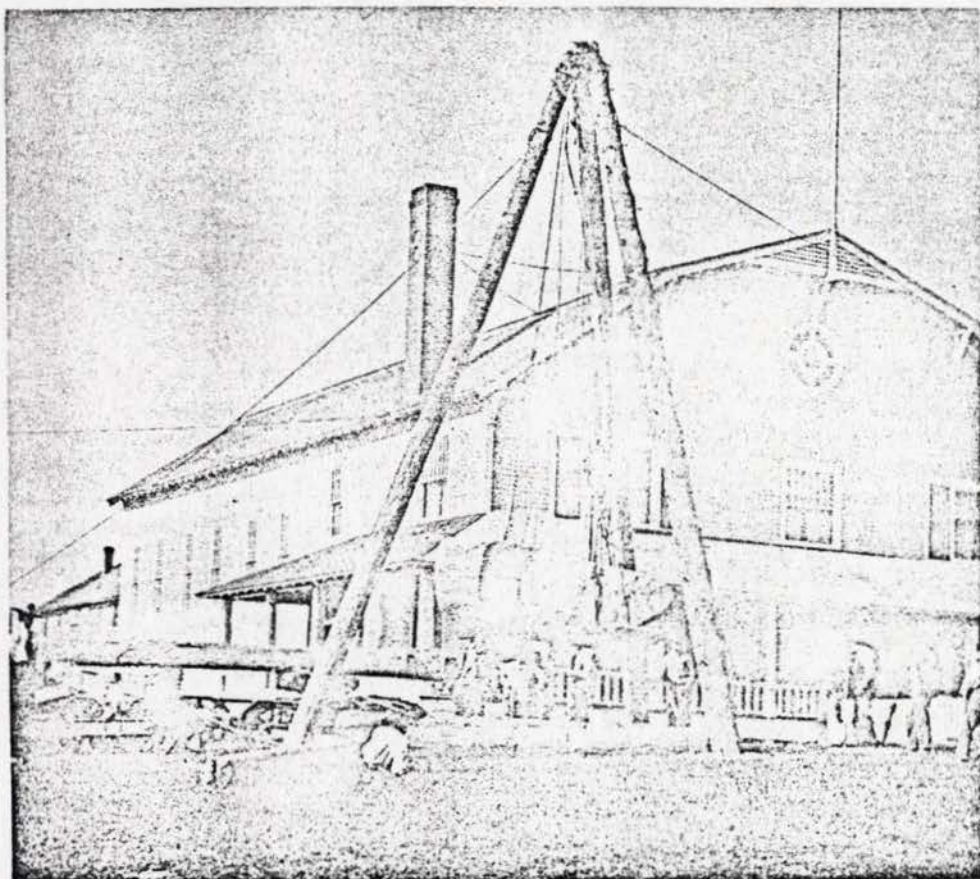


Company Founder Honored With Monument

(Editor's note: From the pages of the Daily Star-Mirror, published in Moscow, Idaho, Saturday, June 11, 1921, comes the following account.)

Potlatch, Idaho—(By Staff Correspondent)—Two large granite boulders, one weighing twelve tons, have just been placed in Potlatch on the Athletic Club lawn as a memorial to William Deary, formerly General Manager of Potlatch Lumber Company, also General Manager of Washington, Idaho and Montana Railway Com-

pany. Mr. Deary was well known as one of the leading men in the lumber industry of the country. As General Manager he had charge of the construction and operation for over ten years, from organization until his death (in May, 1913), of the lumber and railroad companies and the towns of Potlatch and Elk River were built under his supervision. He possessed a forceful personality and was for fifteen years active in developing the industries of northern Idaho.



Heavy equipment and a crew of 12 was required to set the monument in place.

The two boulders which have been set up to help perpetuate his memory were secured from the side of Elk Butte, a large mountain near Elk River, Idaho. They have been exposed for some centuries to the elements. It has only lately been possible to obtain the stones, due to the construction of a logging railroad near their location, whence they have been brought to Potlatch. A bronze tablet will be set in the top stone inscribed, "IN MEMORIAM WILLIAM DEARY."

Fascinating yarns about the rugged men who built Potlatch Forests, Inc. are being retold now, as the company celebrates

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WHERE LEGENDS DON'T AGREE, facts are hardest to find. But the facts remain unchanged longer than any legend. The Potlatch Unit of Potlatch Forests, Inc., a Weyerhaeuser supplier, was born out of legend, but it is a fact that mill operations of the Potlatch Unit began in the fall of 1905 two years after the Potlatch Lumber Company was incorporated under the laws of the State of Maine.

That is all the State of Maine has to do with our story about Potlatch, but northern Idaho and a handful of hard, courageous lumbermen from Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Canada figure strongly in the location and building of a big sawmill and town that today is celebrating a half century of progress.

