

Then and Now—Gooch Logging Operations in 1900 and 1950



Old Time Cabin

Fred Gooch (far right, picture top) was only 12 years old when this picture was taken in front of his father's cabin. Others pictured, from left, are Jasper Force, W. R. Culy, A. F. Gooch, Jason Dowd, Al Ish, Frank Gooch, Nathan W. Gooch (Fred's grandfather).

The New Town got a school (see below), complete with teacher and more than its share of pupils.



Fred Gooch

Editor's Note: We are indebted to Crow's Lumber Digest of Portland for the article and pictures about Fred Gooch and his logging operation.



Fred Gooch began logging at the age of 12, driving a bull team. Today, seventy-one years later, he's still logging. Running his own show with cats.

You have to stop and let that sink in a moment. Seventy-one years is a long, full lifetime. Men are born, grow to maturity, work at their jobs for forty, sometimes fifty years. . . . Others take their places.

Fred Gooch has been logging for seventy-one years—longer than many men live. And he's still at it!

Many months ago, when we started looking for old-time lumbermen and loggers, we heard about Fred Gooch and got in touch with him. Accompanied by his son, Fred Gooch, Jr., who operates a logging supply firm, the veteran of the woods came to visit us. Wiry, rugged, straight as an arrow, he is as clear-eyed and alert as a man of forty. A man of action. A man on the go.

It was on April 1, 1876 that Fred Gooch was born in Fremont, Mich. At that time the Civil War was as fresh in people's minds as World War II is today. No one had even dreamed of an automobile, or a radio—or a logging cat. If they had dreamed of such things and told about it, they would have been set down as looney, and perhaps ended up in the nut house.

To all intents and purposes, it was still the covered wagon age. Things were still being done in the covered wagon way when the boy's parents brought him to Silverton, Oregon, at the age of eight. Early in life he became accustomed to the sights and sounds and smells of the Northwest woods. They became part of him. He became accustomed to loggers and the work of loggers. Logging and lumber had been his family's business for a long time. His grandfather, Nathan Weber Gooch, had been a logger in Michigan. He had come to Oregon by way of California, and had proved up on timber claims in the Santiam region of the Cascade Mountains.

The boy's father, Fred Amos Gooch, worked in the woods and mills. Life was rough and primitive in those pioneer days of a new country. In the battle to wrest a livelihood from the land with the crude tools of those days, even the young boys got into the act at an early age. Fred was the oldest in a family of six children. At the age of 12 he assumed his responsibility as a bread winner and took on a job driving a bull team.

Next came a job with the Santiam Lumber Company at Gates, jobs at Shelburn and Jefferson. . . . The years began to go by, and young Gooch was 19, a man who knew his job and could compete with the best. And so, in that year of 1896, he married Allie M. Titus. He had a logging job with a man named Berry. In another year or so he was logging around Detroit. A family man. A daughter had arrived, the first of three children. They named the baby Sylvia.

Then came a four-year job with the Corvallis and Eastern Railroad, do-

ing bridge work. For awhile after that, Gooch logged for Charlie Spaulding with horse teams. At about this time a new era began in his life. He built his own mill at Scio, cutting mainly railroad ties, but that was only a sort of curtain-raiser, for in October of 1907 he went back to the area where he had started out.

There he built another sawmill and founded a town. The town of Gooch is located three to four miles west of Mill City. A new era had started because the young lumberman decided to start it. It was time for this pioneer country to begin fighting its way out of the frontier stage. Gooch traveled to the county seat at Albany, to see about getting a school for the town that was growing up around his mill. He was turned down.

But the new town got a school just the same. Young Gooch built it himself, and hired a teacher whose salary he paid out of his own pocket for several years. Her name was Sarah Bradshaw. His school was popular, too, and attracted students away from the closest public school. The youngsters preferred the new school to trudging nearly three miles along railroad tracks to the county's school.

