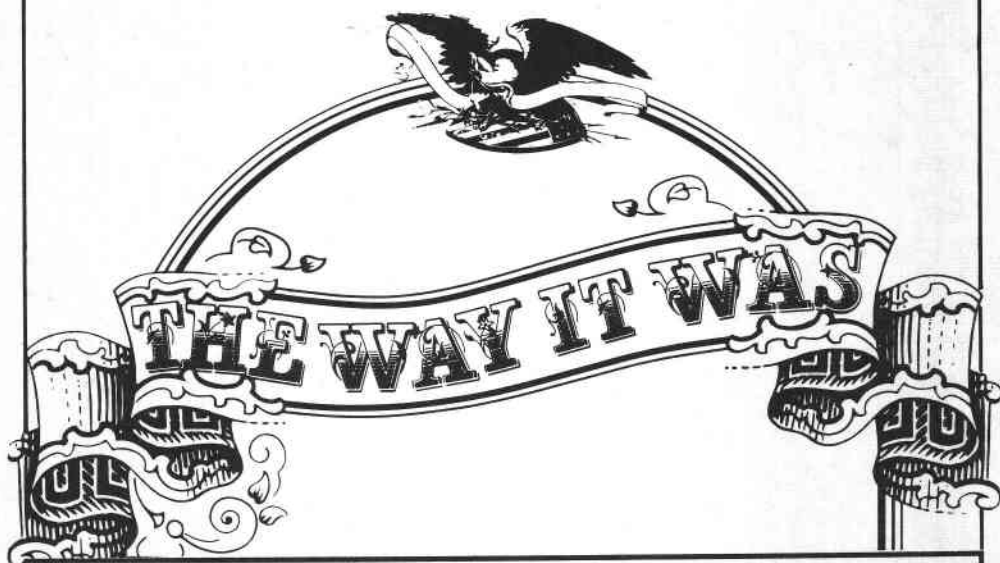


# Lane County Historian



A Booth-Kelly locomotive. Courtesy Louis Polley.

**The Lane County Historical Society**  
**Vol XXXV, No. 3** **Fall, 1990**

# The Lane County Historical Society

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Lane County Historian, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, Fall, 1990

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## **BOOTH-KELLY LUMBER COMPANY**

*An Empire in the Douglas Fir Country*

*by Joan M. Kelley*



Photo #1: Booth-Kelly's first mill at Prune Hill near Saginaw. Courtesy Lane County Historical Museum.

This article is a condensation of a paper written for a U of O class. The author, Joan Kelley, is not related to Robert A. Kelly. Her name is spelled with an additional E.

Oregon's lumber industry was stimulated in the late nineteenth century by the nation's expanding economy and the presence of the western railroad. Timber barons and land speculators descended upon the region as well as the entire Pacific Northwest to acquire forest lands and establish lumber companies to extract the great natural resource.

Western Oregon's inland forests became accessible in the era of railroading. These woodlands were generally purchased from the railroads. The Oregon and California Railroad, later purchased by Southern Pacific, obtained title to immense tracts of land to help finance construction of the railways and to supposedly help the Jeffersonian

farmer acquire land. These generous land grants were instead sold to timber speculators rather than the settlers as the government intended. The lands were often purchased by out-of-state corporations with Eastern or California capital.

Within Lane County, there was a powerful lumber company with local beginnings which dealt with the mighty railroad to purchase lands and establish a timber empire. The Booth-Kelly Lumber Company etched its name in the economic growth of Lane County. The history of this lumber company is a story of individuals with foresight and bold pioneering grit.

Robert Asbury Booth, born May 15, 1858, was a teacher in Drain, Oregon when he realized the business world offered more opportunities and a better means of supporting his family. He took a job as a salesman for the Sugar Pine Lumber Company, a sash and door factory, in Grants Pass, Oregon. His brother Henry, and George and Tom Kelly were all employed in the operation of this manufacturing company in Josephine County.<sup>1</sup>

The lumber trade in Oregon transformed from a local market to a much larger national distribution as a result of increasing population, railroad transportation and technological advances in commercial lumbering. By 1896, Booth leased a sawmill in Saginaw, Oregon, named after the midwestern town in Michigan (see Photo #1). Shortly after leasing the Saginaw mill, Robert and his brother Henry, along with the Kelly brothers

(sons of John Kelly who had an interest in early Springfield Manufacturing Company), organized the Booth-Kelly Lumber Company.<sup>2</sup>

The geography of west central Oregon provided an ideal setting for the development of a lumber empire. The topography, especially in the southern Willamette Valley and the adjoining Mohawk Valley, was well suited for logging. In the late nineteenth century the area was primed for a visionary and the accompanying technology. The combination of Booth's entrepreneurial skills and the Kellys' recognition of terrain would exploit nature's masterly organization.