According to a legend no one has yet dared dispute, the indomitable Irish-Canadian, William Deary put Potlatch on the map by haphazardly ramming a big finger down on the map of Idaho's wilderness while saying with a roar, "Gintilmen, we will build our sawmill right there!"

That statement and that rap on the map ended several hours of debate by directors of the new company in a backroom meeting in Moscow, Idaho. Bill Deary wasn't a man to argue with and besides he was tired after

an all-day trek in the woods. Some accounts of the meeting say that he poked his finger right through the map, but all agree with the record that before the meeting ended minutes later, Bill was ordered to go there and build the mill on the spot he had chosen. At the same time, he was made manager of the embryo mill.

The team of Deary and Laird

Charles Weyerhaeuser was president of the Potlatch Lumber Company at its inception and when the building of the town and mill was completed in 1906, management of the infant boom town, with its new sawmill, was firmly in the hands of its builder, William Deary. A. W. Laird was ordered up from Winona, Minnesota in 1905 to be Deary's assistant. Other midwest imported lumbermen transferred to the new mill were Tom Jones as wood superintendent, Mark Seymour, mill superintendent, Paul Lachmund, sales manager, and Max Williamson, his assistant.

For its timber, the new organization had to depend on holdings of the Northland Pine Company and the Wisconsin Log and Lumber Company, which included large timber stands in the Palouse, Potlatch and Elk Creek drainages. Shortly after the company was formed,

it acquired the mills and timber of the Codd Lumber Company of Colfax, Washington, and the Palouse River Lumber Company at Palouse. The Codd Mill was operated very little after its acquisition, and apparently the Palouse mill only served to cut the lumber to build the town and plant which now comprises Potlatch, Idaho.

The first office of the company in Potlatch was in the depot building of the Washington, Idaho and Montana Railway Company. Later an office was built inside the mill grounds and was used for many years until the present office was constructed. Today only the vault of the old office remains.

Shortly after Mr. Deary died in May 1913, A. W. Laird was made general manager, and W. D. Humiston was named as his assistant. Mr. Laird remained as manager of the Potlatch Lumber Co. until his death in 1931.

Meanwhile, in 1910, the mill at Elk River was constructed on the site of the Trumbull homestead in what was then one of the remotest districts in northern Idaho. Nothing but a pack trail to the placer operations on Burnt Creek entered this region at that time. As the Elk River mill developed, a town sprung up in this wilderness nursed by the mill.

Just as Deary's name is graven in Potlatch history, so is the name of Andres Bloom in Elk River. Bloom, associated since boyhood with Deary, came West and went through this region with him when the timber was being purchased. He stayed to become general manager of the St. Joe Boom Company and operated it several years before he was called to manage the new mill at Elk River. He remained there until his death. Under Mr. Bloom were Joe Edwards, mill foreman, and Charles S. Peterson, yard and shipping superintendent. William Maxwell was office manager, until his transfer to Potlatch as office and townsite manager.

The Elk River mill, one of the most modern and efficient mills of the time, had an active life of twenty years. In 1930 it was closed due to lack of business and the fall and winter of 1936-37 saw its complete dismantling.

When Mr. Laird died in 1931 he was succeeded as manager at Potlatch by R. E. "Jack" Irwin, who had come from Boise-Payette some years before to take charge of manufacturing. Irwin stayed until early in 1933 when he left to return to selling and was followed by J. J. O'Connell. O'Connell remained as manager until 1951 when he was made manager of PFI's lumber division. He was succeeded as manager by Jack Titcomb who in turn was succeeded in 1952 by M. E. Jones, the present manager.

Many changes have taken place at the Potlatch unit since its beginning in 1905. The years have seen the plant undergo such changes as plant electrification, eliminating the old waste burner, the installation of a chipper and barker, blacktopping roadways, and many other improvements, all taking place to better the working conditions, improve relations, and to stabilize and insure continued operation.

The townsite remained under the company's jurisdiction until 1952 when the residents of the town were given the opportunity of purchasing their homes and forming an incorporated town. This transition is for all practical purposes complete.

Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway Company

At the time that the timber holdings which are now those of PFI were purchased, the Palouse River Lumber Company mill was located at Palouse, Washington. Logs were floated down the Palouse River to the mill. At the acquisition of these large tracts of timber, it was realized that railway connections would be necessary both to transport logs and lumber. Also, it was decided to abandon the Palouse property and build Potlatch, whereupon Mr. Deary contacted the connecting main line railroad with the proposal that they build from the main line into the timber and receive the haulage of logs and lumber which was to result from the

operation of the new mill. However, the predicted tonnage was not enough to tempt them and they refused. This was the "reason" for the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway Company. The company decided to build their own railroad.

