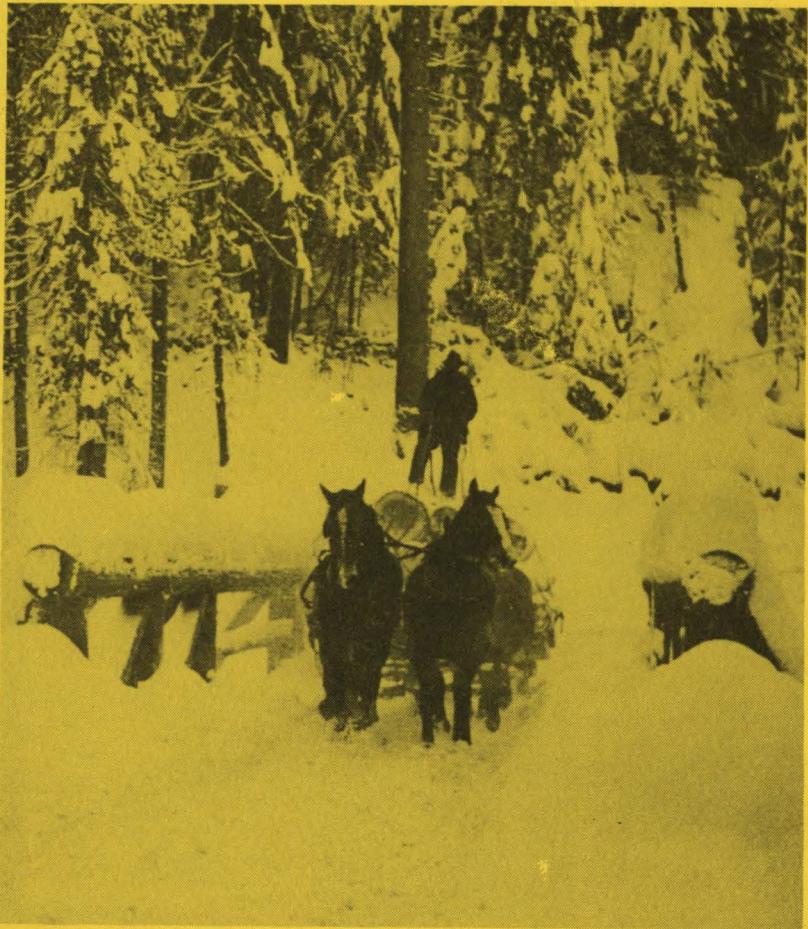


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THE LOGGING CAMPS OF POTLATCH

by Thomas Femreite

Editor's Note: At the turn of the century a number of lumbermen awakened simultaneously to the attractions of Idaho's timber lands. At the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 Frederick Weyerhaeuser saw a graphic display of the state's splendid timber resources. With J. A. Humbird, Weyerhaeuser bought scrip from the Northern Pacific Railroad for approximately 40,000 acres, paying about \$250,000. In 1903 the Potlatch Lumber Company was organized with a capital of \$3,000,000. William Deary was the first manager of the company, and Weyerhaeuser was its first president. While the story of the company's development of the largest white pine sawmill in the world at the company town of Potlatch is well known to many people interested in northwest history, less well known is the story of the logging camps started by the company. The company needed large work crews in the woods to keep its various sawmills in operation. In the days before easy transportation, logging camps were set up throughout company lands to tap the natural wealth. The following article outlines the history of each of the Latah County logging camps operated by Potlatch.

Thomas Femreite has worked for the Potlatch Corporation since 1941 and is currently the Administrative Manager of the Northern Units working out of Bovill. He has experienced a wide variety of jobs with Potlatch, having begun as a log scaler, been an assistant engineer, camp boss, and superintendent before being employed in his present position.

A Setting was a camp location or setting on a railroad siding or spur. When a camp moved to another area under the same condition it would be called the second setting.

The Camp Foreman or Camp Boss ran the camp. He set up all the logging programs and was very much respected by everybody.

Rail Camps were constructed from rail box cars which were altered to include kitchen, dining room, bunk house, office, and so forth. A complete camp could be moved with one locomotive to a new setting overnight. Some of

the camps carried their own water supply, outside toilets, gas lamps, and wood stoves.

Early Potlatch Camps

- Camp 1 Located on Hatter Creek south of Princeton. This camp was started around 1918 and was a railroad camp. Camp Bosses were Henry Flasher, Tom Kelly, Bill Greenwood, and Jack Irwin. This camp had three settings or moved three times to new locations. First located at Hatter Creek, it next moved into Flat Creek south of Harvard and operated into the early 1930s. Horse logging.
- Camp 2 Located at Collins approximately three miles north of Bovill. First started as a rail camp in 1912. Camp Bosses were Clyde Radcliff and Ben Bates. The camp later moved into the bottom of Sherwin hill on the Bovill side. This camp operated around 1920-1922 and later moved into Ruby Creek between Bovill and Elk River. It operated there from 1923 to 1931. Donkey and horse logging.
- Camp 3 Rail camp. Located at Erickson Meadows approximately three miles west of Bovill. Started around 1927. Foreman was Clyde Radcliff. Camp 3 closed down in the late twenties. Horse logging.
- Camp 4 Located south of Helmer approximately in the same meadow where the USFS campgrounds are now situated. Camp started in the fall of 1928. This was a rail camp. Foreman was Bob Mushroe. The camp closed down in 1930. Horse logging.
- Camp 5 Located at Wet Meadows approximately five miles west of Bovill. This rail camp started in 1927. Camp Foreman was Clyde Radcliff. The camp moved in 1928 into Hog Meadows adjacent to the present Highway 8 between Helmer and Bovill. It shut down at the start of the depression. Horse logging.
- Camp 6 Located first just north of Helmer approximately one mile. First started in 1907. This was a rail camp logged heavily with steam, donkeys,

and horses. This camp was the headquarters camp for the Park sleigh haul south of Helmer. The sleighs were pulled by horses from the woods in Park down steep grades to the bottom of the canyon on Potlatch Creek. Sleighs were then uncoupled from teams of horses and hooked to three "Best" and one Holt caterpillar-type tractors. The tractors pulled the heavily loaded sleighs with logs to a landing site adjacent to the WIM railroad just south and a little east of the Camp 6 site. This landing site was made up of two railroad spurs approximately 30 flat cars long running parallel to the main WIM track. The main WIM railroad was owned by Potlatch, running from Palouse, Washington, to Bovill. All logs were then loaded aboard flat cars and shipped to the Potlatch mill. The camp closed down in 1925 and moved to a new location south of Bovill approximately four miles adjacent to the main WIM track, also on Potlatch Creek.

