

Pine Products Corporation

Prineville: 1935-1992

Unlike sawmill operations at Ochoco Lumber Company and Alexander-Yawkey, both of which built from the ground up (with mostly used equipment), Pine Products Corporation's development evolved over a number of years.

The Pine Products site was occupied by earlier sawmill operations but pinning down which one came first is a little difficult. As early as 1920 the name "Prineville Lumber Company" started appearing in the local newspapers. This was a company formed by G.M. Cornett when he purchased the Smith Brother's mill at Grizzly. Joining Cornett in the sawmill business were H.J. Steintorf and J.H. Maison.

According to the *Crook County Journal* of September 16, 1920, the company incorporated with a capital stock value of \$59,999. The new company set about buying more timberland. The company was still in business in May 1932 when Cornett was found dead of a heart attack in the basement of his Prineville building. No mention of the company or Steintorf or Maison after Cornett's death.

As early as 1911, Tum-A-Lumber Company was doing retail lumber out of Redmond. By 1919 they were operating a sawmill in Sisters but in October that mill was destroyed by fire.

Somewhere along the line the company changed their name from Tum-A-Lumber to Tum-A-Lum Lumber. In the August 26, 1915, issue of the *Crook County Journal* appears a company advertisement touting the value of Douglas fir and using the TUM-A-LUMBER name. But

the same newspaper, in announcing the sawmill fire, called the company Tum-A-Lum Lumber. By October 1919 the Tum-A-Lum Lumber Company was including in their advertisements that they were the "Successor to SHIPP & PERRY¹" and were doing business in Prineville, Redmond, Culver, Madras, and Gateway.

The headquarters for the company was in Walla Walla, Washington, and owned by the Crawford family—still is.

I have found no evidence that the company ever operated a sawmill in Prineville. Because the company took over the Cornett planing mill it may be that over the years history has forgotten that there is a difference. If true, this explains why Tum-A-Lum Lumber Company has been associated with the Pine Products Corporation's sawmill site three miles west of Prineville on Lamonta road. But more probably the link between Tum-A-Lum and Pine Products comes in the person of Pop Forsythe. Pop worked for either Tum-A-Lum or Dant & Russell at the time he came to Prineville to resolve a problem you will read about later but I can't find specific evidence of who Pop's employer was at the time.

Into the mix of the Prineville Lumber Company (Cornett, *et al.*)² and Tum-A-Lum Lumber comes Deschutes Lumber Company. On May 18, 1922, the *Central Oregonian* announced the sale of Prineville Lumber Company to Deschutes Lumber Company. By September the company was producing lumber, selling to J.W. Chase

1. Located at the corner of Fairview and Fourth Streets probably right on Ochoco Creek. This was not a small complex; it consisted of at least two dry kiln buildings, a warehouse, the planer mill building, lumber sheds and lumber piles.

2. Since I've advised you to ignore footnotes I thought I would throw in a really useless one. Et al. is abbreviation for *et alia*, which means "and others". The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells me that this is a Latin term which has masculine (*et alii*), feminine (*et aliae*) or neuter (*et alia*) genders. "Used especially to avoid giving a list of authors, etc., in full."

Lumber Company of Portland (no mention of transport but it must have been by City of Prineville Railway).

In February 1923 the company's president, John Chase, died. Almost a year later the sawmill was damaged by fire.

In June 1925 *The Timberman* announced that the Davidson Brothers were going to build a new sawmill on the "site of the old Deschutes Lumber Co.'s mill, Prineville." Maybe this is a good place to try and clear up the name Deschutes Lumber Company (sometimes written: Des Chutes Lumber Company). There were three companies doing business in Oregon over the years.

The earliest-formed company was admitted to business in Oregon from Minnesota on September 17, 1906. This is the company with which S.O. Johnson and his son, Sam, were associated. Sam's wife, Elizabeth, is still living in Redmond. Sam served as Redmond's mayor at least once.

This company was heavily involved in the buying and selling of timber until the company was dissolved in 1925. The Johnsons continued to live in Bend and Redmond and were very active in the timber industry and their communities. Sam Johnson was instrumental in starting the first sawmill on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation.

Next, is what became the Deschutes Lumber Company of Oregon; originally "of Oregon" was not part of their name. Formed in 1919, the name was changed in 1921 to insure there was no confusion between the two companies. This company's records at the Oregon Secretary of State's office are incomplete and I'm unable to determine when they ceased doing business.³ The name was out of the news until around 1934 when another company by that name was formed in Klamath County by W.E. Lamm, R.G. Watt, and Claude McColluch for sawmilling operations at a new mill located at Modoc Point, Oregon. By 1917 this company's worth was declared at \$475,000 yet by 1947 this company was also out of business.



Light gray represents government land; dark gray, lakes.

