

Museum of North Idaho

Volume 28

Number 4

Quarterly Newsletter

Fall 2008



Greasing or "doping" a log chute for easy sliding. Log-I-109

Experiences on the Coeur d'Alene National Forest

By Mark O. Watkins (Retired Forest Service 1955)

Editor's Note: The following is from the Museum's Forest Service Archive Collection. In the 1960s the Forest Service collected stories from its retirees and this is one of those stories relating to logging.

In June of 1912, I was eighteen years old and a friend of the same age, Jack Smith, joined me in a trip into the forest where timber damaged in the 1910 fire was being harvested before it became bug-infested. We thought that work might be obtained at one of the logging camps so we left Spokane and went up into Idaho. At Squaw Bay (now Bayview) we crossed Lake

Pend Oreille by steamer to Lakeview and then walked about twenty miles into the camps, which were located along the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River.

South out of Lakeview up Gold Creek the road was fair for the first six miles to the Weber Mine, then we crossed the summit to the Independence Creek drainage and followed a tote road that was used by the logging camps for hauling in supplies. This road was full of stumps cut off just so the wagon axles would clear. It followed down Independence Creek and forded the creek a dozen times or more before reaching the junction with the North Fork. We had to wade

through the fords which were two or three feet deep in some places. It took us a day and a half to walk from Lakeview to the North Fork where we found the logging camps strung along the river at intervals of a mile or two apart. The first camp we hit was run by Slick Jack Cox and his brother. We hit them up for work and were hired, Jack Smith as a chute greaser and I as bull cook.

Most of the timber being harvested was located up on the mountains along the south side of the river and back in the side draws. The easiest and most economical way to get the logs down to the river was by building chutes down the mountainside in which to slide the logs by letting gravity do the work. These chutes were made by mounting two logs side by side on

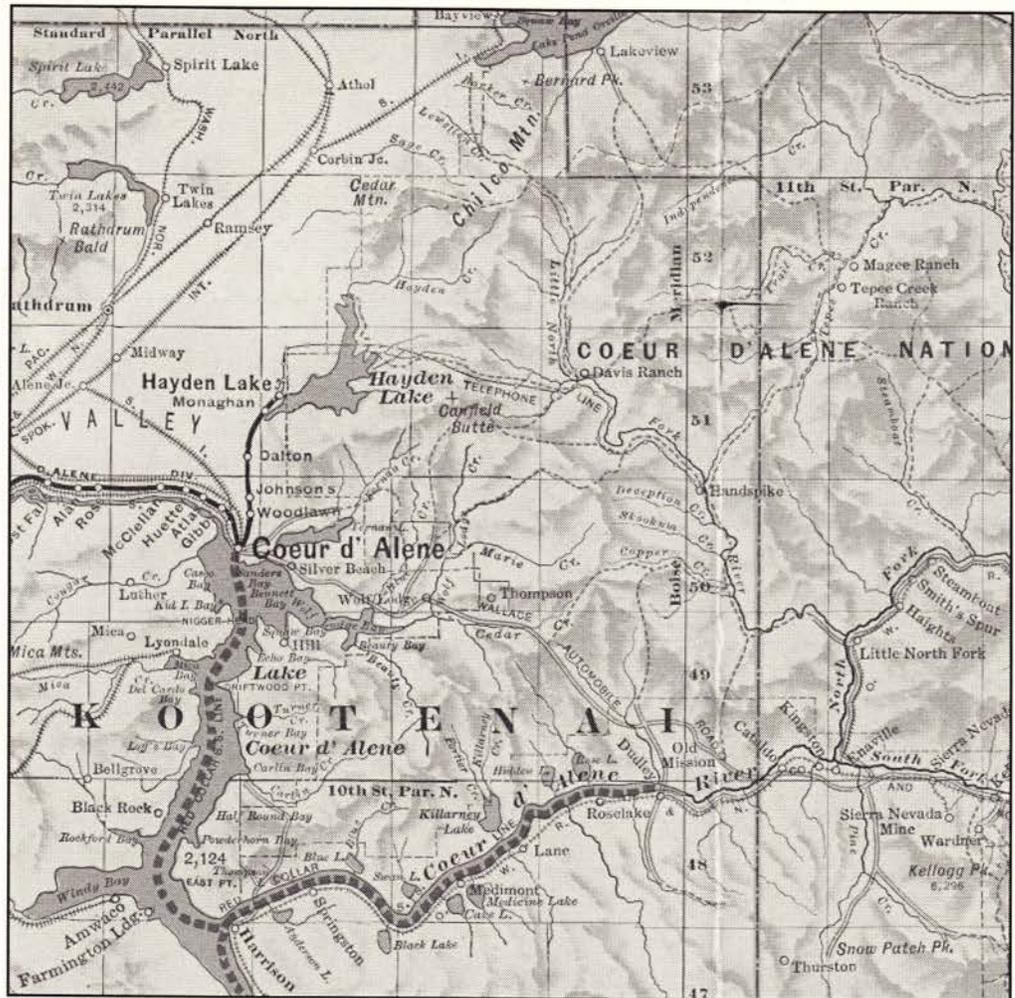
cross timbers and the proper slope was maintained by building cribbing under the low places. The inner side of the chute logs were hewed into a "V" shape with a broadax. To prevent the logs from jumping out of the chute on the curves the outer sides of curves were built up two or three logs high. It was necessary to grease the sides of the chute, especially on the curves, to keep friction from slowing down the log's speed, also the chute would last longer if it was greased. Jack Smith had to walk along the chute carrying a bucket of grease which he applied to the sides of the chute with a wooden paddle. The job was not difficult but the greaser had to keep alert as the logs traveled at high speed and would sometimes jump the chute on the curves.



