

Anderson & Daubin

Dry Creek (Prineville) 1932-1934

In October of 1996, Maurice Daubin returned to Prineville. Maurice originally came to Prineville in either 1932 or 1933, at age 14, when his family relocated from Roseville, California, and started a sawmill. Maurice stopped in at the A.R. Bowman Memorial Museum to ask questions. He was put in touch with Peggy Kasberger who was collecting interviews of timber industry folks. Daubin's story brought to light sawmill operations that were not a part of Crook County's historical record.

Maurice's father, Maurice, Sr., had a friend, Herb Anderson. Somehow Herb had come into possession of 160 acres near Dry Creek north of Prineville. Because things were so difficult in Roseville, Herb and Maurice, Sr. knew they needed a change. With 160 acres of land in timber country, why not start a sawmill? These were depression years and many families looked to Oregon's timber industry as a way of pulling themselves back to economic stability. For some it worked, for others it didn't. But a dream was born.

Herb traded his automobile for a Model-A Ford 1½-ton truck. Maurice kept his Model-A Ford sedan as a family van. The two men were the advance team with their families remaining in Roseville until the end of the school year. Initially the men had no sawmill. They started out cutting logs on their property and sold the logs to E.A. Rell of Ochoco Box and Lumber Company.¹

Problems began almost at once. Rell seldom paid for the delivered logs. Money was very tight for the two lumbermen and their families but during the time that Anderson and Daubin were providing logs to Ochoco Box they learned of a man that owned a portable sawmill. They also learned that this man would put the sawmill on the

Anderson-Daubin site, where he would run the mill, for a percentage of the output. The date when Anderson and Daubin became a millmen and not just timber fallers is not known. A fourteen-year-old's memory doesn't latch onto such details.

The mill that was installed on Dry Creek was a single circular saw powered by a gasoline engine. It was inadequate for the size of logs available. Maurice, Jr. remembered:

...in the winter, I don't remember when, but school wasn't in session, Herb and this other gentleman and his son and I went in this 1½ ton truck in the snow to Portland. We had mattresses and quilts wrapped around us riding in the back of this truck. We went to Portland and got a big Packard or Pearsall twin ignition engine. And we put that into the mill. It still wasn't enough to really do the job. It was about this time the railroad needed ties. So we started cutting ties for the railroad.

The railroad ties were for the City of Prineville Railway, who paid for the ties in script. This would present problems for the sawmill crew because there was not always sufficient money on deposit at the bank to support redemption of the script. Money was important not only to keep the families supplied but also for gasoline to run the sawmill. Maurice remembered that Standard Oil "didn't want to trade lumber or wood for gasoline." They wanted cash. Prior to the arrangements with the railroad agreement, all transactions were bartered.

The Daubin family was living in a house west of town near the Ochoco Box and Lumber Company site. It appears that Rell provided this house

1. Ochoco Box and Lumber Company had leased the site from the Davidson Brothers. After Ochoco Box and Lumber Company ceased operations, Dant & Russell of Redmond operated the sawmill for a time. The site eventually became the Pine Products Corporation site.

rent-free; it was the only compensation the Daubins received from Rell. Economic conditions for the families (as well as much of the rest of Prineville's residents) were far from lush. Maurice remembered,

With the money we were getting from the railroad, we were able to pay for gasoline and buy a few things. We were able to trade with the big mercantile store on Main Street in town just south of Third. We delivered wood to them during the summer months and then we had a credit there come fall. But come spring we owed them money.

We were supporting our two families, three loggers, a teamster, and one other guy and his family. There were about seven or eight of us families that were being supported by this....

Anyway, there was a farmer near us. We got our milk and cream for the year by supplying him with lumber to rebuild his barn. Somebody else down the road [probably Lamonta Road] wanted material to build his corral fence so we got a half a beef from him. It was strictly depression-year living. You traded and swapped around to get by. And we got along pretty good.

Well, this millwright that we had would only come up once or twice a week. We were trying to run the mill ourselves. Herb was a pretty good engineer but he wasn't a millwright. The millwright wasn't doing like he should for [the mill] to really work.

About that time the CCC's came in. They needed trucks to transport the CCC boys and carry supplies and stuff to them. So all of a sudden here's some ready cash. They hired us and our truck for \$200 a month including a driver...and they furnished the gasoline and any repairs. So we were able to start using our truck there. When we got a little bit more cash we bought another truck so we could have a truck for the mill.

Well, then the forest service started buying 4 x 12" bridge timbers from us for the CCC's. The CCC's were building bridges, culverts and fire trails. So we were doing that [providing transportation to the CCC's and timbers to the Forest Service].

Then the Forest Service decided they wanted some timber cut right up here in the Ochoco area on some Forest Service land. [Unable to pin down the location.] They wanted us to cut it and mill it and deliver it to the CCC camps. Well, that was quite a long haul to come from Ochoco back into Prineville because the roads going over that hill into that area were not what you could haul logs on. You could come down them but you couldn't get up them. So we found someone just east of the lake here on the south side of the road with a small mill...²

On the south side of the lake there was a farmer who had a pretty nice little mill and he wanted to sell it. His mill was within two to three miles of the Forest Service land where we were to cut the timber. And it was about 7 to 10 miles closer to the delivery point for the bridge timbers we were to cut. He wanted to sell his mill and we agreed to buy it. But first, we told him, we would want him to run the mill for us until we cut out this timber. The owner of the mill thought that was a good deal because he would be making money as well as selling his mill.

