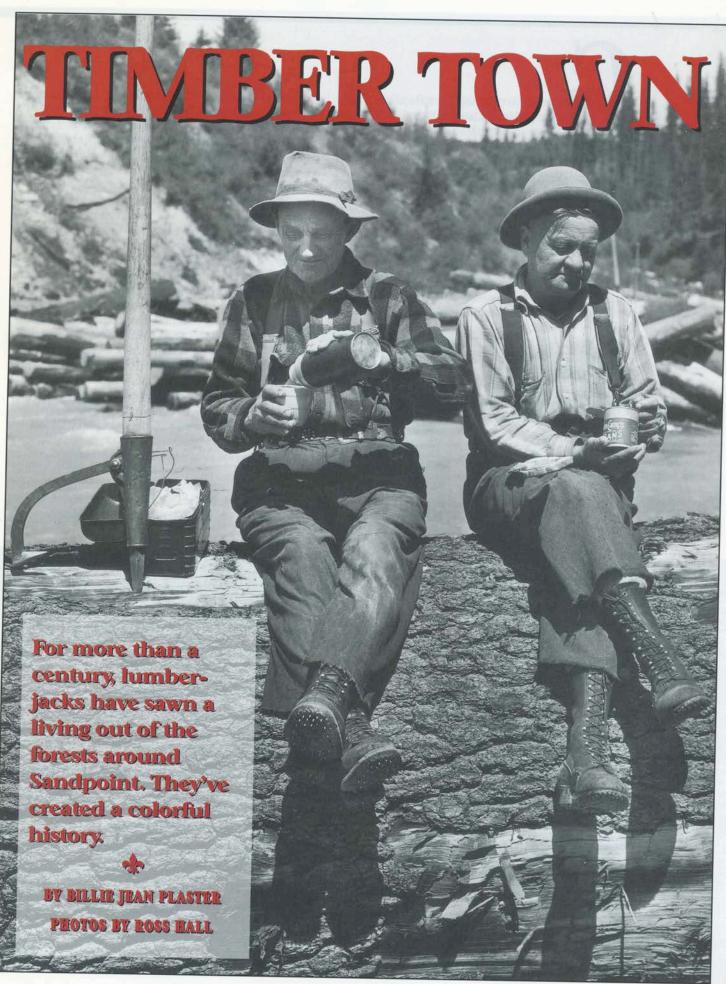
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enerations of of loggers have come and gone in North Idaho, and more will follow. Many of the men working in the woods today are following the footsteps of their fathers and grandfathers who logged here earlier in the century. At that time, logging was one of the few ways to make a decent living here. Not that it is merely a matter of making a living. Timber gets in your blood, they say. It is a lifestyle and a culture.

Our area's timber heritage reaches back into the 1880s and has had two peak periods around the World Wars. At that time the woods were humming with the buzz of logging camps and cross-cut saws. The call of *timber!* rang through the woods as men watched virgin, old-growth timber fall. North Idaho's timber industry was at its busiest.

The forest was cited as "the greatest source of wealth for our area" as early as 1903, in "The History of Bonner County," published that year. The Kaniksu was one of the greatest areas of unbroken timber on the continent. It covered more than 2,600 square miles.

Sandpoint's timber industry heritage leads back to 1880, when Robert Weeks opened a general store and dealt in furs. His business ventures included a hotel, bar and small sawmill. However, the mill failed financially.

Other small mills sprang up, including O. A. Dodge at Fish Lake and Frederick Post in Rathdrum, both built in 1882. By the early 1900s, the scene had grown dramatically with 20 large mills in operation from Harrison

to Bonners Ferry.

Sandpoint grew as the timber industry grew. The townsite was laid out in 1898 by L. D. Farmin, and the city was incorporated in 1900. Not coincidentally, the Humbird Lumber Co. bought the Sandpoint Lumber Co. on Dec. 21, 1900. The Weyerhaeuser Syndicate and the Laclede Lumber Co. were both backed by Midwestern capital. President John A. Humbird and Vice-President Frederick Weyerhaueser, both of St. Paul, Minn., and Secretary E. Rutledge of Chippewa Falls, Wis., invested \$200,000 in rebuilding the world-class Humbird mill.

