

Note: The following is a transcription of the text from the Oregon Lumber Company souvenir photo album, circa 1900. The only date in the album is "1897...", presumably the date they commenced local operations, not the date of the album. As no mention is made of the Oregon Lumber Company's operations in the Hood River valley, this album probably dates from their earliest years in the area. This transcription is based on an OCR of the album in the collection of the History Museum of Hood River County.

## Souvenir

### Oregon Lumber Company's Chenowith and Viento Mills

1897...

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#### Oregon Lumbering Company.

On the Columbia River, 58 miles from Portland on the Washington side, in the midst of the most beautiful of the famous Columbia River scenery, a few miles above Cascade Locks, is the mouth of the Little White Salmon, a stream of water flowing now in gentle descent and now in wild dashes, forming cascades of splendor and beauty and quiet pools of crystal clearness, fresh from the mountains far above, making an ideal trout stream where a lover of fishing or of art and beauty can find the most enjoyable place, where Nature in her fullest abundance has provided all that could be asked for.

Near the mouth of Little White Salmon is "Cook's Landing," a landing place for Columbia River boats and as one is landed at this place he will find a freighting team in waiting for the regular boats, both up and down, and after the freighter has his load of merchandise, baled hay, &c., all on his wagon and securely fastened, an invitation is cordially extended to the passenger to "climb on," and off they start for one of the roughest and in places the most up-hill climb the writer has ever indulged in; but with the ever pleasant and talkative driver, who it is a great pleasure to find, is perfectly satisfied with his vocation, has no fault to find with the country, and absolutely enjoys driving over these mountain roads, the passenger will almost forget that he is jolting over rocks and through ruts, and occasionally going up pitches so steep as to make him hang on for dear life to keep from sliding off backward, and nothing to hang to but a bale of hay. The road winds around and the climb is steadily up following the canon of the Little White Salmon, and soon a view of surpassing grandeur is presented which fully repays one for the discomforts of the ride. Away below hundreds and hundreds of feet, can be seen the foam flecked stream of water winding like a snake over the rocks and down the canon between two walls towering almost perpendicular on either side far above the wagon road, and finally can be seen to empty itself and intermingle with the mighty Columbia, which at this point is almost a mile wide; but the mountains standing out clear and clean cut against the sky and reaching to a height of from 2,000 to 3,000 feet, and rising directly from the opposite side of the river causes one to almost doubt that it is more than one third that distance.

After the ride on the mountain road has continued about an hour and a half, and an elevation of nearly 800 feet has been attained, the view will suddenly change; from the works of nature in her wildest beauty to a scene of activity and bustle which is contiguous to a saw mill and the little village of houses which is now brought to the eye. When the information is volunteered by the driver that the distance which has been traveled from the boat landing to the mill is three and one-fourth miles, it is doubtful if it will be "swallowed;" the passenger will undoubtedly have an opinion of his own which he may not disclose, but it will probably be that the distance is fully twice that. The mill which is now seen is one of the large lumber manufactories of the Pacific Coast, and one of the Oregon Lumber Company's mills, and the subject of this sketch. The officers of the company are: D. Eccles, president; C. W. Nibley, secretary; Jas. Sharp, vice president.

The Oregon Lumber Company having a mill at Baker City where a large supply of pine timber is available and one at this place in the Cascade Range of Mountains where an almost unlimited quantity of red and yellow fir and cedar is found, is thus enabled to supply the demand for any quantity or quality of lumber, and though this mill is some distance from the railroad which furnishes the shipping facilities they employ yet by the method they have instituted for transferring the products of the mill to the railroad they are enabled to deliver it on the cars of the O. R. & N. Co. at the minimum expense which will be described later.

And now, as it may be of interest to follow the process of the evolution of a tree standing on the mountain side its being felled to the ground, taken away to the mill and there converted into lumber of various sizes, and finally

conveyed to the railroad, where it is loaded onto the cars and from there shipped, perhaps to aid in the building of some railroad or used in a mine, or to take its place as a part of some residence, a trip through the timber where the loggers are sawing down the trees, cutting them into proper lengths, barking them and conveying them to the mill, will be taken. A large section of very level land is seen, where the trees are very tall and straight, and grow extremely close together, and though not as large as that in some parts of the country, it is exceptionally good timber. In most timbered districts only a small part of the trees standing are of such an nature as to be profitably cut for lumber, a great amount which to an inexperienced eye looks to be first-class, yet it is found after the timber fellers have gone through, laying low the selected trees, they have left standing a considerable part of it, and upon investigation it will be discovered that all that is left is of inferior quality, some not being sound, and some having branches growing too low. which, in either case, if cut into lumber would be of a low grade.

