

The Samoa sits with its booms retracted and a full deck-load of lumber while the Tillamook, with its booms extended, loads at the Oceanside Lumber Co. docks. (c.1932) Photo courtesy of Wayne Jensen.

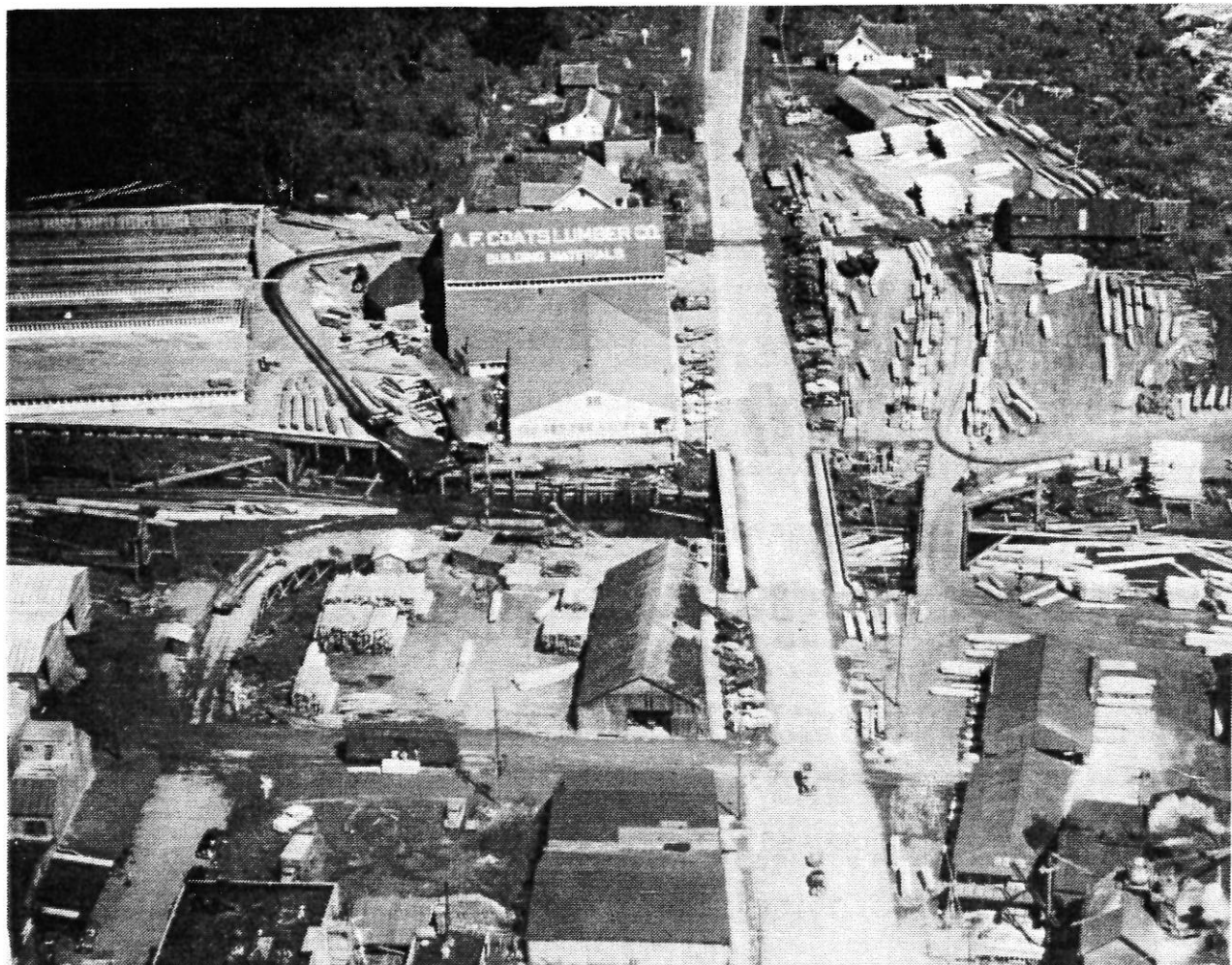
Foley Box Company, Garibaldi (2)

This company daily produced about 5,000 feet of shook (staves and headings for hogsheads, casks and barrels). The company also had a good business in spruce piano posts, with 2 x 4 x 53-inch in greatest demand. The plant was equipped with modern equipment and North Coast type kilns. Tim Parker was president, Homer Stewart, secretary-treasurer and R. Schwerdlmann, manager of the company.