To think about it, that is an odd time for a timber business to shut down: just after the war when there was a shortage of building supplies. But while the operations at Modoc Point and Mowich (also Oregon; see map above) may have ceased their capacity was not lost; it was simply relo-

3. The more I ponder this name, the more I suspect that it was Deschutes Lumber Company of Oregon that briefly operated these sawmill on Lamonta Road. To my knowledge the Johnsons company didn't do sawmilling, just timber.

cated to Anderson, California, where Lamm and Watt joined Ralph L. Smith in a new company known also as Deschutes Lumber Company. I have not been able to determine why the new company was called Deschutes Lumber rather than Ralph L. Smith Lumber.

You may be wondering why I've spent so much time on the "southern branch" of Deschutes Lumber Company. I was leading up to telling you that an interesting event happened with two of the three men that started the company. Lamm and Watt both ended up, in 1937, being hired by Ochoco Lumber Company in management positions. That always struck me as odd. They must have been good lumbermen to be hired away from their own sawmills. After coming to work for Ochoco Lumber the two southerners continued operating their own sawmills for ten more years. But I digress... Now back to how Pine Products Corporation came to be.

By 1925, the Davidson Brothers had taken over the Deschutes Lumber Company sawmill site on Lamonta Road which they continued to operate until 1929 when they gave up the lease on the Tum-A-Lum site and purchased the Kendall-Gillespie Lumber Company sawmill at Grizzly.

Following the relocation of the Davidson Brothers to Grizzly, Ochoco Box & Lumber Company next occupied the Lamonta Road site. This company was incorporated March 5, 1932. I can find no evidence that this company ever did any actual box or lumber production. By 1935, Dant & Russell were operating the site.

Yet I have little doubt that something happened during their time there. I draw this conclusion because of the interview Peggy Kasberger conducted with Maurice Daubin in October 1996. You can read the Anderson-Daubin story elsewhere in this book but in Maurice's interview he said that his family had been hauling logs to "the sawmill west of Prineville..." run by a man

named of E.A. Rell.⁴ Maurice also said that while his family was hauling logs to Ochoco Box, the box factory was moved to Redmond. From other newspaper articles of the time it *may* be that Ochoco Box was actually a part of Dant & Russell.

The origins of Dant & Russell have escaped me but most of their operations were centered around Redmond and Sisters. Technically, they were a Portland company. Their Prineville sawmill began operations in November 1935 with about 35-40 men employed at the sawmill and in the woods. The mill sat idle for almost three years between the Davidsons and Dant & Russell.

And finally, we come to Pine Products Corporation.

The story of Pine Products Corporation *should* have been one of the easiest to write because I had access to the principals of the company when the sawmill ceased doing business in mid-April 1992: James Crawford and Jack Rhoden. By this time the two families were the sole stockholders of the company. I have interviewed both men (Crawford several times) and each wants to tell their story but worry "...if I tell my story, what will the other guy tell you?" There was bitterness on both sides in 1992, each claiming that the other was the reason for the company's dissolution. They both admitted that it was not the shortage of logs that was given to the newspapers.

Also available for interview were a number of Pine Products employees. Everyone had theories about the shutdown but none had facts and the people with the facts weren't about to go on the record. So you won't learn much about the company's demise here.

The company was incorporated on August 19, 1937.⁵ The founding individuals were C.E. Soderberg, C.H. Crawford, and W.L. Forsythe.

4. Rell's initials were found in an article in the *Wheeler County Chronicle* for September 3, 1936, which was reporting the loss by fire at Pine Products sawmill. The newspaper that the prior resident of the site was Ochoco Box & Lumber "headed by E.A. Rell." An obituary in the January 19, 1933's *Central Oregon* referred to the box factory as "the Sines & Rell sawmill and box factory."

Crawford was head of the Tum-A-Lum Lumber Company and Forsythe (Pop) had been working for Dant & Russell. Here is how the story starts.

Crawford was owed money by a retail lumber customer that couldn't pay. The customer owned timber somewhere on Grizzly Mountain and Crawford took the timber as payment. He hired Forsythe to supervise the cutting and milling.⁶ This arrangement resulted in the incorporation of a company some months later.

Soderberg was what appears to have been a lumber wholesaler out of Spokane—that was before such men were called lumber brokers. Rumor has it, retold by everyone with whom I talked, that Soderberg got the company off on the wrong footing by playing hankie-pankie with lumber sales. Just what he did has never been explained; he just “screwed things up.”

Unlike the other big sawmill companies in Crook County, Pine Products did not start their operations owning large blocks of timberland. Over the years they did acquire some but never in the quantity of Alexander-Yawkey's 50,000 acres or Ochoco's 80,000 acres.

You can learn about Ward Rhoden and his family because, fortunately, his wife, Marie, wrote an article for the Crook County Historical Society's *The History of Crook County, Oregon*, published in 1981. Some minor edits have been made to Mrs. Rhodens original article, which reads:

Ward...was born September 1900 in Kentucky and I was born September 1903 in Indiana. We moved west with our families while infants, to Washington — his family lived in Colville, mine on a ranch in N.E. Washington in a log house. We grew to young adulthood in our respective towns where we attended grade and high school.

In January 1918 Ward enlisted in the service, finished basic training, then helped build an army camp in Virginia when the Armistice was signed.

He attended business college in Spokane, worked evenings operating an elevator to help defray expenses.