This camp became the headquarters for all steam loaders and locomotives and lots of timber became available around the area. Several camp foremen ran this camp throughout its lifetime--Les Mallory, Clyde Radcliff, Axel Anderson. The camp shut down at the start of the 1930 depression. Only one man remained to watch the camp and equipment. The camp started up again in 1934 and worked off and on until 1938 then more or less became a place just to store steam equipment. It finally shut down completely in 1940.

Camp 4

Located approximately one mile south of the highway on Brush Creek between Helmer and Deary. This camp started in 1914. Tom Melidy was the Camp Foreman of this rail camp. The camp shut down in 1919 and moved to a new setting five miles west of Bovill on Shay Meadows. This rail camp started production in 1920. The camp moved again to a third setting at McGary Butte approximately five miles south of Bovill or south of the Bovill-Elk River Highway on the east fork of Potlatch Creek. Camp operated

from 1928 to 1930. The Camp Foreman was Oscar Strugal. There was horse logging at all three locations.

- Camp 8 Located approximately one mile north of Bovill. Started in the spring of 1904, this camp was five miles from any railroad. A large storage pond was constructed. Logs were stored in the pond, then water was released and the logs were flumed down Potlatch Creek. They passed the town of Bovill to a storage pond five miles south of Bovill at the rail head. There the logs were fished out of the pond and loaded aboard railroad flats for the Potlatch mill. In 1906 the railroad was constructed into Bovill. The Milwaukee Railroad also came from Clarkia into Bovill Camp 8, which then became the headquarters for the Potlatch Lumber Camp. A large shack town sprang up, and also a school. Large shops and headquarters for logging equipment were located here. T. P. Jones was a Camp Foreman and Charles Sanderson was the Maintenance Superintendent. The camp closed down at the start of the depression. Lots of people lived on here because this was the only home many of them had during the awful depression.
- Camp 10 Rail camp located at Corral Creek next to Helmer, Idaho. The camp started in 1922. Camp Bosses were Art Tracey and Johnny McDonald. The camp shut down in 1925 and the next setting was at Long Meadow just south of Round Meadow in the Park country. This camp started in 1929. This also was located along the main railroad leading into Three Bear Creek, another headquarter camp. Logging Superintendent Clair Nogle and Assistant Superintendent Walter Pierce spent lots of time here. This also was the jumping off place for more railroad construction going into a big body of timber that later became Camps 31 and 32. The first location included steam, donkey, and horse logging, while the latter camp was mostly horse logging.
- Camp 11 Located in upper Corral Creek on T Meadows north of Helmer four miles. This rail camp started in 1920. The camp moved in 1926 to

Oviott Meadow. Camp Foreman was Melker Anderson. The camp closed down at the start of the depression in 1931. All small tools were left in the woods. Lots of people, farmers in particular, went into the camp after they were shut down to pick up saws and axes, hammers, and so forth. The company could not meet the payroll and the lumberjacks just pulled out leaving the tools on the stumps. Horse logging was undertaken at both locations.

- Camp 14 Located at Vassar Meadows west of Bovill approximately five miles. This rail camp operated around 1920. Camp Foreman was Earl Gravis. It is unknown when the camp closed. Horse logging.
- Camps 15 and 16 Located approximately eight miles northwest of Elk River on Shaddock Butte approximately halfway between the east fork of Potlatch Creek and Elk River Basin. These were rail camps. The company started building off the main railroad in Elk River Basin in 1930 towards Camps 15 and 16. The depression shut down construction. In 1934 construction started up again and the railroad was built into the area where Camps 15 and 16 were located. In 1935 the camps were located only a short distance from each other. Clyde Radcliff ran both camps. They moved into a new setting at Three Bear which became Camps 31 and 32 around 1937.
- Camp 30 Located north of Stanford approximately two miles or one and one-half miles north of the present highway. Clyde Radcliff was boss of this rail camp which operated from 1935 to 1936. Tractor skidding.
- Camp 31 Located on Three Bear Creek this rail camp started in the spring of 1936. It became the headquarters for steam locomotive and loaders. Camp Boss was Axel Anderson. Camp came to a close around 1939. Tractor and horse logging.
- Camp 32 Located in Three Bear Creek approximately three miles up the creek from Camp 31. This

rail camp started in 1937. Camp Foremen were Melker Anderson and Axel Anderson. This was a large reloading area for truck haul from Camp 34. This also was the end of the steel or railroad system. It was approximately 30 miles from the main WIM railroad south of Helmer. The camp closed down in 1940. Tractor and horse logging.

- Camp 33 Located north of Harvard on Big Creek. Camp started around 1934. Camp Foreman was Clyde Radcliff. Trucks hauled short logs from this camp to the Potlatch mill approximately 20 miles away. The camp shut down in 1938. Horse logging.
- Camp 34 Located in Mason Meadows approximately six miles from Camp 32. This camp started in 1937 and had a plank road for hauling logs. This camp was called a rag camp as most of all the camp was made out of tents. The cook house was a large tent. At a summer camp here they loaded small one-ton trucks with short logs and hauled them down the plank road to Camp 32. There they dumped the logs and returned again after another load. The camp shut down in 1938. In the summer of 1939 and 1940 the men were hauled from Camp 32. Oscar Hagbom was Camp Foreman.
- Camp 35 Located on Merry Creek approximately seven miles north of Clarkia railroad camp. This camp started in 1940 and closed down in 1944. This camp was the largest camp Potlatch ever operated. Approximately 300 men worked at this camp during the winter of 1941 and 1942. Four complete trains worked out of here, a train crew consisting of a locomotive, a steam loader, and a string of rail cars with one conductor, two brakemen, one locomotive engineer, and one fireman. Every morning each train crew would head out on different spurs taking crews of logging men. The trains stopped off at each landing letting people off. Each landing (Cat) was built adjacent to the railroad track. Two to five skid cat crews would be assigned to each landing. The

cats would cold deck logs along railroad landings and later the train crew would come along and load logs on the flat cars. All logs were felled prior to skidding. Approximately 40 gangs of saws were used for felling timber, all cross cuts. During the war years the company did not shut down skidding or logging. In the early spring and late fall lots of mud came down into the railroad, sometimes three to four feet deep. The train crew would take the snow plow and plow the mud off the tracks.

