



Typical logging scene of sledding logs circa 1905 Log-3-103

The Story of the Log-From the Tree to the Car Many Men who Handle a Stick of Lumber

by F. F. McCormick

The lumber industry, because of the enormous virgin forests found growing over nearly three-fourths of our county, has become one of our greatest sources of wealth, and until the heavy timber lands of the North Central and Eastern States were almost shorn of their pine, no serious thought was given by the private or government owner to husbanding their fast-disappearing resources. As the white pine became more scarce, other woods were substituted for some of the uses for which it was thought nothing

but white pine would answer. Cruisers sent out to find new bodies of pine found that, in the northern part of the state of Idaho, there were many heavy forests of this precious white pine covering mountainsides and valleys, white pine which the eastern cruisers underestimated because of its great height. It seemed as though they had, in their reaching up for rising sons and warm breezes, added two and three log-lengths to their height considered an average amount in their eastern brothers of the same girth.



Stacel lumber camp bunkhouses at Clarkia. This is a typical lumber camp in the 1930s. Log-6-32

Then as the timber holdings in the east were sawed out, their owners moved their mills to this new country, locating on one of the many lakes or rivers fed by the rushing streams and cool springs whose sources were on the glistening snow-capped mountains in the distance.

Then in October the woods' foreman and his man, accompanied by "tote" teams loaded with provisions and tools, arrived in the midst of the forest to build the camps and clear the roads. Then when snow came all would be snug and ready to harvest and haul to the river the towering giants still bending slightly to the passing breezes.

First, the cook camp is raised, then the log stables with their pole stall-partitions and floors. If far from a supply of lumber for a roof, a network of poles is placed over the top logs, then a thick layer of hay cut from some nearby meadows, and on top of this earth is spread to make it tight until the spring rains came. Then the grass and wildflower seeds spring up to proclaim the rich soil of these shaded valleys and benches.

Next, the bunkhouse is rolled up log after log, and its ventilators and wooden hasped door are added. While some are chinking and plastering with stiff mud the cracks between the logs, the others are busy with foot adze and saw laying the puncheon floor (flooring made from smooth-faced split logs). Bunks built next to the walls are ready for beds of blankets and boughs.

Then when the first grey of morning shows in the east and the shadows of the surrounding woods loom black against the slowly whitening snow, the bunkhouse door is kicked open, and with a "daylight in the swamp, fellows, let's hit 'er," the foreman leads the way up the road to the cuttings.

Here, while one of the sawyers goes from the butt of a fallen tree toward the top of his measuring pole and axe, marking off by a notch the lengths of the logs to be sawed, his partner is busy cutting a deep gash in a nearby standing giant who will shortly be among his fallen fellows. As the saw eats through and the cut widens, the sawyers with a loud warning cry of "watch while" spring back as the dizzy tree-top above, with the noise of an approaching storm, circles downward and with a crash which shakes the earth, lies still to be shorn of its branches by the swamper (term for a laborer or assistant). With his axe, the swamper quickly clears the underbrush to the skidways where other logs have been dragged by the skidding teams to await the huge log-sleighs, and the loading crew, placing short skids from the ground to the ends of the sleigh bunks, quickly rolls up with the loading chain, tier after tier until the teamster says, "enough." After the chains are secured, the teamster mounts the load, and with a "get-up-ahead" to the leaders and touch on the flanks of the expectant pole team, the load starts on its way.

With snow groaning under the weight on the heavy runners and swaying bunks creaking as the uneven

road is passed, the straining horses come out on the main road where increased travel makes the load ease and glide forward more swiftly as a down-grade is struck before coming to the sharp descent above the landing. Then as the load breaks over the brow, the runners screech as they are checked by the hay and sand placed in the ruts to hold back the rush of the swift descent. Below is seen the road-monkey (person who inspects and repairs logging roads) removing here and placing there the hay so that just the right speed will be had to make the stop opposite the rail-ways at the landing.

