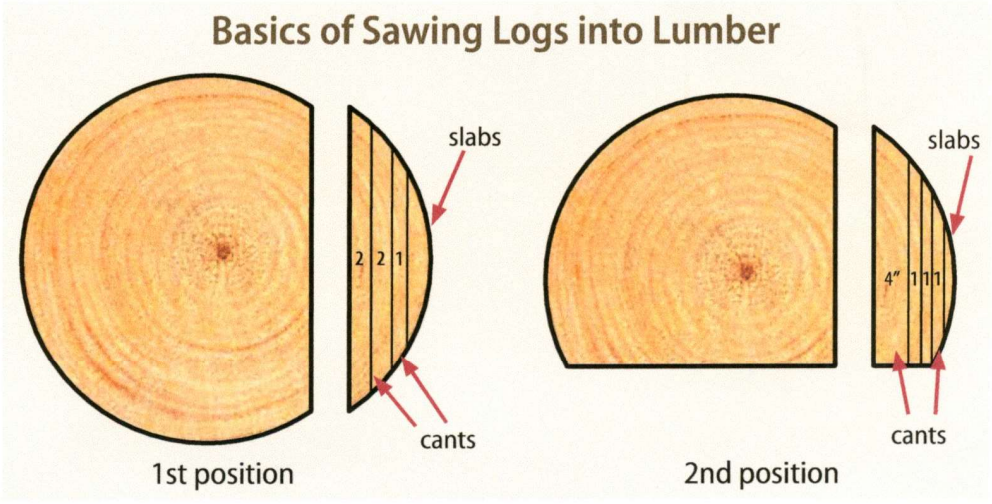
The 1st position of the log on the carriage cuts off a waste slab. In the old days, this slab might be 2 to 3 inches thick (depending upon the log diameter) in order to make the next cut of the saw, producing a cant that is of usable width—minimally 4 to 6 inches. (See Glossary at the end of Volume I for definitions of terms such as slabs, cants and carriage.) These cants would go next to the edger, where the curved sides would be squared up. The slabs would be discarded in a pile for later disposal through burning. The log is then flipped so that the 1st opening face is on the carriage, and the process is then repeated. The same for the 3rd position until square-edge lumber could be sawn directly on the headrig.



Below: Steam-powered saws had enough strength to cut through any size log—as long as the log fit within the headblock opening. The headblock is positioned on the outer edge of the carriage and holds the log in place as the carriage forces the log through the headrig saw (see diagram at bottom of next page). As the lumber barons faced the prospect of working with the huge timber growing in the hills around Coos Bay, they tried to increase the size of their saws' diameters. And here is where a problem developed. The bigger the diameter of the saw, the thicker the steel had to be in order to maintain a straight cutting line and not wander as it cut through the length of the log. At some point, a diminishing return arose—the bigger the saw, the thicker the steel—and the more power required to force the spinning saw through these immense logs. The thickness of the saw is called the saw kerf—and some of these saws were over half an inch thick. ***Photo courtesy of Douglas County Museum; ca. 1897.***