I met Ward in 1922 when he worked at a mill near our home. Before long we were “going steady” — our entertainment was dancing, riding horses and swimming in the summers and skating and skiing winters.

We were married in 1923 and lived at the mill. In 1924 we decided to seek new horizons and moved to Bend, Oregon. Ward worked at a Brooks-Scanlon logging camp until 1925 when he started in the mill learning to grade lumber.

Ward liked his work—we were happy there until the depression closed both large mills. Many men were without work.

Ward found some jobs, also cut wood and sold it until he found a steady job at a mill near Sisters [a Dant & Russell sawmill], Oregon where he met the manager, Leon “Pop” Forsythe in the spring 1933. That fall we moved to Redmond where Mr. Forsythe wanted Ward to grade lumber at a planer.

We continued to live in Redmond until 1936 when Ward again wanted to work for Mr. Forsythe.

Mr. Forsythe and Howard Crawford (who owned Tum-A-Lum Lumber Co. in Prineville) had bought a small, idle mill three miles N.W. of Prineville. They bought the mill in 1935 and by the time we moved to Prineville the mill was going good and a lumber grader was needed.

Timber was plentiful then and “Pop” knew a great deal about timber, and every part of a mill. So he and Ward spent many hours making plans to add a planer, dry kilns, and many other plans.

As the mill grew and prospered, more employees were added as well as modern machinery and “Pine Products Corp” began to make history.

5. Actual sawmill operations may have been conducted prior to incorporation.

6. This in and of itself does not mean that Tum-A-Lum, as a company, operated a sawmill in Prineville.

We built a home on an acre that “Pop” gave us close to the mill; became friends with many of the employees and families, also knew many town families. We really liked Prineville.

Jack, born in 1925, enjoyed school activities and sports which we attended regularly. In 1943 Jack joined the navy and was a corpsman with a Marine infantry in the Pacific area. Okinawa was his last and worst battle. After the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan his Marine division patrolled Japan for six months. He came home in 1946—went to college that fall—after two terms he came home. He helped build roads for the company for quite sometime, worked at different jobs at the mill and later was made sales manager.

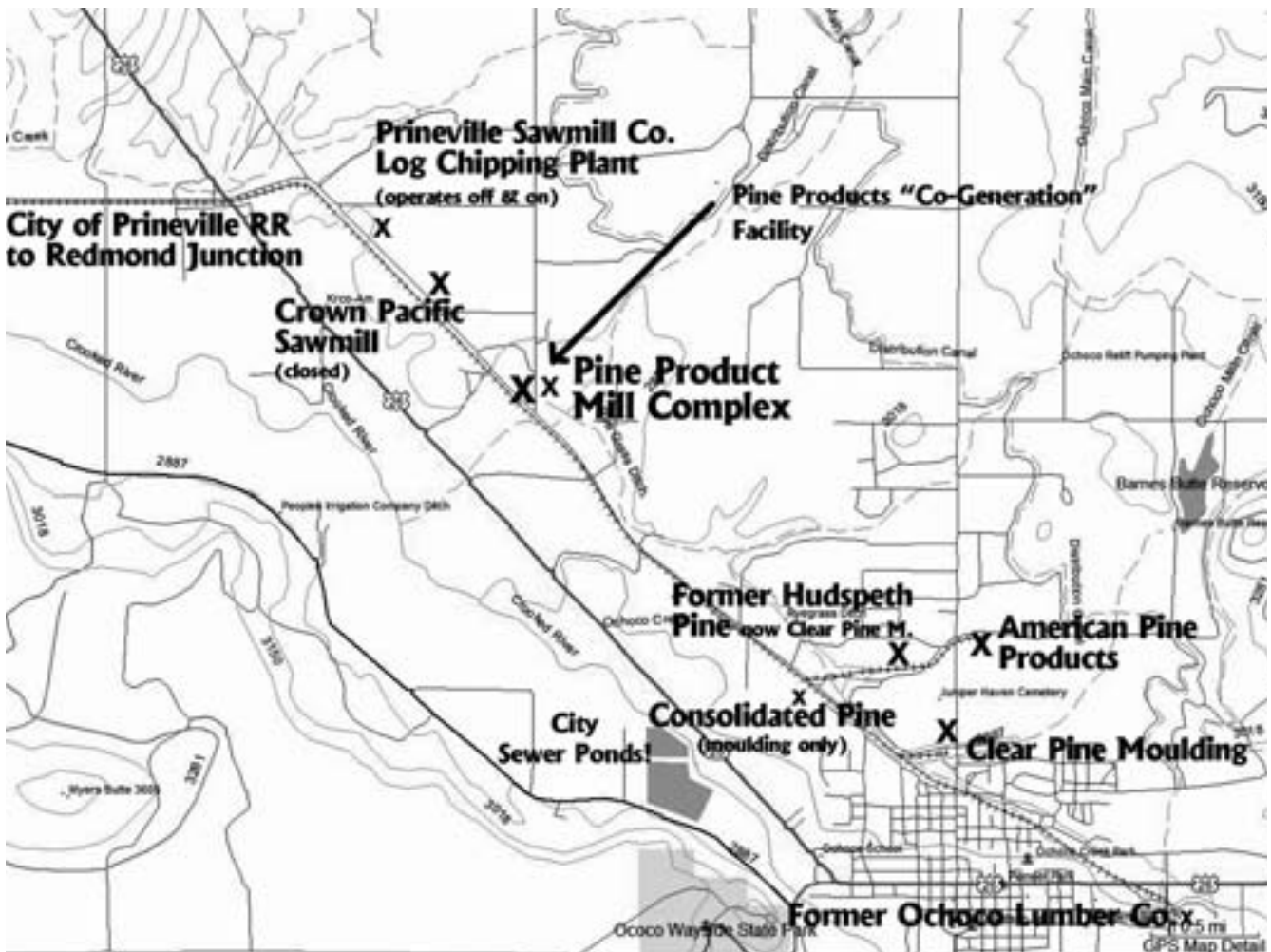
Ward became general manager—the mill expanded, new departments were added and more lumber kilns built.