While in this district it is found that scarcely a tree which is large enough to make into railroad ties is left standing so that where the loggers have been nothing is left only a few very small trees and brush, etc. As the mill has been located at this point only a shortline, the timber which is being cut is quite close; so the hauling of logs is not more than three—fourths of a mile or a mile, but the distance is steadily increasing, and the quality and kind of timber found is steadily changing, so that the manager of the logging department must constantly be devising ways and means for transferring the logs to the mill which, with the ever changing conditions frequently renders a change of the system of logging necessary. As the distance will gradually increase to three or four miles when it will become impossible to haul logs so long a distance over skid roads with horses as the motive power, the Company has in contemplation the construction of a railroad, which it is expected will soon be built.

As the logging continues back farther into the mountains there is found to be much larger timber, more yellow fir, quantities of excellent cedar, and considerable pine and larch, and a body of several thousand acres can be reached by the aid of a railroad which can easily be built with a very moderate grade.

The timber fellers are necessarily men of extreme skill and caution. They must understand from the looks of a tree standing if it is sound, and can profitably be cut or if it is burly or full of seams, or of a decaying nature, in which case it must be left standing, not being of sufficient value to pay to transport to the mill. They are also required to fell the trees in any direction desired, even though it may be opposite to their natural inclination. Their position is one of considerable danger, as, if on account of a high wind blowing or a slight miscalculation in the direction in which it is desired to fell the tree, it is carried a trifle out of the course designed it may strike another, causing the two to go down together and being of such extreme lengths and the uncertainty as to the locality where they may fall, renders the position of any who may be within reach of the falling trees extremely dangerous. Many large limbs are falling in all directions, which if any should strike a man would be almost certain to end his life, but these men work on, apparently unconscious of their danger, only they are very cautious regarding the safety of those working in their immediate vicinity, by notifying them when a tree is about to fall.

Following the timber fellers are the crosscut sawyers, sometimes called "buckers," who cut the trees into required lengths; then come the barkers, whose business it is to find on which side the log will "ride" (the side that will lay on the ground while being dragged along the road). There is a natural "ride" for most logs, and it oftentimes requires a great amount of judgment and skill to determine exactly where the "ride" is. The barker must chop or peel the bark off this side and remove all knots, so it will slip along with the least amount of friction, and "snipe" the end (chop it off rounding so it will not strike any of the "skids" in the road). The "hook tender," then has the difficult task of extracting the logs from their various localities, and get them onto the road and "dogged" together end to end, (two or three, according to size, make a load for two horses,) in readiness for the teamster to hook onto and take to the mill. Horses are used entirely here in preference to oxen, being so much quicker in motion; it is claimed that six span of horses will haul out nearly twice as many logs in a given time as the same number of oxen. About 18 teams are used here, and it is certainly quite a sight to see them coming down the "skid" road one after the other, each with a load of logs stringing along behind.

The "skid" road is a road well graded and built like a railroad grade, great care being taken to avoid any uphill pulls, and to avoid curves as much as possible. At a distance of every seven feet a section of a small tree about twelve inches in diameter and eight feet in length is laid about one-half in the ground and a rounding notch is cut in the center which is kept well greased the whole length of the road. The logs then slide along through these notches and by the logs being peeled full length along their "ride," the advantage in the greater load which can be hauled can easily be appreciated.