In 1905, the WI&M was completed to Harvard, Idaho, and the next year extended to Purdue, with a total trackage of 50 miles. The Palouse end of the line connected at that time with the Northern Pacific at Palouse. In 1908, the Great Northern Railway built a connecting branch to Palouse and in 1910 the Milwaukee road built a branch west into St. Maries and Elk River. This gave the WI&M a direct connection at Bovill with the Milwaukee and the two direct connections at Palouse.

The Potlatch shops

To maintain the equipment of this railroad and the Potlatch mill and woods department, extensive shops were built at Potlatch. Outside of Spokane, these were the largest railroad shops in the Inland Empire. They were equipped to care for all locomotive and car work as well as repairs for the mill.

As for standards, its short line did not prevent the WI&M from comparing favorably with main lines. The track was laid with 70 pound rail and was ballasted with crushed rock its entire distance. Equipment consisted of five locomotives, 300 flat cars, 15 standard box cars, 2 passenger coaches, a locomotive crane, weed burner and miscellaneous work equipment.

The passenger train discontinued operations last spring, however, the freight is still operating with diesel equipment which replaced the steam locomotives several years ago. Freight consists of logs, lumber, farm and other commodities to and from the communities which it serves.

W. J. Gamble managed the WI&M from 1918 until his retirement a few years ago. Roy Huffman, assistant general manager of PFI, is now general manager of the road.

Shortly before the close of the Civil War, or, to be exact, on August 18, 1863, William Helmer was born in a small village in the Province of Quebec, Canada. He was destined to become one of the greatest timber cruisers of our time. Early in his teens, he developed a deep affection for the white pine timber which covered the hills of his native province, and, after receiving his early schooling, branched out as a "land looker", or timber cruiser.

Sensing the development in the lumber industry which was soon to take place in the lake states, William Helmer moved to Stillwater, Minnesota in 1882 and became associated with C. N. Nelson, who had one of the largest white pine operations of the early days in Minnesota. Over a period of two decades as cruiser for the Nelson interests, Helmer developed the uncanny instinct for

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(CONTINUED)

accurate timber estimating which remained with him to his death.

Early in 1901 William Deary, already selected by Wisconsin and Minnesota interests to consolidate a large operating block of white pine timber in Northern Idaho, picked Helmer to accompany him into the Idaho forests. They arrived in Idaho May 1, 1901, and immediately started the cruising and purchasing of the huge timber block which was to become the operating unit of the Potlatch Lumber Company. In the early days of timber exploration very few trails and roads existed in Northern Idaho and Helmer frequently was out for months at a stretch with his compassman, packing their meager

outfit on their backs over uncharted areas of timber land, sleeping wherever darkness overtook them. In this manner, several million dollars were invested in timber on the judgment and integrity of William Helmer.

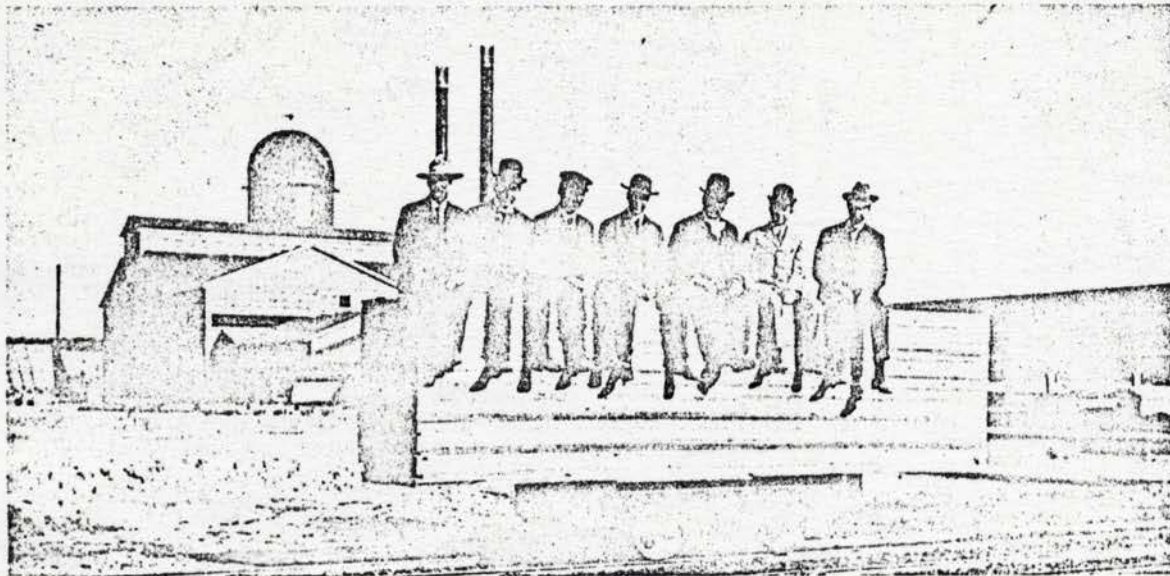
After the mill was constructed at Potlatch in 1905 and operations were well underway, Helmer was chosen to lay out logging railroad spurs and locate camp sites, in addition to his duties as cruiser. This kept him occupied up to 1931 when, after the big merger into Potlatch Forests, Inc., he was relieved of some of his duties and was called on only to supervise the estimating of timber to be purchased by the company.