In 1898, Booth-Kelly leased the J.C. Goodale Plant in Coburg, some forty years after the first Coburg sawmill started operations (see Photo #2). About the same time, the Booth-Kelly Company completed negotiations with the Southern Pacific Railroad and purchased 70,000 acres of odd-sectioned land in the Mohawk basin. Logs for the Coburg Plant were floated down the Mohawk River to the McKenzie River and from there a flume transported them to the millrace and on into the mill pond.<sup>3</sup> This mill closed in 1914 when the cost of moving the logs from the McKenzie became too costly. The Saginaw mill also closed the same year.<sup>4</sup>

The company made arrangements with the Southern Pacific to construct a branch line into the Mohawk Valley to haul out the processed lumber that was milled in the company town of Wendling, founded in 1899 (see Photo #3). This remote mill town was

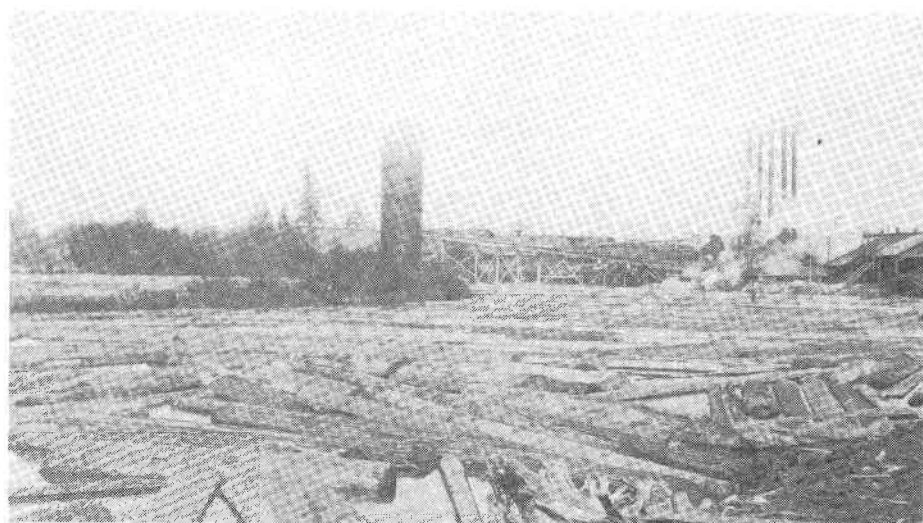


Photo #2: Mill at Coburg, ca. 1910. "6,000 feet of logs in pond." Note the flume in the background. Courtesy Lane County Historical Museum.

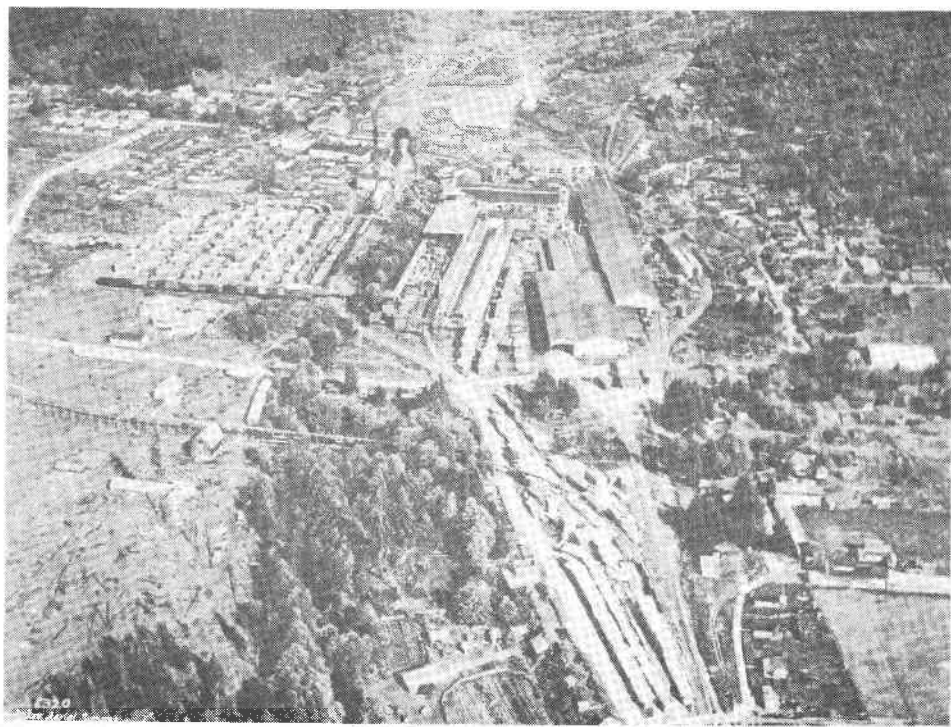


Photo #3: Air photo of Wendling ca. 1920. Courtesy Lane County Historical Museum.

located at the southwest tip of the Company's timber mass.