After the top and corner bing-chains are loosened, the logs go rolling and tumbling down to the current of the river below which carries some of them safely by the sandbars and over shallow rapids to the still water of the mill booms below. Then, men aground along the river in shallow places wait until the springtime when the high waters and the river-drivers rolling and pushing with pike pole and peavey (a thick-handled tool with a curved, hooked arm) keep them in the stream until safely resting at the foot of the sawmill-slip where they await like cattle in the slaughter pen their turn up the inclined conveyor to the sawing floor.

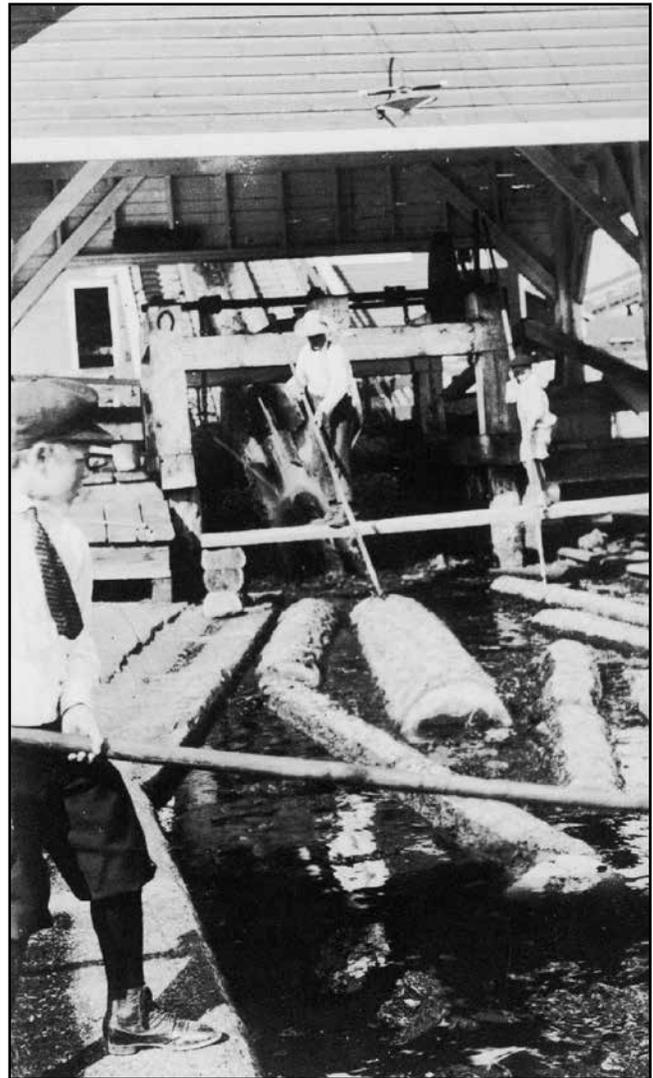
Standing beside the scaler on the log-deck of a modern sawmill, we see him scale and tally a large log as it arrives wet and dripping on the huge chain from the water below. As it glides forward, the deck-tender by a jerk of a lever, releases the arms of the powerful steam kickers below, and the log is thrown out of the chain trough onto the sloping deck-skids to await its turn on the carriage.

Then as the empty carriage, forced back by the long glistening piston of the steam-feed, arrives opposite the skidway, with a rising forward movement, hurls another log onto the carriage where it is quickly secured by dogs to the head blocks and is ready to be carried forward against the saw. As the sawyer signals from time to time, the ratchet setter forces the log out in reach of the saw, which like a belt running around on large wheels appears as a narrow blade, clipping board after board which fall onto the revolving rollers alongside. The boards are swiftly carried to the edgerman who, shifting his saws, rips a strip of bark from this piece, a streak of rot from another, and secures a select strip from a wider piece which passes through untouched, for this is the road all boards must travel on their way to the trimmer.

