

*Not so very long ago...*  
**“BACK WHEN ‘TIMBER WAS KING’”**

*By Jeff LaLande*

**R**elative newcomers to Southern Oregon who have arrived within the past twenty-five years or so may not realize just how central logging and the making of lumber, plywood, and other wood products were to our mid-twentieth century history. By the late 1990s, those natural-resource, commodity-based endeavors had shrunk considerably, in both size and local importance.

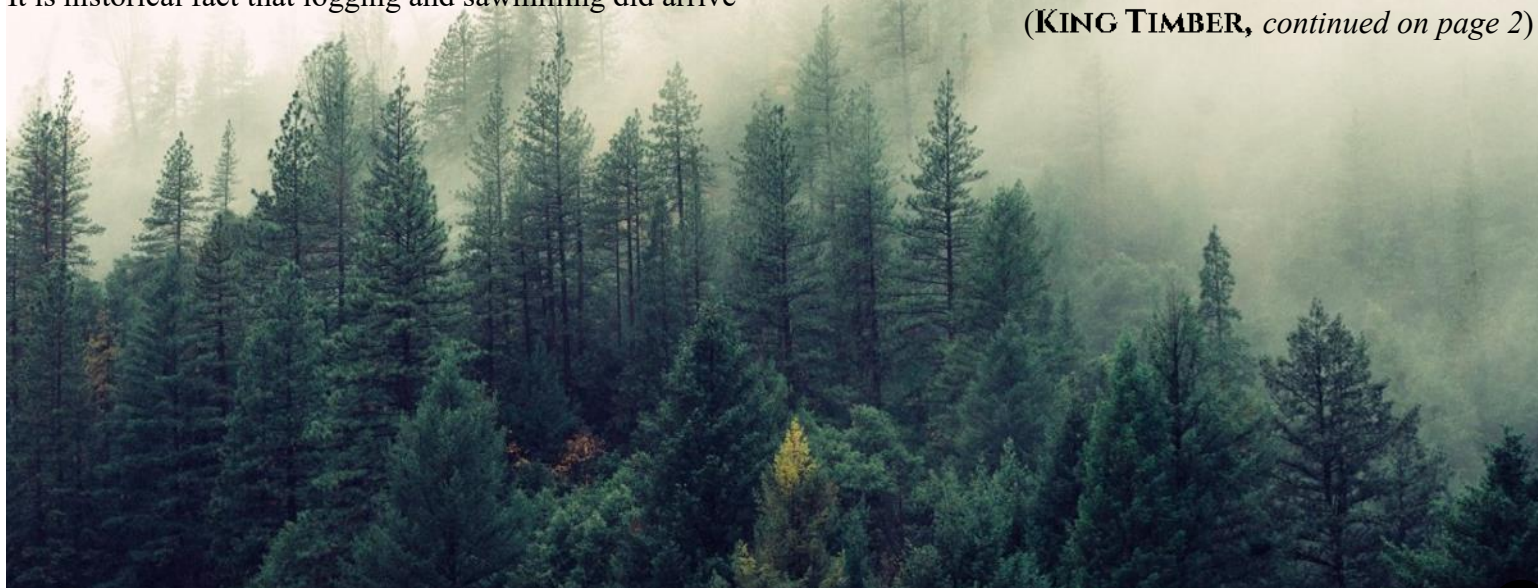
And, to many of our region’s residents (like the author) who grew up and/or lived here during the boom years of the 1950s through the 1980s, it must have seemed at the time that the wood-products industry had *always* been the dominant force in local employment and prosperity. But such was definitely not the case. In actuality, the vast wood-products industrial base of Jackson, Josephine, and Douglas counties during those years was a relatively recent phenomenon.

For many people, the story of how that former economic colossus “came to be” may seem like “only yesterday.” But that “yesterday” is now a major part of our history. It is historical fact that logging and sawmilling did arrive

in the Rogue Valley with the first White settlers of the 1850s. The town of Ashland grew up around Abel Helman’s sawmill (situated on the creek just downstream from the present Plaza). The pines that grew on the foothill slopes that rose up from Ashland Creek (at that time called Mill Creek) provided the timber that fed that little water-powered mill. Later, other communities—such as Prospect and Butte Falls—had similar origins. But these and the dozens of other small-capacity sawmills of the 19<sup>th</sup> and very early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries turned out boards and squared timbers for an extremely limited, and strictly local market.

Even well after the railroad arrived in the 1880s, no large-scale logging or milling occurred for two major reasons. First, immense stands of far-more easily accessed (and, thus, more profitable) commercial forest were then being logged elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest and California. More importantly, Jackson County’s own huge stands of timber, situated as they were quite far from the Southern Pacific Railroad’s tracks, still remained inaccessible. It

*(KING TIMBER, continued on page 2)*



## KING TIMBER

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would require additional railroad construction, up into the Rogue Valley's surrounding forests, to usher in the first "large-scale" wood-products operation here.

But, Oregon had become one of the nation's leading lumber producers by the 1920s with many of the state's more accessible timber lands by now heavily logged over. A Wisconsin-based operation, calling itself the Owen-Oregon Lumber Company, arrived in Jackson County at mid-decade. With a new railroad having been built to Butte Falls, Owen-Oregon (O-O) extended miles of railroad-logging spurs farther out into the woods. It built a very modern, large-capacity sawmill at the north end of Medford, and O-O became for a few short years our region's economic powerhouse. This new enterprise was indeed a very big deal. And things went well until late 1927. Then, in part due to over-production by so many big new mills all over the West and Southeast, the nation's heretofore-heated lumber market began to cool down.

By 1929, well before that October's stock-market crash, many of America's big lumber producers were facing ruin. O-O retreated from 24-hour operations to a single shift in the big mill and then to only part-time. Logging crews and mill workers found themselves without jobs,

and in 1931 Owen-Oregon declared bankruptcy. Timber-harvest volumes on the Rogue River National Forest where O-O had done most of its logging, dropped from over 70 million board-feet annually in the late 1920s to less than one-million board-feet in 1933!

*[Note: A board foot is equivalent to a piece of wood 12 inches square and 1 inch thick.]*

Although reorganized by its Chicago bondholders into Medford Corporation (Medco), the once promising operation barely limped through the Great Depression. Not until 1939-1940—with America's steadily increasing defense expenditures following the outbreak of World War II in Europe—did Medco finally begin to turn a profit. And construction of a huge Army training base at nearby Camp White during 1941, even before the December 7<sup>th</sup> day of infamy, revved up local lumber production.

The War years brought a technological revolution to southwestern Oregon's woods. Railroad logging, fast becoming a thing of the past, yielded to powerful bulldozers ("Cats") that punched miles of narrow truck roads into the steep mountains. A steady stream of new, more powerful trucks now hauled their loads down to the Rogue Valley's rapidly increasing number of mills. Some of them were small and short-lived, such as the several "tie mills" up near Prospect that cut Douglas-fir on private lands to produce



*Owen-Oregon  
Lumber Company  
1930s aerial view  
of mill operation.  
Photo courtesy  
of Vicki Bryden*



thousands of railroad ties (desperately needed because the nation's overburdened railroads bore the brunt of wartime freight and passenger traffic). The motorized chainsaw also greatly increased loggers' efficiency at this time. Gone were the two-man timber-felling and log-bucking teams that wielded manual cross-cut saws—one man could now do the work of four. Better technology in milling also had an impact. In the late 1940s, wealthy Pennsylvania investors built Elk Lumber Company's big new lumber mill (now Boise Cascade) near Central Point.

