

The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

Life in a Logging Camp

With all of our modern conveniences including the ability to commute daily to work, it's difficult to imagine what it must have been like to live and work in one of the hundreds of remote logging camps of the Pacific Northwest. From the late 1800s until the late 1930s when roads for vehicular transportation began to replace the rails, loggers usually lived near the site of operations in rough bunkhouses with a communal dining hall.

Loggers rose well before dawn when the camp boss roused them from their bunks. After a quick wash in tin basins, they headed for a heavy breakfast of hotcakes, mush, bacon, and strong black coffee. The cooks handed out packed lunches for the men who then boarded a "crummy" - an open railroad car and later a small bus or truck - for work in the woods. In this time before powered chainsaws, men worked using only axes and crosscut saws to fell the huge trees. By lunchtime, the heavy breakfast had been worked off, and the typical lunch of salted pork and beans with coffee was welcome. A logger in those days had to consume at least 7,000 calories a day to fuel him for the grueling work.

Work ended at three or four in the afternoon. The men returned to camp to wash up for a supper of meat, potatoes and gravy accompanied by biscuits spread with lard. All meals had to be prepared without fresh produce, eggs, butter, or anything that required refrigeration or frequent replenishment due to the distance of the camp from suppliers. After supper, the men returned to their bunkhouses for a little relaxation and to try to dry out their wet clothes before the boss yelled "lights out" around nine o'clock. Sundays were

the only day off.

In the early years, men only left the camps every six months. They would go into big towns like Portland or Seattle to have a proper bath and indulge in the various kinds of entertainment provided by "Skid Road." That term was taken from the forest roads used to pull out logs and applied to the tough part of town where loggers would congregate. As more towns with mills were built closer to the woods, the men could go to town weekly on Saturday night for their good times. Camp cuisine also improved with the ability to get a wider variety of foods sent in by rail from the grocers and butchers of the mill towns.

The Oregon-American Lumber Company was established in Vernonia in 1922. O-A immediately began construction of a logging camp in the heart of its Coast Range forest holdings while the mill was being built. Camp McGregor, O-A's first camp, housed the loggers who would start felling trees to provide a ready supply of logs for the opening of the mill two years later. Camp McGregor was a model of what was called a modern camp. There were bunkhouses for single men and cabins for families. Many of the loggers' wives worked in the dining halls, and there was a camp store, school and other services that made this much more of a small town than the earlier, remote camps.

Today's loggers still rise way before dawn, work hard in a dangerous profession, and endure adverse weather conditions and steep, rough terrain, but at least they can come home each night and enjoy a few more comforts than in "the good old days."

From Virgil Powell's Diary

Virgil Powell was a long-time resident who had a farm in the Upper Nehalem Valley between Natal and Pittsburg. Each year from 1906

until 1955, he kept a regular diary of his activities. Late October and early November seemed to be hog butchering season among his other farm activities and work in the woods in 1906. He took most of the day off on Thanksgiving, however, if you don't count the all-night dancing!

Tuesday, October 30: Butchered a hog in the morning and picked apples in the afternoon. Bright and clear all day. Sold my ducks to G.W. Armstrong.

Wednesday, October 31: Cut up the hog in morning. Went down to Natal in the afternoon. Rained very hard in the morning and quite hard in the afternoon. Stopped at Petersons and talked with Emil awhile coming back. Got home about 4:15. Got two postal cards this evening.

Thursday, November 1: Sawed wood all day. Very foggy in the morning but bright in the afternoon. Went down to the Cook place about noon and was expecting a deer to come in which the dog was running east of here but did not get to see it. Got postal cards in the evening from Hilda and L.H.P.

Wednesday, November 14: Killed a hog in the morning. Worked on the road at big slide between here and Pittsburg in the afternoon. Rained quite hard in the morning but not very much the rest of the day.

Thursday, November 15: Cut up the hog the first thing in the morning, then went up and worked on the road the rest of the day. Rained quite a little all day.

Tuesday, November 20: Went up to Clarks with Mr. Gerber. Got there at 10 a.m. and cruised timber

the rest of the day. Rained awful hard all day. Got out of the timber at 3:20 p.m. and stopped at Clarks overnight.

Wednesday, November 21: Went in the woods to cruise again. Went over and was on Stewarts land about noon. Did not rain very much. Done a very large day's work. Got back to Clarks at 5 p.m.

Thursday, November 29 & Friday, November 30: Did not do much of anything any of day. Clear and a pretty good day. Sent postal card to Alice. The Thanksgiving turkey went up to Vernonia in the evening to the dance. Had a good time, 29 numbers sold, I had No. 22 danced quite a bit. The dance broke up at 6 a.m. Got home at 7:30 a.m. Had breakfast and went to bed and slept until 2 p.m. Pretty good weather most of the day. Went up to the Post Office (in Pittsburg) in the evening for the mail. Got postal from Lameck.

The Vernonia Pioneer Museum is located at 511 E. Bridge Street and is open from 1 to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays (excluding holidays) all year. From June through mid-September, the museum is also open on Fridays from 1 - 4 p.m. There is no charge for admission but donations are always welcome. Become a member of the museum for an annual \$5 fee to receive the periodic newsletter, and if you are a Facebook user, check out the new Vernonia Pioneer Museum page created by Bill Langmaid. The museum volunteers are always pleased to enlist additional volunteers to help hold the museum open and assist in other ways. Please stop by and let one of the volunteers know of your interest in helping out.

What You Need to Know About Flood Vents *continued from page 6*

square inches.

Other design and performance criteria for engineered openings are specified by the American Society of Civil Engineers:

- 1 - Engineered openings are to perform such that the difference between the exterior and interior water levels shall not exceed 1 foot during base flood conditions.
- 2 - Engineered openings are to be not less than 3 inches in any direction in the plane of the wall. This requirement applies to the hole in the wall, excluding

any screen, grate, grille, louvers, or devices that may be placed in or over the opening. The 3-inch opening requirement applies to the hole in the wall; not the space between the grates, grilles or louvers.

In a Nutshell: Numbers to Remember

FEMA's flood insurance requirements boil down to this:
1 - One square inch of opening in a foundation wall per square foot of house.

- 2 - Vents must be less than 12 inches above the ground.
- 3 - Two vents per enclosed area, on different exterior walls.

That's it. Make sure you have the appropriate flood vents installed -- or do it yourself -- then call your flood insurance company to get a reduction in your premiums. You'll also enjoy the peace of mind of knowing that you're not only compliant, you're safer.

Woodland Resource Fair

OSU Extension Service is hosting a Woodland Resource Fair on Wednesday, December 4th, from 5:30 - 7:00 PM. The free event will be at the Extension office, 505 N. Columbia River Hwy in St. Helens.

Anyone who owns wooded property in Columbia County is invited to drop by the Woodland Resource Fair to learn about programs and organizations that can assist with the care and stewardship of their land. Local representatives will be on hand from Oregon Department of Forestry, Columbia County Small Woodlands Association, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District, the

Columbia County Assessor's Office, and OSU Extension Service.

The event will have an informal, open-house format. Come to connect with local resource professionals, and take home some new information. Come with questions regarding the management of your forested property and take home some suggestions. For more information, contact Amy Grotta, 503-397-3462, amy.grotta@oregonstate.edu.



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