Many of the rail spurs were constructed up steep canyons and the railroad grade would get up to a 5 or 6 percent grade. The old "shays" would push a string of flats and loader to the top of the grade, then start loading on its way back down. Several trains had runaways during this period. I remember a morning when the track became icy. The whole train took off down the track at 60 miles per hour. Everybody jumped into the clear. A few moments later you could hear logs. All the flat cars were in the hillside below. The old "shay" was still on the track at the bottom of the grade picking up steam. The center of gravity on the "shay" was near the track or bottom of the shay and it would not "tip over." It was hard to fish logs and loader out of the canyons among trees and stumps. All the logs were brought or hauled down to Camp 35 from the surrounding drainage during the day. Sometimes only four or five flat cars of logs could be hauled down the steep grade as too many cars would push the engine. Every night a locomotive would pull or push 40 to 60 carloads of logs into Clarkia. There the cars were set on siding and the Milwaukee Railroad crew would haul the logs to our mills at Potlatch and Coeur d'Alene.

During these years, nobody really looked after the safety program. There were no bird gages on any cats, and no hard hats. Consequently, there were lots of fatalities and lots of broken bones.

Camp 36 This camp was located in upper Palouse River

approximately 14 miles east of Harvard. Logging was begun in 1938. The camp was moved from old Camp 33. Most all the buildings were moved from old Camp 33. This camp would move down to Laird Park some parts of the year to the old CCC camp, then move back again during the summer months. One year the camp moved into the town of Potlatch and used the old bakery for the cook house. Then it moved back to the upper Palouse. Oscar Hogbonn was the Camp Boss. Tractor skidding and truck haul. Logging in the area was completed in 1954.

- Camp 37 Located on Bussel Creek approximately 10 miles north of Clarkia on the Marble Creek drainage. This camp was operated only in the summer months of 1941 and 1942. Camp Boss was Axel Anderson. Tractor skidding long log 33' and truck haul to rail head at Camp 35. The truck road was partly a plank and dirt road, approximately five miles long. Single drive white trucks were used. There were approximately 150 men at this summer camp. Most of the men came from over the hill from Camp 35, as Camp 35 used only a few men for summer work constructing and building rail spur plus loading and so forth for their big winter logging program. At the end of this truck grade was a rail head where the logs were loaded from the trucks to the flat cars. This reloader was called the McGifford. This steam loader sat on top of a ramp and the empty flat cars would slide down under the ramp and were loaded just in front of the ramp.
- Camp 38 Located at Stanford approximately four miles northwest of the Deary rail camp. This camp was located on a long spur adjacent to the WIM railroad. It consisted of just a bunch of rail cars that were made up with a cook house, bunk houses, and so forth. The water supply came in a large railroad tank car. It only took a few hours to set a camp up like this. This camp started in the spring of 1942. It closed down in 1944. The Camp Foreman was Clark Lancaster. The cats skidded directly to the main WIM rail-

road. When the main liner train from Potlatch would come through with the freight train and passenger cars, the train crew and loading crew would make way for the main liner by going off into a passing track. When the main liner passed the company loading crews would go back loading logs on the flat cars until the main liner returned.

- Camp 39 Located west of Bear Creek approximately eight miles west of the Deary rail camp. In the spring of 1942 Les Mallory began constructing a railroad from the main WIM rail line near Camp 38. This railroad was built five miles to the west fork, from the main line of the WIM. The company began building small bunk houses and a large portable cook house and shops at their main shop at Bovill. These buildings went on the flat rail cars and were shipped to the new camp site called Camp 38. Melker Anderson was the camp foreman. Later, in the fall of 1942, Melker shot himself and Art Henderson was selected to run the camp. Cats skidded directly to the main railroad and spurs. In the spring of 1943 the camp ran out of timber and was moved out.
- Camp 40 Located on Stoney Creek approximately 20 miles east of Clarkia. This camp was first run by John Anker in 1941. Trucks hauled logs to Clarkia. This camp was located in the heart of the largest white pine stand in Idaho. Anker had only a short season to get the logs out. He double-shifted all logging. Cat skidding took place 10 hours a day, seven days a week. Anker got out more timber in those days on certain days than any other logger. In the winter months Anker would build roads. Early in April in 1942 he bought the first power saw for the company. A large titan, this two-man saw weighed about 50 pounds. They had a hard time trying to keep the saw going and finally ditched it after a couple weeks of sawing.
- The production was hauled from this camp to Clarkia and loaded aboard cars and shipped by

railroad to a siding west of St. Maries. There the logs were dumped in water and pulled by tug boats to the Coeur d'Alene mill. Around June 1, 1942, John Anker left and Clark Lancaster took over, but he quit after a couple months. Art Henderson then started running the camp. I remember in 1950 the winter the company decided to stay at the camp and build roads. Eight feet of snow fell during this winter. The company built 24' wide roads all over the woods out of mixed dirt and snow. That spring after the snow left the road was hardly recognizable. It was just scratches along the side of the hill. The camp shut down in 1952 and was turned over to Gypos. The company began to log in this country again in 1958. By communicating from their main office and shop at Bovill approximately 40 miles away, as of this writing the camp area is still being logged.

Camp 41 This rail camp, located on Deep Creek, was six miles from Elk River. It started operation in the fall of 1942. The Camp Foreman was Henry Hendrickson.

The Camp first started with horse logging. The horses were transferred from camp X the fall of 1942. Logs were skidded with horses and tractor most of the winter. The the winter of 1942 the horses were phased out and the tractor took over completely for the company. In 1943 Art Henderson began running the camp. The camp came to a close in 1944. I remember the spring of 1943 as the snow left the crews were cutting the trees off at snow level. The management at Lewiston saw the high stumps on the hill side and made the crews go back out and saw off the stumps.