During America's dramatic Postwar housing boom, the radically new technology and increasing demand had important effects. Now, small-size logging/log-hauling enterprises, many of them family-owned and with just a few employees, could easily compete with big operations like Medco. Called "gyppo" outfits, some flourished briefly and then, having cut over their private timberland, faded by the late 1950s. Still, some of these gyppo owners made high profits, and did so quickly. Other Jackson County gyppo operations, like those begun by Anthony Lausmann and Eugene Burrill, steadily grew into big operations with their own mills; these men made sizeable fortunes.

The 1950s-1970s was a time of unprecedented prosperity here. Federal receipts from local timber sales—a substantial portion of the dollars from which Uncle Sam, by law, shared with western Oregon counties—funded new county roads, parks and campgrounds, libraries, schools, and more. Young loggers and mill workers could make a "living wage," buy a house, and send their kids to college. It was this period's hell-bent-for-leather timber harvest of local forestlands (both private and federal) that made it seem to many people as if a large-scale wood-products industry had "always been here," and that its prosperity would go on forever. But it was not to be.

By the late 1950s—with most *private* timberland now heavily cut over—our region's hungry lumber and plywood mills became ever more dependent on *federal* timber (i.e., that managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management). Hundreds of jobs, and the many local businesses that profited from those paychecks, depended on continued high levels of logging on public land.

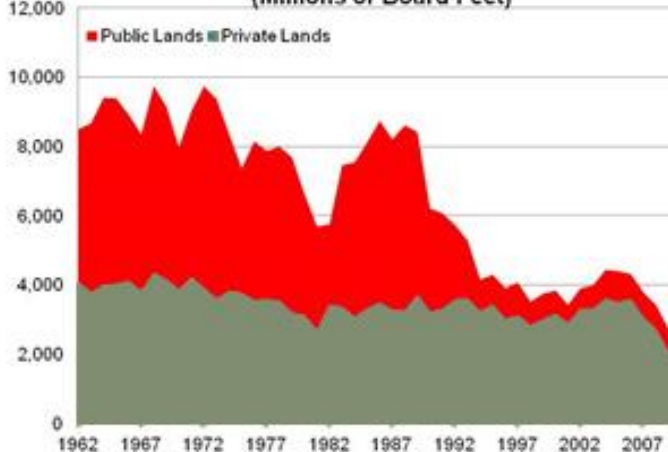
Scores of federal foresters now implemented the "industrial forestry model" that had been pioneered by big outfits like Weyerhaeuser and Georgia-Pacific—clearcutting; herbicides; pesticides; fertilizers; reforestation with seedlings derived from faster-growing trees. As a telling example, the Rogue River National Forest's annual timber harvest went from less than 100 million board feet in 1953 to nearly 200 million in 1963; by 1973 the volume harvest nearly reached 300 million board feet!

The eventual result of this untenable situation, which played out dramatically during the early 2000s, is featured elsewhere in these pages. The "When Timber Was King" years (which led up to the subsequent "Timber War") stand out as a truly transformative time in our region's history. Equally important, because of the relatively late arrival of a large-scale wood-products economy in Southern Oregon's three counties, our area's Postwar "gyppo tradition" likely was more vibrant, central, and politically influential than any other place in the Far West.

**Oregon Timber Harvest, 1905-2010**  
(Millions of Board Feet)



**Oregon Timber Harvest, 1962-2010**  
(Millions of Board Feet)



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*Note: Much of the information presented above derives from the author's own personal knowledge as a 30-year Forest Service employee on the Rogue River National Forest.*

# THE LIFE OF A LOGGER

## *Early Lumberjacks in the Pacific Northwest*

*By Sharon Bywater*

*In the early 1800s, lumberjacks were rugged men who chopped down trees with axes and hand saws in the forests of Canada and the United States. They rejected the ways of the civilized world, relying on their wits and physical strength for survival.*

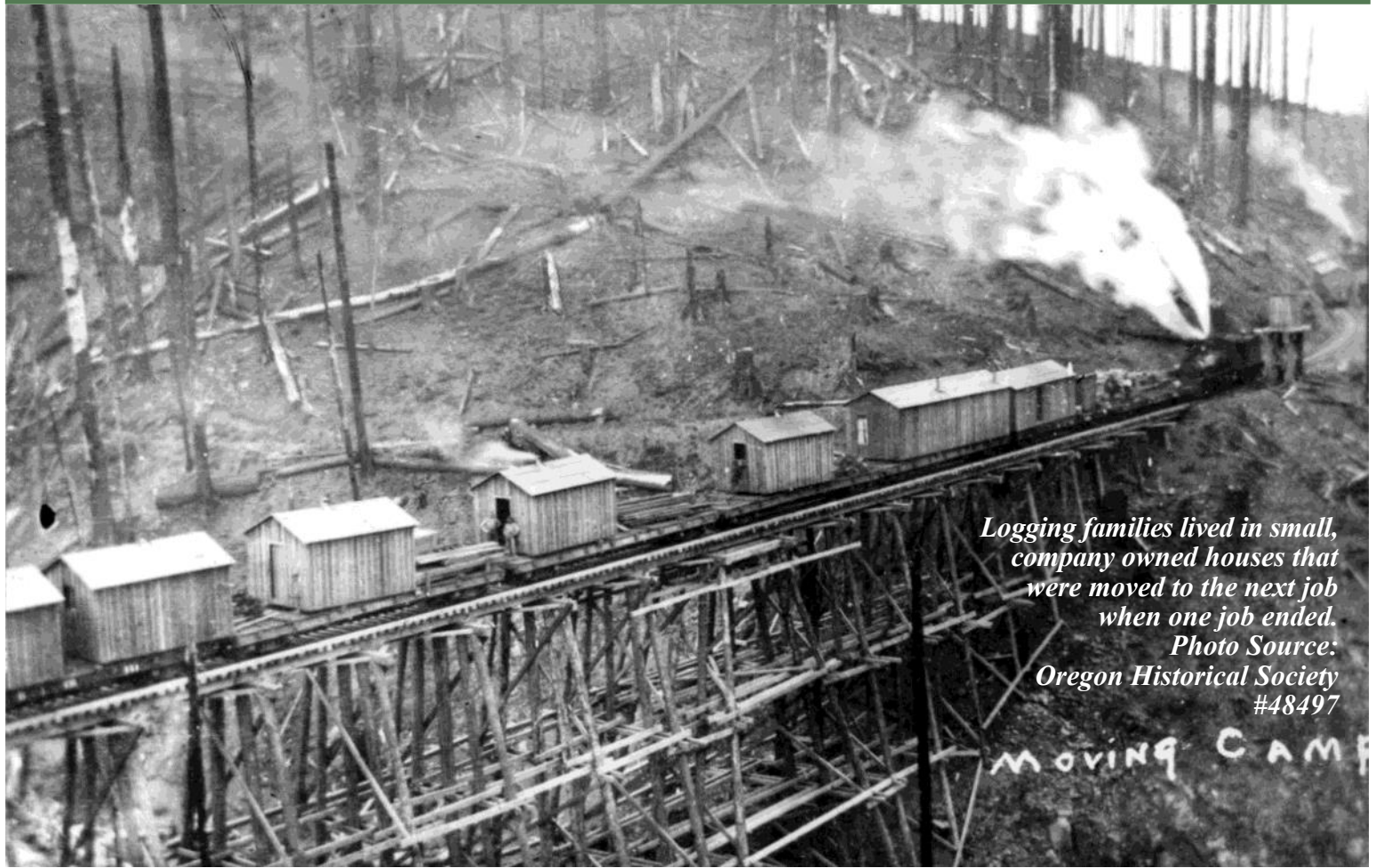
**E**arly lumberjacks migrated from the eastern forests of Maine, onward to Michigan and Minnesota, moving farther and farther west as they searched for more untamed forests. The archetypal lumberjack, Paul Bunyan, hailed from the forests of Canada but came to represent lumberjacks everywhere. Typically pictured with his faithful blue ox,

Babe, Bunyan is a larger-than-life bearded figure wearing a plaid flannel shirt known as a Mackinaw, suspenders and caulk boots. He has been depicted in statues across North America, including Portland, Oregon, whose Paul Bunyan statue is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



*Lumberjacks hitched  
huge logs to oxen.  
Photo Source:  
Oregon Historical Society  
#3651.*





*Logging families lived in small, company owned houses that were moved to the next job when one job ended.*  
*Photo Source:*  
*Oregon Historical Society*  
*#48497*

When loggers reached the Pacific Northwest, they found trees bigger than any they had seen before. In his book about the logging industry, *Holy Old Mackinaw*, Stewart Holbrook called the forests along the Northwest's Pacific shore "the outstanding timber zone of the United States, then or now." Along Oregon's southern coast, Douglas-fir grew up to 300 feet tall and easily 10 feet around. They were a lumberjack's dream.