The mill was located on 120 acres along Lake Pend Oreille, north of the present-day Edgewater Lodge on the east side of Sand Creek. The mill quickly built 80 houses for use by employees. They brought modernization to Sandpoint by installing an electric light plant. A devastating fire on March 14, 1907 didn't idle the mill for long. When it reopened in October, Humbird employed 500 men and had a cutting capacity of 180,000 board feet every 24 hours. The present-day City Beach site was a huge landing yard. Steamers owned by Humbird moved the logs on Lake Pend Oreille.

Kootenai also developed because of Humbird Lumber Co. The company bought a sawmill in Kootenai in 1903. The two mills were connected by railroad.

In Laclede, meanwhile, Albert C. White arrived in 1909 from Saginaw, Mich., where the country had been "logged out." He bought the three-year-old Laclede Mill from Andrew Christenson. When the Laclede Mill



"THE BATEAU." 1949, BY ROSS HALL.

burned in 1922, White bought the idle Dover Lumber Co. Mill and proceeded to transfer operations. Not willing to leave the standing buildings at Laclede, White moved 55 buildings — from warehouses to homes — from the Laclede site up the Pend Oreille River to Dover. The Dover Mill closed in 1928 after the untimely death of A.C., who suffered from heart problems.

Priest River was also a booming timber town. The White Pine Lumber Co. operated until it burned in 1905. The Jurgen Bros. Lumber Co. rebuilt it and operated it until 1912, when it was sold to C.W. Beardmore. Another mill owned by The Fidelity Lumber Co. operated at Albeni Falls. From 1916 through the '40s, the annual log drives on the Priest River during spring high water were supplemented by smaller drives on Kalispell

Creek, Granite Creek and Caribou Creek.
Those smaller drives came from Priest
Lake, where booms of logs were towed to
the outlet and dumped into Priest River.
When the logs reached the town of Priest
River, they were sorted according to the
company brand marked on the ends.

The Humbird Lumber Co. possessed a vast 200,000 acres of prime timberland across Bonner County and in parts of Kootenai County. Humbird acquired 18,000 acres from the Northern Pacific Railroad and the remaining timberland from private individuals. They started cut-

ting the valley floors first. When that was depleted, they moved into the mountains. When logging moved into the backcountry, lumber companies were faced with transportation problems. To transport logs into town, Humbird Lumber Co. constructed railways up several creeks. Rapid Lightning Road, for example, was the former railroad bed used by Humbird and later, Diamond Match Co. The C.W. Beardmore company built six miles of flumes to carry logs from Rapid Lightning Creek to where it dumped into the Pack River.

When the Weyerhaeuser Syndicate invested in Humbird Lumber Co., it was estimated that it would require 30 to 40 years to saw the visible supply of timber. Within a 30-mile radius, there were 500 million board feet of timber, most of it cedar, white pine, yellow

"WATER SOFTENER," 1948. BY ROSS HALL

One of the most colorful periods in Idaho logging was in the days of river drives, when logs were moved by water during the spring runoff. In Bonner County the last river drive took place on Priest River in 1949. The logs were collected from logging shows around Priest Lake, then floated down the Priest River more than 40 river miles to the Pend Oreille River and on to the sawmills. The brave lumberjacks who worked with peaveys and pike poles to herd the logs downriver were known as "riverpigs." When logs got piled up, it was their job to work the logjams loose.

Below, in this famous Ross Hall photo titled "River Pig Rescue," one man has lost his footing and fallen into Priest River. Fellow loggers steady the log with a peavey and a pike pole while he scrambles back onto the log. Below left in "The Bateau," men work to free a "center." At left, in "Water Softener," Tom Kiiskila, the Finnish riverpig featured on the cover, fills his boots with hot water in the morning to warm them. Men were constantly wet, and they figured it was better to start the day with a warm boot.





RIVER PIG RESCUE," 1949. BY ROSS HALL.

pine, fir and tamarack. Sandpoint was known as the largest shipper of cedar poles and pilings in the Northwest. North Idaho provided much of the central United States with lumber. There was a great demand for wood, as it was a time of great expansion for the United States.

Even though the disastrous fires of 1910 and 1919 destroyed many acres of timber, there was still an abundant supply.