Two men using a crosscut saw and men in the back men using peavies. Log-2-117

The title of bull cook was misleading for the job consisted of being sort of a handyman around camp. As I recall, my duties were to keep plenty of firewood in the cookhouse and the bunkhouses, to keep the bunkhouses and the stable clean, carry water from the river and to take lunch by packhorse up the mountain to the woods crew. There was a gentle old pack horse and a saw-buck pack saddle with a wooden case on each side, these cases would hold three five-gallon kerosene cans on each side. The cook would have a hot lunch packed in the kerosene cans each day at about 10:30 and I would pack the lunch up to the woods crew and build a fire to keep it warm until noon, then load up the dirty dishes and return to camp after lunch.

Lumber-jacks were a rough crew, they would spend most of the year in the woods doing hard work, some would work on the drive down the river in the spring, then they would go on a big spree until their money was gone and in a few weeks would be back in camp to repeat the cycle. Working conditions were different then. They worked a ten-hour day and traveled to and from work on their own time. The sawyers worked in two-man teams and kept their own tools sharp, they used 5 1/2 and 6 foot crosscut saws. The swampers were axe-men and brushed out the trails on which the logs were dragged down to the chutes. As the grade was often quite steep the trails were made with curves in them so that several logs dogged together and pulled by a team of horses down the trail would not slide into the horses on the steep places. There were dog-setters who would carry a heavy hammer and a bunch of dogs to fasten the logs together for skidding down the trails. The dogs were hooks with points about three or four inches long, two such hooks were fastened together by a short length of chain three or four inches long. The dog-setter would drive one hook into the side of a log right near the end and the other hook into



This is a portion of the 1912 Trail Map of territory served by the Red Collar Steamship Line. The top portion shows the route the author would have taken from Lakeview to access the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River and Magee Ranch in the Coeur d'Alene National Forest.

the next log. Several logs would be fastened together in this manner. The teamster, driving a team of horses hitched to a skidding tong or maybe a length of logging chain, would hook onto the downhill end and drag the logs to the chute. There were men with cant-hooks and peavies who would roll the logs into the chute to begin their journey down to the river. At the river there were other men and teams to deck the logs in great piles along the edge of the river to await the drive down to Lake Coeur d'Alene next spring when high water came. To help out in getting the decks of logs started down river in the spring the loggers had built a dam up Independence Creek to hold back a head of water. When the drive was ready to start this dam was blown out and the water released to get the drive under way.