Cutting down timber with an axe and cross-cut saw was hard work but getting trees to the sawmill was even more daunting. Lumberjacks hitched huge logs to oxen to be dragged from the forest over primitive log tracks called skidroads, usually to a river landing. Bullwhackers, legendary for their profanity, used a goadstick to prod the oxen. Holbrook wrote that the skidroad "was the Western loggers' first and greatest contribution to the science of moving timber."

Early lumberjacks often lived in the forests during a timber cut. It was intermittent work, with low pay and primitive living conditions. In *The Lady and the Lumberjack*, Olive Barber describes her life in an early Coos Bay logging camp, where she lived in a tent and learned to cook beans for every meal because "it takes what you might call high-octane food to give a man the energy and

strength to climb steep hills, jump over logs, and wade through the bottomless mud of the winter months."

Even though steam sawmills began ramping up lumber production in Oregon around 1850, life in the forest was still primitive. It was not until 1882 that John Dolbeer of Eureka, California, patented the steam donkey, a crude steam-powered engine that began to replace oxen for pulling logs out of the forest. Placed on the forest floor, the steam donkey could move trees faster and help loggers reach previously inaccessible timber stands. But as progress moved the timber industry forward, old-timers lamented the loss of the bullwhacker era when lumberjacks were king and did not require the aid of technology.

After the railroad came to Oregon, some companies practiced "railroad-logging," building rails into the forest to transfer felled trees to rail cars and on to processing plants. The Owen-Oregon Company (later the Medford Corporation) used this practice in the 1920s in Butte Falls, Oregon. Loggers lived in small, company-owned houses, much like railroad cars, that moved to the next job when one job ended. They had no running water or electricity. Food had to be hauled in.

(LOGGER, continued on page 6)



## LOGGER

(continued from page 5)

Although they were becoming a dying breed, old time lumberjacks have been memorialized in legends, books, movies, and songs. Real life lumberjacks, such as Jigger Johnson of Maine, contributed to the myth of the strongman at one with life in the forest. As legend had it, Johnson was so tough that he could kick knots off frozen logs with his bare feet.

In a song from his album, "Ride This Train," Johnny Cash epitomized the life of the Oregon logger. The song is simply titled "Lumberjack." Cash claimed that all the Roseburg loggers looked like Paul Bunyan to him, and he summed up the local logging life with this lyric:

*Well you work in the woods from morning to night.  
You laugh and sing and you cuss and fight.  
On Saturday night you go to Eugene  
And on a Sunday morning your pockets are clean.*

Cash's words do not exaggerate. From early on, loggers spent their time off in streets called skid roads, the part of town that later became known as skid row. Named after the primitive tracks used to haul logs out of the forest,

the name skid road was eventually attached to any poor section of town, usually near the water, where loggers congregated to spend their wages. Portland and Seattle were well known for their "skid road" saloons and houses of ill repute, but every small logging town had its own.

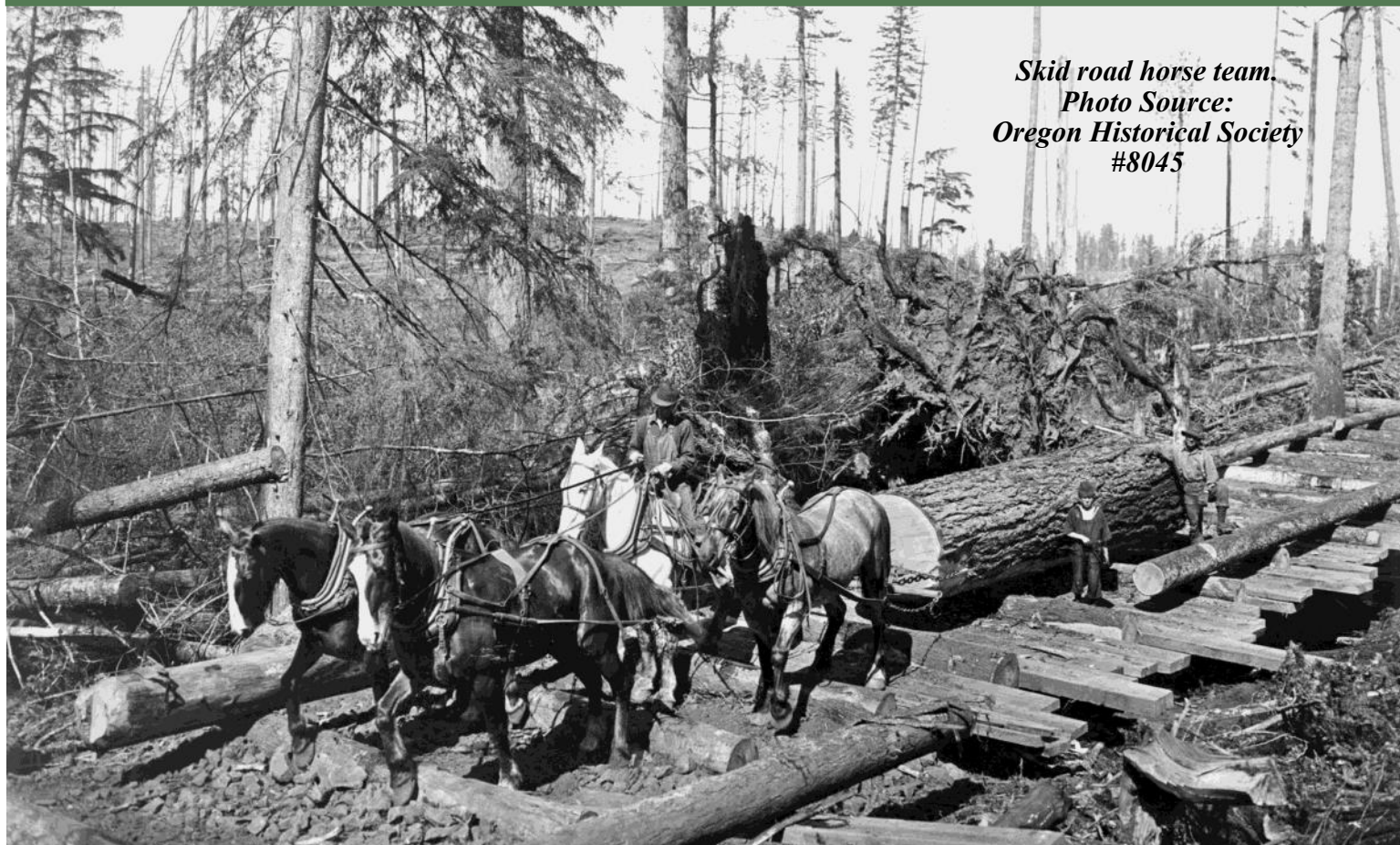
It is no surprise that lumberjacks were young men who had the strength and endurance the job demanded. In *The Lady and the Lumberjack*, Barber describes her husband's hospital ordeal after his ear was severed in a logging accident. He returned to logging only to have his ankle and shin crushed in a fall. He was told he would never log again, but still he returned. A study of Pacific Coast logging by Andrew Mason Prouty found that in the early 1900s, one in five Washington state loggers was injured on the job every year, and a third of 18-year-old loggers would not live to be 65.