And that wasn't all. Progress came to the town of Gooch in other ways. In 1908 or 1909 Fred Gooch installed an electric light plant. He provided light free of charge for everyone equipped to use electricity. And so this little frontier town of Gooch, buried in the Northwest woods, was illuminated by electricity like the most modern city in the nation. . . . Because a logger who started work at 12 had progressive, ambitious ideas. His own schooling had been scanty—hit or miss. He didn't want it that way with his own children.

Maybe the lumber "boom" about that time helped Gooch carry out some of his modern plans. This boom followed the 1906 earthquake at San Francisco. Railroad ties zoomed up to a price of \$10 per thousand feet. At his Scio mill, Gooch had netted only 6.19 per thousand, and until the "boom" he didn't do much better at Gooch—about \$7. The ties from his Scio mill had to be delivered to the right-of-way at that price, and stuck.

Perhaps it was just the laws of economics, and perhaps not. At any rate, Gooch believed in utilizing all of the log he could. With the facilities of those days, that wasn't much compared to today's standards, but it was a step in the right direction. Other log mills just wasted the slabs, but Gooch turned them into dimension, for which he realized \$6 per thousand. Not much, considering today's prices, but in those days it probably seemed like a lot.

Some other prices: Once he cut a 14x14, 66 feet long, for a house mover, and collected the top price of \$25. He did equally well sawing a stick to be used as the gunwale of a ferry. It was 36 inches wide, six inches thick and 32 feet long. He pocketed \$25 per thousand for this too.

In 1914 Gooch traded his mill for Portland property. Then came another series of jobs. . . . as logging super-

tendent for several outfits, then a job with Shaw & Bertram at Klamath Falls. . . . log foreman for Hammond Lumber Co. at Mill City. . . . Logging manager for C. C. Cameron at Albany, then a job with the Hammond-Tillamook Lumber Company at Garibaldi.

In 1931 Gooch and his two sons, Fred Jr. and Earl, built a mill at Creswell, where they also had a logging operation. They were there four or five years. As Gooch describes it: "A lot of work and little return." Those were depression days. Remember.

After that, Gooch was a log foreman for the Mt. Jefferson Lumber Co. at Lyons for six years. But from that time on, he has been on his own, running his own show. He now operates three TD 24 tractors, has his own fire truck, loading machines, power saws—the works. And it seems like whenever there is a tough job that no one else wants to handle, they call on Gooch.

And no wonder! He's seen it all, met all the problems you can meet. He not only started with bull teams, but followed through with all the improved types of logging as they developed, such as logging with horses, steam donkeys, skyline, skidders and diesel yarders. Most popular in today's logging are the big diesel cats and arches, of which Gooch now operates several in the Santiam territory.

And that's about how those seventy-one years went by. The boy who started driving bull teams at 12 years of age, now rides the most modern of cats, as agile as many a kid. He's had a good life and raised a fine family. The baby daughter born to the young logger and his wife is now Mrs. Sylvia Duncan of Mill City. His son, Earl Gooch is with Manufacturers Life Insurance Co. at Salem, while Fred Gooch, Jr., operates the Gooch Logging Supply Firm of Sweet Home, with branches at Philomath and Lyons. There are two grandchildren and three great grandchildren. They say Great Grandpa is as young at heart as any of them.

It was just about three quarters of a century ago that his own grandfather, Nathan Weber Gooch, staked out his timber claims in the Cascades. He built a log cabin in a beautifully scenic spot overlooking a waterfall. As a boy, Fred Gooch knew the spot well, and loved it. Years have gone by since then, decade following decade. With the passage of time, the old log cabin has gradually crumbled away until only the stone fireplace remains. But the spot is still in Gooch's possession. The woods and the timeless waterfall are still there. And overlooking the falls, now called Gooch Falls, Fred Gooch has own cabin. The old fireplace and the cabin seem to link the past with the present for the man who drove bull teams as a boy, but who is so young at heart; that he's still thrilled at the promise of the future.

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