It was in the Mohawk Valley where R.A. Booth firmly established his empire, sixteen miles from Springfield. George Kelly was superintendent of the plant. The Kelly entity evidently sold out about 1908, yet R.A. never changed the name of the company.<sup>5</sup>

Around the turn of the century, R.A. moved the lumber company's office to Eugene. He also established his residence there as well.

Booth secured some of his land with dummy entrymen acquisitions, later known as the land-fraud system. Land purchased by settlers through the Timber and Stone Act and Homestead Act was intended to aid the yeomen in his agrarian quest. However, many settlers simply turned around and sold the land to lumber companies. The different lumber companies orchestrated these purchases and often times assisted the "settler" to and from the Land Grant Office. A long-time employee of Booth-Kelly referred to it as the "Tom, Dick, and Harry" method.<sup>6</sup> When the Progressive movement came to Oregon in the early twentieth century many timber barons were indicted for land fraud. Booth was also indicted, but after years of federal investigations and a trial held in Portland, Booth was acquitted and the Company rolled on.

In 1901, the Company came into Springfield where its mill expansion was welcomed and recognized as "the largest lumber concern in the state of Oregon."<sup>7</sup> The Company was an integral part of Springfield's

economic growth (see Photo #5). Booth-Kelly then purchased 140,000 acres in the Mill Creek, Willamette, McKenzie, Fall Creek and Cottage Grove areas to supply "The Mill".

R.A. built an enterprise based on great undertakings and astute and loyal management. He reached out into the community and political world to broaden his vision for the betterment of the state. From 1900-1908 he was a state senator; he served on the state highway commission from 1918-1923. His belief and concern for education resulted in his position as a trustee of Willamette University and his participation in establishing a program for student loans. He was also a member of the state park commission.<sup>8</sup> What R.A. practiced he also expected of his company men and thus encouraged them to enter municipal politics. Robert Asbury Booth died on April 28, 1944.

In the 1940s the timber industry experienced a changing economy due to the end of World War II and labor disputes at many of the mills. The Wendling mill closed in 1946 as a result of timber depletion and a labor strike. The land in the Wendling basin was well-along in the process of reproduction because of Booth-Kelly's early practice of sustained yield, making all this land extremely attractive. Georgia-Pacific purchased the company in July 1959.

From its modest beginnings in Saginaw to a lumber company with immense land holdings, the Booth-Kelly Lumber Company played an important role in local history. □

<sup>1</sup> Dixon, A. C. "Booth-Kelly". Willamette Chapter, Society of American Foresters, Eugene, Oregon. March 14, 1960 p. 2.

[The Dixon papers are found in the Rare Book Collection at the U of O. Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> Cox H.J., *Random Lengths* (Eugene, Oregon 1949) 28-9. Dixon 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Cox p. 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 133-4. *Oregonian*, January 13, 1924.

<sup>5</sup> Cox p. 252.

<sup>6</sup> Dixon p. 8

<sup>7</sup> *Eugene-Guard*, June 18 1902. Dixon p. 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> Cox p. 141. *Who's Who for Oregon* pp. 72-3. *Oregonian* May 1, 1944. "Commissioners Who Built Oregon's Highways" *The Oregon Motorist*, 12 no. 4 (June 1937) p. 12-3.