Those who did reach old age, often had trouble making ends meet. Ken Kesey's novel, *Sometimes a Great Notion*, tells of the men, women, and forests of southern Oregon. He describes one broken down old lumberjack who went to logged-over slopes "where he cut down cedar snags... and split them into shingle bolts," selling them for 10 cents a bolt. With the money he scraped together he bought rotgut liquor.

*Donkey engine, a steam powered winch, shown here on a log sled.  
Photo Source: Oregon Historical Society  
#022906*







*Skid road horse team.  
Photo Source:  
Oregon Historical Society  
#8045*

After World War II, mechanized tools changed the logging industry forever, but not the image of loggers as rugged, rough men who would rather risk being crushed by a log than adjust to a more civilized life in the city. According to Holbrook, the comforts that began infiltrating the lives of post-World War loggers would make them unrecognizable to the early lumberjack. Gone were the old bull whackers and men living in log bunkhouses without plumbing or electricity. Holbrook wrote, “It was the loggers’ ancient enemy, Civilization, following hard on their tails, and they wanted none of it.”

Modern loggers work with sophisticated machinery and often have homes in town and a family. As civilized as logging has become, loggers still have the most dangerous jobs. A 2008 article in the *Wall Street Journal* listed logging as the “worst 3D’s job (dirty, dangerous and demeaning),”

citing “work instability, poor income, and pure danger.” But like Barber’s husband in *The Lady and the Lumberjack*, many loggers can’t see themselves doing anything else. Chuck Carlson, a third-generation logger in South Dakota who spoke to *The Atlantic* about his job said: “I think it’s a big part of my identity. It’s all that I’ve ever done and it’s all that I’ve ever wanted to do.”

### **A Few Logging Terms**

**Bullcook:** The camp chore boy, often the butt of jokes.

**Push:** Camp foreman

**Flunky:** Cookhouse help

**Nosebag:** lunch bucket

**Whistle Punk:** the boy who blows a whistle to signal the direction of logs being pulled by the steam donkey.

**Cold deck:** stack of stored logs later brought in from the woods.

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*Medford & Crater Lake Railroad  
ground breaking ceremony, April 4, 1905.  
Photo Source: SOHS #10569*

## THE BUTTE FALLS RAILROAD: FROM LOGGING TO TOURISM

*By Allen Dobney*

*From a vision in 1889 to abandonment in 1962, the Butte Falls Railroad line was managed by eight different organizations.*

**A**s early as 1889 a railroad was envisioned that would provide passenger, freight, and logging transportation from Central Point through Eagle Point to Butte Falls. Planning and surveying for the line were undertaken, but the project never got past this initial stage.

In 1891, the **Rogue River Valley Railroad** developed a plan to extend their railroad through Medford and on to Eagle Point. Surveying was performed by J. S. Howard under the direction of general superintendent Graham. By 1893 Mr. C. H. Leadbetter, president of the Rogue River Valley Railroad, was developing grand plans to build the railroad past Butte Falls over the Cascades and on into Klamath Falls but work on the railroad never started.

On January 14, 1905, Medford banker A. A. Davis organized the **Medford & Crater Lake Railroad Company** to build an excursion line carrying tourists from Medford

to Crater Lake. By March 9, 1905, the railroad had secured \$75,000 for the purpose of constructing the railroad as far as Butte Falls.

With great fanfare on April 4, 1905, the town of Medford celebrated the start of railroad construction. Mrs. A. A. Davis lifted the first shovel of earth in the ground-breaking ceremony. The Medford school band provided music for the occasion. Mule teams stood by to start grading the roadbed as soon as the ceremony concluded.

Using contract crews from India, 11.7 miles of track construction to Eagle Point had been completed by December 1<sup>st</sup>, but by early 1906, the line was in financial difficulty and construction was halted. On February 2<sup>nd</sup> of that year, the Medford and Crater Lake Railroad went into receivership.



In May 1907, Portland investors W. Stryker and Alexander Sweek financed the incorporation of the **Pacific & Eastern Railroad**. The line was to be managed by George Estes. Because of continuing financial difficulties, the railroad changed ownership four times over the next three years. Nevertheless, construction continued toward Butte Falls.

In June of 1910 James Hill, President of the Great Northern Railway, took over the Pacific & Eastern. John F. Stevens was elected president of the P&E, overseeing all Hill rail lines that were strictly Oregon properties. With the financial support of the Hill roads, the Pacific and Eastern completed the rail line into Butte Falls on November 15, 1910.

The original plan was to extend the line across the Cascades, connecting to James J. Hill's Great Northern Railroad at Klamath Falls. Although the route was surveyed beyond Butte Falls, construction never began. For most of its existence the P&E operated at a deficit. The line was allowed to go into receivership in 1918. By court order, it was shut down and sold at auction on January 15, 1919.

In 1920, Mississippi lumberman James Brownlee purchased timber land north of Butte Falls. He also purchased 33 acres near the junction of the P&E and

Southern Pacific railroads and began building a mill in Medford.

On August 20<sup>th</sup> of 1920, Millard D. Olds, a Michigan lumberman who had timber holdings east of Butte Falls, purchased the defunct P&E Railroad for around \$200,000. He then began extending the railroad east from Butte Falls and in 1921 began limited logging on his holdings. In 1921, Olds also purchased about 6,000 acres from the Crater National Forest in the Four Bit Creek Timber Sale. This was a tract east of his holdings with an estimated 87.5 million board feet of timber.

Brownlee owned the mill, Olds owned the railroad, and both men had access to timber in the Butte Falls area served by the railroad. A partnership seemed to be to the advantage of both men, and it was formalized on April 1, 1922. **The Brownlee-Olds Lumber Company** operated the railroad and the mill until May 1924 when the entire operation was sold to the John S. Owen Lumber Company of Wisconsin. The Owen family also owned timberland in the Butte Falls Area.

The Owen family incorporated the Owen-Oregon Lumber Company to operate the Mill and manage the timber land. A separate company (wholly owned by Owen-Oregon) known as the **Medford Logging Company**

*(BUTTE FALLS RR, continued on page 10)*



*First Pacific & Eastern train into Butte Falls,  
November 15, 1910.*

*Photo Source: SOHS #1575*



## BUTTE FALLS RR

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was created to operate the Railroad. Along with the timberland, mill, and railroad, came the right to log the Four Bit Creek Timber sale. The railroad was extended into the timber sale area in 1924 and full-scale logging was started in 1925.

Owen-Oregon started operations with a 2-6-2 Porter locomotive and 40 log cars. The roster was soon expanded with the addition of 40 more log cars and the purchase of a used 70-ton Willamette geared locomotive and a new Baldwin 75-ton 2-8-2 locomotive in 1924 followed by a new 70-ton Willamette geared locomotive in 1925. The geared locomotives collected the loaded log cars from the landings and delivered them to a transfer point. The Porter locomotive hauled the loads from the transfer point to Derby (west of Butte Falls). The larger Baldwin locomotive then took the loads from Derby to the mill in Medford.

Even though Owen-Oregon had an ample supply of available timber, it

never made money. The Great Depression accelerated its decline. In 1932, the company went into receivership and the property was sold at public auction. It was purchased by its creditors and reorganized as the Medford Corporation.

During the late 1930s the **Medford Corporation (Medco)** began to show a profit. The railroad was slowly expanded to the north, accessing new tracts of private and Forest Service timber.