A new road which has many advantages over the old "skid" road has just recently been instituted here and proven

to be a success. It is built in the first place like the ordinary "skid" road. then a pair of notches 31 inches apart are sawed into each skid 4 inches deep, enough to allow a 2 x 6 scantling to go into and stand 2 inches above. Planking is then put in between the skids and between the scantling and water is run into the trough thus made, and is continually kept running so that when logs are hauled through they are kept wet on the bottom, and are thus easily hauled, and at a great saving of "skid grease," which is a large item when it is considered that several barrels are used every week and the cost is about \$9.00 per barrel. The teamsters are as a rule a jovial set of men, ever ready to tell or listen to a funny story and though their life is one of toil and their hours of work are many, yet they can usually be found sitting around their "bunk" houses, after their work is over, laughing, singing and giving themselves over to solid enjoyment, and while it is notorious that owing to the nature of their liability at any time to get into a tight place where all the force the horses are capable of exerting is required, they usually get into the habit of using language of a very forcible character; but here it is entirely different: none of the teamsters use language of a sulphurous nature, that is to say if the teamsters themselves are to be believed, and there certainly is no reason to doubt this, (unless in company with them a short time). A pond is formed adjacent to the mill by damming a stream of water which flows from the mountains and through the woods directly past the mill at the point where it starts to drop into the canon below to join with the water of the Little White Salmon, and this pond is drawn from for water to supply the mill and to float the logs in. This is the objective point on all the "skid" roads, which branch out from here like the branches of a tree. The logs as brought from the woods are rolled off into the water and the log driver who has become expert in riding logs, is here and there over the pond driving logs like a band of sheep toward the end of the mill which is "like" the mouth of a huge monster whose appetite is insatiable. The logs are drawn in by having a "dog" driven into them, and three are hauled up at once, and they are one at a time rolled on to the carriage, where in less time than it takes to tell it the large saw has taken a slice off of it, and if a small log it is then usually passed on to the pony saw while the larger sized logs are most generally cut into the desired lumber with the large saw the slabs being dropped onto "live" rollers and carried through the mill and run down a chute into the canyon below where they are consumed by fire. The boards which likewise drop onto live rollers, are carried to the edgeman who runs them through the edger, which has three saws, and all rough edges are thus cut off, and at the same time the board, if desired, is ripped into two or three pieces. Or sometimes the larger sized logs are cut into "cants," the log being trimmed on three sides then sawed to make two or three "cants" with the large saw. These cants, also all small logs with one side trimmed, are put onto the pony carriage and sawed into lumber of whatever size desired. all boards requiring trimming being given to the edgerman while slabs go to the place of everlasting fire. A cut-off saw is situated conveniently on either side of the mill, one at the rear of the large saw and the other behind the pony so that all lumber can be trimmed to any length and all bad ends cut off. More lumber is probably cut with this mill in proportion to its size and the number of men employed than any other saw mill on the Coast. Eighteen men are usually employed in the mill, and with two engines, with a combined capacity of 110 horse power, saw from 275 to 300 logs per day which makes about 100,000 feet of lumber.

A flume which is also supplied with water from the pond is built from the mill to the Columbia River, following the canyon of the Little White Salmon. It is built V—shaped, of two inch lumber, each side being 38 inches in height with a three cornered piece of timber in the bottom.

Great credit is due Mr. Wm. Eccles for the successful management and to Mr. Nels Moen for the building of this flume through the almost impenetrable canon where mountains of rock tower hundreds of feet on either side and rising abruptly from the river bed; and where to survey the proposed route of the flume it was necessary that men of intrepid daring and great skill be employed. Trails were cut in the solid rock, where only foothold could be had, and on one side perhaps a hundred feet straight below flowed the wild waters of the river, where instant death was assured the man who made a misstep, or by any accident fell, as no man could possibly fall into these turbulent and treacherous rapids and get out alive, as he would immediately be beaten to death on some of the rocks of which the stream is lined; while on the other side is the precipitous rock rising above as high as can be seen.

In other places little notches were cut for foot and hand holds up the steep sides of the cliff, where a cat would find difficulty in climbing, and it was over this trail these men doing the preliminary work could be seen daily with packs on their backs laboriously wending their way.

The first part of the flume from the mill is built along the side of a sheer bluff at an angle of 53 degrees till it reaches the canon bottom 700 feet lower than where it starts, and timbers shoot down this long steep place with such rapidity as to throw the water in a spray from the flume, so that although a large supply is turned into the flume at the mill it is nearly all thrown out before the bottom is reached. and another flume for carrying water is built from further up the canon which furnishes the water for the flume from this point.