Camp 42 Located at Bovill north of the town. This camp started during the war year of 1944. The camp was run by Les Mallory. When the camp first started it was located south of Bovill. They first started building a railroad. Then after buiding one-half mile of track, the track was

removed and changed to a truck road, as this was the beginning of phasing out logging trains in the woods. A large construction crew began building the truck road into a very large volume of timber. Approximately 200 MMBF was available from 1942 to 1949. All timber was hauled on off-highway trucks to the railroad landing at Bovill. There logs were loaded aboard a car sent to the mills at Potlatch and Coeur d'Alene. In January 1955, Tom Femreite began running camp. As the main highways became more improved, Potlatch went to highway trucks, trucking to Lewiston and Potlatch directly from the woods. Then the camp was closed as nobody wanted to stay at camp. The bunk house still remains and lots of logging is still carried on by company and gypo people relogging ground that was logged in the late 40s and 50s. First tree length logging started here in 1949 by Earl Ritzheimer.

Camp 43 Located on Deep Creek approximately 10 miles southeast of Elk River. This railroad camp was first operating in 1945 with cat skidding to the rail. Camp Boss was Art Henderson. Approximately 120 men were employed here. This camp usually shut down in the dry weather. In muddy weather logs were skidded to a corduroy loading and loaded aboard rail flats. Every spring around the first of April the skidding would start. This would give the saw mill a steady flow of logs during the wet spring and wet falls.

In 1949 the steel was pulled and made into a truck haul. Oscar Hogbonn became the camp boss. All logging was skidded to one big corduroy landing and a rubber tire osgood loader set in the middle of it. Logs were hauled to the Elk River railroad landing. The camp began building road out from the camp into the surrounding areas in 1952. The camp closed and the buildings were hauled away. The cook house was moved to the Troy-Deary Gun Club and today is a real nice gun club.

Also, this area became close to home for many as the highways became better and everybody commuted back and forth to work. This camp area has lots of relogging being done now.

Camp 44

Located on Fish Hook Creek about nine miles south of Avery, Idaho. This camp started production in 1944. Axel Anderson was the first Camp Boss. Camp 44 was later run by Dooly Cramp. Logs were hauled from upper Fish Hook Creek down through a tunnel built by the CCC boys in the early 30s into a siding next to the main Milwaukee Railroad. There they were loaded or transferred from truck to flat cars and hauled by Milwaukee Railroad train to a log dump west of St. Maries, then towed across the lake to the Coeur d'Alene mill.

In 1950 a heavy storm blew down lots of timber in this upper Fish Hook Creek starting a spruce worm infestation killing large portions of the spruce stand. Our company threw all the equipment and men into this area and started harvesting up to 50 MMBF of timber per year after three years of logging, going over many sections of infected timber lands and removing approximately 150 MMBG of timber. Tree mortality came to an end. For the spruce--our company then concentrated on other species--many miles of main road was constructed from Fish Hook Creek area into other areas around Avery. The camp was closed down in 1964 and contractors moved into the area. Most all the contract loggers commuted from their homes as far away as St. Maries, some 60 miles each way.

At this writing in 1979, lots of timber is still being harvested around the Fish Hook area, most all of it USFS and B/N Railroad timber.

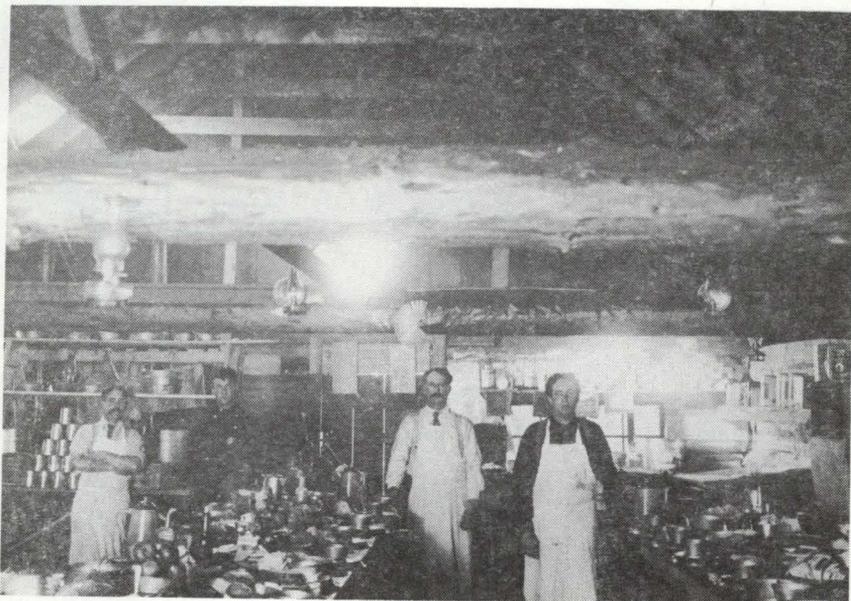
Camp 45

Located in the east fork of Potlatch Creek approximately nine miles east of Bovill. This camp operated from 1945 to 1968. Oscar Hogbonn was the first Camp Boss. Later Art Henderson became boss. This camp closed down in

1948 as the logging road and highway became improved and lumberjacks started driving from home. Lots of logging is still going on in this area.



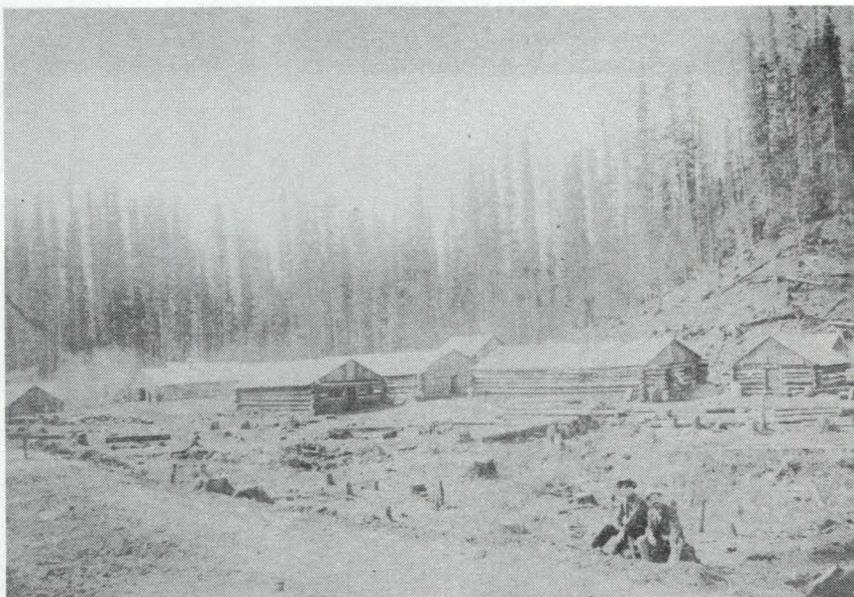
CAMP 6 -- Original from Chester Yangel, Bovill