World War II became a boom time for Medco. The mill needed to run two full shifts every day to meet the demand for timber. In 1945, the 60-acre Daly Pond (a.k.a. Medco Pond) was built 15 miles north of Butte Falls, providing for longer term storage. Logs were often stock piled here during the summer and shipped out during the winter to keep the mill supplied.

In 1952 Medco purchased its only diesel locomotive, identified as #8, a 100-ton, 800 horsepower Baldwin. But during the 1950's

trucking was also becoming more efficient, and Medco soon realized that the era of railroad logging was coming to an end. In 1962 the railroad ceased operations. Four locomotives survived the scrappers, two of which (#4 and #8) are owned by the Southern Oregon Railway Historical Society.

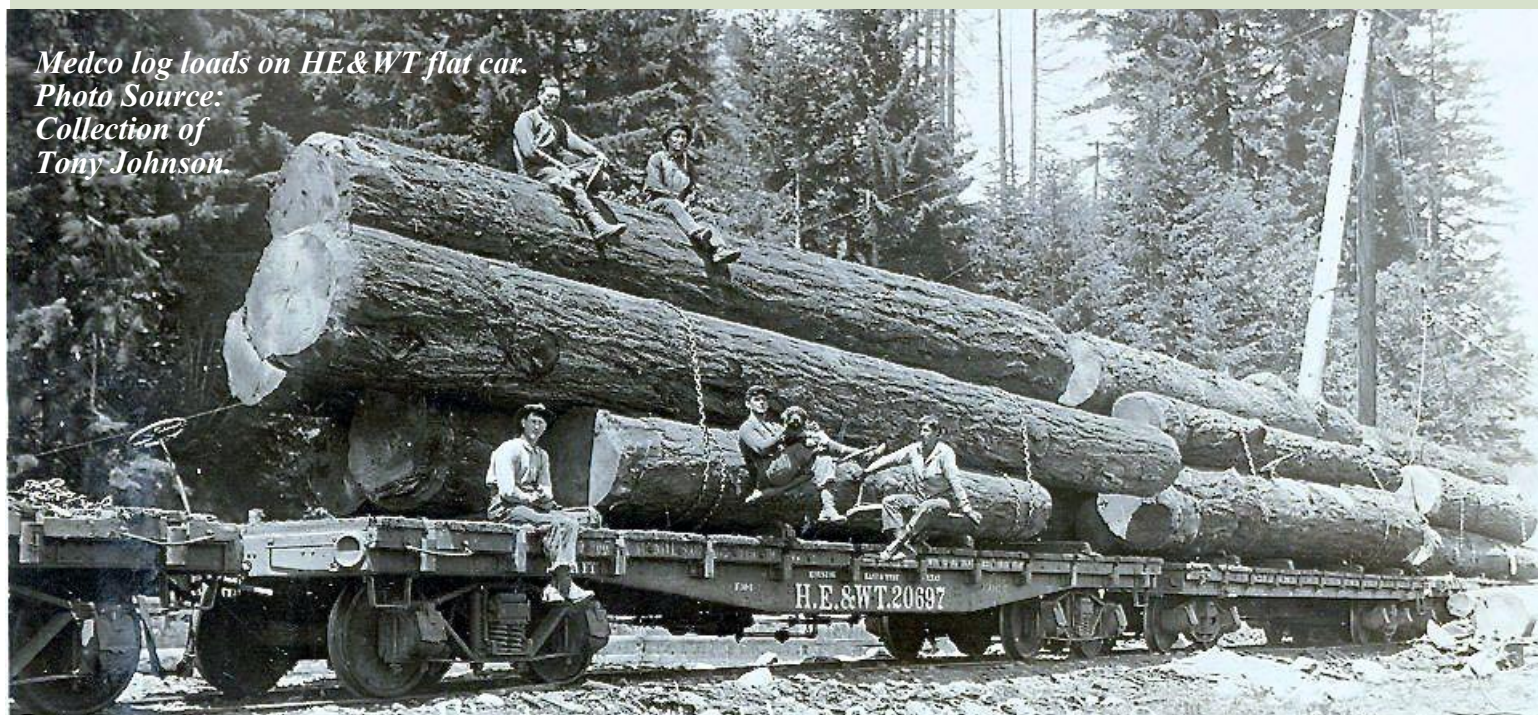
Today the Southern Oregon Railway Historical Society and the town of Butte Falls are working on a project to create the **Butte Falls Scenic Railway**, a tourist railway on three miles of the original Medco line. This excursion line will be a living railroad museum operating in its original forested environment showcasing locomotive and other equipment originally used in the region. Medco Engines #4 and #8 will eventually operate on this railway. The project is currently in the planning and design phase.

To learn more about this project, visit <http://soc-nrhs.org>.

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*Medco log loads on HE&WT flat car.  
Photo Source:  
Collection of  
Tony Johnson.*



A photograph of a Northern Spotted Owl in flight, wings spread wide, over a forest floor with green ferns. The owl is brown with white spots and large dark eyes. The background shows tall trees in a forest.

## *"The Battle over Old Growth and the Spotted Owl"* **"THE TIMBER WARS"**

*The Northern Spotted Owl may be merely a bird,  
but it is a symbol of so much more.  
In northwest forest communities,  
just the mention of the bird  
sparks memories of bitter battles  
in what are called the "Timber Wars."*

*by Gloria Wyeth*

**O**n one side was the timber industry as a driver of local economies, and on the other, activists desperate to save old-growth forests. Running through it were nearly two centuries of local, state and federal regulations. There were many warriors in this conflict.

***But the Northern Spotted Owl was not one of them.***

The history goes back to the roots of America and all that was done morally and immorally, legally and illegally, in the name of western expansion, economic development, and nature conservation. Old-growth Oregon forests were in the thick of it, and

the results dramatically changed many communities once dependent on the timber economy.

**The Oregon and California Railroad** Revested Lands have a history unlike any other American lands. The saga includes railroad barons, a land grant of millions of acres, massive fraud, timber barons, and ultimately reversion of the land to the federal government. These events impacted 18 Oregon counties, including Curry, Josephine, Jackson, Coos, Douglas, and Klamath.

The railroad was deeded land in 1866 to sell to settlers, but it fraudulently ended up in the hands of timber barons.

After many legal battles, the federal government took back two million acres in 1916, and after more uproar, passed the "O&C Revested Lands Sustained Yield Management Act" of 1937. The timber was to be sold and cut for sustained yield. The Act also addressed watersheds, the economic stability of local communities (timber taxes), and recreation. Under this act, the O&C lands were stabilized until the Northern Spotted Owl controversies of the 1990s completely upended forest management.

**Bureau of Land Management (BLM)** roots go back to when the young nation began acquiring additional **(TIMBER WARS, continued on pg. 12)**

## TIMBER WARS

(continued from page 11)

lands. The General Land Office was created in 1812 to encourage homesteading and westward migration. In 1946 Congress merged the GLO and the U.S. Grazing Service, creating the BLM.