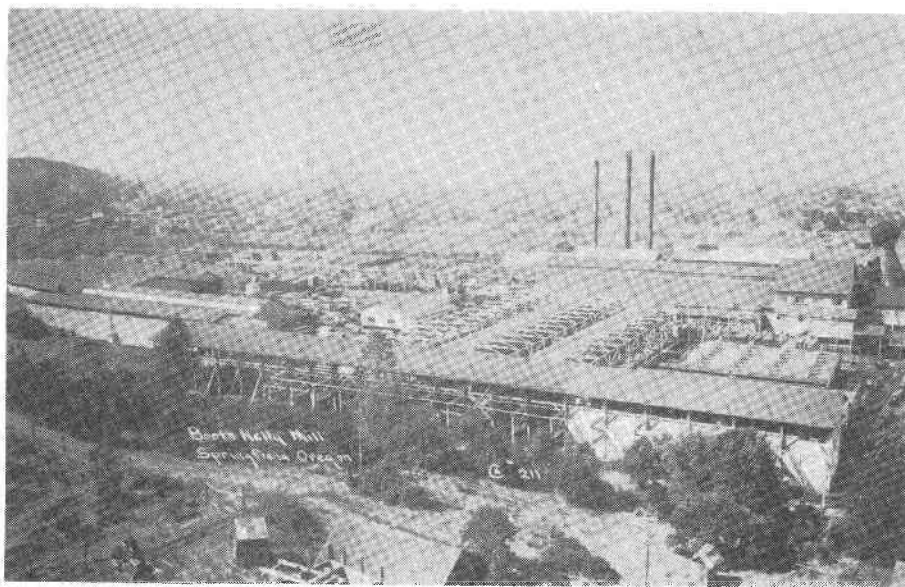


Photo #5: Booth-Kelly Mill, Springfield, ca. 1920. Courtesy Lane County Historical Museum.



## *LIFE IN A BOOTH-KELLY LOGGING CAMP*

*(From an interview with Thelma Coe)*

When we first went to a camp above Wendling we lived in a tent house. My dad built a floor and side boards about four feet high and then put this big tent on top of it. We lived in that for the first year. Dad worked for the section gang. They built the railroads, and then when the camp was moved they tore them up. We moved to Camp 29, which was on the east side of Mt. Nebo. They were almost through with that logging site, so then we moved clear around to the northwest side of the mountain. We sort of went back down the hill as the railroad was torn up.

I lived in different logging camps until I was about 12. I went to school in a box car. It was a one room, eight grade school, and whenever they moved camp, why they just hooked on to it and moved it. My teacher from the second grade until I came to town was a Mrs. Allen. Floy, her name was. The school had a cloak room at one end, and desks and windows all along one side, and a big furnace in the back, a wood circulator. In the winter when it was really cold sometimes she's let us sit right around the stove, and I ruined a good pair of shoes one time. Went out and played in the snow, come back in, and my feet were cold. There was an inner firebox, and then an outer shell, and I put my feet against that and cooked the soles of my shoes.

When I was about five, we moved to Camp 34 and dad started firing one of the steam donkeys. We lived in a house then. It was right by an old landing where they had loaded the logs on the flat cars and the bark would peel off. It was quite deep there — maybe a couple of feet. And that caught on fire, and for two days and nights, all night long, we could have read a newspaper by this light, except that it was red. They kept a tank of water right by our house, shooting water on our house. The camp water tank was about a block and a half away, and when the railroad tank would run dry, they'd race up to the big tank and fill it up, and the house would be so hot by the time they'd get back that when the water hit it, it just sizzled. I was too little to be afraid, you know. It was just interesting.

We only lived in that house maybe a year and a half, 'cause when they moved it to the next camp, they broke one of the skids when they unloaded it. That was a one-room company house with just a curtain across to separate the bedroom.

A man was killed in the logging woods, and my folks bought the house from his widow. It was a two room house. The kitchen was separate. Then the living room-bedroom was all one. And we had a porch clear across the back, and my dad boxed in one end of that with a curtain, and that



was my bedroom year 'round. No heat. I undressed in the house by the big wood stove, and tore out there and jumped into bed. We used to heat a rock and I'd wrap it in newspaper and use it to help warm the bed.

They piped water into the camp. Everybody had a faucet in the yard — the school house too. They made a little siding for the school house. The cook house and the bunkhouse were close to the main line. The houses would be scattered up and down along the main line.

When I was seven we moved to Camp 37, right at the head of Camp Creek. Then we lived at Camp 40. That's sort of at the head of Camp Creek too. They were burning slash and it got away from 'em. They evacuated the whole camp, 'cause they weren't sure they could get it stopped. They loaded the women and children into the box car and took 'em out. It was really kind of funny what different ones would take with them. They only thing mother could think of was that if our house caught on fire, the rifle shells might go off and damage somebody. She took Dad's rifle and the shells and went out in the back yard and buried them in a trench. She was bakin' bread, and when my dad came to the house she said, "If you get a chance, come look at my bread." They lady across the street insisted that they save her washing machine — that they load it. The fire went out in our stove at the right time, so the bread was baked "to perfection".

That camp was right up the hill north of Deerhorn. One woman had

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her clothes all dampened in one of those big old laundry baskets to iron. She put that on her hip and started down over the hill. She didn't go very far 'til she set it on a stump and went on.