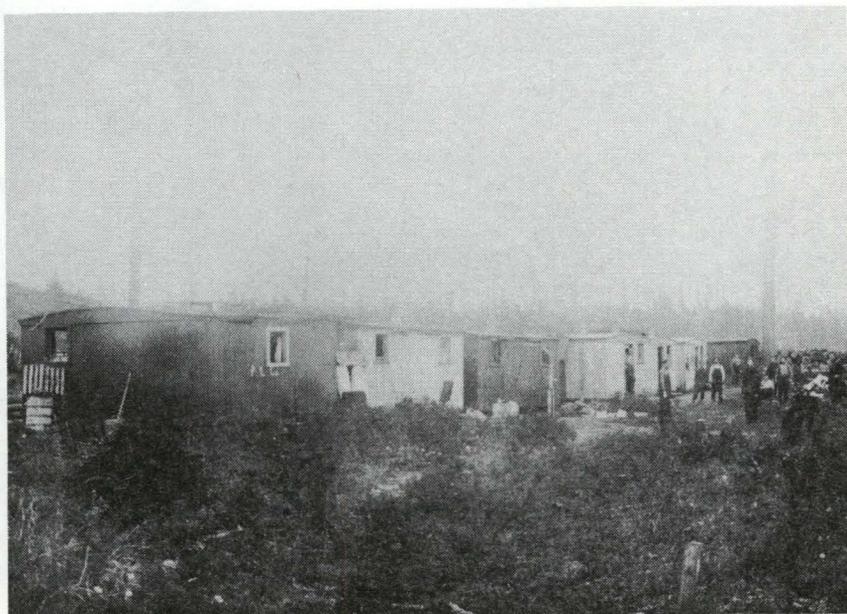
ANOTHER VIEW OF CAMP 6 (probably) -- Original
from Chester Yangel, Bovill



POTLATCH LOGGING CREW -- Original from Mabel
Morris, Elk River



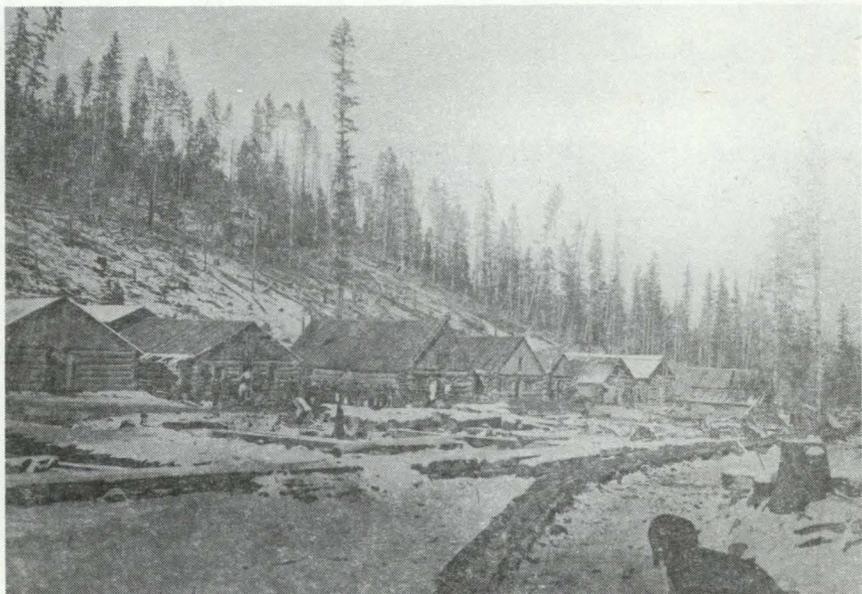
POTLATCH LOGGING CAMP -- Original from Chester Yangel, Bovill



POTLATCH LOGGING CAMP ON SKIDS -- Original from Chester Yangel



HORSE LOGGERS CIRCA 1906 -- Original from
Clifford Ott



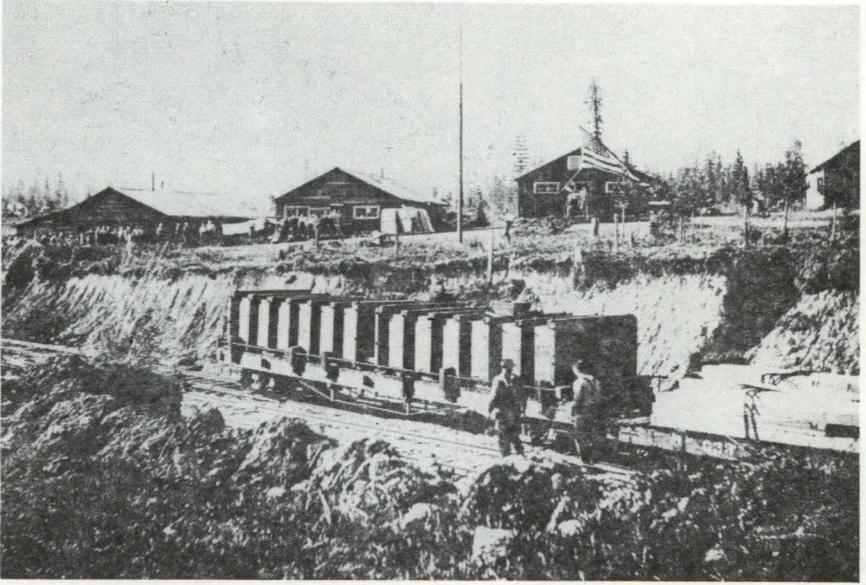
A LOG FLUME RUNS IN FRONT OF AN ELK RIVER
CAMP (probably camp L) -- Original from
Mabel Morris, Elk River