The grade from here is nearly the same, the full length is gradual, and only one sharp descent. It winds around first on one side of the river then on the other, crossings being frequent, and the bridges are necessarily of suspension build, one being of 160-foot span and 45 feet high. A great amount of lumber was consumed in the construction of this flume, as it is nearly all high trestle, one place being 90 feet in height, while for a distance of 900 feet in another it is on an average 55 feet high. It has been necessary in one place to cut a tunnel through the side of the mountain and in another one side of the flume rests in notches cut in the side of a perpendicular cliff, while the supports for the other side rest upon the ground 50 feet below.

The length of the flume is three miles, and it certainly was a great work of engineering skill to superintend its construction.

The end of the flume is in a little lake or slough at the mouth of the Little White Salmon, and all the lumber arrives here within about 15 or 20 minutes from the time it is sawed, dropping from the flume into the lake, where it is confined by booms which extend in a circle around, forming a barrier which keeps it from floating away. Here it is the flume men find their daily employment, loading the lumber on to rafts in readiness to be taken across the river. From 30 to 40 thousand feet is loaded onto a flat raft. which is made of 2 inch plank nailed onto 2 x 4 scantlings. The raft is loaded down till it is 5 or 6 feet in the water and about the same above. From here the rafts are towed across the river to Viento, where the lumber yard and planing mill is situated, about a mile across and a mile below by the little steamer Pearl, which has recently been built by the company especially for this purpose, and is a model of beauty and power, oftentimes taking two rafts of 40,000 feet each across where the current is very strong and a heavy wind is usually blowing, and at this point, the waves roll very high on a windy day, being one of the roughest places on the river, but the captain, whose several years of experience as master of a steamer in this locality has enabled him to handle her in almost any kind of weather, while "Old Tom," the engineer, will usually impress one with his smiling countenance if all is well; but if anything goes wrong it will be with his vociferous expressions, which sometimes pours forth in torrents like a swollen mountain stream.

The rafts on arrival at their destination are tied to an incline which extends from the lumber yard down into the water low enough to be accessible at the lowest stage of the river, cars are run down the incline to the water's edge, where the lumber is loaded onto them, and they are hauled up by means of a cable and a donkey engine which is situated at the head of the incline. After the cars have been loaded and hauled to the top, horses are hitched to them and by the use of a system of iron tracks are taken to any part of the yard, where each different size and length of lumber is left at its particular pile, and is stacked up to remain and dry till some future time when it will be called for to fill a bill; while a side track from the main O. R. & N. line has been extended through the yard and men are kept busy loading railroad ties and lumber of various descriptions onto cars for distribution throughout the country.

A planing mill is situated conveniently in the center of the yard, so that orders for dressed lumber of all descriptions can be promptly filled. It is equipped with all necessary first-class machinery for making the various kinds of dressed lumber, and with sufficient motive power in the way of a steam engine and boiler to run all the machinery. And under the skillful management of the foreman the mill and yard is conducted in the best interests of the Company.

A large general merchandise store belonging to the Company is conveniently located near the railroad at Viento and a large stock of goods of such a description as almost any one would require is constantly kept on hand, and with the ever obliging book-keeper (who also has charge of the store) in attendance: one trading there will have no trouble in being pleased.

The little town of Viento, which is justly celebrated for its beauty of location and the grandeur of the scenery which is adjacent, lies snugly at the foot of the mountains whose towering forms rise in palisade after palisade to a height which will cause one not accustomed to the sight, to stand and gaze in wonderment and admiration at these mighty works of nature, whose greatness can not be excelled anywhere in the world.

Thousands of people every year cross the ocean to see the Alps, and its snow clad peaks. and to take a trip up the Rhine, with the ruins of old castles to be seen on its banks, and to see other places of world renowned scenery while the beautiful scenery of the Columbia River, though perhaps of less celebrity, is also less remote, and those who have traveled the world over and not failed to see its mountain peaks and water falls and canons, where streams of water of beautiful clearness continually flow, have no hesitancy in pronouncing it unsurpassed.

These mountain streams, such as the Little White Salmon and many others abound with trout, and by a good sportsman hundreds can be placed in his basket in a few hours fishing.

All these points of interest can easily be reached from Portland by a few hours ride on the cars of the O. R. & N. Co., whose lines reach through this entire district.