They stopped the fire within a hundred feet of the houses. The lady next door to us wanted to save her silverware. She buried it, and when they dug a fire trail they went right through where she had buried it. I don't know if she ever found it all or not. But I can remember every night for weeks her and her husband were out there siftin' soil, trying to find that silverware.

One box car had seats along the side, and on Saturday night anybody that wanted to go out, the train took the box car to Wendling. Anybody that owned a car had it parked in Wendling. You'd go from Wendling to town for groceries. We never went more than every two weeks, and usually my folks only went once a month. Mom would buy sugar by the fifty or hundred pounds, and flour the same way. She'd buy milk by the case, and she used to buy eggs for several different women, from a farm right across from where the Springfield Golf Course is now, twelve dozen at a time.

I used to tell people I had ridden in the box car, on the flat cars, in the engine, on the front we called the cow catcher, in the caboose, but I was eighteen before I ever rode a passenger train, and they'd look at me as if they wondered what kind of a tramp I was.

They usually brought two train



Booth Kelly Camp 35 out of Wendling. 1924. Cookhouse in right. Person not identified.

loads of logs out a day from the camps down to Wendling. Any of the women that needed to go to town could always ride down in the caboose. One time when we were coming down, one of the wheels on one of the loads locked. That train just came to a dead stop. Everybody in the caboose was thrown to the floor. The main brakie (brakeman) went down forward to see what had happened. The second brakie had been riding on the logs, and it threw and injured him. They put him on a stretcher up in the engine. My mother, another lady and I had to ride on the cow catcher on down to Wendling.

There were probably a couple dozen houses in a typical camp. Then there'd be a lot of single men at the bunkhouse. The loggers had lunches

packed for them. The cookhouse was pretty large.

Mother and I would go out to pick hops in the fall. Maybe hop-picking wouldn't be done when I had to start school. Mother would stay and pick, and I usually would stay with my dad in camp. Then I'd have to go and stay at the cookhouse from the time he went to work until school started. At that particular camp all I had to do was go out of the cookhouse, cross a spur track and walk maybe a hundred feet to the school house. I remember at Camp 37 we'd get enough snow that walking to school the snow on both sides of the path would be higher than my head.

When we moved camp the houses were moved. They were built on skids, and they'd be pulled up onto a flat car

and taken to the new camp, where they were unloaded. The porch roofs were hinged, so they'd just go down during the move. I think the back porch floor was hinged too, and they'd put that up and then put the roof down over it.

After Camp 40 we moved to Camp 3, north of Mill Creek.

The social life happened in the 4L Hall. Every camp had one of these. Those buildings weren't moved. They had to be rebuilt. Once a week they showed movies, the kids all got in free. We'd pull chairs up so we could put our feet on the stage. They were silent movies. We school kids could read the wording. The boys thought they were dating. They only had a nickel to spend, so they'd buy a box of Smith Brothers cough drops. That was the treat. Tasted like licorice.

Usually one night a week a minister came from somewhere and we had Sunday School and church in the evening. Never on Sunday. For a while it was the Methodist minister from Marcola. In Camp 35 we had another minister, a doctor who was a Seventh Day Adventist. They asked him to explain why they were Adventists. He had charts and stuff, but I don't remember much. I was too little. The Methodist man was quite old. The kids would go to sleep and he would wham the pulpit and wake everybody up.

Sometimes there were dances. The 4L stood for Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen.

[After our interview Thelma wrote a letter with more details.]