Federal forest management dates back to 1876 when Congress created the office of Special Agent in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 1881, it expanded to become the Division of Forestry. Responsibility for forests fell under the Department of the Interior until 1905, when it was transferred to the new U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

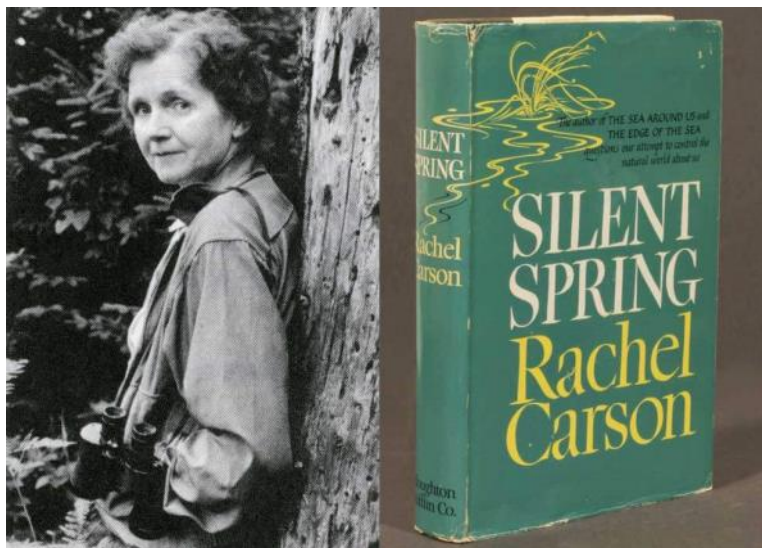
Concern for the environment is as old as the hills. Since the settling of North America by Europeans began in the 1600s, citizens have deeply appreciated and feared nature. Early efforts to preserve natural lands included establishing National Parks, three before 1908. Early conservation groups included the National Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and the National Wildlife Federation, all established between 1886 and 1946.

The earth shook, though, in 1962 when the book *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson was published, warning of the devastation that pesticides were wreaking on birds and other creatures. It triggered a powerful environmental movement, and legislation was passed that would forever change how Americans interacted with wilderness lands and habitats.

**Social Activism** was already rising when *Silent Spring* hit the scene. Spawned by the Vietnam War, the draft, and the civil rights movement, protests became commonplace. Political unrest soared with escalation of the war and the assassinations of John and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King. New activist groups sprang up, later including **Earth First! (EF!)**, which became a major player in the early timber wars.

Earth First! was founded in 1980, by some who had roots in the radical political activist groups of the 60s. The group didn't always agree on tactics. One faction turned a blind eye to sabotage and violence, while the other, led by co-founder Mike Roselle, advocated non-violent civil disobedience. Both tactics were used.

The earliest EF! protest in Oregon was held April 26, 1983, on Bald Mountain near Grants Pass, when EF! founder Mike Roselle and Kevin Everhardt, both from Wyoming, joined local members Pedro Tama of Takilma and Steve Marsden of Merlin to block the path of a



bulldozer and halt construction of a logging road. EF!, along with the Oregon Natural Resources Council, also filed a lawsuit against the Forest Service. Protests here continued until July, when a court ruling halted construction.

This was the first of dozens of efforts in Oregon, all based on staging protest events to block road construction and logging operations combined with lawsuits. Soon EF! and several groups who joined them turned to more effective means, including tree-sitting, camping in groups, and chaining themselves together or to trees. There were angry confrontations with violence on both sides, as well as peaceful events. This early activity was only marginally effective, but it served to escalate the conflicts and gain political attention.

*And still, the Northern Spotted Owl had nothing to do with any of it.*

Meanwhile, back in Washington, D.C. in the aftermath of *Silent Spring*, public concern for the environment and calls for legislation mushroomed. It was a time when politicians could reach agreement and gain approval from their constituents. Ground-breaking environmental legislation included:

- **Wilderness Act** (1964), setting aside 9.1 million acres of federal lands to be preserved in perpetuity, including national forest, national park and BLM lands. It eventually grew to 100 million acres.
- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** (1970), which mandated environmental impact reviews.
- **Environmental Protection Agency**, with responsibility for maintaining and enforcing national standards under environmental laws.



- **National Forest Management Act (1976)** gave the public new tools to protect national forests from rampant logging.
- **Federal Land Policy and Management Act (1976)**, which regulated BLM land use, established wilderness areas, and ended Homestead Act land claims.

With this legislative foundation in place, the timber wars moved from the forests to the court rooms.

*At last the Northern Spotted Owl entered the picture.*

In 1969, Eric Forsman was an undergraduate in the wildlife department at Oregon State University and working for the U.S. Forest Service at a station near Eugene. “I was sitting here one evening, and I heard this kow-kow-kow-kow kind of call,” Forsman remembered during an Oregon Public Broadcasting podcast. He imitated the call, and the owl called back. Soon a pair flew down and landed near him.

Forsman studied the birds for his graduate thesis. After tracking them for a year, he determined they lived almost exclusively in old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. He was the first to associate spotted owls with old forests.

Andy Stahl got his start working for the U.S. Forest Service, then for timber companies, and then for the National Wildlife Federation where he successfully promoted a lawsuit that shut down timber sales on the Siuslaw National Forest’s Mapleton Ranger District.

The court injunction in the case stated, “The Forest Service and defendant-intervenors contend that before the proposed timber sales may be enjoined, the court must balance the equities. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has recently ruled that this balancing is not necessary. When an agency fails to comply with NEPA, irreparable

(TIMBER WARS, continued on page 14)



*Earth First! Protest.  
Photo Source:  
[becausewemust.org](http://becausewemust.org)*

## TIMBER WARS

(continued from page 13)

damage is presumed, and absent unusual circumstances, an injunction should issue. There are no unusual circumstances here.”

“Balancing the inequities” was favored by the timber industry and politicians, and debated between agencies. Conservative administrations favored finding a balance that would help the environment but mitigate economic harm. Others expected the federal agencies to adhere to the laws.

### *Back to the owl.*

Aware of Forsman’s work, in the aftermath of the Mapleton injunction, which applied to just that one district, Andy Stahl was the first to consider using the owl and the laws to protect forests throughout the entire Northwest. His formula combined science and the law.

He brought in scientists and biologists. Others started petitions to list the owl as endangered.

The turning point came in June 1990 when the Northern Spotted Owl was listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ensuing lawsuits, focusing on wildlife habitat rather than timber, resulted in drastic cuts to timber sales, protected millions of acres of old-growth forest, and set forest management on an entirely new course. A 1986 Forest Service management plan to preserve critical owl habitat in old growth forests was at the heart of the issues. The plan pleased neither the environmentalists nor the loggers.

Senators Mark Hatfield of Oregon and Brock Adams of Washington were among those looking for balance. They immediately passed the Hatfield-Adams Compromise or “Section 318” of the 1990 Interior Department appropriation, a rider which attempted to insulate agency timber sales plans from judicial review (i.e. no lawsuits), allow

large timber sales to make up for what had been lost by the court injunctions, and delay deadlines for owl protection plans. The measure included a compromise that offered 7.7 billion board feet of timber for sale during the 1989 and 1990 fiscal years and preserved 11,000 jobs. However, the scientific studies claimed that to preserve the spotted owl habitat, no more than 2.6 billion board feet per year could be cut. The controversy raged in the press, in protests, in Congress, in courts, and throughout the regulatory agencies.

However, ensuing legal decisions devastated the timber industry. The first “owl” case, the Sierra Club and the

National Audubon Society vs. the U.S. Forest Service, alleged that the 1986 Forest Management Plan was inadequate to protect the bird.

The case was heard by Ninth U.S. District Court Judge William Dwyer in Seattle. In May 1991 Dwyer ruled in favor of the National Audubon Society and

the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund and ordered the Forest Service to halt more than 75 percent of its planned timber sales—2 billion board feet. He also held that the Forest Service had to comply with the ESA and not just prevent extinction, but maintain a viable species.

Dwyer rejected arguments about the economic consequences of stopping timber sales, stating, “The timber industry no longer drives the Pacific Northwest’s economy. Job losses in the wood-products industry will continue regardless of whether the Northern Spotted Owl is protected. The argument that the mightiest economy on earth cannot afford to preserve old-growth forests for a short time, while it reaches an overdue decision on how to manage them, is not convincing today.”

There were more protests and more attempts to change the laws. Judge Dwyer, however, continued. On May 28, 1992, he again rejected a new plan that set aside 5.9 million acres.





