

JOHN DIAMANTIS

Elk River; b. 1885

sawmiller

1 hour

minute page

Side A 01

Arriving from Greece in 1909, John lived two months in New York, then came to Spokane and worked on a railroad extra gang. The extra gang was hard work and paid 15¢ an hour. He began working in the Elk River mill in 1911 at whatever job he could get because he had no experience. From the close of the mill in 1930 to 1950 he worked in the woods.

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The winter of 1912 there was nine feet of snow at the depot. His Greek extra gang had to work exactly as the foreman said; the foreman fired the whole gang and replaced them with Yugoslavians.

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When the mill closed down, Potlatch dismantled many Elk River homes and piled the fixtures outdoors at Potlatch, where they rusted.

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John moved to Spokane after he retired in 1952 because Elk River had no medical facilities for his wife. Mr. Morris explained that the drugstore couldn't afford to handle prescription drugs. John built a home in Spokane Valley with many kinds of fruit, but it became too much to care for.

Side B

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Nearly all the men at the Elk River mill had IWW cards. When a strike meeting was called at the mill, Superintendent Bloom told the men that those who struck would be fired and that IWW was Russian propaganda. So the men went back to work, but no lumber came to the mill from the woods.

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Eight hour day and good conditions caused by IWW. John told nobody that he had a card. The man selling cards, George Manus, was fired; he moved to Spokane and got wealthy from drinking and gambling business.

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U.S. is the best country. Most Greeks scattered from the northwest, to the East or back to Europe. The U.S. was the worst country to work in in early 1900's; thousands of immigrants a day made cheap labor. Coolidge opened the country some, but Hoover wasn't good.

24

Lumberjacks drank too much, played poker in the camps and were mostly single. A man who deserted his family because of drink; the son drank too. with Sam Schrage 7/28/7