

realized that “if we share profits this time the union will force us to continue in succeeding years,” or words to that effect.

The company kept the money, sending it back to headquarters in Wausau, Wisconsin. But this story is getting ahead of itself. Let’s get back to how it all got started.

The company’s name was in the news even before any announcement of a sawmill being built. There was a beetle infestation plaguing the forests of Crook County and there was a lot of work north of town on company land in an attempt to get the pests under control. This was as early as 1932. But as early as 1925 A-Y (as they were commonly known) tried to sell some of their holdings to Ochoco Timber Company. This was, no doubt, land outside the main block of their holdings and would help Ochoco consolidate their holdings.

These were worrisome times in Crook County as no major sawmill was yet in operation. The city’s railroad had been on the verge of bankruptcy. Something, anything, needed to happen and soon. The newspapers ran rampant with “news” of impending start dates that came and went. A-Y was among the promised operations but not until after Pine Products Corporation got there operation up and running did the promise become fulfilled.

By early 1938, A-Y was doing some construction work north of town. By “north of town” is meant way north of town, way out in what is not the national forest—10-15 miles into the boonies.

Y-A was taking what everyone said was a unique approach: they were going to operate year round. Which suggests that someone hadn’t done their homework. Back in those days most of the forest was under several feet of snow for several months. But A-Y didn’t seem to care—or realize.

Their intention was to place their sawmill *in the woods* and operate year round, trucking lumber to the railhead in Prineville.

There were three different forest sites before reality set in and it was decided to move sawmill operations “north of town”—really north of town. The site selected was where construction of a planer and dry kiln facilities had already been started. But by the time A-Y was up and running at the in-town sawmill operations had become big-time. Also running full bore was Pine Products Corporation and Ochoco Lumber Company was getting started.

Alexander-Yawkey Lumber Company prospered and grew. This growth contributed to the area’s growth and the general betterment of Prineville. Tracking the Alexanders and the Stewarts was complicated by the very names used in these two families: There was a Stewart Alexander and a Walter Stewart. But by 1951 the original Alexander and Yawkey had gone to their reward and ownership passed to younger Alexanders and Stewarts. I have no record of the first name of the Stewart that became part of the operation in 1951.<sup>1</sup>

But the new name didn’t slow the company’s progress. In late 1952 five new dry kilns costing \$150,000 were added to the plant. These five new kilns had a capacity of 430,000 bf.

By January 1959 the mill had announced its plans to close down. The reason given, the reason so abused by the industry, was shortage of logs. I interviewed the company’s senior forester of that time and he assured me that there were at least five more year’s worth of logs on the company’s land.

That land has been sold and bought and harvested several times since 1960, each time the new owner needs to harvest enough timber to make a profit. The land now looks like a war zone.

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1. Late breaking facts: “In 1951, John Alexander bought out Tom Yawkey. Tom Yawkey owned most of the Red Sox. Alexander set things up so that his mother's estate had 50% ownership and he had 50% ownership. His mother's maiden name was Stewart and the company name was changed to Alexander-Stewart Lumber Company.” From *Crook County Timber History; A Narrative*; Crook County Historical Society, 1997.