A. F. Coats Lumber Company 1913-1950 (4) (6) (7) (8) (9)

In April, 1913, A. F. Coats, Sr., then living in Seattle, founded and incorporated the A. F. Coats Lumber Company. Initial stockholders included H. A. Franklin, O. A. Schultz, F. A. Beltz, C. H. Schultz, C.

W. Miller and A. J. Anderson. Capital improvements consisted of the small sawmill at the north edge of Tillamook on Hoquarton Slough (formerly the Tillamook Lumber Company) with a limited capacity of 5,000 feet per day.



A.F.Coats Lumber Co. sawmill and yards. (c.1939) Note the existence of the newly completed Highway 101 bridge over Horquarten slough and the older counterpart alongside. Photo courtesy of Tillamook County Pioneer Museum.

There soon followed a period of rapid growth and expansion. Through World War I and the prosperous early 1920's, A. F. Coats Sr. controlled the destiny of this growing company. By 1924, the sawmill was cutting between 85-90 M feet of spruce, fir and hemlock daily. With the exception of the head rig, which employed 56-inch saws, the

mill was electrically equipped throughout. A Portland Iron Works log turner constituted the deck equipment. Other machinery included a planing mill, band re-saw, automatic trimmer, 8-inch edger, Portland Iron Works lathe mill and a 10-inch hog.

H. A. Franklin was sawmill superintendent, Kelly Franklin mill superintendent, and Joe Langtry was planing mill foreman. The company secured its logs from Coats Driving & Boom Company.

It was also during this period that A.F. Coats' three sons, as they graduated from college, cast their lots with their father in the lumber business. They each worked for some period of time in the woods and mill before assuming any management duties. George Coats took over logging operations while W. R. Coats spent years in the sawmill and other phases of the business in preparation for his ultimate position of general manger. The third son, A. F. Coats, Jr., took over the retail department.

The A. F. Coats sawmill ultimately achieved a capacity of 100,000 feet daily. However, in 1931, at the depths of depression, the death of A. F. Coats, Sr., caused a severe blow to the family and business. F. A. Beltz, who had joined the firm in 1919, took over duties of general manager.

The mill operated under the A. F. Coats Company ownership until April, 1950 when it was sold to the owners of the Oceanside Lumber Company at Garibaldi and dismantled. Coats' Wilson River timber and logging equipment went to Elkhorn Logging Co., and a larger stand of green timber to Crown Zellerbach, a business transaction reported to be worth over a million dollars. Although after 37 years of operation, its sawmill and logging operations came to an end, the A.

F. Coats Lumber Company continued to operate its retail stores for several years.

Sundquist & Norberg (4)(6)

John Sundquist and John Norberg operated a 35,000 foot capacity sawmill located on the Tillamook Highway, 11 miles from Tillamook. This plant cut piano posts and mine props from short lengths. The company employed two trucks to haul the output to Tillamook.

A. M. Matlock Lumber Company (4)(6)

About 1923, A. M. Matlock installed a sawmill 1 miles south of Tillamook. Ten family houses, five bunk houses and a cook house were erected. A plant road 2,500 feet in length was built from the sawmill to the Tillamook Highway. It was constructed of 4-inch plank laid on logs 100 feet long. The power plant consisted of a 150 H.P. engine to drive the head rig and a 60 H.P engine to drive the rear end of the mill. The head rig carried 52-inch saws. A pond with 500,000 foot capacity provided log storage. About 80 percent of the 50,000 foot daily output was fir which was hauled to Tillamook for shipment. A. M. Matlock of Dallas, Oregon, was initially head of the company. It was later sold to A. G. Beals who operated under the name of Yellow Fir Lumber Company, and later under the name of Beals Lumber Company.