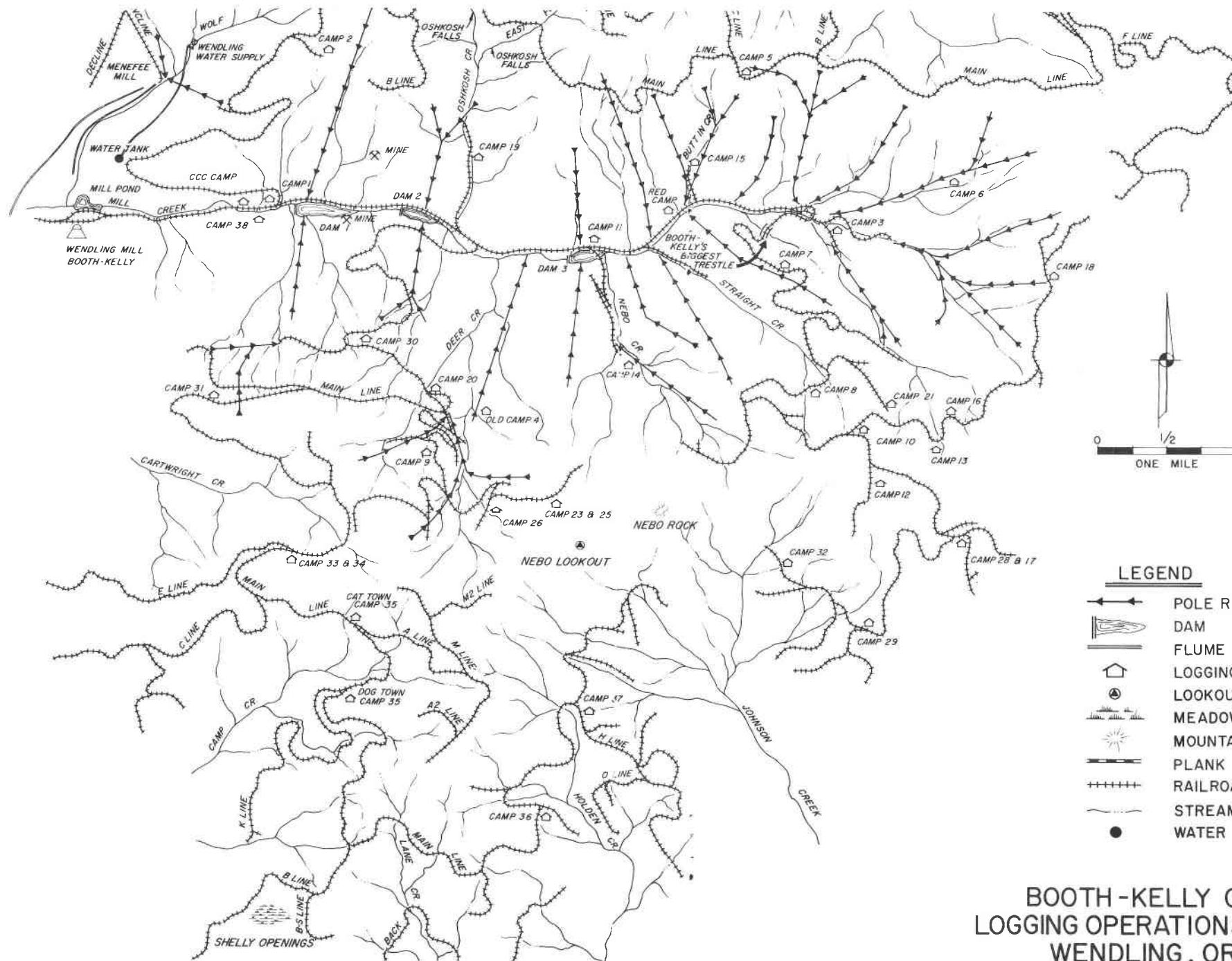
Groceries could be ordered from Wendling store and were brought up once a week. So fresh fruits and vegetables were available, but prices were higher than in town and mother seldom used the service.

We sometimes had a small garden with things like onions, radishes and lettuce. We took advantage of the wild weed called miner's lettuce for salads.

Some of the houses were owned by the logging company. They were painted white, while the privately owned ones were lumber colored.

When I was six my father made me a figure 4 trap and I trapped a couple of chipmunks. One of the older boys had no luck and wanted the chipmunks, so talked me into trading for a pair of banty chickens. □

ED. NOTE: For more information about Wendling, see *Lane County Historian*, Vol. XX, #1.



# BOOTH-KELLY COMPANY LOGGING OPERATIONS 1898-1945 WENDLING, OREGON

Booth-Kelly Logging operations map is from Louis Polley's book *A History of the Mohawk Valley and Early Lumbering*.

## THE AL MARTIN FAMILY OF GLENADA

*(from an interview with Jess Martin)*



Al & Jennie Martin and daughter Lucy. Courtesy Jess Martin.

The **Siuslaw News** of January 22, 1908 carried the following story. "Born at Glenada to Mr. and Mrs. Al Martin, a 12 pound son, all doing well." An interview with Jess Martin of Eugene, May 3, 1989, contains a bit more information about Glenada in those early years.

The Al Martin family lived in the country on a "homestead" during the summer months, and in Glenada in the winter. According to Jess'

memory, there was a party at their Glenada home every Saturday night, at which time it seemed like everyone in Glenada was at "our house; the Hansons, the Harcleroads, the Calders. I guess Calder was the founder of Glenada. I know he built the hotel and a rooming house, and he was the man that laid out — that platted the township."

"When we lived on the homestead over the hill from Glenada, we'd go

down Saturday night to the Hansons, or some other place for parties. I was about two years of age, and I'd ride down on my dad's shoulder and hold on to his hair. My folks could see Halley's Comet. It was an awe-inspiring thing. They were awe-stricken. They knew it was going to hit the earth, and what was going to happen when it hit? They lived way back over the hill, away from people, and I think their imaginations ran away with them."