Prior to his death in 1951 and after his

retirement, his love for the woods deepened and he continued to reside in Idaho. He nurtured the hope that he might live out his days in the shadows of the White Pine, which had become so much a part of him. Those who knew Bill and have been intimately associated with him over the years have loved him for his fine character, his modesty, his outstanding ability and deep rooted loyalty to his company and his many friends.

Last to appear on the scene is Potlatch Forests, Inc., formed in 1931 by the merger of the three companies: Potlatch Lumber Company, Edward Rutledge Timber Company at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and Clearwater Timber Company at Lewiston, Idaho. PFI today operates the sawmills and supplying tree farms of the three companies from headquarters at its Clearwater Unit at Lewiston.

The record shows that though the Potlatch Lumber Company was actually incorporated last of the three, it deserves the kudos for beginning operations first and providing the name for the present company that is sponsoring the 50th Anniversary celebration of the Potlatch Unit.



MAX WILLIAMSON,
in 1923 snapshot, with
his dog Pickles.



1906 PHOTO has caption reading: "First car selects now ready on Track 2". From left to right — R. M. Weyerhaeuser, Cliff Musser, Bill Deary, A. W. Laird, Mr. Wilkinson, A. H. Irving, Mark Seymour.

Part of Potlatch history to be sold with mill

By Marty Trillhaasse

POTLATCH — The 77-year-old sawmill that built this town and was the flagship mill of the timber company bearing its name will go on the auction block Saturday.

The auction, which will begin at 10 a.m., follows five to six weeks of salvage operations at the mill. George Chambers of CleElum, Wash., who is supervising the operation, says the project involves 48 employees and will last about 18 months.

Potlatch Corp. officials decided in March to permanently close the facility. Portland Sawmill Machinery of Portland, Ore., and Smith and Chambers Salvage of CleElum, Wash., are running the salvage operation of the machinery and about 30 buildings. The purchase price was not disclosed.

Auctioneer Jim Hagedorn of Potlatch expects attendance at the auction to be as high as people scout out everything from a good buy on a piece of machinery or building material to an antique.

"The people who have the concession stand, they're coming in with enough to feed 1,000 people," he said. "We're looking at eight hours of solid selling from 10 in the morning until we're through."

Among the collectibles up for bid are a hand-drawn fire cart, a hand-cranked telephone, vintage pre-1920, and antique blacksmith tools.

"This is an old sawmill. Anything out there is old," he said.

"The brick that's in this place, that alone has a heritage in itself."

The plant began operating in 1906 as the principal mill of what was then the Potlatch Lumber Co. A merger in 1931 with the Clearwater Timber Co., of Lewiston and the Edward Rutledge Timber Co. of Coeur d'Alene produced Potlatch Forests Inc., which evolved into Potlatch Corp.

The mill's age was one reason that Potlatch officials decided to close it, some 18 months after it had been temporarily closed due to the economic recession.

"As the flagship mill of the company, there was a lot of consideration given to that decision," said Potlatch spokesman John Barclay of Lewiston. "It was just evident that there was no way we could go on but to close it permanently."

The age and configuration of the plant diminished its efficiency, Barclay said. Timber supplies were another factor, since the company's 600,000 acres of forest land meets only half the system's needs, he said. That requires the company to turn to less certain sources, mostly the federal government, he said.

The company retains ownership of its plant office building, built in 1964, and the 129-acre site. The company has no plans for the property.

"The land itself is pretty valuable. We don't have plans for it, but we're not ready to write off the option for doing something with that," he said.



Dan Pelle photo

Stick by stick

Salvage workers consign the Potlatch sawmill to history.

Barclay discouraged any speculation stemming from the company's decision to retain ownership of the property.

"Any speculation that we have plans to build a new facility there are completely out of line, are completely without foundation," he said.

Chambers said his work crews have begun dismantling the sawmill, machine shop and warehouse.

"The sawmill building, you're looking at a year and a half to get that down," he said.

At least one more auction will

be held when the dismantling is completed and salvage operators will continue to make sales to the public, wholesalers and distributors during the course of the project, he said.

"The last one will undoubtedly be the bigger one," Chambers said.