The Spruce and Hemlock Mill (6)

F. S. York operated a 12,000 foot capacity sawmill on the Tillamook Highway, 7½ miles east of Tillamook. He cut about 75 percent spruce with the balance in Hemlock. The head rig was equipped with 48-inch saws. A 3-saw, 42-inch edger and a 6 x 14 planer

From the mid 1880's through the turn of the century, the sawmill, box factory and general store of Truckee Lumber Company, at Hobsonville, represented the largest and single most important facet of the lumber industry in Tillamook County. During this period the company employed about 70 men in its mill and yard and as many more men in the woods.

On March 3, 1906, the Truckee Mill was sold to local interests headed by Clark Hadley and it became the Hadley Lumber Company. Less than one year later it was reorganized under the name of the Miami Lumber Company, and sold to Ganahl & Co. of San Francisco. Shortly thereafter, the head of the latter company died, and the enterprise was taken over by a son-in-law. This operation failed to be profitable and the mill became idle. A watchman was retained for ten years to look after the property. During this time buildings fell into disrepair, logs in the booms became victims of winter storms, mill machinery rusted away, and the air of a ghost town settled over the place. The hotel remained furnished, but no one ever stayed there. Families in surrounding buildings departed. Finally, the property was abandoned and the mill was left to its fate.

Tillamook Lumber Company (1895 - 1913)
(2) (9) (10) (11)

About 1885, a small sawmill was built on Hoquarten Slough at Tillamook by George Smith and John Barker of Forest Grove. From all reports, the mill produced lumber over the following six years only as required to meet local building needs. This operation was sold in December, 1891, for a consideration of \$11,645. The new proprietors consisted of L. Hiner, president; Wm. Eberman, vice-president; Wm.

D. Stillwell, treasurer; and L. Crenshaw, secretary. William Barker, who resided in Bay City, moved to Tillamook as superintendent. A sash and door factory was added and extensive improvements were made, giving the mill a capacity of 5,000 feet daily. In 1892, the latter proprietors incorporated as the Tillamook Lumbering Company with a capital stock of \$20,000. Other investors included A. G. Beals, George Lamb and Carl Haberlack. This mill neither achieved any great commercial significance, nor participated in much of a cargo trade. This was due to a large degree to navigational problems of Hoquarten Slough, the upper bay and Dry Stocking bar. Nevertheless, this mill is credited with installation of the first light plant in Tillamook



Tillamook Lumber Co. crew. (c.1900) Photo courtesy of Oregon Historical Society.

city. Arrival of electricity to the downtown area was noted with the Tillamook Headlight in April, 1892, with the following amusing report:

"The incandescent lights have been glowing for the past week and the arc lights will be turned on tonight. The city presents a scene of gorgeous brilliance, the people are buoyant with enthusiasm, and there is nothing to mar the occasion but a drizzling rain and the Democratic Convention."

Netarts Bay Cargo Mill (1890)

A cargo mill was also reported to be operating on Netarts bay about 1890. Although very little is written regarding this operation, they were believed to have shipped lumber to San Francisco during summer months aboard the sailing vessel Free Trade. One day the Free Trade cleared the bar on an outbound crossing and never returned to Netarts Bay. Remnants of the sawmill can still be seen at low tide where the boilers once stood. (2)

Nehalem Mill and Boom Company

Potentials for Nehalem River as a milling site had not been overlooked. In 1884 and 1886, the United States Engineers (Portland District) reported:

For some years past a number of parties have had their attention called to this river with a view to the establishment of sawmills and fisheries but have been deterred from investing in these enterprises for want of reliable information as to the bar at the entrance. (12)

By 1889, two villages on the river were engaged in fierce competition to be the first to construct and operate a sawmill. The Nehalem Mill and Boom Company incorporated that year to build a sawmill on the island across from the present site of Nehalem. While the mill on the island was being built, Robert Krebs was building a

PLYWOOD PLANTS AND SALVAGE SAWMILLS Generally

Strong lumber markets during and after the war as well as the ready availability of salvage sales brought about the greatest period of local industrial development that this county has ever experienced.

The neophyte plywood industry, which had previously graced the local landscape with but one peeler plant, now sprouted several major facilities which grew to be major components of the industry. Sawmills, from the large industrial giants down to small re-manufacturing outfits, began to dot the landscape.

