



# Sierra Nevada Logging Museum

Operated by the non-profit Friends of the Logging Museum,  
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[www.sierraloggingmuseum.org](http://www.sierraloggingmuseum.org) **Spring/Summer 2012**

## Message from our President, Ginny Kafka

Dear members and friends,

John, our newsletter editor, tells me it's time to write a message for this spring's newsletter. It's hard to not say the same things that I've said in previous newsletters because the same things are still the most important, our goals are still the same, and the pride in our museum and our accomplishments remain the same.

This museum is an amazing accomplishment carried out by amazing people, and an amazing amount of support from both the local and outside communities. Each year, it seems that we lose another, some years more than one, of the people who lived the history we try to preserve, and I guess that as we lose those people, our obligation to preserve the history of lumbering in the Sierras becomes even more important. As a result, we rededicate ourselves to making our museum ever improving and ever better at educating the public about this historic and amazing era. Too many

“amazings” in this column, but partly I did this for effect, and partly because no other word quite describes as well, the museum, its workers, and its progress. To end this, let me say a huge thank you to our amazing supporters.

## 2012 Logging Jamboree

Saturday, Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> is our 17<sup>th</sup> annual logging jamboree with lots of exciting logging competition, wonderful food, and semi-guided tours of the museum. We are having no music at the end of the day this year, due to poor attendance for the musical part of the day, and a general lack of interest in past years. It seems as if, after watching a full day of competition, folks want to go home. Adult tickets are \$5.00, what a bargain! Plan on spending the day with us.

## **Our Accomplishments This Past Year**

### **Outdoor Exhibits:**

1. Our outdoor exhibits now have attractive explanatory signs for each of them. These signs give valuable information about what the equipment was called, what it did, and a history of where and how it was used. The almost ADA trail has been improved and some more work on it will be done by Jamboree.
2. Ever since the early days of the museum, we have fussed about how to display the huge bandsaw that was given to us. This saw was about 50 feet long and had big sharp teeth on both sides of the blade. Bill Kafka has built a display showing the saw going around a large wheel much as it would have done when used in the mill. Bill also mounted a number of our large circular saws on the wall near where the bandsaw is displayed. Very well done, Bill.
3. Our memorial wall honoring the lumbermen who died while logging or lumbering has a lot of new names on it. An interesting story about the wall involves a man who was visiting the outside area when the museum was closed and saw his father's name on the wall. He sent us a very complimentary letter and a nice donation.
4. We have a binder full of stories about most of these men, and it may be of interest to the visitor to read some of these stories.



## **The Shay Locomotive**

After many years of waiting, we received the small grant to restore the Shay. The boiler has been down in Torrance, CA being made steam worthy. We are obligated to make a short demo run using compressed air as the end piece of our use of the grant money. However, the locomotive can never be run on steam on the property that we lease from CCWD. The locomotive will remain a static display. Ron Glass and his boys are doing the work on the locomotive.

## **Indoor Exhibits**

### **Incline**

Model of Incline at El Portal. This new, as of last year, exhibit remains one of our most popular, maybe in part because we docents like it so much. Somehow it epitomizes the spirit of the men whose hard work and ingenuity could build something like this incline in the 1901 to 1912 era. The timber was on top of the mountain and the mill was down the river at Merced Falls, so they used the high traction Shays up doing the logging and the regular locomotives hauling it along the river to the mill.



Our Shay locomotive was one of several that brought logs to the top of the incline. This article that follows about the Incline is part of an ad for Camp One Yosemite, a resort. Permission to use the article was given to us by Lucinda and we thank her and her resort.

Quote:

*The incline branched from the YV (Yosemite Valley Railroad) Railroad opposite El Portal on a Y and spanned the Merced River on a trestle. The right spur of the Y was used for loaded log cars which were then switched to the main line for transporting to the mill. The left spur of the Y held the empties which were ready to go back up to the top. The incline started up the mountain on a 48% grade, changed to a 52% grade for several hundred feet, and then dropped to a 45% grade until the middle of the incline was reached. A manual switch was situated just below the midpoint and the remainder of the route was double tracked to the top. The 1000 feet to the summit was a 78% grade, the steepest on the line, and probably the sharpest grade ever built on a logging incline in the US. There were four trestles and two overhead hold-downs in addition to the regular roller system. The big hoist at the top weighed 150 tons, and was a steam-powered product of the Willamette Iron Works. Line speed was 1300 feet per minute and about six cars an*

*hour could be handled.*



A log car rounding the curve near the top of the big incline. Cars were alternately sent down right and left hand tracks depending on which end of the cable was at summit.

## New Photo and Lithograph Collection

In last year's newsletter, your editor had an article about the wall full of photos from the Manuel Mill which came from the now long-defunct bowling alley that had been funded by Manuel trust money. It was hard to imagine getting more photos of this caliber already matted and framed. But it happened. Arnold residents, Gerald Sachs and his wife Ramona Green stumbled across a collection of old photos and lithographs which were just sitting around in boxes. Recognizing that these were objects of worth, they acquired the collection, arranged for the Arnold Lions to have them matted and framed, and donated the collection to the Logging Museum. There are several very large prints of the Blagen Mill, a photo of a fellow moving logs on the mill pond, and numerous other photos of the Blagen Mill operation. Perhaps, even more

significant is the collection of lithographs of scenes in Calaveras County. Some of these are more relevant to the Calaveras State Park and the Murphys Old Timers Museum, and eventually the relevant photos will go to those museums. However, at present, we have them all displayed. As an example of how the lithographs add to the history we try to present to the public, as you enter the museum, on a narrow piece of wall is a lithograph of Dunbar Meadow when it still had the ranch house on it, and under that litho, we have a photo of the Blagen Mill occupying the same piece of ground.



