

Triangle Sawmill Company

Built originally by Creston Close, who brought in Robert Cato, near the headwaters of Lost Creek near the border of Ochoco National Forest (Forest Road 4235). Ward Rhoden had encouraged Close to start the mill and Close referred to Rhoden as “a silent partner.” The sawmill produced about 35 thousand board feet a day and was constructed to log private timber. The sawmill was built in the Prineville Machine Shop. It was diesel powered, double head rig, double saws. In January, 1947, the plant was purchased by the Prineville Lumber Company, by then a subsidiary—sort of—of Pine Products Corporation, and green lumber was being hauled to the plant in Prineville for processing. The plant and woods operations employed about 16 men. The site had a cook house and bunk rooms. The roads weren’t good enough for men to drive from Prineville to work on a daily basis.

Ward Rhoden bought out Close and Cato; Cato wouldn’t sell unless Close sold too—the two couldn’t agree on how to run the mill but remained friends. Rhoden made the purchase as owner of the Prineville Lumber Company, which was originally built by Harold Baldwin and Alma Lippman in 1941. I’ve never understood why Rhoden started these companies apart from Pine Products. It doesn’t appear that these operations were in competition with Pine Products and all were eventually brought into Pine Products—or just disappeared. This mill burned in August 1948 and was not rebuilt. Pine Products continued the logging but trucked the logs to their plant in Prineville.

When I talk about this operation with people I’m sometimes asked, “Why was Rhoden operating a sawmill in competition with Pine Products?” He wasn’t. Although Rhoden purchased the operation it wasn’t personal; he was representing Pine Product Corporation.

In buying small operations like Triangle, Pine Products was able to inexpensively expand their lumber production at a lower expense than actual expansion of the plant in Prineville.

My first attempt to locate the site of this operation was unsuccessful. Diana “Zeb” Jacobson at the Post General Store had given me directions (she and her husband, Ken, had come across the site while “exploring”) but in the age of ever-lower budgets for the Forest Service some road signs were missing and I lost my way.

I was crying on Zeb’s shoulder one day about not being able to find the site and she said, “I’ll show you. Hey, so-and-so, watch the store for a couple of hours. Martin and I are going to the woods.”