This chapter presents an overview of this emerging local industry. Although up to 40 manufacturing plants were reportedly in operation during this period, many have by necessity been left out of this account. Nevertheless each contributed its share to the overall effort which in total amounted to the greatest salvage of a national resource ever accomplished.

A Local Plywood Industry

It began with an idea--a simple, yet ingenuous idea--the brain child of a small group of rough and ready woodsmen. They felled a giant fir and hauled it to the mill. They put it in a rotary lathe and cut it into thin sheets of wood. Then, they glued pieces of these sheets together and let them set under pressure. That's how the fir plywood industry was born, in Portland, Oregon about 1905. There was plywood, to be sure, before 1905. But not fir plywood, which became the greatest panel production item of all the woods.

A few pioneers of plywood eventually found their way into Tillamook County where there existed some of the finest peeler logs

in the Northwest. John Buffelen, Harry T. Nicolai, Leonard Nystrom, Axel Erickson, Vern Nyman, and Al Peterman, to name a few. Some fared better than others.

Early plywood production in the Northwest was associated primarily with door manufacturing. Some early customers included established panel door firms such as Nicolai Door Company, Oregon Planing Mills and Central Door and Lumber Company; all around the Portland area. To the north in Washington orders came from Chehalis Fir Door Company, Tacoma Fir Door Company, Pacific Manufacturing Company and Buffelen Lumber and Manufacturing Company.

While fir plywood had its beginnings in Oregon, it was the growing state of Washington that quickly took hold of the new industry, and in 1910, the first plywood plant in Washington began production. It was the beginning of domination in the field by the Evergreen State which was not to be relinquished for 44 years.

Yet, with the penetration of the PR&N Railway into north county, many fine fir logs rolled eastward on rails destined for veneer and plywood operations which were developing elsewhere in Oregon in conjunction with the door manufacturing industry.

It wasn't until about 1926, when two lumbermen by the name of Murdock and Magnuson arrived in Tillamook with the intention of establishing a local spruce peeler plant.

The concept of a peeler plant enabled a "green end" that could be set up for only a fraction of the cost of a plywood mill. Labor costs were moderate and the operation was a simple one. A veneer plant could be set up near a larger timber stand and moved to a better location when the stand was cut. Peeled veneer was much

easier to ship than the whole log. The company proposed to city officials a plan wherein the city would furnish the site and at the conclusion of their operations, the Tillamook Spruce Veneer Company, as they were to be known, would reimburse the city.

Tillamook City voters approved a bond issue for the purchase of an industrial site for the use of Tillamook Spruce Veneer Company. Cost of the property was \$7,500.00 and an additional \$1,500.00 was advanced by the city to excavate the log pond. Two years after commencing operations, the Veneer Company paid back the \$1,500.00 advanced for the log pond and after eight years of continuous operation, when the company moved its plant to Coos County, the original \$7,500 was paid back to the city. Local taxpayers had been reimbursed and the community had reaped the economic benefits associated with eight years of continuous payroll. (1)

It wasn't until the middle of World War II that the plywood industry again considered a local operation. The industry had gone to war with 31 plants which had to bear the entire burden of war time production. Early in 1942, all plywood was placed on a priority rating system. Production and distribution came under strict controls. Plywood had a priority even higher than most grades of steel. The industry itself was hard put to produce government requirements.

Aberdeen Plywood Company

Timber cruisers from Aberdeen, Washington came down to the burn in early spring, 1944, and spent several weeks inspecting the charred graveyard. The survey crew concluded from these cruises that there was at least a fifteen year supply of peeler logs; a sufficient

amount to justify construction of a plant. Aberdeen Plywood Corporation decided to consider plant construction and tentatively arranged a timber deal with both the county court and Winton Oregon Timber Company. Before closing the deals, Aberdeen officials had to first work out details for siting and building a plant and obtain approval of the War Production Board (W.P.B).