By 1925, Humbird averaged 1,300 men employed, and was operating another mill on the Pend Oreille River near Newport, Wash., but its demise was soon to follow. The Depression swept the country in 1929, and two years later the mill closed its operations. The company liquidated its assets over several years. In 1938, the old abandoned Humbird Mill in Kootenai burned. The company's 120 acres from the lakeshore to the highway north of Sandpoint sold in 1941 to a California investor for \$5,000. S. Holderness of San Diego also



Bud Lang Sr.

Brown, Jr.

As the Depression began to loosen its grip, and with World War II looming on the horizon, the timber industry made a comeback. Diamond Match Co. opened an office in Kootenai in 1935. Harry E. Brown's mills at Colburn and Dover were bought in 1941 by James

bought 1,000 acres of the mill's land in the

The rest of Humbird's land — some 200,000

acres in Bonner and Kootenai counties - was

advertised for sale as attractive farm and home

Priest River area for \$5,000.

Through the '40s, all the larger companies including Diamond, Long Lake, Winton, H.E. Brown and Ohio Match operated logging camps in the foothills and mountains around Bonner County. Running somewhat like the military, the logging camps had barrack-like buildings, a mess hall and a 9 o'clock "lights out." However, the camps had very little discipline except in the cook house, where the customs were rigid. The "gut



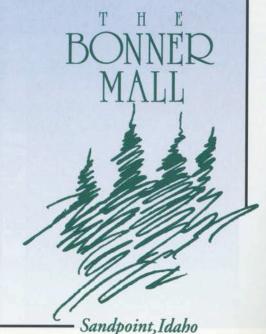
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robbers" — as the less-skilled cooks were known — demanded respect, and the foremen gave strict instructions to new loggers about conduct in the cook house. On their free time, men played cards or read or played shenanigans on fellow workers.

There are many oldtimers today who well remember the old-style logging and life in the logging camps. Sandpoint native Lloyd Robinson, 83, relates a story where he was part of logging camp prank to "blow up" the scaler's shack because the scaler was reportedly cheating them. The dynamite they tossed in was a dud with real fuse. "There was always something going on in the evenings," Robinson said.

When Bud Lang Sr. went to work in the woods in 1934, he earned \$3.40 a day. Of that, \$1.20 per day was taken for boarding in the camp. Another dollar was withheld each month for hospital compensation. Lang, now 77, says the logging camps were nicer than commuting daily because you didn't have to get up so early and drive to a faraway logging job. There were still some camps in the 1950s, but they weren't common anymore.

Robinson hated to see the the camps go. "When we quit having camps, it seemed like we quit logging," he recalls.

Robinson remembers one summer camp in the Caribou Basin where 80 to 150 men worked. "People came and went," he says. Fallers would be sent packing if they didn't meet their quotas. When logging shut

IN JUNE: TIMBERFEST

N JUNE the North Idaho Timberfest celebrates the region's timber heritage with an all-day event that includes a downtown parade, logging events, exhibits and a country-music ball.

This year's fourth annual Timberfest is June 11. (For the record, it's always the second Saturday in June.) Last year the event drew 2,000 people, with about 70 contestants, 35 exhibitors and 30 entries in the truck parade. Another 1,000 people joined in the "Snag Fallers Ball."

A 10 a.m. truck parade through the streets of Sandpoint launches Timberfest. Viewers can see the big trucks roll through with loads of logs and logging equipment. By 11 a.m. the exhibits and food booths open at the Bonner County Fairgrounds.

At noon the logging events kick off the most exciting part of Timberfest. Spectators can watch loggers compete in ax throwing, choker setting, double buck cross-cut sawing, Jack-n-Jill bucking, obstacle pole bucking, the horizontal chop, and stock power saws and hot saws. Only professional circuit contestants may compete in the New Zealand chop, spring board chop and single buck cross-cut sawing. Other events include speed climbing on a 60-foot spar, birling (log rolling) like the old "riverpigs," a loggers team relay race and log load wrapping.

Admission at the gate is \$2 for adults and \$1 under 13 years old. The evening is hoe-down time with the Snag Faller's Ball. Doors open at 7 p.m. and the dance begins about an hour later. For more information, call 263-2161.



Timberfest contestant Ron Moeller competes in the speed pole climb.



