



Bull team skidding a large old-growth Douglas fir log in the late 1800s (University of Oregon)

section corners for each 640-acre block—for all of Oregon. They often used simple wooden stakes to mark corners but, thankfully for those who followed some years later, referenced these corner stakes to nearby trees (called bearing trees). Menasha surveyors still use these original corner-points 125 years later to establish property boundaries

Smith's approach to acquiring land was to purchase lands from individual homesteaders who had purchased their properties from the federal government in 160-acre tracts. Obviously, more surveying was needed to define his ownership on the ground before any harvesting could begin. He turned to the Coos County Surveyors for help.

Logging in the early days around Coos Bay, however, was limited by the topography and the strength of animals used to drag the logs from the stump to the water's edge or to a nearby mill. Once a log was delivered to the water it could be floated to the mills that were scattered along the Bay. While steam engines were quickly being developed to replace other methods of mechanical power in mills and railroads, they were slow to be adapted to logging operations. It would not be until the late 1880s that the first steam donkeys, as they were affectionately called, reached the logging business. The first one arrived in Coos County about the same time C. R. did, in 1904.

As the original pioneers in Coos County began carving their homesteads out of the forests, rudimentary sawmill techniques were imported from other parts of the United States—all using human power. The first area "sawmill" was a pit saw operation in the Coquille valley region.

Getting the logs to a central site was one problem. The next was sawing them into boards. When C. R. first visited Coos Bay, he found several local businessmen already operating steam-powered sawmills in the area. Prominent among them were Henry Luse and master shipbuilder Asa Meade Simpson (who used his mill to cut lumber for his ships as well as for export). Luse and Simpson were great competitors, each constructing a sawmill in 1856, Luse in Empire and



Ten-man survey team including A. N. Gould as Coos County surveyor, 1914 (Douglas County Historical Museum)

Simpson in Old Town North Bend (as that section of the current town of North Bend was then known). The Simpson mill was built at the southeasterly "toe" of the current Simpson Heights area about three-quarters of a mile up the Bay from Highway 101's McCullough Bridge, very near the current location of the Menasha Forest Products Corporation headquarters in North Bend.

Along with his sawmill and logging operations around Empire City, Luse also ran cattle in the sand dunes on the north side of the Bay—reaching his ranch only by boat. Locally, this property was known as the Henderson Ranch, and it would play an important role for Menasha in the region some 130 years later.

While the general record indicates that Simpson and Luse built their mills in 1856, a report in a master's thesis (author unknown but probably done at the University of Oregon) indicates:

In May 1853, Asa M. Simpson visited the area and decided that it could be developed easily. This California

ship-owner and sawmill operator, originally from Maine, noted the wealth of timber around the bay and decided to establish a sawmill there. His equipment arrived in 1856, but the ship carrying it was wrecked while entering the bay and one of Simpson's brothers lost his life in the mishap. Owing to this delay, the first sawmill in the area was built by Henry Luse at Empire City.

Nathan Douthit, a Coos County historian, indicated that the first sawmill in Coos County was built by George Wasson and a partner near Bullards (south of Coos Bay) in 1853.

C. R., in addition to finding lumber mills on the Bay, also found a few factories making finished wood products. For instance Asa Simpson's son Louis, along with various local businessmen, had organized the North Bend Manufacturing Company in March 1903 to make Port Orford cedar doors (at the rate of 300 per day), window sashes, porch columns, moldings, and other millwork material. Louis also helped to organize the North Bend Shingle Company in 1904. By 1907 North Bend Shingle was cutting 100,000 shingles per day, but on August 24, 1911, the mill was destroyed by fire. It was rebuilt only to burn again on June 16, 1918, and was never rebuilt.

After looking the area over, appraising the timber, exploring land values, assessing the shipping possibilities, and eyeing his competitors, C. R. Smith made his decision. On September 21, 1905, he purchased Menasha's first parcel of timberland in the Coos Bay area: 318 acres in Coos County sold by Henry B. Taylor of Iola, Waupaca County, Wisconsin. Smith's company paid \$2,200 for the property. Three months later he bought another 480 acres from the same people for \$5,760. These were the first steps in creating what is today the Menasha Forest Products Corporation.

The work of C. R. Smith, Asa and Louis Simpson, E. B. Dean, Luse, and other local mill owners and lumbermen offset the loss of coal shipments from Coos County; lumber would more than



Henry Heaton Luse (Coos County Historical Museum)



Asa Meade Simpson (Coos County Historical Museum)



Henry Luse Store and Dock at Empire, Oregon (Oregon Historical Society 86529)



Henry Heaton Luse Mill (Coos County Historical Museum)