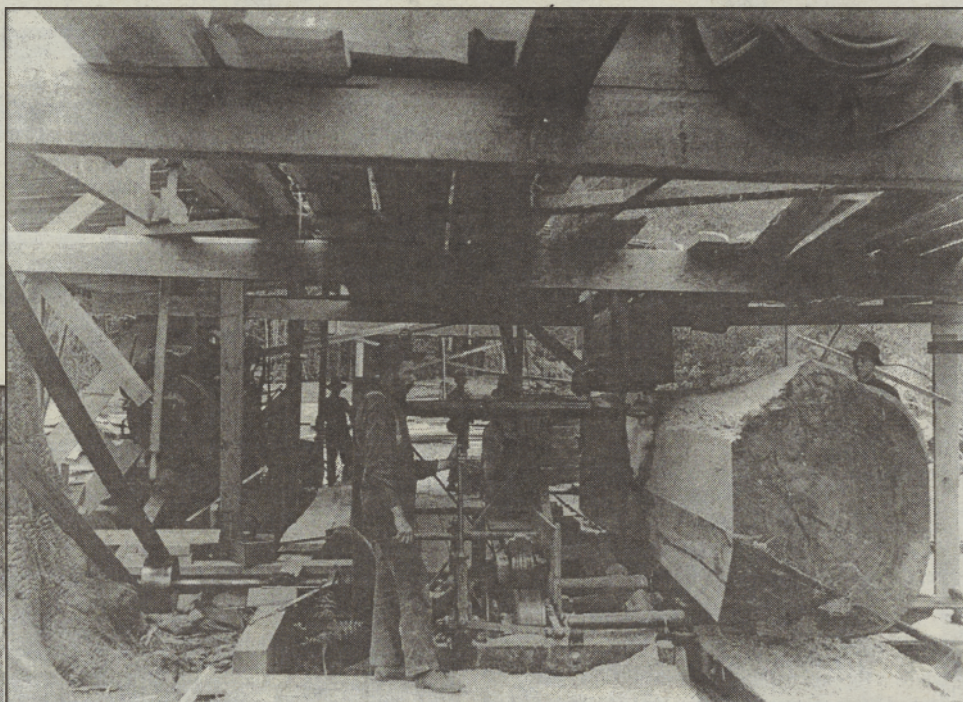


Coos County's major industry: lumbering

It was Captain A. M. Simpson, father of Lois J. Simpson of Empire, one of the first settlers of Coos County, who first realized the possibilities in timber resources of Southwestern Oregon. In 1858, he began the operation of the first commercial sawmill on Coos Bay, with a capacity of 10,000 board feet. Before long, industry growth caused this area to become one of the largest and most active lumber regions of Oregon with its numerous large sawmills and dozens of logging camps.

Early day logging was a task scarcely understood by the logging operator of today. While the timber was located close to the water's edge, the only means of transporting the logs to the water was by



Off bearer Everet Hatcher and sawyer Jack Lo, above, mill a log that was "better than six ft through."

The region's massive trees (at left) tower over a man standing in the forest.

using oxen.

The development of the lumber industry was slow because of the inaccessibility of this district (with no highways inland, no rail connections, and rough shallow water over the bars leading to the ocean), but by the 1930s southwestern Oregon was occupying an enviable position with its vast timber resources estimated at around 176 billion feet. They consisted of old growth fir, sec-

ond growth fir, spruce, Port Orford cedar, red cedar, hemlock sugar and yellow pine, white fir and myrtle.

These timber resources were estimated as bringing a yearly revenue of nearly \$9 million to this area by 1937. At that time, it was believed that with reforestation, the supply would be unlimited and industries dependent upon this resource would always be a success.

Some of the rarest woods in the world are grown in this locality. The Port Orford white cedar, famous for its durability and safeguarded by nature against insect damage, grows in abundance along the coast in Coos and Curry Counties. The famous myrtle wood, Douglas Coast fir and tall, Sitka spruce predominate in this heavily timbered section.

Southwestern Oregon was declared in the 1930s to have the greatest timbered area in the Pacific Northwest, most of which was then untouched.

Over the next 50 years, timber was Coos County's major industry. Many mills were built and local timber was shipped around the world.

A combination of factors, including a recession in the 1980s and a federal ruling to protect endangered spotted owls in 1991, contributed to wreck the local timber industry and the county's economy.

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