A proposal was brought before the Tillamook City Council by Albert Shafer, president of both the Shafer Lumber Company and Aberdeen Plywood Corp. He was assisted by Vernon Nyman, general manager of Aberdeen corporation. They requested a sawmill site on Hoquarten Slough under somewhat the same conditions that were given the Tillamook Spruce Veneer plant some 20 years earlier, that is, that the city furnish the site and at the conclusion of their operations, the company would reimburse the city. (2)

The suggested site included the old veneer plant, about five acres of the W. S. Coats ranch, and a small piece of land owned by Coats Lumber Company. W. S. Coats disliked the idea of giving up five acres which would cut off his approach to the ranch, but offered to sell his entire 15 acre plot. Everyone favored the mill but legal advice established that the city was unable to buy property for a private corporation without first submitting a bond measure for voter approval. Since this process was likely to take at least two months, discussions then centered around county purchase of the site. Considerations were even given to donations from private citizens with future reimbursement from the corporation. But it was finally decided to call a special meeting of the Tillamook County Court for several days hence. When the county considered the question the

following Tuesday, news media reported only that the court had made Aberdeen officials a proposition and were awaiting a reply.

Yet before a final decision could be made on plant location, construction approval by the War Production Board (WPB) was necessary, and up to that time, had not been received. Aberdeen officials actually planned the construction of several local facilities. Formal application was made before the WPB in Portland on May 16, 1944, for a contract to build a sawmill, peeler plant and door and sash mill. Appearing before the WPB were officials of Aberdeen Plywood Corporation and Acme Door and Sash Company, an Aberdeen Corporation subsidiary. County Judge Harlan Woods and R. B. Miller of the Chamber of Commerce were also present, since salvage contracts were riding on their approval. Additionally, about four months prior to this meeting, WPB approval had been given the Mountain States Power Company to purchase a 3000 KW power plant, complete with boiler, auxiliaries and accessories. But when application was made for installation of equipment, it was denied by the WPB. Had it been allowed, it would have now been ready to supply all electrical needs at satisfactory rates, as well as to consume wood waste of sawmilling operations. These were matters of great importance to Tillamook County and everything was done to induce the WPB to allow these projects; work was needed for returning soldiers and the ravages of time on deteriorating timber weighed heavily on local conditions. (3)

The peeler mill was approved less than three weeks later, but the sawmill was denied, and it appeared that approval was going to be somewhat difficult to obtain. Fred Brundage of WPB stated that his office had turned down applications to build sawmills at Eugene,

Roseburg and other points because the sawmills which were operating could not secure enough logs and it seemed foolish to build more sawmills under those conditions. He also added that the manpower question was a very serious one and men which would be employed would be taken from other industries.

Commissioner Ed Lindsay and Ed Anderson as well as R. B. Miller, met with Brundage on Saturday, June 3, to present additional statements on behalf of the pending cutting contracts. Reiterating earlier remarks of Harry S. Knox from Acme and V. A. Nyman, Vice President and general manager of Aberdeen Corporation, the Commissioners expressed that the purchase contemplated both a sawmill and plywood plant; that one installation without the other would be incomplete; that the mills would be of distinct advantage to Tillamook; that the timber would not be supplied from existing operations but would be distinctly new and that the timber would deteriorate rapidly unless salvaged. (4)

Brundage listened to their statements but felt he could not give his approval without taking the matter up with the East. He advised the company to supplement its application and that it might be well to stress the fact that many logs would be otherwise left in the woods since they could not be shipped or transported due to freight charges on larger logs (to Aberdeen, Washington).

Less than a month later the WPB granted approval to Aberdeen Plywood Corporation for building both a sawmill and peeler plant in Tillamook. The new mills were to be devoted to filling government orders as long as the need remained.

Timber dealings were renewed. The county court set up the sale of timber from 8000 acres controlled by Winton Oregon Timber Company on Trask River. The amount paid by Aberdeen Corporation was \$200,000, of which the county received \$65,000 for back taxes. The court then negotiated a deal involving the remaining timber owned by the county in this area, some 205,975,200 board feet.