In June 1991, Fish and Wildlife blocked 44 timber sales in Oregon. The BLM requested an exemption. The controversy was deemed sufficient to convene the Endangered Species Committee (the so-called “**God Squad**” of six Cabinet members and one public member). It was the third (and so far final) time it had convened.

Throughout January 1992, the committee heard 97 witnesses. Environmentalists said the owl populations were declining by 7.5% per year and getting worse. The timber industry argued for continued cutting and a strong economy. A public hearing was held, and in May the committee voted to exempt only 13 of the 44 BLM timber sales. It directed BLM to implement its still-draft Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan *and* produce new plans. The exemption was then overturned because President Bush had talked to committee members.

President Bill Clinton was elected in November 1992, and the world shifted once more. He held a “timber summit” in Seattle on April 2, 1993. By 1994, 10 federal agencies worked with scientists on a region-wide plan that would be scientifically sound, ecologically credible, and legally responsible” and would strictly adhere to all laws. The result was the **Northwest Forest Plan**, a series of federal policies and

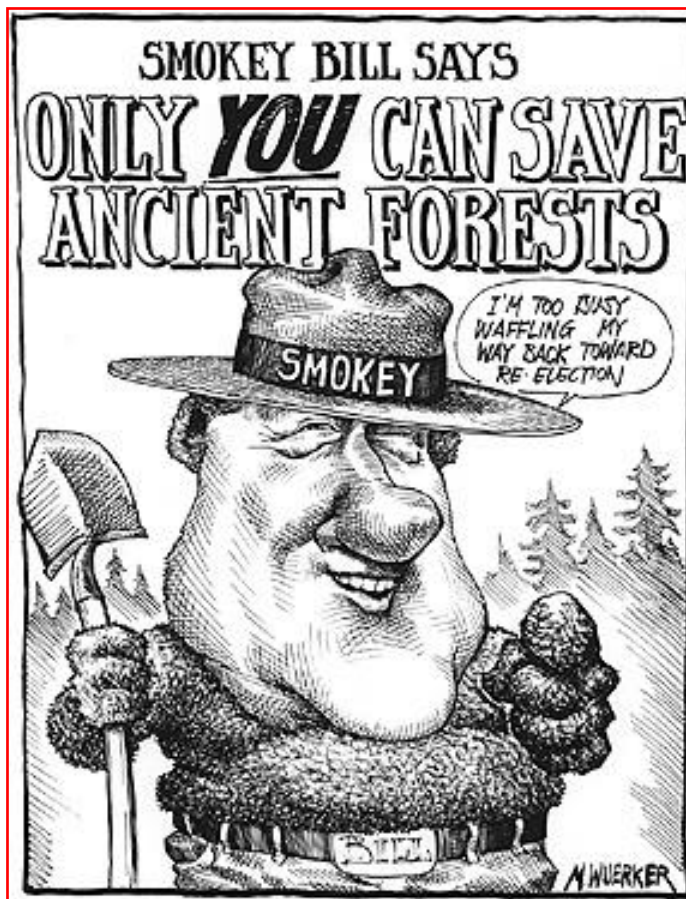
guidelines governing land use on all federal lands in the Pacific Northwest. It covers 10 million acres in Western Oregon, Washington, and Northern California.

Judge Dwyer accepted the new plan as in compliance with the National Forest Management Act on December 21, 1994. The plan permitted the harvest of one billion board feet of timber on public land, less than one fourth of the logs cut in the 1980s.

The new plan defined and expanded forest management well beyond the Northern Spotted Owl and took the little bird out of the spotlight. It hasn’t done very well. Currently threatened by the larger barred owl, as well as by devastating fires, its numbers continue to decline 3.9% per year.

Old-growth forest logging has been reduced by about 75%. Logging has never returned to the high yield cuts of the 1970s, and southwest Oregon communities that depended on logging jobs never fully recovered.

The timber wars calmed down after 1994, but didn’t end. On January 13th this year, outgoing President Trump approved the opening of 3.9 million acres of land for logging in Oregon. Incoming President Biden reversed it during his first week in office. *(For additional information, see <http://sohs.org/timber-wars>.)*



## AND ON THE HOME FRONT ... “Picking Sides” during the Timber War

Times of deep political division are nothing new to Southern Oregon — for example, local tempers here rose to fever pitch during the American Civil War and, of course, they have done so yet again over just the past few years. Less than forty years ago, another period of deep polarization struck our region: the so-called “Timber War” of the late 1980s and well into the 1990s.

Fierce debate over timber-harvest levels on federal forest lands — public lands that were, by the 1980s,

key to sustaining our area’s wood-products industry and the many jobs dependent upon it — became a major national issue. And nowhere was that debate more intense and personal than it was in Jackson, Josephine, and Douglas counties. Southern Oregon, because of its relative lack of economic diversification and its heavy dependence on logging- and milling- related payrolls and federal funds, was ground zero during the Timber War. Bitter arguments over the fate both of jobs and of the Northern Spotted Owl (considered an “indicator species” *(HOME FRONT, continued on page 16)*

## HOME FRONT

(continued from page 15)

for old-growth forest-dependent animals) peppered the opinion pages of newspapers.

Initially, anti-logging protests at federal offices here, led by groups like Earth First!, resulted simply in hyperbolic sarcasm from the other side. In rural areas, some pick-up trucks bore bumper stickers such as, “*Earth First!... We’ll Log the Other Planets Later!*” and “*I like Spotted Owls...Fried, Stewed, or Broiled.*”

Local acrimony increased as the war of words increased in volume and angry rhetoric. One heavily attended public meeting held in Medford seemed, at times, to be on the verge of actual physical violence between opponents.

In a bid to stop logging, unknown individuals stated they’d secretly hammered steel spikes into scores of trees that were scheduled to be cut – something that would imperil the lives of loggers and millworkers.

One Jackson County Commissioner, who some residents felt had failed to speak out strongly enough in favor of preserving timber jobs, faced a vehement recall campaign in the late 1980s that was funded in part by the timber industry. Although that recall failed, some customers who went to local lumber retailers but declined to sign the store’s recall petition remember being subjected to harsh words from salespeople.

Over the course of a hot August day in 1988, more than 1,500 logging trucks, driven from five states, arrived in Grants Pass with horns blaring. They rolled, bumper-to-bumper, down the city’s downtown thoroughfare to the cheers of onlookers then drove on to the pro-logging “Round-Up” protest held at the Josephine County Fairgrounds just south of town. There, Congressman Bob Smith and others gave the assembled throng stemwinder

speeches decrying environmental “terrorism” and demanding to be heard by national policy makers.

Some environmental groups called for an end to *all* logging on *all* federal lands. Some opponents demanded that those same public lands be turned over to the states and counties for increased logging. Neither got their wish.

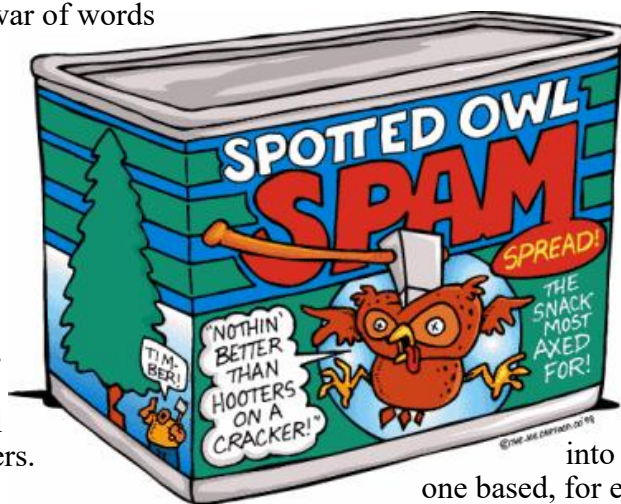
Our area’s Timber War did not actually end. It still persists, but on a smaller scale and with far less national media attention. Still, by the mid-1990s, federal timber-harvest volumes had shrunk to a veritable trickle compared to the

boom years of previous decades. These substantially smaller harvest levels of federal timber have remained a fact of life throughout the Pacific Northwest and northern California.