...it's about half way from here to town. All I can recall is that someplace between forest service land near the lake and Prineville there was a little mill down on a little flat. It was a little below the road and maybe a half mile off the road in a nice big flat area. We just hauled the logs from the forest service land to the mill, cut them up into bridge timbers, and hauled them to the forest service and to the CCC's up in this area here.

...We moved the mill after we cut all the timber that the government wanted cut. We moved it up on to our site [on Dry

2. I have been unable to confirm who this might of been. Sounds like it could have been Keystone but then that confuses Russell's sale to Jim Johnson. Sometimes facts don't add up and you just have to let them stand as you find them.

Creek] and replaced the other mill that we had, that wasn't too satisfactory, with this mill, and it was a pretty good little mill. [A double circular saw arrangement.]

...That let us cut a lot bigger timber. Before, there was a lot of waste. You'd cut off three or four slabs from one side and then flip it over so you could cut the other side. And you were wasting all the slab cuts. With the double heads you could cut bigger slices off and get more lumber out. If you're a good saw man you can make money for yourself, or you can lose money by how you cut the logs.

There is no reason to doubt Maurice's story (his other claims check out) but I have not been able to determine who this man with the mill might have been. Perhaps someone who reads this will know and call me with specifics. Maurice had come back to Prineville in 1984 looking for information. On that trip he went to where he thought the site had been located (between the Prineville Country Club and town) and found a young lady who was the daughter of the man that owned the mill described above. Maurice cannot now remember the woman's name or the exact location of the former mill site. In any event, Anderson and Daubin had a new mill. Maurice continues the story,

Herb Anderson, like I say, was an engineer without the education. He and I—I'm 14 years old at the time—put that mill together. His son was a little bit younger and not as husky as I was. Herb and I put that mill together. The mill was powered by a steam tractor. So we got that in operation. Then we had a mill that was producing quite a bit more, because it had the power to do it.

This was early 1933. Anderson and Daubin purchased this second set of mill equipment for about \$500. The former mill owner became an employee, supervising the mill's operations.

[The weather] didn't bother too much. It was cold in the winter but we got by. And the mill was going fine. We didn't have a resaw—which mill people understand. A lot of people don't. We just had the carriage and the cutoff. If we wanted 4 x 12" timbers we cut them like that. Whereas if we'd had a resaw we could have made 2 x 4s out of 4 x 12s and stuff like that. For about \$150 we could have probably bought a resaw and really increased our production maybe 50 to 70 percent, or maybe 100 percent.

But along came Roosevelt and his alphabet programs. The NRA or the AAA or whatever it was, said we were limited to "X" number of board feet a day to cut. Well, that wasn't enough to sustain all of these families and get by. My Dad decided to dissolve the partnership.

It was like I said, the depression. They didn't think they could open the high school [in Prineville] that fall. My Grandad suggested that I come to live with him that September so I could go to school in Modesto. So I started high school in Modesto that fall.

Anderson & Daubin was out of business sometime during the year 1934. In the December 20, 1934 issue of the *Central Oregonian* (p. 1, c. 1) was this:

Morse Acquires Mill For Lumber Yard

W.B. Morse, Prineville mayor and central Oregon warehouse operator, has announced the purchase of the Anderson & Daubin mill on Dry creek, eight miles north of Prineville. The mill was established there by its former owners about two years ago and has been cutting for local consumption. Morse has retained Tom Smith, experienced sawmill operator, to operate the mill for him which will give employment to six or seven local men. Smith has had considerable experience in sawmill operations, having previously owned mills on Willow Creek and on upper Ochoco.

Morse purchased the mill to produce lumber for his Prineville retail yard to enable him to eliminate middleman's profits and sell finished lumber at a low price. The mill will be operated in accordance with local demand.³

I have something of a special interest in this particular sawmill. In the late 1920's, my maternal grandfather, Henry Peck, worked some land "out on Dry Creek". This was called a homestead by the family but the official records don't bare this out; Grandfather must have attempted to purchase the land from someone that obtained it through homesteading. I can find no land records for a Henry Peck.

Yet my mother has vivid memories of summers spent on Dry Creek. Grandfather, during the summers, was in the firewood business. He and my frail Grandmother, together with their three children, felled the trees, limbed them, and cut the logs into firewood—all by hand. The children couldn't have been much help, as they were too young. My Grandmother, Ellis Telfer-Peck, was the daughter of George Martin Telfer who had a sawmill southeast of Ashwood. Before coming to Prineville, Grandmother Peck taught school at Ashwood. From teacher to woodsman; some transition.

In the years that followed Maurice's interview in 1996, we spoke often not only about his family's operation on Dry Creek, but also about Prineville in "those days", how hard the work was, how much work had to be put in to earning a living and getting enough food on the table to feed folks so there would be energy for the next day.

Our conversations usually closed with Maurice's offer of photos, "There out in the shed in a trunk. I'll get to feeling better soon and find the energy to sort through them." He never did.

A suitable length of time after Maurice's passing I contacted his widow to convey my condolences. We talked a few minutes about Maurice and the work I was doing and the topic of photographs came up. Mrs. Daubin assured me that once she had her strength back she would trek out to the shed and get busy. The photographs are still resting in that trunk. May they and Maurice rest in peace.

3. This was the beginning of what became known as Prineville Lumber Company.