in 1957. In order to produce finished lumber and wood chips, this family-held company employed approximately one hundred and eighty men at an annual payroll of \$900,000. By the 60's the Scott Lumber Company had two hundred and fifty employees receiving \$1,300,000 in annual wages. Using progressive methods of timber conservation and wood conversion, the Scott firm pioneered the production of "Fertimulch" bark products in 1959, and in 1961 began to market a pre-finished paneling called "Shastawood."

Thus, as the decade of the sixties commenced, over 2,300 men were employed in Shasta County lumber plants and were accounting for an annual payroll of approximately \$12,120,000. These statistics did not include those indirectly dependent upon the mills of the area. The truck drivers, shipping agents, small lumber yard personnel, loggers and others who relied on the continuance of the local lumber business would have increased these figures considerably.

Although the entire United States and several foreign countries were markets for local lumber, southern California seemed by 1959 to be the most prominent distribution area. Both railroad and truck transportation were used in the distribution of the lumber products. The future of the local industry seemed bright, with increased efforts in timber management, and the promise of a continued supply of government timber on a bid basis. The trend toward the use of wood fibre in the manufacture of paper and plastics indicated a greater degree of timber utilization. During the 60's the trend toward larger, more comprehensive wood products plants and the consequent elimination of smaller firms continued. The building of Kimberly-Clark's (formerly the Ralph Smith Company) pulp and paper plant of Anderson in the early 60's was the most notable addition. However, most of the major concerns continued to expand their operations and provide more use for all parts of the log. Thus, the second period in the history of lumbering in Shasta County seemed destined to continue for many years to come.