However, the financial apocalypse that some had predicted for places like Medford and Grants Pass failed to happen. This was largely because these urban areas had diversified greatly during the period

into far more of a “service economy”—one based, for example, on proliferating “big box” stores, greatly increased health-care infrastructure, and a growing population (including the arrival of affluent retirees). On the other hand, it is undeniable that small logging communities like Prospect, Butte Falls, and Cave Junction indeed suffered decline. And, with the increased local competition for a reduced supply of federal timber to turn into wood products, the number of sawmills and plywood mills in our region has likewise dwindled since the 1990s.

But the broader impact has been on county-government coffers, which for years had been swollen with the counties’ share of Uncle Sam’s generous “O&C dollars.” These dollars from federal timber sales that had helped keep Southern Oregon’s property taxes unusually low also plummeted...and our property taxes have risen to make up the shortfalls.



## ADD COLOR TO OUR BLOOM: *Become a Sustaining Member!*

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

## “Moments to Remember”

*Albert Einstein once defined creativity as “intelligence having fun.” The 2020 year, for all of its grimness, left vivid images that are a tribute to the ingenuity of our members. In my mind’s eye I see the following:*



- ◆ Vehicles arched in great rows facing a hay-wagon stage at Hanley to hear Nick Garrett-Powell’s feast of sound and rhythm as socially distanced couples danced in the moonlight.
- ◆ A wildly successful drive-through Heritage Plant sale in which people picked up their orders, barely leaving their automobiles.
- ◆ Rooms and spaces at Hanley Farm and the History Center freshly tidied, scraped and organized, and ready for new things.
- ◆ A photo opportunity provided by Santa and our Red Truck at the SOHS Holiday wreathmaking event.
- ◆ The center hall of the History Center tastefully arrayed for our Repurposing Sale (now scheduled for March 26-27).
- ◆ Hanley lawns arrayed with COVID-spaced tables at which guests produced scores of life-size scarecrows from farm-made kits.
- ◆ The largest Zoom course ever enrolled by Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Southern Oregon University (OLLI at SOU) entitled “The History of Southern Oregon: A Tapestry of Cultures.” The course was entirely developed and taught by SOHS members and friends.
- ◆ Happy smiles of researchers from as far away as Nebraska, Spain, and Germany receiving on-line assistance, including documentation and photographs, from the capable staff of our Research Library.
- ◆ Live classes brought directly to the living rooms of shut-in, locked-down, and quarantined members of our community, thanks to the wonders of Zoom and our Windows in Time speakers.
- ◆ The Rogue Valley Chorale performing Holiday Music in front of our Hanley 19<sup>th</sup>-century barn on a beautiful day in late fall.
- ◆ And beneath it all, the society moved forward: standing committees regularly met, new committees were formed, and planning took place, archival and technology projects got underway. As I write, an education website is under construction, a new museum is being planned, and more safe events are in the works for 2021.
- ◆ Amidst the gray days of this year, despite everything that happened, we brought a little more light to our valley—and managed to have fun!



With gratitude,  
Doug McGeary



## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

*The Southern Oregon Historical Society may not be Irish,  
and your name may not be Donegan, Riley, or O'Shaunessey,  
but we know how lucky we are to have had you as donors  
and volunteers in 2020!*

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## SPOTLIGHT ON ANNA SLOAN

by Larry Mullaly

**D**uring her short time as a member of the Society, Anna Sloan has become a major contributor. How she came to be active with SOHS, and the journey that brought her to us is a fascinating story.

Anna grew up in a small town 20 miles south of Boston, and vividly recalls her first hands-on experience with archaeology. “We did a dig in the school garden where another group had buried artifacts and had to interpret the culture of the items we discovered.” But learning and discovery of other cultures from objects of the past always attracted her. Her parents were interested in the arts, culture, and history, and frequently brought her to museums. “Boston had some of the best” she explains. “Fine arts, science, history—all of these sparked my interest.” Because her mother was British and her father French, the family often visited relatives abroad, and Anna became fluent in French.

Her first love was museums, and after graduating from the University of New York, Manhattan, where she majored in anthropology with an archaeology minor, she worked in the History Tenement Museum Lower East Side, housed in two restored tenement buildings where some 15,000 residents of 20 different nationalities lived over the years. “It is a museum about and for the ordinary person,” Anna explains. It also gave her first-hand experience in a cultural center renowned for its award-winning educational exhibits.

While at the Tenement Museum, she was encouraged to pursue graduate work at the University of Oregon under the noted anthropological archaeologist, Madonna Moss, whose emergent field blends artifact records with cultural lore. “The native cultures still have elders with vibrant oral history,” Anna relates, “that can be tapped and used along with the artifact record to reach new insights.”

Interestingly, it was her work with minority history that brought her into contact with SOHS. During a Jefferson Exchange conversation with well-known local archaeologist Chelsea Rose, Anna learned that the Society’s vertical files, collections of research materials gathered over decades, contained valuable information on the black community in Southern Oregon. Shortly afterwards she became a



member of SOHS, and in 2019 joined its Collections Committee which oversees the acquisition of new artifacts into the society’s care. This past year, she became a member of the SOHS board, and recently was hired as part-time Assistant Curator.

Anna brings to SOHS the same enthusiasm and painstaking attention to detail that she has shown in her academic work. Shortly after joining the Board of Trustees, she helped draft the Society’s response to requests for renaming several sites in Jackson County, and subsequently contributed to the important *SOHS Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion* approved by the SOHS board this past June.

In November, Anna was appointed to spearhead the newly expanded SOHS Museum Committee. This eight-member group is working with other SOHS committees to design and implement a museum plan, and to ensure the successful, sustainable functioning of the museum into the future.

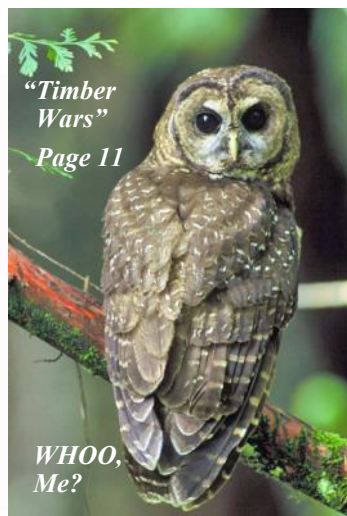
During this same period, Anna developed (and now hosts) the society-sponsored class entitled “Southern Oregon History: A Tapestry of Cultures,” being offered by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Southern Oregon University. The 8-week course, offered via Zoom, features lectures by nine historians (most of whom are society members), and has an enrollment of nearly 200 students. SOHS has been asked to again offer the course this spring.

Anna is excited about her new role as curatorial assistant because it provides the opportunity to work with one of the largest artifact collections in Oregon, a role that provides her hands-on experience. In this capacity, she processes accessions of new items offered to the society. “Once the board accepts an artifact, we make a record, label it and secure it in a climate-controlled environment.” She is amazed by the breadth of our holdings. “The collection is so impressive,” she explains, “and I have had so much fun exploring and learning from our holdings.”

Anna’s future plans remain open, “My next big step,” she explains, is to successfully defend my dissertation: *Gender, Identity, and Social Relationships at Nunalleq Archaeological Site in Southwest Alaska*. Then I will be looking for a job.” She is particularly grateful for the opportunities offered by SOHS. “The society has done a lot for me giving me a sense of community and fulfillment. The people here are wonderful, kind, engaged, and hard-working. It is fun to be around folks who care so much.”



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