Aberdeen officials came to an agreement with the county court on September 1, 1944, and paid \$267,419. Thomas Mills handled negotiations for Winton Oregon Timber Company and Shafer and Nyman negotiated for Aberdeen Plywood. Together with the \$65,000 in taxes, the county collected a total of \$330,750 in these transactions. The county treasurer disbursed these funds to the taxing districts located in the Trask area, and the county's share was invested in a special sinking fund dedicated to post-war improvements. (5) (6)

Aberdeen officials then closed a deal for property lying north of the Steinbach operation along Hoquarten Slough. The old Tillamook Veneer mill was purchased by Acme Door Company and the plant was razed. The company announced, however, that construction of the Acme plant would be postponed until the freeze on logs was lifted in order to buy from the open market and not have to depend exclusively on Aberdeen for its supply. But this would mean a back log of post-war work estimated by Judge Woods to last from eight to twelve years. (7) (9) (10)

The building of the peeler plant, on the other hand, was pursued at top speed. Surveyor Stanley Coats ran the lines, and new machinery and equipment were ordered in October, 1944, as the local community eagerly awaited imminent economic benefits. (8)

The project was put out for bid in January, 1945, and by the fall of that year was completed and placed in operation. Finished at a cost of \$150,000, it consisted of one large building, two small buildings and an eight acre log storage pond adjoining the mill on what had been known as Coats farm. It had also been found necessary to drive piling along the slough and extend Southern Pacific railroad tracks. (11)

The main building consisted of one continuous room. Huge logs entered the building on the log haul at the north end where a barker removed their outer covering. Logs were then swung into a gigantic peeler at the center of the building. It was described by local news media, "to look for all the world like an exaggerated apple peeler might appear in a nightmare where one felt he was smaller than anything we see in our waking hours." The concrete base on which the lathe and barker were installed contained 107 cubic yards of concrete and rested on piling built on rock. Logs were held in lathe chucks and rotated by a mammoth diesel engine while a blade with a razor edge moved forward and cut exactly the correct thickness. An eight or ten foot wide ribbon of veneer ran off the rig in an endless strip, 100 feet or more in length. (12)

Four storage belts cared for peeled veneer in order to prevent a bottle neck and assure a steady flow to the clipper. The ribbon was chopped into short lengths by the clipper operator using a remote switch to trigger the cut. Location of the cut was dictated by surface appearances, eliminating bad spots and making a variety of widths to be laminated into plywood. As material left the clipper it was sorted. All good veneer was stacked in piles to be bundled

for shipment, while useless pieces continued onto another belt to be ground into hog fuel. No wood was wasted in this plant. Every scrap of wood not turned into veneer was chopped into hog fuel for Mountain States Power Company, while trim and cores were sold to local residents for home fuel. (13)

The company bought No. 1 or No. 2 peeler logs from anyone who would deliver them to the mill pond. Two six-inch pumps operated day and night to keep the pond full of water. A crew of 25 daily turned out a rail car or more of 1/10-, 1/8- and 3/16-inch veneers in lengths of 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 feet. They were bundled into huge packages, each containing sufficient veneer for about 90 4 x 8 sheets of plywood. As the bundles were banded with metal strips and secured, a "motorized stacker" hauled them onto waiting rail cars for shipment to Grays Harbor, Washington where they were manufactured into plywood. More often than not, two carloads were shipped each day. (14)

Cessation of world hostilities did not signal the end of government controls so far as the plywood industry was concerned. Demobilization began in late 1945, and plywood workers began returning to the mills. Domestic demands for panel material were great but the industry could not supply a fraction of the need. The industry had solved many of its major problems by this time: a workable sales promotion plan, and a waterproof glue line had established a forceful market entity. Conditions were ripe for locating a local plywood plant.

Tillamook Veneer Company (26)

After eight years of continuous operation under Aberdeen interests, the Tillamook peeler plant was sold on April 14, 1955, to E. E. Roberts, local accountant and Walter Purcell, former owner of God's Valley Logging Company. The greater part of Aberdeen's timber holdings was sold to H. L. H. Logging Company. The plant crew of 25 continued work under existing superintendent Francis Nyman. Mrs. Nyman was bookkeeper.

Buffelen Manufacturing Company of Tacoma, Washington supplied peeler logs to the new Roberts-Purcell plant, known as Tillamook Veneer Company. The timber was located generally on Cook Creek. Buffelen Company operated a sawmill at Batterson with a capacity of 70M to 80M board feet. Instead of shipping their peelers north on the Columbia River and then by rail to Tacoma, Buffelen shipped direct to Tillamook Veneer Company. Green veneer was then transported from Tillamook to Tacoma.