“Pop” Forsythe passed away in 1941 and was truly missed by every employee.

Ward became very active in civic affairs: Lions Club, Masonic Lodge and Elks Club. He was among the men who solicited for contributions for Pioneer Memorial Hospital which opened in 1951 and was a director for quite a few years.

Lee, born in 1934, was in high school and active in sports, and other school activities and was student body president his senior year. Again we enjoyed attending all the school sports.

In 1953 Lee and friends left for service but saw no action. When they had finished their advanced training the Korean War had ended and he was on patrol duty for six months, after which he came home and farmed for us. Lee didn't care for mill work so while farming he took a correspon-



dence course in real estate, passed the test in Portland and combined the two for some time.

In 1960 Jack became assistant manager of Pine Products Inc., which enabled his dad to attend horse racing and do some farming.

Ward passed away in 1969—Jack became General Manager and a few years later President. Lee and Bill Volkman formed V-R Trucking Co. and hauled logs for Pine Products since 1971.

So many wonderful people have been employed by the company—some of them have retired, some are deceased but many still work there as well as many new employees.

A stud mill and lumber stacker plant have been built and recently a mill, very modern, cuts either small or large logs up to 22".

Shortly after Ward's death, the company set aside a Memorial Scholarship Fund from which, each year, a deserving senior receives a four-year scholarship—some yearly scholarships also.

A few years ago some fellows talked about building a much needed stadium on the grounds near the Junior High and High school, but had no funds with which to build.

I think Bob Wendell, then football coach, suggested that they ask for contributions of money and labor (lots of labor)



The above photograph was provided by Curt Deatherage of Creswell, Oregon. Curt spotted the postcard for sale on eBay and bought the card, sending me a scanned copy. Curt is as crazy as I; the history bug that bit Curt is the wigwam burner bug. Curt travels the northwest photographing and recording the history of any wigwam burner he can find. He never seems to run out of possibilities.

Curt's inquiring mind has been a great asset to *Green Gold*. He has a keen eye for spotting information of which he knows will interest me. This usually requires that he buy something online—probably something he wouldn't otherwise buy. Curt is not the only history buff that watches out for *Green Gold's* interest. Thanks, guys, for all of your contributions (all of whom are mentioned somewhere in this narrative).

Now on to the description of the above photo, which was too long to put on the same page as the photo.

with which to build it. Much money was collected and the work began—before too long a nice stadium was built. It was named “Ward Rhoden Stadium” and really is an asset to our community....

I have not pinned down the date on which the Rhoden family became stockholders in the company—a date that is of little importance anyway, now after all these years. The important thing is that eventually the Crawfords and the Rhoden’s were the sole owners.

It is important also to know that the company relied heavily on the sale of public timber for logs. In 1947 the company bought the Triangle sawmill from Creston Close and associates and with that purchase came either timberland or cutting rights.

On the previous page is a seldom-seen photograph of Pine Products with detailed description on this page. Then, following the photo’s description are some excerpts from an interview with Jack Rhoden.

The details for the following description have been provided by Jerry Brummer. Jerry worked at Pine Products and was the mill supervisor when the plant closed in 1992. It was Jerry that gave me the information for the following description:⁷

The log pond to the west of the railroad tracks, and all the other facilities located in that vicinity, were Pine Products’ “fir mill,” an entirely separate sawmill for sawing fir logs. This arrangement was more efficient than trying to keep fir logs separate in the main mill pond and it allowed fir logs to be cut without the need to adjust the main mill’s equipment.

On the east side of the railroad tracks, the long building seen above was eventually extended to the junction of the two roads (the house seen above was moved). Following the north-extension of Lamonta Road one sees the four dry kilns. At one time two

additional kilns were located almost opposite these four near where the co-generating plant sits today. Pine Products had to resort to open air drying. That area can be seen beyond the main mill pond, just above those two trees which seem to be among a plowed area. That distance from the mill must have added some cost to drying lumber.