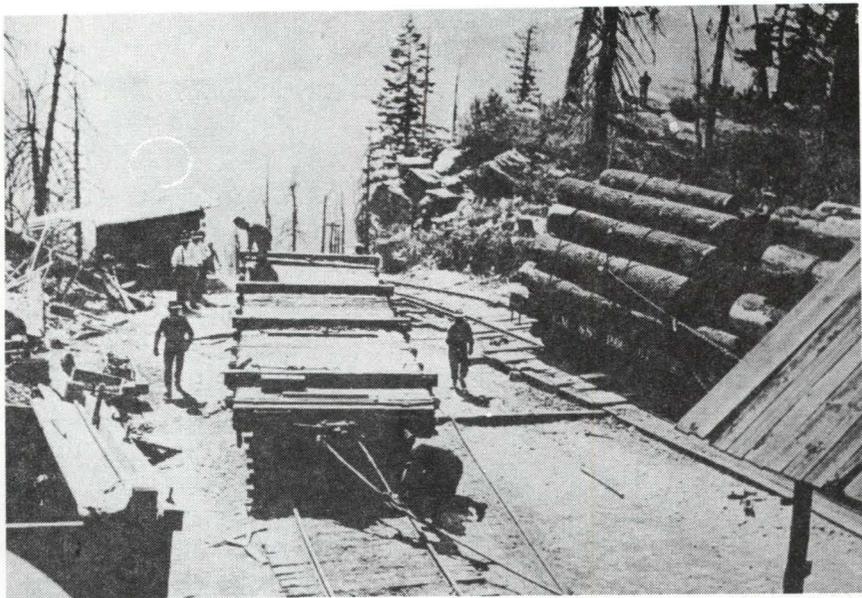
CAMP 5 CIRCA 1910 -- Original from Chester
Yangel



WHEN TRAINS HAULED LOGS FROM BOVILL, WORKERS INCLUDED (left to right) Byers Sanderson, Sr., John Zagelow, Les Mallory, Ken White, Axel Anderson, Clair Hayes



A LOADED FLATCAR AT POTLATCH CAMP 6 -- Original
from Margaret Olson, Deary



WORKERS READY A FLATCAR FOR LOGS -- Potlatch
Corporation photo

A. C. GILBERT: MILLIONAIRE WITH MOSCOW ROOTS

by Keith Petersen

When the Yale University Museum recently announced it had sold \$40,000 worth of big game trophies from its collection, a familiar name was mentioned in the news story. Most of the trophies had been left to the University in the estate of Alfred Carlton Gilbert, who died in 1961.

A. C. Gilbert was a modern Renaissance man, a storybook character out of the Frank Merriwell and Horatio Alger books many of us read as children. It is appropriate that reminiscing on the life of A. C. Gilbert should remind us of youthful reading, for Gilbert's entire life was spent catering to the whims of young people. As president of the A. C. Gilbert Toy Company, he sold millions of dollars worth of Erector Sets, American Flyer electric trains, chemistry sets, microscopes and other similar toys. At the time of his death his company employed over 2,000 people and had sales of over \$13,000,000 annually. He himself was a millionaire many times over. Had he done nothing more than be president of a major American company he would be a noteworthy person. But he had many interests, and was successful in virtually all of them.

Gilbert was born in Salem, Oregon, on February 15, 1884. In 1892 his family moved to Moscow, Idaho. In an autobiography entitled *The Man Who Lives in Paradise*, published in 1954, he described the Moscow of his youth:

Moscow main street might have served as a set for a western movie. Frame buildings housed stores, the bank, and several gambling halls and saloons, as well as some licensed and legal establishments for lustier pleasures. Horses were tethered to rails along the street, and the only vehicles were wagons and hacks--except in the spring or after heavy rains, when even they could make no headway in the deep mud. Moscow was the kind of town with the kind of life that was disappearing from America during the years I lived there. When we first moved there, Idaho had

been a state only two years. Before I left for school seven years later, I had seen the first automobile make its appearance, the property of a doctor who was wise enough to keep his car in the barn during the muddy season and go back to his horse.¹

Gilbert left a modest impression on Moscow during his youthful seven years here. But Moscow made an even more considerable impression upon him. It was in Moscow that the future millionaire undertook his first business transaction. It was also in Moscow that the inventive mind that was to eventually be responsible for over 100 patents first experimented with the making of practical gadgets.

The University of Idaho . . . advertised that it would trade guinea pigs for cats. Both animals were used in anatomy and biology classes, but they had apparently run out of cats at a time when they had more than enough guinea pigs.

Moscow was full of half-wild cats. . . . They were pretty tough and did a good deal of damage, killing birds and chickens.

I'd had many different animals as pets but no guinea pigs, so I decided to get some by the simple method of catching cats. I rigged up a figure-four trap and set it up one evening in the barn. The next morning it had one very angry cat inside it, which almost clawed my arm off when I tried to get it out. I fought him hard, but he got away.

That afternoon I cut a hole in one end of my box trap, then covered it with a movable door. The next morning I had two cats inside, both waiting to tear me to pieces. But I was ready for them. I slipped a gunny sack over the end of the box, slid the door away from the hole, and dumped my cats into the bag, without touching them. I never cared much for cats after that, but I liked them for bringing me the two guinea pigs I got in exchange.

Now, I know that memory plays tricks, but I swear that three months later I had more than twenty guinea pigs. . . . I sold guinea pigs to my friends. And in time I sold them to the university, which reached a period when it was long on cats and short on guinea pigs. I sold them to the Washington State Agricul-

tural College. . . . I can't remember how much money I made on these deals, but it was considerable for those days.²

Besides inventiveness and toys and working with children, Gilbert's other love was always athletics. In the barn behind his parents' Moscow house Alfred created a gymnasium complete with horizontal bar, an old mattress that served as a tumbling mat, weights, a wrestling ring and a punching bag. The punching bag intrigued him most. He got so he could punch it adroitly with either hand--blindfolded. He could even grab the head board with his hands and keep the bag going with his knees and feet. This particular skill came to the attention of a member of a traveling minstrel show then in Moscow, and Gilbert was offered \$15 a week if he would join the troupe. Without consulting his parents ("I didn't think of myself as running away from home. . . . I was just starting my career, that's all--perhaps a bit younger than most"³), Gilbert joined and in a short-lived career was billed at the age of 12 as THE CHAMPION BOY BAG-PUNCHER OF THE WORLD! A week later his father caught up with him in Lewiston and his professional bag-punching days were over.