Al Martin "had an itchy foot." He was an itinerant sawyer. He roamed around. Between 1900 and 1908 he moved his family between the Florence area and Idaho five times. Jess eventually learned that his father was hired by different firms to teach people to saw, because he was a good sawyer.

Al Martin's wanderlust began at an early age. Family tradition has it that he ran away from his family home in New York at the age of 14, planning to join Custer. When he got to Nebraska, he learned that Custer had been "wiped out", so he went to New Mexico and worked on cattle drives up to Dodge City. Then he bought a farm in Nebraska. Then he went to work in a wire factory and he invented the knot in woven wire that keeps the knot from being a hinge — keeps the fence from sagging. Somebody in the plant invented barbed wire while he worked there. Then he got a job building bridges as a subcontractor for Means and Kelly, one of the biggest contractors in Nebraska. He met his wife while she was cooking, and he was a harvest

hand, at his sister's ranch in Nebraska, and they eventually landed in Oregon.

A highlight in Jess' early life was a Fourth of July celebration in Florence. "My dad was the day marshall. Joaquin Miller was the speaker. Dad introduced me to Miller, who grabbed me, set me on his lap. I could smell the tobacco. I could smell the whiskey. I was only four year old, but the memory is still there. I can smell it." Another memory of that day is of a man walking a high wire. Jess' mother had a picture of that event for many years.

Once the Al Martins left Florence on the Willamina, enroute to a train from Newport eastbound. The ship's captain, Johnson, according to family legend, had been drinking all night, and a storm hit off Heceta Head (pronounced Heck'-e-ta in those days), and didn't arrive in Newport until after the storm had abated. And they scraped bottom two or three times going over the bar at Newport. Purpose of the trip — "Dad had traded his Glenada job and a lot for an alfalfa farm in Hepner, Oregon." Alfalfa involved hay making. Another family story tells of a time when Al was on the hay stack, and somebody on the ground sending up hay warned, "Rattlesnake coming up." The load no sooner lit on the stack than Al said, "Rattlesnake coming down." Men and horses all scrambled away. "I saw that snake come winding down. I suppose the snake was as frightened as anyone else."

Taylors lived on the Hepner farm just over a year. Then Al traded it for

a farm on the Ollala Slough just over the hill from Toledo, Oregon. That is where Jess grew up, went to school and worked in the mills. He lived in Toledo for 49 years. After he left Toledo he worked in mills, did consulting work and carpentry work until his retirement at age 75. He's been active in boy scout work and many civic enterprises, and is an honorary member of the Lane County Historical Society. Jess is 82 years old. □



Jess Martin about 4 years old. Courtesy Jess Martin.



l-r: Nora Hansen, Jennie Martin. Courtesy Jess Martin.



## THE KORN BAKERY

This story was compiled from interviews with George Korn, 92, and his nephew Terry Korn, who supplied all the photos used with the article. Ed.



Harry Korn



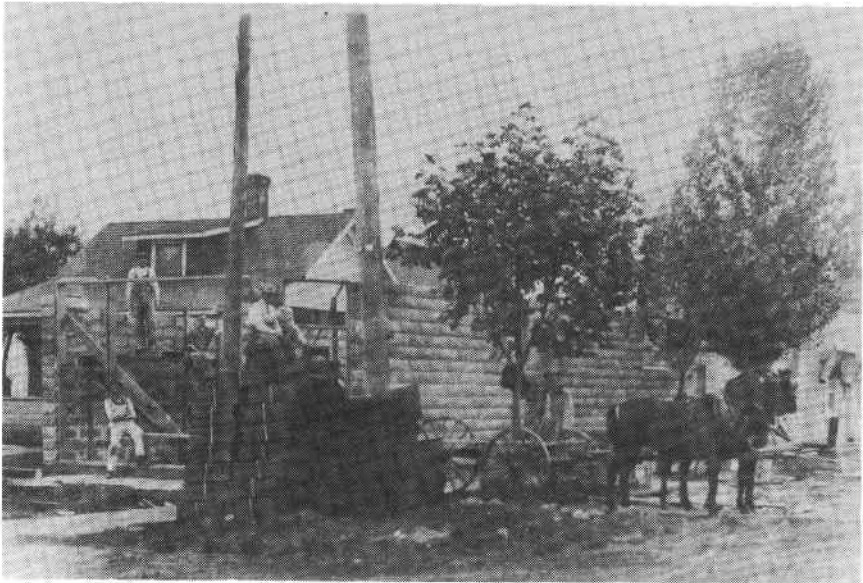
Henry Korn

George Korn came from a family of bakers. His grandfather had five sons who each operated a bakery, four in the Middle West — Quincy and Rock Island, Illinois, and Clinton and Davenport, Iowa. George's father, Harry, migrated to Portland Oregon, where he operated a bakery on Union Avenue for a time. Then he moved to Eugene and bought a little "one horse bakery" at 14th and Mill Streets about 1910. This bakery was previously known as the University Bakery, and George described its

location as about halfway between downtown and the campus.