In addition to this timber, Tillamook Veneer Company bought all peeler products from the remaining Aberdeen Plywood Company operations on Trask River. As to other sources of logs, the company hoped to secure a regular supply of timber through authorized state sales. Expectations for long term operations were based on this premise. When Roberts and Purcell assumed control of operations in 1955, there was an excessive demand for their product and they hoped to secure a steady market for their veneer.

The owners, who also acted as company managers, were experienced in logging operations. Purcell was a logging engineer and Roberts was also versed in logging. Both had private timber holdings.

Roberts came to Tillamook county in February, 1942, under the employ of Hawley Paper Company, where he worked until 1944. At that time he accepted a position with Spaulding Pulp and Paper Company. He later entered the public accounting field but, again in 1946, engaged in the logging business.

Purcell came to this area originally as a logging engineer for the Prouty Logging Company, located on the Miami River. From there he went to the God's Valley Logging Company.

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waiting market for finished lumber as soon as it emerged from the planers.

Oregon Coast Lumber Mills (43)

In September, 1950, the sawmilling facilities of A. F. Coats Lumber Company, as well as their timber and logging equipment were sold. The Oceanside Lumber Company, operators of the mill at Garibaldi, and the Nicolai Door Mfg. Co., assumed operation of the sawmill under the business name of the Oregon Coast Lumber Mills, with C. E. Castle in charge. The purchase included the rafting, dumping and booming facilities, and the shingle mill. Operations at the sawmill continued at its 100 M feet daily capacity. Existing crew were retained under the same union agreement with the A. F. of L. Victor Creech was time keeper and Earl Lahmon, yard foreman. General offices were located in Garibaldi.

Timber in Wilson River districts and logging equipment of A. F. Coats Company was sold to Elkhorn Logging Company. Harry Smith, F. C. Dillard, C. R. Yunkers and H. H. Weicks were the stockholders of the Elkhorn Company. All were county residents and experienced logging operators. The company was formed for the specific purpose of acquiring the burned-over holdings of Coats, according to Wiecks, "because of their belief in the importance of keeping the logs in this area for sawing." Saw logs were brought to the Tillamook mill and peelers were taken to the Nicolai Veneer Plant in Garibaldi.

Oregon Coast Lumber Mills operated over a two year period until October 1, 1952, when management announced closure of its sawmilling operations at Tillamook effective October 3. Closure of the sawmill

did not immediately affect the shingle mill. Management released the following statement when the announcement was made:

In 1950, the Garibaldi mills purchased the A. F. Coats mill and timber holdings and have operated that mill in conjunction with their Garibaldi operations. Under existing timber contracts, all logs must be manufactured in Tillamook County, and the logging of enough saw logs for both the Tillamook sawmill and the Garibaldi sawmill, causes an over supply of peeler logs for the plywood operation. This summer, by special agreement, these excess peelers were sold outside the county and the payroll involved in their manufacture was lost locally.

In order to avoid a repetition of this situation and to keep the payrolls in Tillamook County for a longer period of time, the management deems it necessary to close the Tillamook sawmill operations at this time.

No immediate disposition was made of the sawmill and its former employees were readily absorbed within other local operations.

Buffelen Lumber and Manufacturing Company
(44) (45)

A new mill was placed in operation at Batterson by the Buffelen Lumber and Manufacturing Company in March, 1948. The parent company operated a large plywood mill as well as a door and sash plant in Tacoma. Since the company bought logs locally amounting to millions of feet annually, the addition of the Batterson facility made possible a cost savings. Logs which were previously shipped by rail were thereafter reduced to either rough lumber or high-grade peelers before shipment to Tacoma, thereby reducing freight charges.

The sawmill was diesel-powered and electrically operated, enabling a daily capacity of 50-70 M feet. Adjoining the mill was a log pond with a capacity of 2,250,000 feet. A crew of 35 was employed under manager Harry Anderson. Six houses were erected near the mill for some employees. Soon after opening the company installed a planer and began accepting local orders.

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