The two trees and the furrow-looking area is where the mill dumped their trim-ends. These were sold as firewood. The railroad tracks continue northwest. The road that parallels it was also called Lamonta Road in those days. Further up the road, to the west of the tracks, you can see smoke or steam. That is from the moulding plant. That operation was eventually moved to a spot just up from the fir mill. But by that time the fir mill had been decommissioned and a stud mill built in the same place. If you look further to the west you can see the Madras Highway almost parallel to the railroad tracks. Not seen in the photo, unless you have some imagination, is the railroad crossing of Highway 26 (Madras Highway). Were you to follow Lamonta Road along the tracks you see it curve to the west. After a short distance the track crosses over the highway. What use to be called Lamonta Road has a stop sign at the highway. That portion of Lamonta Road is now called NW Elliott Lane.

Some distance further out the road paralleling the railroad tracks is the site of another plant. That site was originally Myna Keswick’s Lamonta Wood Products which evolved [sort of] into COIN Mill-work which relocated closer to town on Lamonta Road (across from current Consolidated Pine, Inc.) then up on the hill to the former Alexander-Yawkey/Stewart sawmill site.

The Keswick site eventually became Prineville Sawmill Company, then Louisiana-Pacific, then Crown Pacific. Crown is now closed down. Just beyond the Crown site Prineville Sawmill Company (Wood-

7. The only place Jerry ever saw the actual photograph was in the company’s office.

ward Companies) has a log chipping site that is quite large. Some mistake it for a sawmill.

Now, some excerpts from Jack Rhoden's interview, conducted by Dr. Denison Thomas on March 8, 1995.⁸

Jack Rhoden's Interview; Excerpts

Pine Products was basically the first large mill in Prineville—band-type mill—and Ochoco followed. Then Alexander-Stewart and then Hudspeth.

But in 1941, I think it was December of '40 or '41 Pop Forsythe died and Dad took over as General Manager and Vice-President. Through that time the mill was always quite successful. Lee and I can remember during the war they ran this mill at three shifts six days a week. On Sundays you couldn't sleep because you didn't have that noise, that background noise. Everything was too quiet. I was about 16 at that time and Lee was 8-1/2 years younger.

During those war years everybody wanted to do what they could. I know Dad started up a box plant here where they made ammunition boxes and also they made a lot of casket stock which was made out of 1 x 10" and 1 x 12" Pine. After the war things just kind of went along. There was a lot of ups and downs at that time.

Everything was done by hand in those days. Piling the lumber, tearing down the lumber. We had two small planers running in the shed. The lumber would go directly from the planer down the chain and it would be put piece by piece into a boxcar. We had a rail siding in there.

After I'd been away to school for a time—Lee was more interested in farming and ranching—I stuck around the mill. Finally kind of worked my way up to where I was helping Dad quite a bit, doing the purchasing, and I ended up in sales and everything else.

We started doing some modernizing. We had to do away with Davidson Fuel because we found a better thing to do with the slabs and everything that was going out in the burner. That burner would stay red hot seven days a week. Sparks would be flying all over the place. We had probably ten or twelve houses across from the burner and sparks would be flying all over them. All these houses were built with rough lumber from the mill.

Dr. Thomas asked: Jack, "[T]ell me about the housing situation out here around the mill itself."

Well, just about every house that exists here right now was built because of this mill and with lumber from the mill. This little store out here, Pine Grocery, was started by a fellow by the name of Bert Siglund, which started because of the mill. Right here where this office is sitting there used to be a house where a family had it and raised two boys. Right in front of the office going out here there were three cabins. Even though they did not have their outhouse, cooking facilities or anything in these little cabins. All the houses, which were built by the employees, had outhouses. All wells were pipes driven into the ground 10' to 14'.

So the boarding houses sprung up. Right across the road there where our old planer shed is sitting right now, there were three houses there. One of them Gene Brick lived in. Another one by the name of Elmer Scholtz. He had a gas pump where we got gas.

8. Some years later I finally got Jack to allow me to interview him. He would not allow me to take notes or record our conversation. As much as he wanted to tell me *his* story, he couldn't and he swore me to secrecy about some of the things he did tell me. Thus, I use his own words.

Right behind that was a pretty large house. A woman by the name of Mrs. Brink had that. She took in a few roomers. She cooked for these people. My mother, about late '36 early '37, she opened her house up for lunches for the people working here.

Like Lee was saying a while ago, a lot of the people didn't have transportation. We even got a little bus to pick the guys up in town and they could eat out here at a couple or three different places. Real good food by good cooks. Eventually there was about twelve other houses built up here. Most of those, except for a couple for single guys, were family type homes or for married couples.

People had a lot of fun in those days. The town was wild and rugged. I know my Dad started a fast-pitch softball team. We didn't have much of a team. The CC'S had the best team. Ochoco. Alexander-Stewart. That was our recreation. There were several teams. Then when the CC'S decided to disband or something here Dad hired most of them, so we ended up with the best softball team in the state—one of them. That was in the late '30's and up until December 7th '41, after that a good share of our team went into the service.

...these houses were just torn down when we modernized. Some of them in the '80's.

