

Thousands Of Trees From Scott Creek Area Cut For Big City Use

By JOY BIGGS

While the pleasure of trudging home from the woods with a fragrant evergreen in tow for Yuletide festivities is reserved for those living outside the reach of the beam of city lights, trees bunched on a crowded corner bring to city dwellers a touch of the Christmas spirit, with a romantic aura of the places they have been.

The trees, cut in beautiful wooded mountains, bring a hint of star-shine and falling snow to city apartments, enhancing the holiday season. Cutting of the trees is not done indiscriminately, but by rote and regulation, authorized in national forests by bid awards.

Each little tree, the average between four and five feet high, routed from the Rogue River national forest, Scott creek area, to California homes this Christmas, is perfect. With close, compact branches, needles thick as fur on a cat's back, they are called "Scotchman's trees" by the forest rangers—they have so much natural green finery, tinsel seems superfluous and few packages are needed to dress them up.

High Stumpage Price

The reason for the uniform perfection of this year's harvest of Christmas trees is the price paid by the bidder. This year 25 1/4 cents per lineal foot was the bid, topping all previous bids by more than half. The top price heretofore was 11 1/2 cents per lineal foot in this section of the Northwest. Only the cream of the crop is cut at such prices.

Thinning thickly wooded areas is not the object of the forestry department's Christmas tree sales. Trees cut for holiday use are of the close-branched slowly-growing variety unsuitable for timber which is cut from fast-growing trees with wide-spaced branches.

The contract on this sale of silver-tip or Shasta red fir, which covers 11,000 acres in the Scott creek area, calls for cutting not less than 1000 trees per year and no more than 3000, with four years allowed for cutting 10,000 trees.

Two green whorls, or branches, must be left on each stump by the cutter, and in many instances deformed trees, not merchantable for other uses are cut for Christmas. This is all natural growth, that is, not specially planted for holiday nor any other purpose.

Prime Trees

Most of the trees cut on this sale were between 20 and 40 years old, all prime with good foliage, healthy color and nice symmetry of limbs. Mild weather made the first days of cutting easy with a light blanket of snow on the ground only lending atmosphere to the operation.

Trees the age of these must be handled with care in loading, as their limbs are brittle and snap easily. Limbs of the younger ones are more resilient and spring back to place when bent, without injury. Although many of the trees in this cutting are forest giants for decorating hotels and banks, the average is much shorter, dwindling down to a goodly percentage of miniature size and table models.

Beautiful Country

Operation on this sale started at the base of Mt. Scott, in majestic country of mountain spires and canyon fastnesses, at an elevation of approximately 6000 feet. A four-wheel drive truck was used for hauling and sleds were available but were not necessary as the crew found it easy to cut all the trees wanted without leaving the road by many yards. Cuttings were piled along the roadside until dusk put a stop to the work, when the truck came down the mountain stopping for pickups en route.

A new procedure is being experimented with this year under supervision of the forest service. That is, topping the trees, cutting a little Christmas tree from the top of a grown tree. A sharp-toothed, 12-inch pruning blade on a 15-foot handle is used for this work and the cut is made at an angle. The object of this is to produce another tree, growing two in time, from the same trunk. The top branch left will start pointing upward and form another tree with its own verticle branches in another 10 or 15 years if this experiment comes up to expectations.

Restrictions Set Up

In certain designated areas, not, however, in logging areas such as Scott, cutting of trees is forbidden within 100 feet of roads. Cutting is also restricted in recreational and administrative areas of national forests, on new growth over old burns and sparsely-wooded meadow lands.

White fir and other species can be removed at the option of the operator and any improvement work he wants to make in the sale area is up to him, with approval of the forestry department. This he will sometimes do if it will benefit himself during the life of the contract.

The forestry service gets 2 1/2 cents per lineal foot, of the sale price, to be put back into the area for improvement on a long-term scale, not to be realized in the duration of the sale, but of future benefit to the stand. Other receipts from the sale go into the general U. S. treasury, and 25 per cent of the total goes back into the county for improvement of roads and schools. Therefore, 25 per cent of the total, including the 2 1/2 cents, benefits the county within which lies the forest or part of it from which the trees are taken. Bid on the Scott creek area was awarded in August, 1947.

Trees Assembled

Lewis Byron Ansted was the successful bidder on this section, one of four offered for contract bids. The three other bids were awarded the Halfmoon Produce company of Medford. Ansted will cut on all the sales and wholesale his trees to the Halfmoon.

The trees in this cutting are assembled at a point on the Sand Creek road, where they will be measured by forestry men. Similar to all timber sales in the national forest, Christmas trees are paid for in advance.

It was originally planned by Ansted to haul the harvest to Redding where it would remain in cold storage until time to market them in the cities of California. He has decided, however, to leave the trees at Sand creek as the weather is the same degree as the cold storage house would be, until time to market. The only drawback to this plan is the threat of a big snow storm that might bury the trees and cause additional work in digging them out.

The forest service measured the trees and checked them out for shipment around December 1.

IN THE PICTURES

The picture of a load of Christmas trees somewhat resembles the picture used on the Christmas seals this year, emphasizing the progress made in modern transportation from the old ox-drawn load of trees on the seal.

A grove of growing trées forms the background in this winter scene, taken at 6900 feet elevation at the base of Scott mountain in the beautiful Cascades. The cold mantle of crisp snow beneath the truck shows marked tire indentations. (Top).



WORKERS ARE HALF-BURIED in fragrant evergreen branches during the operation of harvesting trees from the great Northwest for the firesides of city dwellers. Right: Table-size model of Shasta red fir. These little fellows are often the crowns or spires of big trees.



LEWIS BYRON ANSTED tests the teeth of the pruning hook used for topping tall ones. Right: Just one more for that toppling load of greenery. For more on tree harvest, turn to Page Six.