Charlie Magee was living up the Tepee Creek near the present location of Magee Ranger Station. Before the logging operations had started this was a remote and isolated area and probably the reason Magee was living there. The story about him was that he had come



Splash dam built by Winton and Rosenberry Lumber Company on Big Creek, now known as Shoshone Creek, on the Coeur d'Alene River. The logs were backed up behind the dam until they were ready to be floated down the creek. Log-4-30

into this country to escape the law in Tennessee where he had been mixed up in a feud and had killed a man. I do not know if this story is true or not.

Living conditions in the logging camps were rather primitive. Most of the buildings were constructed with log walls about four feet high with large wall tents mounted atop the log walls. There was a combination cook and mess house and two bunkhouses

built with tent tops. The office building and the stable were built of all logs with shake roofs. The stable was rather large for there were several skidding teams as well as a four-horse team for hauling supplies. There was a row of double-width and double-decked bunks along both sides of the bunkhouses. The bunks were made of small logs or poles flattened on the top side with a broadax and then covered with about six

inches of straw with side boards to keep the straw on the bunks. This was all the camp furnished in the way of a bed; each man had to furnish his own bedding. There were long benches down the center between the bunks, also a table and a large drum stove at one end. Haywire had been strung from one side of the bunkhouse to the other above the stove as a place to hang clothing to dry. There were about twenty-five or thirty men in each bunkhouse and when those wires were filled with lumberjacks' socks and underwear the place needed ventilation.

A lumberjack will put up with most anything except poor food. In order to hold their crew the Cox Brothers furnished good food and plenty of it. The cook was an expert camp cook and not only set a good table of meat and vegetables but was a good baker as well. All the supplies came down Lake Pend Oreille from Sandpoint to Lakeview by steamer and into camp over the tote road. This trip took three days and during the hot summer days the meat was sometimes past its prime when it arrived at camp. This was the only drawback to the food situation and could not be helped.

The country along the river was beautiful and the fishing was the best I have ever seen. The fishing was so good that I have been told there were places along Independence Creek where the only way you could bait your hook was to get behind a tree where the fish could not see you or they would take the bait before you could get it on your hook. My friend Jack and I did not have much time to fish because of working ten or more hours each day and six days a week. Sunday was the time for washing clothes and bathing in the river as there was no bath house. Jack liked the life so well that he stayed on at camp and went down with the drive the next spring and followed this work for several years. I did not care to become a lumberjack so when it got too frosty in the fall I headed for Spokane and home.

Watkins Hires on with Forest Service

It was twenty-three years before I again came in contact with the Forest Service. During those years I had served in France during World War I, had worked at several different jobs and become a married man. In 1934 I saw a notice of a civil service examination for storekeeper so applied and took the examination. I received an appointment on May 1, 1935, at the Forest Service Warehouse in Spokane.

In the fall of 1935 Howard Flint spent some time in Spokane conducting experiments in dropping supplies from airplanes with the idea of supplying firefighters in this manner. This was the first attempt by the Forest Service to do any such thing. As part of my duties I helped pack the supplies that were being

dropped in the experiment.

Most of the supplies were dropped by free-fall without parachutes. We packed various kinds of canned goods by insulating each can with wood excelsior and then wrapping the whole package in several layers of kapok pads from condemned sleeping bags, this was then wrapped in manties and secured well with rope. Howard Flint would take these packs out to Felts Field where Nick Mamer would take him up to make the drops from various heights. The bundles would then be returned to the warehouse where we would unpack them and examine the contents for damage. It was surprising how well most of the canned goods came through. Shovel and axe handles would often break. Crosscut saws were lashed to strips of plywood and would come through all right if they did not light on one end. We even packaged a Hammerlund Radio for dropping by making a heavy crate and suspending the radio in the center lashed to a kind of track in such a way that the radio could move only up and down the track and with this movement snubbed with rubber shock cord. In order to hold the crate upright we used a piece of burlap about six feet square attached to the top of the crate as a parachute, it also helped retard the speed of the drop. Water containers for drinking water were made rather like an aerial bomb of fairly heavy metal and dropped. Some of the drops were quite successful and others were not. This experiment was a forerunner of the present practice of airlifting supplies to firefighters. As I recall the free-fall method was not used much.

