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LENGTHENING LIFE OF TIMBER MOST IMPORTANT MATTER

Guard Special Service.

Washington, Oct. 19.—Throwing the locomotive out of consideration, no agent has taken a more prominent place in the material development of the Rocky Mountain region than the telephone and the telegraph. Improvements in overland transportation furnished by steam roads and in rapid communication made possible by the use of the wire for delivery of messages have gone hand in hand in making the West thoroughly accessible and in hastening development.

A person seldom realizes the important part which the telephone and telegraph play in his daily life, and few know the enormous amount of capital invested and material required to construct and maintain the extensive lines.

Thirty million poles are used in the United States on 800,000 miles of telephone and telegraph lines. This does not include the large number of poles which are required by the electric lighting and transportation companies. Most of the poles in use are cedar, but throughout the Rocky Mountain region this is not available, and Douglas fir is substituted. Douglas fir, while not so durable as cedar, is much more lasting than the other available timbers, and its use has been widely extended.

As the telephone and telegraph lines increased to meet the demands of business brought about by the growth of railroads and towns, it became necessary to cut down large areas of timber lands to supply the poles holding the wires. For a long time timber was so plentiful that suitable poles could be easily obtained without going far from the lines under construction. Now, however, the considerable distance that the poles must be transported in many cases and the general scarcity of timber has tended to raise the cost. Consequently, pole users have been compelled to find some cheaper, more abundant timber to replace the expensive Douglas fir or discover some inexpensive way of making it last longer by fighting off decay.

The decay of wood is caused by the action of low forms of plant life called fungi and bacteria. These live upon the wood and in time completely destroy it. In order to grow, they require a sufficient amount of heat, air, moisture, and food. All of these requirements are met in most parts of the United States. When the pole is set, however, air and moisture generally exist in requisite amounts only in that portion of the pole nearest the surface of the ground. The portion of the pole buried several feet underground does not furnish them with the necessary air, while the part above the ground, in most cases, contains insufficient moisture for their development. If the part near the ground line can be protected from attack, the life of the pole can be materially increased.

Many methods have been tried at various times to protect this vital part of the pole. Most of these consisted in applying oils or paints or similar substances with a brush to the butt. With a few exceptions they have been largely abandoned as not giving the desired protection. The substance applied remained almost entirely upon the surface of the wood and as a result seasoning checks and wind shakes ruptured the coating and exposed the untreated wood to attack by fungi, which soon destroyed the pole.

The forest service of the United States department of agriculture has spent considerable time in developing a method by which the butts of poles can be successfully and economically preserved against decay, with a consequent increase in the life of the whole pole. This consists in immersing them in alternate baths of hot and cold preservative, such as creosote or zinc chloride. The poles are placed in a tank of hot preservative to a depth of one foot above the ground line when set, and kept there for a few hours, depending upon the species and condition of the timber. The pole is then placed in a bath of cold preservative for a short period, which completes the treatment.

When the wood is heated in the first bath, the air and moisture in the wood cells and intercellular spaces is expanded and some of it is driven out. Upon immersion in the cold preservative, the difference in temperature causes the expanded air and moisture to contract, thus forming a partial vacuum, which causes the oil to penetrate the wood to the desired depth. The wood to be treated should be air seasoned.

Douglas fir is a dense timber, and the heartwood is very difficult to penetrate successfully with preservative, but usually a pole has a zone of sapwood which is thick enough and can be impregnated with enough of the preservative to greatly increase the natural life of the pole.

However, in the Rocky Mountain region it is not necessary to confine attention to Douglas fir. Large supplies of lodge pole pine are available. This is called an "inferior" timber, because it is not as durable when placed in the ground as the more resinous Douglas fir, is lighter, and therefore easier to transport, and embodies all the requisites of an ideal pole timber, with the one exception of susceptibility to rapid decay. This, however, can be easily overcome by a proper preservative treatment. By the infection of a proper amount of preservative, a lodge pole pine can be made to last twenty years or more at a small cost.

There are large areas of lodge pole pine in which the trees have been fire or insect killed. A great deal of timber has been standing in this condition for a long time. It is for the most part sound and exceptionally well-seasoned, and consequently in excellent condition for preservative treatment. It can be secured at a lower price than green timber of the same species, and for pole purposes, is just as good if not better. When properly treated with wood preservative it can be employed for poles in lessening the drain upon the more expensive species, such as Douglas fir.