Here, seated on a platform suspended above all with a dozen levers, each connected by a cable to a concealed jumpsaw in the table below, sits the trimmerman, who, scanning the boards as they pass below, by a pull at a lever causes a saw to rise and clip a bad end from a passing board, then sinks leaving the table

clear for the next. In the meantime, the slabs from the bandsaws and the strips of waste from the edger have been carried through the slasher whose battery of saws cut them into four-foot lengths. As it passes on its way, the stock for the lathmill is sorted, leaving the balance to mount slowly to the opening in the refuse burner, whose flames suck upward for a hundred feet, and quickly spread to the winds all of the portions of the log which are of no commercial value.

From the trimmer, the lumber, borne crosswise on a chain conveyor, goes down to the ground level where it passes the grader, who, by different marks with his lead-crayon, identifies the grades which are piled in separate widths and lengths on nearby trucks for transportation to the piles in the yard. Months of sunshine and drying winds fit the lumber for the planing mill where the selects are worked into fancy trim, fine finish, clear sidings and cornish lumber. The small tight-knotted grades go into cheap flooring and drop sidings and the poorer grade into ship-lap and sheeting.



Two men and a boy move logs onto the bull chain at Panhandle Lumber Co., Spirit Lake, circa 1900 Mil-16-67



Shoes and socks hang from the interior of the bunkhouse in this logging scene from 1911. Log-6-32

The railroads carrying these products in straight and mixed cars exchange them in far-off communities for machinery, tools and provisions, thus supplying mutual wants from the abundance of nature's storehouses.

Life in a Logging Camp

The life of a lumberjack was not an easy one. Men were away at camp for months at a time and during treacherous winter weather. They worked together, ate together, played together, and lived together in communal bunkhouses. Fresh clothing and hygiene were scarce but good food was never hard to come by. Following are some interviews recalling what it was like at the logging camps.

"Ordinarily when you went to camp you usually figured on going out, say in October or early November, and you didn't figure on coming back until March or April."

Clothing and Hygiene

"...you dried your socks and your rubbers and your pants and your stag shirt and everything. You string

them up; there was haywire strung up all up and down the whole length over those stoves and in between the stoves. You usually had to wear two or three pairs of socks and 9 times out of 10 they were wet if it was bad weather and you would usually fix yourself—if you didn't have a safety pin, you would get some hay wire and pin your socks together so that somebody else wouldn't get them and you'd throw them over that wire and your stag shirt and you always wore wool pants. There was no such thing as jeans or overalls, you know."

"Most of the lumberjacks wore woolen two-piece underwear winter and summer. Usually they came in sweaty and often wet and hung their sweaty clothes and socks around the heating stove to dry. The smell was indescribable. Talk about air pollution-smog! This was something with tobacco smoke and fifty men drying their clothes and socks and all the other odors of hard-working men who seldom took a bath or changed their clothes for weeks and sometimes months at a time...." —Henry Peterson

"The first winter I spent 145 days without a bath."

The Bunkhouse

"In the bunkhouse we had kerosene lamps set on racks at about every third bunk. The guy who sat underneath could read, but nobody else could."

"In the meantime at this end you went in about 15 feet from the door there was a great big oil drum stove with legs on it, they welded the legs on it you know and they fed it four-foot cord wood and in the middle there was another one and at the end. If your bed was next to the stove it just about cooked you and the poor guy up at the end here, he was freezing to death hollering for more fire."

