

The name "POTLATCH" is an Indian name meaning "A Great Feast". The Potlatch River, which empties into the Clearwater at Arrow--near the old Indian settlement at Spalding and Lapwai, contained in its upper basins and watersheds one of the finest stands of White Pine timber known. The Indians had given the river and tributary area the name "Potlatch" because of the abundance of fish, game, camas, and berries; and therefore, a meeting place of the Indian tribes for the holding of a big feast.

Potlatch Lumber Company was incorporated in 1903 under the laws of the State of Maine and at the time of incorporation, had acquired sizeable holdings on the Potlatch and its tributaries, and the name POTLATCH LUMBER COMPANY was a natural selection. The company acquired the mills and timber of the Codd Lumber Company of Colfax, Washington, and the Palouse River Lumber Company of Palouse, Washington. The Colfax mill was run very little and the Palouse mill only for cutting lumber to build the town and plant at the site now known as Potlatch, Idaho

The building of Potlatch town was done during 1904, 1905, and 1906 and the mill started operation in 1906. In 1905 construction was begun of a railroad from Palouse, Washington, which was to extend to Bovill, Idaho (that railroad exists as the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway Company). Station stops along this railroad were named after large universities, some of which have grown into thriving communities. Some of the names are Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Vassar, Cornell, Purdue and Wellesley. Other stations were named after prominent men of the Potlatch Lumber Company, as Deary and Helmer, after the first General Manager and the first timber cruiser of the company.

This railroad was built for the purpose of transporting logs from the timber area to the mill at Potlatch. For many years, in addition to logs, there were regular passenger and mail trains on the WI&M from Palouse, Washington, to Bovill, Idaho. At Palouse the line connects with the Northern Pacific and Great Northern lines and at Bovill it connects with the Milwaukee line. The principal freight on the WI&M today is that of logs from Bovill to Potlatch mill, some grain from storage along the line, and lumber from the mill.

During the year 1910 a mill, one of the most modern and efficient in the world at the time, was constructed at Elk River, Idaho. This mill was operated for twenty years. In 1930 it was closed due to lack of business and was completely dismantled during the fall and winter of 1936-37.

In 1931 Potlatch Forests, Inc. as we know it today came into being, with the merger of the Clearwater Timber Company at Lewiston, Edward Rutledge Timber Company at Coeur d'Alene, and the Potlatch Lumber Company at Potlatch. The General Offices of the company are located at Lewiston, Idaho. The Clearwater plant is known as the Clearwater Unit; the Potlatch plant is the Potlatch Unit; and the Rutledge plant as the Rutledge Unit of Potlatch Forests, Inc.

As of this date, March 1958, there are employed at the Potlatch Unit 350 people, including supervisory personnel. The mill is operating five days a week, two shifts per day. The present production capacity is approximately 280 thousand board feet of lumber per day.

The mill at Potlatch has undergone many changes from the time it was originally built. Logs are received at the mill pond formed by dams in the Palouse River and upon going into the Sawmill, are de-barked by an automatic barker. From there they are fed to one of three carriages, two of which are "Sel-set" automatic network "rigs" (riderless carriages). There is also a cant gang saw, which is used during times of carriage repairs, but not used full time. The one carriage which requires a "setter" to operate is now in the process of conversion to automatic networks. All edgings and trims from the Sawmill are run through

chippers for conversion to chips. The chips and sawdust from the mill are loaded in box cars and highway trucks for transport to the Pulp and Paper mill at Lewiston, Idaho. The bark from the logs and any waste material which has bark on it is used for fuel to produce steam and electricity for the whole plant.

From the sawmill the green lumber passes to either an automatic or hand-operated stacker where it is piled in Dry Kiln stacks, and from there to any one of 25 dry kilns. Drying time in the kilns is from 40 hours to 336 hours, depending on size and species of lumber.

From the Dry Kilns the lumber goes through an automatic unstacker which "breaks down" the kiln stacks, transferring the lumber over approximately 400 feet of sorting chain where each board is taken off by hand and sorted for species, grade, length, and width. From there the lumber is transported by carrier, either to rough storage yard or to the planers for surfacing.

The surfacing department contains three planers, various rip, trim, and siding saws, and two moulding machines for production of all types of finished lumber. The glue-up department is utilized in making wide panels from picked stock.

The loading docks have a capacity of 25 box cars and a retail dock is located for loading of highway trucks. There is capacity in sheds for surfaced lumber, moulding, and glue-up stock of approximately 6,000,000 board feet, and storage in the yard for approximately 15,000,000 board feet of rough lumber.

Plant offices such as superintendents, personnel and first aid, warehouse, and shipping office, are located in the center of the plant. The main office, which contains offices of the accounting department, time office, stenographic and offices of WI&M Railway, is located in the village about a quarter of a mile from the plant.

The company town of Potlatch was incorporated in 1952 and the houses were sold to those who wished to purchase them. At the present time, Potlatch Forests, Inc. owns only the Potlatch Store, the hotel, the hospital, several implement buildings and two residences within the boundaries of the Village of Potlatch.

The Village of Potlatch is a progressive community of approximately 1,000 people. New, modern school additions have been made during the last three years, and a community swimming pool was completed last year. At the present time, there is a new garage business under construction, and a service station is anticipated in the near future. Plans are developing for construction of a sewage disposal plant and there is talk of constructing an air strip near the Village.

During the summer of 1957, highway 95-A, which begins at a junction of highway 95 about 2 miles below Potlatch and passes through the Village, was surfaced and further improvement is expected during 1958.

There are many active organizations in the Village of Potlatch. A few are the Potlatch Area Boosters and Boosterettes, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, Working Women's Club, Jay-C-ettes, Robinson Post of the American Legion. The fraternal organizations include the Moose Lodge, Odd Fellows, Rebekahs, AF&AM, and Royal Neighbors. All of these organizations, along with the 4-H clubs, riding clubs and Grange organizations in the immediate vicinity, contribute toward an active group of people in the Potlatch area.