In the late 40's to the early 50's wood chips became quite valuable to be shipped to the pulp companies to be made into pulp. Ours went to Longview Fibre. Most of the plants were up there along the Columbia River.

At first we would hand pick them and put them on a table and go through and knock the bark off. Then they would be chipped which eventually led to putting in a big chipper. In order to put the big chipper in and not having bark on the wood we had to put a debarker out on the pond or at the head of the mill so the logs would go through that and get the bark off. Then all the refuse would go into chips.

Then the sawdust and shavings we started saving that for particle board and we got to utilizing everything that there was.

I might mention, before we go on, things that we did to try to increase profitability. At one time we had about 320 or 330 employees when we were doing everything by hand and running three shifts. We went back to two shifts after the war. Then we started modernizing in the 50's.

Understand, all the lumber was hand-piled, put through the dry kilns and then torn down. Whereas before we had the dry kilns everything was hand piled out in the yard and air dried, and then torn down out in the yard and brought down and put through the planer.

Then we bought a stacker, a Lawson stacker, and put it in across the road. We had to bring the lumber over there by carrier and take it away by carrier but it eliminated so many men. It was profitable to get more mechanized. This was something we all hated to see but you had to do it to stay competitive.

Most of the people that went to work here right after the war stuck with us until they retired. I can name quite a few of them. But they stuck with us until they retired.

[There was] Mike Mitchell, Gene Brick. There was another Mitchell family. The man and two of his boys worked here. Willis Mahlin. Let me give you a couple more names. I'd feel bad leaving them out. There was Johnny Sill, Norm Pentecost, Bill Tackman. Bill worked for Lidstrom for a long time before he came here.

Going back in time, back in the old days you always had a lot of men as everything was handled by hand like I said, even on the carriage. Gene Brick started on the carriage—riding the carriage back and forth doing the dogg'n for Shephard. Every once in a while the carriage would get put about half way out of the mill. Gene got some pretty good rides. Then as we got more mechanized we put in a set works

where the sawyer could operate the carriage by himself. That eliminated the other person.

We put in a log kicker to kick the logs on an automatic steam deal so you didn't have to turn the logs with peaveys. Things like that. We put a log turner in. Actually, what they called it was a 'nigger', but you're not supposed to use those kinds of words now, I guess.

About 1964 we had two planers and, like I said, it was putting lumber directly into the cars, going down a chain. You'd stand out there and jack the lumber into the cars. So we modernized. We were the first ones to put in a 16-knife Stetson-Ross planer. We put in an all new trimmer system, the whole works, lumber sorters, etcetera in 1964. This eliminated quite a few people. But it raised our production.

Our production in those days when we were just running the big mill on a two-shift basis would be around 150,000-160,000 thousand foot a day. That amounted to around three million feet a month or a little over. Our dry kilns were capable of handling about 2,900,000 to 3,000,000 feet and we cut more than what the dry kilns would handle. We still had to air dry some.

Then my father passed away in early 1969 and I took over as the President and General Manager. Not too long after that we got into a program—it was in the 80's—when we decided to put in a small log mill and get mechanized some more. At this time we were down to only 135 people and running two shifts on the sawmill and one shift on the planer. Because this planer would handle considerably more than what the other two did together.

So every time we did something we eliminated people. That was a real bad situation, but that's just the way it was if we wanted to stay in business we had to do it.⁹

Another big modernization was when we put in this small log mill. It was in the late 80's. A fellow by the name of Bob

Jones helped us build it along with several engineers. It was the most up-to-date small log mill in the country. We put in a green sorter behind it. We had 36 sorts on it to sort the lumber. When you got a bin full, the lumber would come out and by pushing a button it would be stacked and stickered and everything. You only had two people there whereas before that on each shift in the sawmill you had three or four people pulling the chain; you had a lumber grader on the chain and everything else. So that eliminated quite a few people.

But when we modernized and put that in our production running the big mill two shifts, the small log mill one shift, we were cutting around 225,000-230,000 foot a day. We went from 135 people at that time down to, in the 90's, 90 to 95 people.

[The mill's power] was electric except for the shotgun in the mill. We had steam fire pumps in case the electricity went off and steam shotgun which ran the carriage back and forth in the big mill. Steam heat every place. Otherwise, everything was electric.

We started [the co-generation plant] about 1988-89. It took us over two years to get it in operation....

...you asked what prompted the building of the co-generation plant? All these houses that were built here because of this mill were sold when people got older and wanted to move to town or something. These houses were all sold. You had a lot of different breed of people down here. Back in the old days when all of these little houses were up through here, I'm not kidding you, the smoke would go right through the houses, sparks and everything else. And people didn't get upset about it. But when we were dropping soot and smoke out of the stack they started complaining. They went as high as the state level. Then we were over-firing these boilers to get the steam and power we wanted. We had to put in new boilers anyway and we decided we might just as well put in a

9. Good for the bottom line, bad for employee relations and the local economy. Necessary if a company is to stay competitive and in business.