Beardmore Tunnel Camp – The log bunkhouse was long and narrow with daylight only at each end and bunks for 108 men built along each side of a center aisle. It had three big oil barrels made over into stoves spaced in the aisle, and the first one near the entrance was rigged with a sort of water jacket that heated the water in a 50 gallon barrel connected to it. Close to this barrel was a wooden trough about 2 feet wide that had a dashboard on it with tin wash pans and a supply of coarse laundry soap.... The bunks were made of boards, with no springs or mattresses, with a capacity of two men in each of the two-storied bunks. As the building was only 18 or 20 feet wide, when those 108 men came in for the night and hung up their shoes, socks, insoles and wet pants, it was a strong smelling place. But we got used to it and didn't mind it at all. We would go to the barn, get a big armful of hay to put in our bunks, spread out two blankets.... – Bill Whetsler



Blackwell Lumber Co. Cookhouse #3 at Mica Bay in 1906. Log-13-9

Recreation

"I'll tell you what we did for recreation. You had to do something so down near the wash stand someplace they'd have a little table and somebody would spread a blanket out and the crew would get around flat and play poker, penny ante, two bit ante, you know, depending on how much money they had and of course the lights went out, period, at 9 o'clock.... Then maybe up a ways, three or four benches, all benches in front of those beds so you could sit down...." --Bill Whetsler

Food

"There was what they called triangle iron bar like this, come in a triangle, three cornered thing that hung just out the front door and then you had a long piece of iron about that long. I got so I could play a regular tune on it, call them to dinner." –Lillian Butler

"You'd get up to maybe three or four hundred men in a camp. ... We'd get up at two o'clock in the morning and cook breakfast and send 'em out while the ice was still on the road."

"But all in all, I'll tell ya, there's nobody ... I don't care if he was a king or who he was ... could eat better than those camps. They had the finest food that you ever saw. Everything possible that you could bring in was brought in to keep the loggers happy."

"Oh, we had some good pastry cooks. Some of the best..."

"They all had big appetites and they'd eat everything I put on the table. Roast and you always had two kinds of vegetables besides potatoes and rolls and brown gravy and soup and pies and they'd load up and there wasn't a time the tables was set that there wasn't doughnuts and cookies on it, too. If they wanted that, why, they could have it. They really fed them and Fred Crowder was the best boss I ever worked for, for furnishing anything I asked for. He was the best one and he'd furnish anything that I asked for, no matter what it was."

Museum News



We thank Architects West for their \$5,000 check in support of our virtual gala. From left: Jocelyn Babcock, Scott Fischer, Ed Champagne, Steve Roth, Marcus Valentine, Mark Puddy, Adam Miller, Keith Dixon and Julie Gibbs

From the Board President

We are in the midst of an exciting time for the Museum of North Idaho (MNI)! We are transitioning to new leadership and taking big steps to make a new museum become reality.

On behalf of the MNI Board, I thank Executive Director Dorothy Dahlgren for over 38 years of dedicated service. We will always recognize Dorothy's many accomplishments as the foundation of the museum's future success. The MNI team wishes Dorothy a wonderful retirement filled with fun new adventures.

The Museum remains in good hands as we extend a warm welcome to Britt Thurman, our new Executive Director. Britt brings extensive experience to MNI via her work in various capacities at museums in Idaho, Kansas, Massachusetts and Virginia. Britt grew up in Coeur d'Alene, and we are happy she made the career choice to return home.

November 16 marks the one-year anniversary of the J. C. White house move to MNI's future new home at the base of Tubbs Hill. Installation of utilities, exterior and interior refurbishment will be complete soon. In 2021 the house will be open for small gatherings and museum business functions.

In the meantime, MNI initiated the design phase for a new exhibit hall. We began by seeking input from many local historians and members. Their feedback led to the interpretive plan we will use to develop an exceptional visitor experience.

The interpretive plan is the basis for the content as well as the architectural design of the new facility. We are eager to unveil the results early next year.

Of course 2020 also had its share of challenges. COVID-19 visitation restrictions impacted admissions and gift shop income. Our museum staff and volunteers quickly shifted gears to ensure MNI's sustainability. Memberships, book sales and attendance at Robert Singletary's historical walking tours remained strong. We were also fortunate to receive operational grants.