While his father, Frank, a cashier in the Moscow First National Bank, was not excited about the prospects of his son becoming a minstrel show performer, he did encourage him to pursue his interest in sports. Gilbert took this encouragement to heart, and later became the world's record holder and Olympic champion in the pole vault.

At the University of Idaho I saw my first pole-vaulting. I thought it was wonderful, soaring so high in the air just by using a pole. They were probably jumping no higher than eight feet, but it seemed high to me, and I made up my mind to try it. Getting a pole was the problem--it had to be strong and straight, with a long grain and no knots.

One evening about dark a few members of the Moscow Athletic Club accompanied me on a walk out of town. Along the road were split-rail fences from which we appropriated a cedar rail that looked good. I suppose the farmer who owned that fence was angry at finding part of it missing, but he made an important contribution to a later world's record and an Olympic championship without knowing it.⁴

The cedar rail was carefully shaped and sanded. After much experimentation and many falls, pole vaulting soon took the place of bag-punching as Gilbert's favorite sport.

But Gilbert's approach to athletics--like his approach to life--was eclectic. He liked variety. In the late 1890s he founded the Moscow Athletic Club, a group of about a dozen young boys who not only shared Alfred's interest in sports but were also willing to assist A. C. with his household chores in order to have an opportunity to make use of his well-provisioned gym. Soon the Club began to have intramural athletic competitions. But the members wanted to compete against a larger group. Gilbert therefore organized, in 1898, Moscow's first Field Day. With the support and encouragement of parents and teachers, every boy in town was invited to participate in the big event. Seven events were held, and Alfred won six of them. At the second annual Field Day in 1899, eight events were held, and A. C. won seven. After the big day of competition, Alfred and the other victor had their photograph taken by Henry Erichson, town photographer. That picture and the medals he won that day always occupied an honored position in Gilbert's trophy case. The photograph showed Alfred with seven medals on his shirt, and the other contestant with one. "I lost the mile run," he later told friends. "That was the last event, and I was a little tired. I came in second. Not so good."⁵

Shortly after the second Field Day, Gilbert went away to preparatory school at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. He never returned to Moscow for any length of time. But his athletic and business careers were really just beginning.

During two years of prep school and two years of college at Pacific University, Gilbert distinguished himself as an outstanding quarterback (despite the fact that he was only 5'7" and 135 pounds), a champion wrestler and a world's record holder in chin ups. Always a man with a keen sense of competition and fierce determination, Gilbert was once defeated in a wrestling match. He thereupon travelled 3,000 miles to enroll in a physical training class and returned to Pacific to throw the man who had unaccountably beaten him.

It is also indicative of his thoroughness that in 1904 he journeyed to Yale University to attend medical school--not because he intended to practice medicine, but because he thought the training would be helpful to him as an athletic coach. While at Yale he set world's records in the pole vault in 1906, 1908, and 1909 (13'2"). Not only was Gilbert an outstanding vaulter, he was a revolutionary one. He was the first vaulter to replace hickory poles with springier bamboo (which has since been replaced by fiberglass). He was also among the first to vault without the use of a steel spike in the bottom of the pole. Instead, he dug a hole under the crossbars--the forerunner of today's box--and "planted" the pole prior to take off. This latter practice was controversial in the early 1900s, and when Gilbert attempted to dig such a hole in the 1908 Olympic Games in London, he was forbidden from doing so by the officials. Nonetheless, he vaulted well enough in the old style to be co-champion and gold medal winner. He was for over forty years the "unofficial" coach of pole vaulters at Yale University. Considered the expert in the field, his painstaking study of the physics involved helped Yale to dominate intercollegiate pole vaulting for over two decades. When, in the 1940s, the editors of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* wanted an article written on vaulting, they went to Gilbert.

Gilbert was a member of the Board of Governors of the Amateur Athletic Union for over 25 years, and he served as manager of the American Olympic teams in 1932 and 1936. He also remained a firm advocate of and participant in physical fitness activities until his death. But at the same time he was heavily involved in athletics and dominating world pole vaulting, he was pursuing other interests. To pay his way through medical school, Gilbert performed magic tricks. In fact, he became so enamored of magic that he never put his medical degree to career use--not even as a coach. For in 1909 he founded the Mysto Manufacturing Company, and began peddling a line of magic supplies. His life as a businessman had begun.

Business was not good until 1912 when, riding on a slow-moving train, he saw a construction crew fastening together steel girders for a new bridge. From this chance happening came the inspiration for the Erector Set, a toy that has brought pleasure to generations of American young people. In only a year, Mysto Manufacturing

tripled its growth. Three years later, the name was changed to the A. C. Gilbert Toy Company, and Gilbert's successes in the toy manufacturing field multiplied. Over the years Gilbert introduced a whole line of instructional toys--chemistry sets, microscopes, puzzle boxes. In 1938 the company purchased the rights to the American Flyer electric train from a defunct company. The A. C. Gilbert Company became the leader in the toy field.

Many American scientists cut their teeth on Gilbert's toys. A Yale University chemistry professor once discovered that 70% of his class got their introduction to the subject through Gilbert's chemistry sets. During World War II, one of the architectural marvels of the war--the Bailey Bridge--was first mocked-up from an Erector Set. Gilbert's only real business set-back came in attempting to introduce too much knowledge to the world of toys. In the 1950s he developed an atomic energy set, complete with Geiger counter, uranium-bearing ore, and other nuclear equipment. Gilbert was dismayed to discover that people had such confidence in his sets (Columbia University bought five for its physics department) that they feared children would make atomic bombs. After a flood of protests, Gilbert dropped the set. As with virtually all of the toys marketed by the A. C. Gilbert Company--with the exception of the American Flyer--this had been a brainpiece of the company president.

Gilbert attained financial success and eventually purchased a 600 acre game preserve near his home in New Haven. The preserve was stocked with deer, pheasants, ducks, and turkeys. The trophy room in his rustic hunting lodge was crowded with the heads of some of the game he shot on hunting trips to British Columbia and Alaska--the trophies recently sold by the Yale University Museum.