power plant behind it. We had plenty of fuel and everything. We had real good engineers come in. They told us how much fuel we had to burn and all that stuff. So we decided to put the power plant in. PP&L did not give us their blessings; they fought with us every inch of the way. They had this area tied up. We could not sell our power even though there were other mills and other businesses that wanted some of our electricity or all that we didn't use. But we could not sell it to them unless they were part owners. We did furnish the power for our own plant operating the whole thing. We ran a power line five miles out to hook on to Central Electric Co-op. Being as that we didn't get PP&L's blessing, they and Bonneville wouldn't let Central Electric Co-op live up to their verbal commitment with us. So therefore we had to go back to PP&L and fight to get some kind of contract. Well, what it cost was all they would give us and the price was not very good. But we had a contract where it would escalate in future years. We were furnishing our own power; the power bill here was running about \$50,000 to \$52,000 a month back in those days. And we did get to furnish our own power plus we did have some income from the co-generation plant, not a great deal, however.

[The CO-GEN plant cost] a little over \$9,000,000. That included the new dry kilns and everything, too. That was a state-of-the-art dry kiln. It was about \$650,000. So it was probably \$8,400,000-8,500,000 that the CO-GEN plant cost us. But that included moving everything across the road. We had all of our fuel piles and everything over there. That included putting in different blower systems and we had to do a lot of other work to get the CO-GEN plant functional and get the fuel over here. We didn't have enough room over there and we wanted it separate. That was quite costly because that's where we were putting the small log mill. We had the green sorter going out there and everything else, so we had to do a lot of work to get that moved in there.

And you asked about the wood waste. We had ample wood waste. We were told that this plant would burn ten ton an hour. That's a lot of fuel. We actually were burning in order to keep at maximum production up to 15 to 16 ton an hour. And we did try some rubber. Ronnie, my boy, was looking after that part of it. He was in on the small log mill working on that. And he worked with getting this CO-GEN plant built. You could only run about 4%-5% maybe up to 10% rubber. If you tried to run straight tires in there nothing could burn that rubber fast enough. There's two gallons of oil in every passenger car tire. Where they have had some big fires up on the hill, that oil is just running down the hill, not much of a hill, a fire of oil running down the hill. Adding 4% or 5% rubber to the waste the BTU's came up real good and you could hold them real good. It mixed real good with the wood. And it cut down on our fuel consumption considerably. Our wood fuel. We talked to Les Schwab about furnishing the rubber. For our experiments we bought the rubber from a plant in Portland that was chipping tires. First they cut the steel beads out, although they left the steel sidewalls in. Then they'd chip them into about 3/4" to 1-1/2" pieces and we would meter it in. That worked real good. So we said, "Cut up some whole tires with the beads and everything else in it." They did. It saved them cutting the beads out. They sent that down and there was absolutely nothing left of that. The heat was so intense there was no metal left. We did not use enough to warrant Schwab to put in another chipper. We looked at putting in another chipper ourselves but it was so doggone expensive at that time and you had to double chip them, and so forth. If Schwab was somewhere where they made a lot of cement for highways and runways and different things, he could have sold a lot of his rubber, but there just wasn't the market here for it. And we wouldn't use enough to warrant him putting in a chipper.¹⁰

It was really getting quite successful. We did not have a good contract at the time because we did it without PP&L's blessings. We had a tough time getting a good contract but we had free fuel. So it actually wasn't bad. We had income from it each month as well as furnishing our own power. But as of today the boys and I still own the CO-GEN plant and we're looking at starting it up on natural gas now....

My father seemed to get along real good with [the Forest Service]. Back in the old days they only had about three people in there. Darroll Frewing and another forester and one gal. Darroll is still here but I haven't seen him for quite some time. I think four or five people operated out of the old post office upstairs there. Now I don't know how many hundred or thousand people they have. But those fellows got the timber sales up. Then they got a supervisor, Hap Hewlitt. I think he was the first supervisor in there....

We had our own [timber] fallers most of the time, or we contracted it to one guy and he had the fallers. We had a road building crew. We built our own roads. Dick Helms was another fellow who was here forever and retired. Dick was our head forester at that time along with Lee Adams, Sr.

Dick was primarily on the roads and Adams primarily looked after the forestry part. But we had quite a bit of equipment and the time came that Fred Endicott—Bill Endicott Logging—did most of the logging for a long time. Eventually they decided to quit so my brother Lee and a partner of his furnished the trucking and loading. We had our own skidding crew and road building crew. The timber falling was contracted to Ray Demaris.

Most of our lumber went out of the area. We did not sell any locally unless we did a friend or a farmer or rancher or somebody a favor. It always cost you a lot more money to sell locally. You sold in car-

load lots in those days. Most of it went in to the New York area, east coast area, or Chicago, east of Chicago and the mid-west.

Recently they've developed markets in the last twenty years they've developed markets in Kansas City and that area, Texas and California. So the lumber ended up going to a lot of different places. But they've built mills a little closer to that eastern market now. I don't know how much nowadays is going back to the east coast.

The City of Prineville Railway was really happy to see Pine Products get started here. It meant quite a boom to them. That was five, six, seven carloads a day going out. And then when you got into the chips at one time we were getting at least three carloads of chips a day, plus six, seven carloads of lumber.