Shortly after the above experiments, in the next year or two, O.C. Bradeen of Procurement & Supply was able to get parachutes from the armed services that had been condemned as unfit for human use. Most of these parachutes were just over-age and in perfect shape for our purpose. Thereafter rapid progress was made in dropping supplies from the air. As most of the drops were made in timbered country many of the parachutes were damaged by hanging up in trees and snags. Bradeen then developed a repair department at the Spokane Warehouse and as fast as parachutes were returned from fire drops they were repaired and repacked ready for use again.

After spending six years at the Spokane Warehouse I was transferred to Procurement & Supply in the Regional Office at Missoula. The next year I was sent to the Nez Perce National Forest at Grangeville in the fiscal and accounting section. In 1949 I went to the Lewis & Clark National Forest at Great Falls and in 1952 to the Coeur d'Alene NF where I retired in 1955.

Lumbering to be Featured

The 2009 lobby exhibit will be about the timber indus-

Museum News

A Message From The Board



I would like to thank everyone for their continued support of the mission of the Museum of North Idaho. The Friends of History met recently, learning about the Benevon fundraising model and volunteering to help with the capital campaign. It is gratifying that so many people appreciate our efforts to collect and preserve our region's history and are stepping up to help with this huge endeavor. Too, as we work to expand our facility and programs, we need YOUR help. Please promote the museum to family, friends and acquaintances.

We need to build our membership and community awareness. Spread the word by sharing your newsletter and encourage them to join; consider giving gift memberships!

Having a sense of place and history provides a context for finding meaning and identity, and for feeling alive in our communities. The recognition of a shared past, a sense of history, a mutual understanding that this place is not interchangeable with countless other places, helps identify each of us personally as well as a community.

People come to the Museum seeking meaning in this place they call home. What was this place like before I came here? How will that define what this place will be in the future? Without a sense of place, we may feel generic and disconnected. By collecting, preserving and interpreting the history of our region, the Museum provides the resources needed to experience the richness of our cultural heritage and, by extension, enriching our individual and community life.

As the capital campaign progresses, it becomes increasingly important that the Museum's Endowment Fund be sufficient to the challenge of operating an extraordinary museum, a place with exciting and innovative exhibits and programs, a destination for visitors and residents alike. A donation to the Museum's Endowment is an investment in the future of our community.

Kathy Arneson - Chair

The Museum is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Please consult with your attorney or accountant for information about how contributing to the Museum can be a useful tool in estate or tax planning.

Artifact Donations Since August

Francis Halle: glass negatives of scenes around Bellgrove and logging near Harrison prior to 1910.

Frank Ames: postcards of the Georgie Oakes and Coeur d'Alene, history books.

Cheryl Ann Komosinski: photo of St. Maries in 1894, St. Maries history, *Beneath these Mountains* and *Northwest Disaster*.

John Pointner Estate: collection of rifles and pistols.

Bob Walden: yardstick from Erickson's Upholstery.

Dick Rainbolt: sheet music *Chosen Flower*, *Memories of Idaho* and *On the Shadowy St. Joe*.

Pat & Greg Nelson: *A Gentleman of the Old School*, Reuben Denton Nevius.

Holly Osland: *Oh! Honestly* by Holly Osland about the Delyea and Osland families.

Wyatt Cone: *George Cone*, *Cross Cut Saw and Idaho White Pines 1937-1942*.

Burnice Hauser: 4 shaving mugs from Farragut Naval Training Station.

Charles and Eileen Seymour: abstract title.

Clare Earl Johnson: steam whistle from a boat.