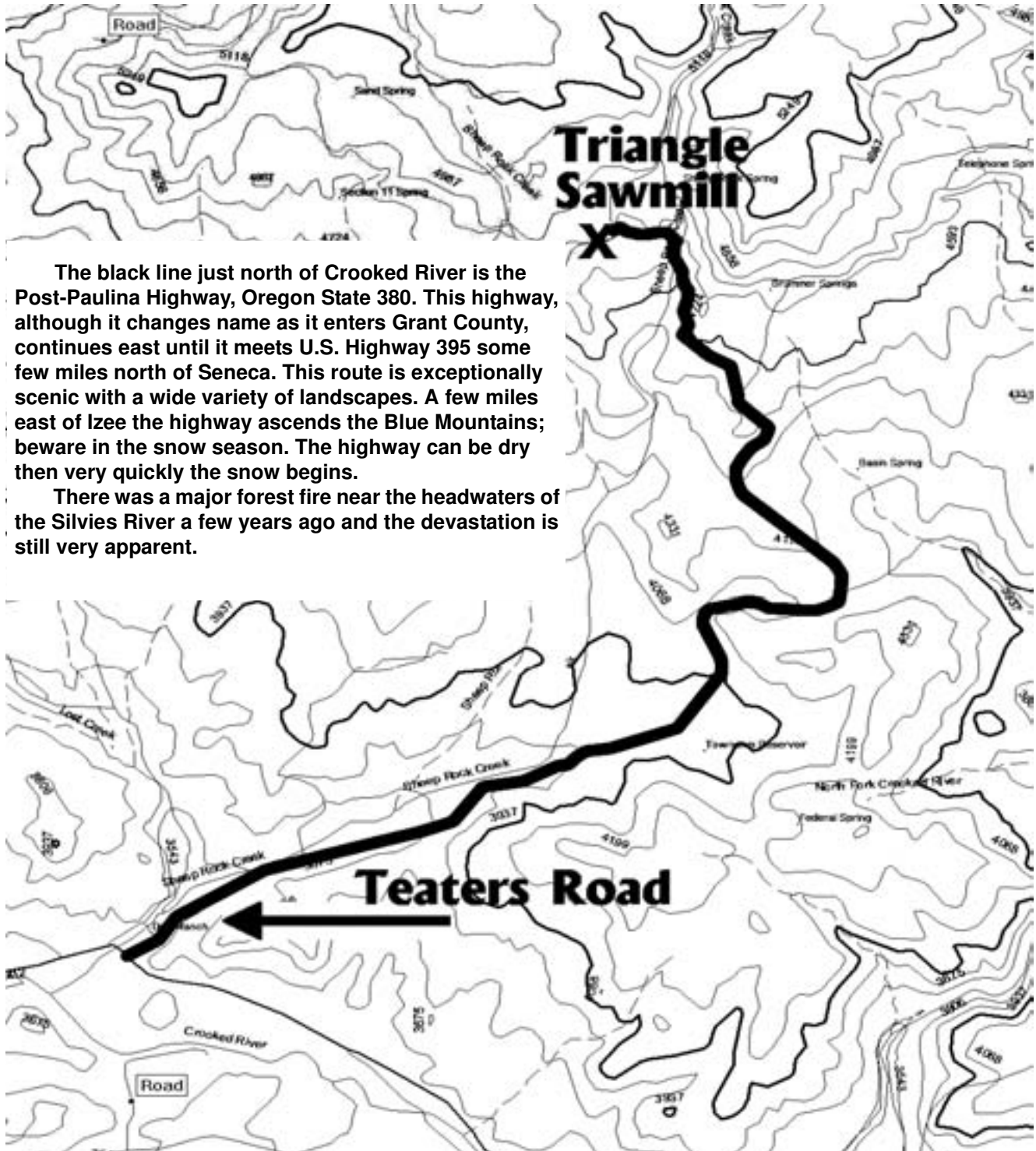
Zeb and I have been buddies since she and Ken moved to Post in 1995. Both Zeb and Ken have worked in the timber industry, lastly at Ochoco Lumber Company. Zeb left to enter the life of proprietor of the Post store but Ken stayed on until the mill closed for good in 2002. These two wonderful people often serve as sounding boards for my wild ideas about the history of the timber industry. Ken keeps me on track about procedures in manufacturing logs into lumber.



**My very good friend and buddy,
Diana (Zeb) Jacobson.**

Anyway, Zeb and I took off up Teater's Road; up and up, past Sheep Rock and into the forest. Just as we crossed the snow line, not much, but some Zeb said, "Right here!" I stopped the truck and said, "Where?"

Zeb said, "Look out my side window." We were parked in about what would have been the middle of the mill pond and outside Zeb's window was the old log dump. Fortunately I have obtained photographs of before and after the fire plus some of my own that I took that day with Zeb.



GREEN GOLD



The above composite photo shows the Triangle mill site just after the 1948 fire. Overlook the poor match of the two photos. The photographer must have changed locations between shots. They are matched as closely as digitally possible but look at the barrel in the foreground; not a very good match. This and the other photographs on this page were loaned by Jim Buckley, son of Jim & Betty, who may have lived or worked at Triangle. Jim, Jr., loaned the photos to Zeb who loaned them to me, with Jim's permission. The Buckleys, if I have the story straight, now live in Alaska.



Speaking of Jim Jr., this may be him on the stump. Log pond in background and directly behind the child is the log dump which now sits beside the road. At right: after the fire.



Before the fire. Photo courtesy of Royce Dotson.



Log dump as seen from what is now the bottom of the former log pond, which must have been deeper in those days.

The road runs just out of sight to the left.

The only structure remaining at the site is this foundation and downward extension of a large outhouse.