MNI also expanded community outreach through enhanced virtual programming. We launched a new website with greater access to online resources. Our increased social media presence is popular

with MNI's growing audience of followers. In September, MNI held its first-ever virtual fundraising gala. The event was a huge success and raised over \$20,000 for our new building fund.

A special thank you goes to Jocelyn Babcock, our Development Director, for the leadership, creativity and technical skills that made these amazing accomplishments possible.

As an eventful year draws to a close I especially wish to acknowledge MNI's generous donors and members. Because of you, we will achieve our vision to serve our community as a premier regional museum!

Julie Gibbs, President

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Welcome Britt

I am pleased to welcome Britt Thurman as our new Executive Director. The MNI board has made an excellent selection. Britt has connections to Coeur d'Alene, a Master's degree in Museum Studies and museum experience in community engagement and program development. Working with her the last two weeks I feel confident she will serve

our membership and community well.

I have enjoyed working with our museum community, and I will continue to be a member of the Museum and support its mission. To continue to build on our accomplishments, I request that in lieu of cards and well wishes, please consider giving to the Museum's Endowment Fund in my name at www.idcomfdn.org and enter "Museum of North Idaho," or send a check to MNI, PO Box 812, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83816-0812.

Dorothy Dahlgren, former Director

Museum Membership

Thank you for supporting the Museum. Please check your mailing label for your renewal date and consider renewing at a higher level. This additional income is vital to operations since our admissions and store sales have been greatly reduced due to the pandemic.

Although this year has not been a good travel year, many members have joined at the \$150 or more level. With this membership level, you will receive a membership card that provides free admission to over 1,000 institutions throughout North America and worldwide through the North American Reciprocal Museum Association (NARM). Visit the NARM website to learn more.

Grants Received

Idaho Historical Society Community Enhancement grant for \$1,400 for new computer and scanner.

Non Gala A Success

With the cancellation of our annual meeting in April we held a virtual program September 25th. We had a great turn out for the play "Two Nickels Make a Dime: Logging Up the Marble" narrated by George Currier centering around logging on Marble Creek, the Wobblies and St. Maries. We met our goal by raising \$20,244 which will help with

the renovation of the J.C. White house. You can view the program at facebook.com/MuseumofNorthIdaho or youtube.com/channel/UCEJd4goI08uNbKYxyJ-GWqQ.

Santa Selfies at the Chapel

Save the Date: Socially Distant Santa Selfies! a fundraiser for the Building Fund on Saturday, December 5 from 11am-2pm at the Fort Sherman Chapel. Check out our Facebook page for details.

Seeking New Part-time Bookkeeper

We are seeking a new part-time bookkeeper to join our team. For details, visit indeed.com.

CPA Lisa Hunt started working at the Museum in October 2014 and has been an essential member of the team. We thank Lisa for her dedicated service and all she has done for the Museum over the years.

Shop to Give!

Give back while you shop this Holiday Season! Remember us on Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday by using Amazon Smile, Fred Meyer Rewards and Giving Assistant. Make sure you check out our Facebook fundraiser for #GivingTuesday.

New Artifact Donations

Judy Hafich-Smith: Hand-tinted framed image of Tubb's Point

Marlo Faulkner: Door from the Potlatch Office

Clyde Hanson: 148th Field Artillery Book of Honor and WWII story of Bill Heath

Larry Hasse: *Industry & Subsistency*

Pete Vandall: Forest Service Look-out Cookbook for Region One, 1966



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Please add museum@museumni.org to your email contact list

Museum of North Idaho

Our mission is to collect, preserve and interpret the history of the Coeur d'Alene Region to foster appreciation of the area's heritage.

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The Museum of North Idaho Quarterly Newsletter is published in February (Winter), May (Spring), August (Summer) and November (Fall)

Editor Britt Thurman bthurman@museumni.org
PO Box 812, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83816-0812
208-664-3448 www.museumni.org

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