While Gilbert's life seems in many ways to parallel that of Horatio Alger characters, he disdained the comparison. "I had the happiest boyhood of anybody I ever knew. Nobody ever had so much fun. . . . Or so many hobbies. I wasn't a poor boy and I never paid my way through school, not entirely, that is. My father was a banker. He wasn't a big banker and he wasn't always a banker, but he helped put me through school. I worked because I wanted to work."⁶

But Gilbert accomplished much. He was successful in more areas than most people even experiment in. He died in 1961 at the age of 76. A few years earlier he had written a suitable epitaph. "I've never worked at anything that wasn't fun. If I had my life to live over I don't think I'd change it. Except maybe to take up mountain climbing."⁷

NOTES

¹A. C. Gilbert with Marshall McClintock, *The Man Who Lives in Paradise* (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1954), p. 27.

²Ibid., pp. 25-6.

³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴Ibid., p. 29.

⁵John Bainbridge, "American Boy," *New Yorker*, 20 December 1952, p. 38.

⁶Gilbert Millstein, "Toy King," *Life Magazine*, 18 November 1946, p. 70.

⁷"Happiest Millionaire," *Newsweek*, 6 February 1961, p. 62.

BOOK REVIEW: HOMER DAVID SAW THE CENTURY TURN

by Eddie Sue Judy

Tales from the youth of those grown old often are lean in scholarship but richer in the flavor of their times than the best researched work. The newly released *Moscow at the Turn of the Century* by the late Homer David is a case in point.

The paperbound book, 86 pages plus introduction and editorial note, is comprised of two written sections and several pages of photos. David wrote the first section in 1965 as a letter to Elmer Nelson, then-manager of the Moscow office of the Idaho First National Bank. The brief history mainly deals with commercial interests of early Moscow. It includes lists of early businesses, historical buildings and prominent citizens.

The second section, written in 1966, is "Some recollections of Homer David, 1890-1910." Interest in the letter to Nelson, which was mimeographed and circulated among a limited audience, encouraged David to write the longer work, according to the editorial note. The Latah County Historical Society has had the two works printed and bound, with an introduction by Clarice and Harry Sampson, into a single volume.

David, 1881-1971, was son of David's Department Store founder Frank David. The family owned and operated the store at Third and Main until 1959. The store, still bearing the family name, went out of business this past spring.

The Davids came to Moscow when the author was nine years old. Most of the text apparently comes from David's own memories of his boyhood and young manhood. Documentation is noted in at least one instance. The nature of the material in other instances implies borrowing from other sources.

The first section, being addressed to a banker, emphasizes banking and other commercial interests in early Moscow. But it also includes a brief context of regional, county and city history.

The first section is not stifflingly formal, though one is tempted to flip through its lists to the photos beyond.

But it's the second section that gives the reader a real sense of the era of Homer David's youth. When you read the "Recollections," you walk into East City Park on a lazy Saturday morning and sit down on a bench next to an old man. He introduces himself a little shyly, a little stiffly, but then he starts remembering aloud. For two hours, his youth comes back to life between his lips and in your ears.

The "Recollections," though cogent in their own fashion and articulate, are by no means a definite history of the town and era. They're not meant to be. They ramble. They skip about. They're full of speculations and value judgements. They repeat themselves, as random recollections will.

"The haphazard collection of recollections, I realize, is a feeble attempt to record some of my memories," David wrote in the book's last paragraph. "I wished only to

give an overall picture of events between 1890 and 1910, a formative period in Moscow's history. . . ."

Both sections contain long lists of names that once belonged to faces few now living ever saw. The lists could be tedious if a person dutifully reads each name. But some names are revelations. For example, Almon Asbury and Lieuallen streets in the town's Northwest section are named after a Moscow resident of the late 1800s named Almon Asbury Lieullan. Lilly Street, in the same area, is named after--three guesses--Almon Asbury Lieuallen's daughter, Lillie.

Trivia? Maybe. But it helps a person feel a little less like her surroundings are an arbitrary whim.

The book is the sixth in the historical society's local history series. It was printed by the News-Review Publishing Company of Moscow. The book is available for \$3.50 to non-members of the society and \$2.80 to members at Bookpeople of Moscow and at the McConnell Mansion, 110 S. Adams, Moscow.

If you're after an exhaustive academic study of Moscow-Latah County history, leave *Moscow at the Turn of the Century* on the shelf. But if you want a share in the inheritance of an old man's memories, read it.

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Landed Gentry 1871-1978. Opal Lambert Ross. Published by the author and produced by North Country Book Express, Inc., Moscow, ID 83843. \$12.

Landed Gentry is a book worth knowing. When a review starts out like that it's almost a sure bet the review will go downhill from there. That is not the case with *Landed Gentry*.

It is a solid effort to present a cohesive chronicle of the settlers who made Township 42 in north Latah county, Idaho, what it is today. In 1871, Thompson Meldrum surveyed the lands around Deep Creek to officially mark out the township for the government. In 1873, wagons bearing homesteaders began to arrive.

Mrs. Ross has avoided the temptation to merely list the names of settlers who arrived and stayed in Township 42. She provides the names but blends them with the events of the time and wisely deletes lists of who brought what to which particular picnic.

In tracing the development of the township, Mrs. Ross includes pertinent historical sketches of the area's industries, services, and schools. But her focus, rightly so, remains the people who molded the land to their needs. In summation, she writes, "The name 'Landed Gentry' is given this history because nearly everyone mentioned, from homesteader to present proprietor, is a landowner. And it can be truthfully said that most are a little affluent, which is to say, very well off, indeed."

Mrs. Ross's book about Township 42 stands as a worthy contribution to the works intent on reflecting the past of Idaho and the nation as a whole. The photographs, supplied primarily by Albert Clausen and Clifford Ott, old and therefore difficult to work with, are reproduced with excellent clarity. One of the best features of Mrs. Ross's book aside from the land settlement and genealogical tables, however, is the index. Too few local histories include indexes and Mrs. Ross should receive thanks from each future reader who consults *Landed Gentry* with a particular interest in mind.

Not only are those who still inhabit Township 42 "very well off, indeed," but now readers exploring Latah County

history can count themselves wealthier thanks to Mrs. Ross. Her book is available through the society and local booksellers.

--Bill Loftus

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The *Quarterly* invites suggestions and submissions from readers. Correspondence should be addressed to the editors in care of the Latah County Historical Society, 110 S. Adams, Moscow, Idaho 83843. All work for the magazine must be considered strictly on a volunteer basis.

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