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RIVER PIGS AT BREAKFAST, " 1949, BY ROSS HALL

"THE TEAMSTERS," 1915. BY DICK HIMES/ ROSS HALL COLLECTION



t top, in "River Pigs at Breakfast," the men quietly eat breakfast in a floating Amess hall. The "gut robbers" were absolute boss in the cook house and ruled with rigid rules. Above, "The Teamsters," photographed in 1915 by Dick Himes, were the predecessors of the Teamsters Union. Horses were the main way of moving logs on the ground. Opposite, the Humbird Mill dominated two miles of shoreline in this 1915 photo, taken east of present-day Edgewater Lodge. Steamers such as the Pend D'Oreille, pictured, towed logs in bunches from the shorelines around Pend Oreille Lake into the Humbird landing yard, near today's City Beach.

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HUMBIRD MILL, 1915, BY DICK HIMES/ROSS HALL COLLECTION

down for the winter, Robinson would work in the pole yards in town.

The late 1930s and '40s heyday of logging also made for a heyday in Sandpoint. Wyn Fitchett, 67, was a young logger then and said the "hot shot" loggers tramped up and down the concrete sidewalks in their caulk boots, which was "ridiculous." Pronounced "corks," the boots had sharp spikes on the sole for footing on logs. Walking on concrete in your caulks might have been showy, but was foolish if you wanted to keep your caulks sharp.

Loggers worked six days a week until the 40-hour week became law in 1938 with passage of the Fair Labor Standards. Come Saturday night, the loggers descended from the camps to raise the roof in town. At the Brunswick Cafe, the location of the present-day Pastime Cafe, the slot machines were clicking steadily, and the card tables were occupied most of the time. "Everything was going on downtown," Robinson says.

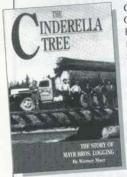
To any visitor journeying through it was obvious that Sandpoint was a timber town. The lumberjacks wearing flannel over long underwear, logging jeans and suspenders were everywhere around town. The ton and a half logging trucks pulling two-wheel, single axle trailers loaded with logs rattled through, or stopped at the present site of Lake Pre-Mix on Fifth Avenue, where there was a landing site for logs to be loaded onto boxcars. Around Lake Pend Oreille, logs were gathered in

bunches from Pack River and the Clark Fork River. Like a long, winding snake, the logs were shepherded by tugboats 32 miles down the Pend Oreille River to the Diamond Mill at Albeni Falls.

Logging was different then. Robinson said in the "B.C. era" — Before Chainsaws — men worked on both ends of a cross-cut saw to fall timber. If a tree had a swollen butt, the sawyers would mount spring-boards above the butt to get away from the pitch seam, those pockets where the sap collects. Hitting the pitch seam with a cross-cut would slow the sawyers down like a spoon stirring molasses. One of the sawyers would carry a bottle of kerosene or diesel to dissolve pitch on the saw. Two men could saw more than one with a chain saw, provided the saw was filed right and the men were skillful, according to Robinson. Brush piling was done by hand rather than machine. Unlike today's semi-trailers, the flatbed trailers used to haul logs didn't have trailer brakes or stakes to stabilize the load. They used corner binds, wrappers and top chains to secure the load, which was almost always made up of short logs measuring 16 feet.

And the timber! The timber was all old growth. Lang remembers taking virgin white pine from the lower end of Wellington Creek where it drains into Rapid Lightning while logging in the early '60s with Leonard Plaster and Bob Green. One tree yielded five long logs and contained 11,500 board feet of timber. In an old

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LOG RAFT ON LAKE, ca. 1960. BY ROSS HALL.

black-and-white photo, the band of Lang's tin hat is even with the butt of the log as it lays in the deck waiting to be hauled to the mill. Lang stands six feet tall.

Fitchett recalls the large cedars he fell using spring-boards and cross-cut saws. The old cedars had what was called "churn butts," large butts up to four feet across that quickly tapered as the tree rose from the ground. Sawyers commonly notched a spring board above them to avoid the work of cutting through the enormous butts. He called the experience "awkward" at times, especially when the trees were falling and he would have to jump five or six feet to the ground and scramble out of the way. There was always an uncertainty about how the tree would hit the ground. The sawyers would use two to three 5-pound iron falling wedges to help guide the tree. The wedges measured about a foot long and 5 or 6 inches inches wide, much bigger and sturdier than today's hard plastic falling wedges.