But eventually the trucks started taking over. Because you'd put 60,000 feet in a boxcar and then they'd have to unload it by hand and everything else. Whereas, a lot of these people found out if they bought a lift truck back there a truck would come in—they'd get say 20,000 feet on a truck—they could keep their inventory rolling instead of having to put it in storage with a lot of extra labor and a lot of extra work....

[Let me tell you a little about my Dad.] My father was always very generous. He always felt that he'd been quite lucky. But he worked very hard, too. I mean he worked six days a week long hours ever since I could remember. But he was very generous. If anybody needed help he gave them help.

I can remember when Lee was in school that on two different occasions, I think, he bought them all football uniforms when Lee was in grade school. Then another time basketball uniforms. He backed just about everything there was.

Like Lee said, he was real strong in the Lions Club. They'd ask him to take the presidency a few times but Dad didn't think he was a good enough speaker, he was a lot better doer. He was really quite

10. The above paragraphs detailing the construction and investment in the co-generation plant come from a second interview conducted by Dr. Thomas on April 26, 1995.

active in the Masons, the Shriners, the Lions Club. He was a 50-year Legionnaire, also a member of the Elks since 1946. The fact is, after I got out of the service—I had just turned 21—Jerry Battles took Dad and myself over to Bend and we joined the Elks in Bend. Then we came to Prineville when they started it here.

The stadium that was named after my father was mainly because of his generosity, I think, in the public area. I don't think he had an enemy. They wanted a new football field and my idea was to move the rodeo grounds and race track up on the hill and use that.

Leonard Wilkinson from COIN Millwork was the instigator of building the stadium. He put a lot of money into it. Our family put money into it plus Pine Products furnished just about all the lumber that went into the stadium. I think Ochoco furnished some; Consolidated furnished some. But primarily we furnished most all of the lumber. Wilkie (Wilkinson) wanted it named in Dad's honor which was really fine with us. It still has the name on it. I hope it remains on it forever.

The company ceased operations in 1992. In his interview with Dr. Thomas, Jack had some thought about the future of the industry:

...with these environmentalists the way they are, even good managers can't manage it properly I don't think. They tie your hands. There's millions of feet, even in our local forests, that need to come out that's dead, dying, down on the ground.

With the proper logging methods they could get that out. Within a year you'd never know it. You might see a stump, but if you cut the stump off short the grass would grow up. The forest would be much more beautiful; the trees would grow. The forest needs a lot of thinning to open it up. They could get a lot more growth. There's just so many things they could do. But you can't get into these wilderness areas.

Even if we had a fire like on Lookout Mountain or on Wildcat they cannot use mechanized equipment. There was one up there just this last summer in what they call the Mitchell watershed that feeds their water system just off from Big Summit Prairie. They let it go until it got on to government land out-side of that wilderness area. It almost got on private land, also. I know the private landowners were there with their equipment, Craig Woodward and others, so they could try and take care of it before it got out of control completely.

(continued after two pages of photos)



Wigwam burner as it looked on a bright, sunny day in 2001.

The highway is Lamonta Road. Camera pointed just west of north.

The co-gen plant is just to the right of the pickup truck on the right side of photo.



Co-generation plant, 2001. Efforts were made around 2003-04 to get the co-gen plant producing again. I haven't kept up with the story but the plant is now idle but still owned by the Rhoden family. In back of the round tank-like structure is a high cement screen. Just beyond that was where the wood fuel (chips, sawdust) was stored. This was mill waste that had been "ground up" (for lack of the technical term) to feed the co-gen plant. These photos were taken by me with my trusty digital camera.

Left, dry kilns. Right, what I originally thought were parts of the smoke stack but now believe to be pieces of waste-piping from mill to burner. The mill site, in general, looks like a disaster area. Some parts have been leased, rented or sold to various entities. The Rhodens do not own the site, just the office on the east side of the road.



The bad part of it is there was a logger right there in the area that could have put that fire out in two or three hours with a Cat. They let it burn there for about a week.

But the fight isn't over when it comes to these environmentalists. They seem to have a lot of money and they want everything to go back to complete nature. They want it so they can walk through the woods. Well, in a very short time there will be so many dead falls and stuff. You can drive through them; you can go look at scattered 40's now that need to be logged. They won't even be able to walk through it. They won't have any enjoyment. Then they'll want the For-

est Service to go and build a trail, saw that stuff out of the road, so they can walk through it.

I don't think they need near as many Forest Service people as they have now. They still have as many or more than they did with all the mills operating. I think they could get by with probably about a third of what they have, maybe less. But everybody has their pet weed and their pet tree and I guess under our type of government it's pretty hard for anyone to do something about it.

That is the story of Pine Products Corporation.

Pine Products Corporation, July 1973.
Photo by Western Ways, Inc., from the
collection of Steve Stone.





Prairie City Lumber Company, Western Ways, Inc. photo, July 1973, from the collection of Steve Stone. Owned by D.R. Johnson, whom I've never met but meant to. None of the Johnson interests are covered here, which is a shame. But if the book were any larger you would break your lap.