Sally Pierce: Elks photos, Cd'A High School Commencement and reunion programs.

Mike Elfsten: medical diagnosis book, 1928.

Ray Putnam: Cd'A High School annuals 1940-1943 and 1947.

Arman Farmaine: photo of airplane with woman riding on the wing. Piloted by Ted Anderson down Sherman Ave. July 4, 1933.

Jim Shepperd: money bags from American Trust Company and Idaho First Bank.

Don Johnson: panoramic view of the Potlatch Lumber Company in Potlatch, Idaho.

William McNeill: birding-point arrowhead found at Sanders Beach.

Teri Franta: photos of the steamer Idaho at St. Joe about 1896, Roosevelt in Spokane in 1910, overview of Cd'A in 1906, and postcards of Fowler's Restaurant, Mullan Tree, Hayden Lake Golf Course and the Cataldo Mission.

City of Cd'A Police Department: jail blotter 1954 to 1975.

Photos Copied

Jerry & Joanne Avery (Nathan Hunt): Joe Avery saw-mills in Harrison, Kingston and Rose Lake, Joe and MilaAnn Hunt Avery (1915).

Gene Soper: Travelair 4000, a part of the Billy Bee Flying Circus, 1976 and a DX cutting ribbon, 1976.

Cliff Fender: Club Cigar, Fender Sport Shop and the interior of the USO. Donation of a check from Fender's Club Cigar Store.

Thanks, Susan

We wish the best to our bookkeeper Susan Taylor who moved to Boise in October after the death of her husband. Susan has worked for the Museum part-time since 2002. We appreciate Kathy Arneson taking over the bookkeeper duties.

Serve on the Museum Board

Welcome new board member Craig Wise. He is filling out Robert Singletary's term until the election in April.

The nominating committee is seeking individuals for the Board of Trustees. This is an interesting and crucial time for the museum with the beginning of raising funds for much-needed expansion of programming and a larger facility. We need your support more than ever; please consider serving on the board. Contact Dorothy at 664-3448 or email: dd@museumni.org for information. The membership elects board members in April for three year terms.

Our Appreciation to these *Community Partners*

U.S. Bancorp Foundation

Mountain West Bank

Specialty Tree Services

RDI Heating & Cooling

Panhandle State Bank

STCU Spokane Teachers Credit Union

Empire Airlines

For information on how you can be recognized as a *Community Sponsor* and contribute to the preservation of local history please call 664-3448.

Web site hosting by
Group Argia SA at www.argia.net

Memberships

We thank all those who sent in their membership dues. If you received a renewal envelope in Oct., please send in your membership or a gift membership to help us meet our membership goal this year.

Building Fund Donations

Bruce and Colleen English Sally & Carl Gidlund

Donations

John and Helen Yuditsky made a cash donation.

Sandy Emerson and family donated copies of Tom Emerson's books for resale in the Museum Store.

Bob and Lenny McLoed fixed up new office space in the old visitors center. Runge Furniture donated carpet and John Ewing laid the carpet.

Memorials

For **Karen Clark** from Wes and Sally Fuller

For **Roger Hudson** from Leigh and Jean LeGore, John and Nancy Criswell, Ray and Vickie Johnson, Laura McHugh

For **Vi Jones**: Mavis Norgaard and family, Mr. & Mrs. David Vershow and family, Mr. & Mrs. Dick Christensen, Bruce & Candice Blackmer, Ivy Irons, William & Marion Hames and Kathleen Gilbery

For **Harry Ferris** from Charles & Betty McLain

For **Louise Shaddock** from Leigh LeGore and Elise Donohue

For **Millie Eatock** from Alene Pokstefl

For **Wacele Rhodes** from Helen Naslund

For **Tony Moen** from Helen Yuditsky

Memorials to the Museum

Remember your loved ones and friends with a memorial to the Museum of North Idaho. Your cash donation builds the Museum's endowment fund. The name of the deceased is placed on the memorial plaque at the Museum.

Memorial For _____

From _____

Address _____

Whom to notify _____

Address _____

Amount _____