The government considers the investigation in the preservative treatment of timber of such importance that the business of one branch of a bureau in the department of agriculture—the office of wood preservation in the forest service—is given over entirely to the work of experiments in co-operation with railroad companies, mining corporations and individuals in prolonging the life of railroad ties, mine props, bridge timbers, fence posts and transmission poles. Advice and practical assistance is furnished all who request this advice of the forester. The lengthening of life of timber means the saving of thousands of dollars annually through doing away with the heavy expense of labor and cost of material for renewals.

Dormitory and Self-Government.

The men's dormitory at the University of Oregon is a self-governing body, over which there are no rules of the faculty, and none but of their own making. In this respect they differ from nearly every other dormitory operated by colleges.

Of course there are meals at a set time, but even then the matron, Miss Grace Parker, is very kind. However, when late it is rare that one of the 83 students bother her or any of the kitchen help, preferring rather to go without a meal.

The dormitory has a president and four house committee men, two to each floor. These men look after keeping order during study hours, the hours of which are set as it were, by common consent. Besides these duties all the other burdens fall upon their shoulders, outside of which each man is made responsible. Ordinarily the lights go out at eleven o'clock each night, but if a student stays away all night not a single member of the faculty can say anything.

While often members of the faculty live in the dormitory, they are under the same government as the students, and are obliged by honor not to take up anything to President Campbell, that falling to the house committee men.

Some queer episodes have come out from the faculty being in the house, but not once in the traditions of the dormitory has any member of the faculty tried to assume more than the position of any student.

The dormitory has its traditions, just the same as the University. At one time one-half belonged to girls, the other to men. That was the days before the dining room and kitchen were added.

Before the regime of President Campbell the dormitory was closed down for two years, but after that it was renovated and the self-governing

method adopted.

At the dormitory the freshmen are the lowest of students. It falls upon their shoulders to carry the drinking water into the halls, answer the telephone and above all things to "key down." The universal punishment is the bath tub for all offenders. When a student moves in late there are initiatory performances to enforce the proper appreciation of his honor, as there are usually at a fraternity or sorority.

The men at the dormitory are a fine set, taken one after the other, and hold a great number of places in student body affairs, from student body president down to the lowest assistant manager.

The rooms are universally well kept, and decorated the best of any men's dormitory in the Northwest. It is said. The reason is that the inmates of the house keep their rooms so well—they do not have to make their beds or sweep—and the responsibility of pride which lies upon their shoulders naturally makes them think of the house as their home. A number of college men, who have experienced every form of college life in their career, boarding out, fraternity and dormitory, say that the pleasantest days of their college life were spent in the dormitory.

The men also supply themselves with papers and magazines, taxing themselves ten cents a month for that purpose. They have, too, all the advantages of a modern clubhouse, hot and cold water, and fine baths.

The great advantage of dormitory life is that it is a pure democracy—the inmates are not selected, but come from everywhere. In that way the student who stays there gets to know the life of the college. Yet unless he cares to, he does not have to mix with any man, for there you will find no rules which compel you to stay in the society of any man.

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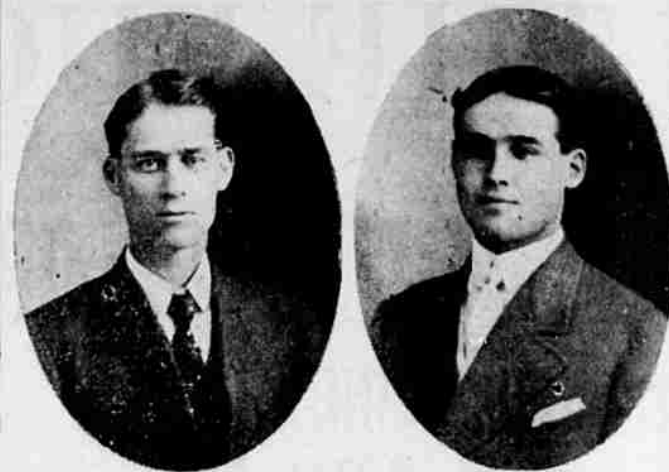
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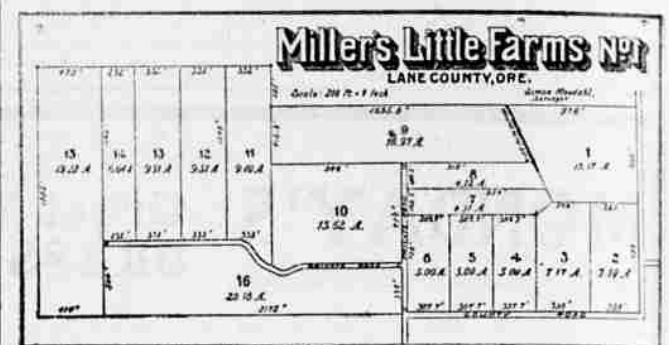
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