Here's a preview of the actual lithograph of the Dunbar Ranch. If you can't get into the museum to see the actual lithography, you can see a larger version on the web site in the section entitled, "Blagen Mill". You can also read there the hows and whys Mr. Blagen settled on this site to build his mill in 1938.

Just go to [sierraloggingmuseum.org](http://sierraloggingmuseum.org) and look in the list of topics for "Blagen Mill". Just one example of the great addition to our collection.

**Our Website**, by John Hofstetter, webmaster and newsletter editor [www.sierraloggingmuseum.org](http://www.sierraloggingmuseum.org) has an incredible amount of information on it. There are literally hundred of photos on it, covering mainly Calaveras, Amador, and Tuolumne counties, but also has some photos from more distant sites in our 18 county area. In addition to lots of factual information

about the industry, the operations, and the people, there are a number of wonderful stories from the 40's, 50's and 60's about life in the logging camps. To use the web site most effectively, you should learn to use the search function on any page you open. For example, if you search for Lars Sanders, you'll be taken to his collection of stories about life in White Pines and labor negotiations with logging contractor, and legend, Doc Linebaugh. Of great value to me, the webmaster, are the comments people make at the end of any particular story on the web site. We have added a great amount of new knowledge to our web site through these comments. We've also been able to correct some errors that were on the site, and we greatly appreciate being able to do that.

## Speaking of Lars Sanders

To those of our readers who aren't from our area, and have no idea of whom Lars Sanders was, he was a long-time logger, story teller, and museum supporter, who epitomized the logger devoted to his craft as well as to his community. For those of you still having a VHS player, the museum has a number of VHS tapes entitled "From Misery Whips to Chisel Bits". About half of it is Lars Sanders demonstrating the skills needed to be a successful logger. We will sell the copies we have left for \$3.00. If you'd like us to send you one of the remaining copies, send us the \$3.00 plus \$5.00 for shipping and handling, and we will mail you out a copy. Your editor watched this film for the first time the other day, and not only learned a whole lot, but enjoyed it immensely. Good, good, high quality film. A project of Ted Shannon, long time supporter of the museum.

## The Calaveras Big Trees Saved From the Saw

Besides our obligation and desire to save and share the heritage of logging and lumbering in Calaveras County, we also are obligated to do the same for the other 17 counties that had active logging in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. As part of our coverage of Tuolumne County we have quite a bit on the web site about the Pickering Lumber Company, and in the museum we run a slide show of the Pickering operation in the 1950's, Pickering is of special interest to us because although their mill was in Standard (Sonora), much of their timber came from Calaveras County, south of the Stanislaus River. In what nowadays would be considered an environmental disaster, they could have cut much of the South Grove of Big Trees State Park. **I've printed in red what I found absolutely amazing about this.**

### Pickering and the South Grove of the Big Trees

Brian Wise owner of the Yahoo Group of plcorp, a group of people especially interested in the history of the Pickering Lumber Company, gives us this history of how the Calaveras Big Trees, South Grove, was saved from the lumberman's axe.

*"Actually, the push to save the Big Trees goes way back to 1900 and earlier. After their "discovery" in 1852, various persons were quick to exploit the trees. At least one mammoth sequoia was cut down, and another had its bark stripped*

*for display overseas. **The South Grove property was sold at public auction (by the State of CA) for \$15,000 to a Mr. Sperry, who later sold it (1900) to a lumberman named Whiteside.** It was that sale that aroused public awareness of the Big Trees and inspired the creation of the Calaveras Grove Association.*

*The CGA assisted in the movement to create a system of state parks, which occurred in 1928. In 1931 the North Grove finally became a state park, but the South Grove property had already been sold to Pickering in 1927.*

*When the Great Depression hit, private donations became scarce, state park funds all but vanished, and the CGA disbanded so there was no push to acquire the South Grove and add it to the park system. Pickering didn't reach their South Grove property until about 1949, establishing Beaver Creek Camp in 1950. Pickering didn't take advantage of the South Grove property then, though, as conservationists and the Forest Service held them at bay. A new CGA was formed in 1954 which held a massive fund raising campaign, and thanks to a huge donation from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the California State Parks Commission negotiated the purchase of the South Grove property from Pickering. The Forest Service, however, allowed Pickering to cut timber on approximately 30 acres within the South Grove to help smooth over their relationship.*

Comments and suggestions in regard to either the newsletter or the website can be directed to John H. at [snlm@goldrush.com](mailto:snlm@goldrush.com). He is aware that he often speaks in 1<sup>st</sup> person, then 3<sup>rd</sup> person, and heaven only knows what else, but that's the way he talks and he writes like he talks. He's also aware that the type is larger than it needs to be, but that's out of deference to the aging readers including himself. He also changes font size in the middle of page, but somehow he thinks that's relevant. FLM should fire him!

## 2012 Logging Jamboree

Don't forget that our Logging Jamboree is on the Saturday of the Labor Day Weekend, Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>. We'll have a lot of new seats available in the amphitheater, and plenty of competition, plus great food, and much to see.

17<sup>th</sup> Annual, can you believe it?

Friends of the Logging Museum  
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## Memberships, Donations, and Gifts

Probably all of you know that the museum exists because of the bequests of a few people who put the museum in their wills, or made large bequests before leaving us. Let us encourage you to consider including the museum in your estate planning. Our day-to-day expense coverage depends on the memberships that you hold in our non-profit organization, plus donations from individuals or service groups. Our memberships run from July 1st to June 30th. So a renewal form is included. We had a fantastic response in regard to memberships last year, and hope to do as well this year. **Thank You!**