The timber was so much bigger than today, Fitchett says, that he and his crew would often spend an entire day cutting and skidding a single tree. There wasn't too much excitement, really. Mostly is was "work, work, work with those old 'misery whips,' "Fitchett said. "The nicest thing about big timber, was when you got the logs cut up, you had something."

Motorized saws first came onto the scene in the



JAMMER SKIDDING BIG WHITE PINE, ca. 1960. BY ROSS HALL.

1940s, but they were heavy and less efficient than the cross-cut. Lang, who was a full-time sawyer from 1946 to 1984, used his first power saw in 1946. It was a two-man mall weighing 80 pounds. His first one-man saw arrived in 1948, a gear-driven Reed-Prentice that weighed 60 pounds — a monster by today's standards. "It would beat your fingers off," Lang says. The experience was similar to running a jackhammer. Today's professional-size chainsaws weigh between 15 to 25 pounds — and offer considerably less vibration.

Fitchett said while logging in 1946 at a "post camp" splitting cedar posts, he got to use a two-man chainsaw the foremen provided for cutting on the landing. "They were man-killers," Fitchett said.

Direct drive saws, which were much lighter and didn't vibrate so much, came on the market in the late '50s. What a luxury that was, according to Lang.

The main way of moving logs out of the woods in the



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HAULING CEDAR POLES, ca. 1960, BY ROSS HALL

hrough the 1950s logs were towed in huge booms from Lake Pend Oreille down the Pend Oreille River to the Diamond National mill near Albeni Falls. At far left, Fred Kennedy's tug boat is pulling the braille of logs through the Long Bridge at Sandpoint, circa 1960. Middle left, in about 1936 truck-mounted jammers started replacing horses to skid logs to the landing horses. These huge white pine logs cut by Pack River Lumber Co. about 1960 near Naples were typical of trees cut when logging shows were in old-growth timber. At near left, long poles demanded special effort to haul out of the woods; here two trucks are being used to get these cedar poles around the corner, about 1960. Below, hauling logs out of the woods in the winter with logging trucks was made possible after modern four-wheel trailers with air brakes came on the scene in the 1950s. They also had corner stakes to help stabilize the loads. In this picture circa 1955, a heel boom loads the truck from the rear.



LOADING LOGS, ca. 1955. BY ROSS HALL.



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replacing horses in 1936. The jammer worked by using double drums mounted on boom trucks that would skid the trees in log lengths one at a time. A runner would hook the trees with jammer tongs and then return from the landing with the tongs to hook the next tree. "You'd get to be like a mountain goat running back and forth with jammer tongs," Lang said. Today they skid several tree lengths at a time and buck logs — cut them into log lengths — on the landing. Of course, most of the trees today are much smaller. By and by, the old ways of logging

'40s was with jammers, which started

By and by, the old ways of logging were replaced by mechanization. The old logging camps closed as loggers turned to daily commuting. Loggers nowadays are often gone from 5 a.m to 5 p.m. to accommodate long drives to jobs. By the late '50s, loggers were using single-man chainsaws to fall trees, cats to skid trees, and trailers with corner stakes. The big timber became scarce, and loggers started cutting second-growth timber. Today it's a rare return to the old days for the sawyer who gets to cut a strip of old-growth timber.

Although the stamp of the timber industry here is considerably less noticeable today, it still plays an important role. Back in 1957, nearly 38 percent of the county workforce worked in timber, not including the self-employed mill owners and gyppo loggers. These days, about 15 to 20 percent of the county's work force is employed by sawmills or in the woods. The industry's annual earnings this year total \$60 million.

Logging is quite different today. More mechanized harvesting equipment is being introduced. Feller bunchers can reach into the forest, grip a tree and fall it in one motion. A forwarder cuts the tree down and de-limbs it in the forest. It then crawls forward on the slash to decrease the soil impaction which heavy machinery can cause.

That the forests are the wealth of northern Idaho remains as true today as proclaimed back in 1903. As the Forest Service Regional Forester P.D. Hanson observed in 1952, "... Full productivity from all the forest lands of all ownership will provide enough wood to obtain the full measure of benefits that we envision, and the green of our forests will match the gold of our fields forever."

Billie Jean Plaster is wife of a third-generation logger, Mark, and mother of the next generation, seven-month-old Luke. Originals of the photos by the late Ross Hall are available through the Ross Hall Collection at The Hallans Gallery, 202 1/2 S. First Ave. Phone 208/263-4704.