Tiptop was a trade name, probably used by the previous owners, because Korns eventually changed to Betsy Ross and Milky Way brands. Terry noted that there were other bakers in town later on; Kremel at 7th and High, and McKee over in Springfield. Rodeman and Andreason had "deli-type" bakeries down on Ninth St.

Karry Korn's son Henry worked with him in the local bakery. George, also Harry's son, was the salesman.



Korn Bakery under construction at 14th and Mill St., 1914. University Bakery building in background at right. Mill Street was graveled in those days.

He "got rid of the bread and the rest of them baked." Terry said his dad and mother lived in an apartment over the bakery for about a year after they got married. "But every time they had trouble in the bakery they'd go rattling the steam pipes and get Dad downstairs, so he decided it was time to get out, and he built a house up on Sylvan Street and moved up there." The apartment later became the bakery office.

The bakery ran primarily at night because the bread must be ready for the truck drivers to take off on their routes by six o'clock in the morning. Terry told a story about someone losing a bandaid, which might have gone into the dough. The workers took many loaves out of the pans and

squeezed them, trying to find the bandaid. "You know what happens when somebody finds something like that in a loaf of bread. You'd never hear the end of it. You'd lose half your customers." The bandaid eventually came rolling up out of the machine. The man who lost the bandaid nearly got fired, but begged to be kept on, because he was supporting a family — on 30¢ an hour.

In the early years bread was delivered by horses. Williams Bakery was their chief competitor. In 1914 Korns added to the plant. George said, "As the railroads were built we shipped bread to Mapleton, Florence, Cushman, Marshfield, Canary and Siltcoos Lake. And to Oakridge, Marcola and up the McKenzie. The

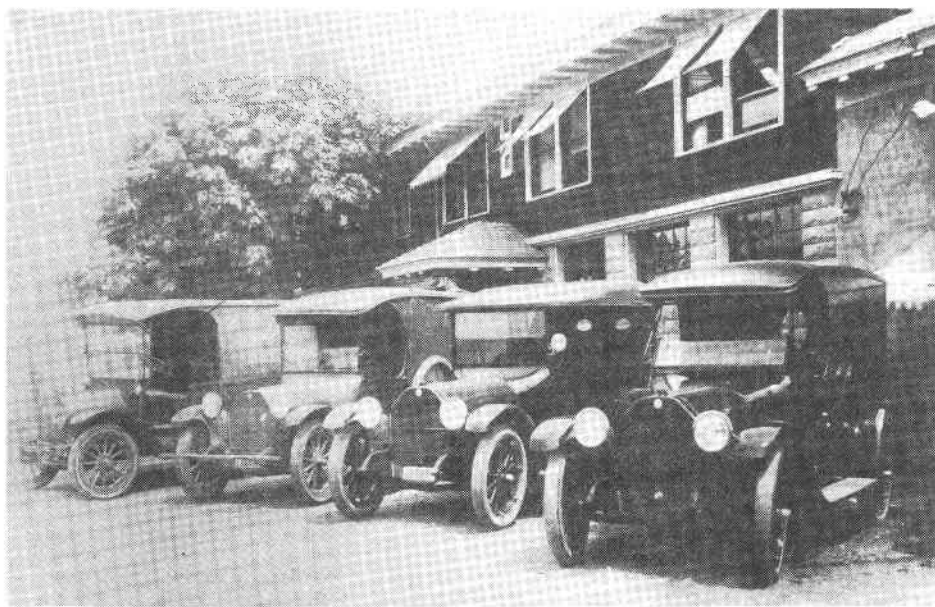
bread went out in crates, which were brought back by the railroad free of charge in order to keep the business. The coming of the automobile revolutionized the delivery process.

Terry said, "I got some information from Oscar Warfield, who was our mechanic for years and years. He identified a bunch of this stuff for me. They had an old Peterson oven. It was oil fired, a great big massive brick thing. It had an oil burner that went into a tunnel on the back side of it. They baked the French and rye bread and some of those specialties right on the brick hearth. Boards with long handles were called peels. They'd lay the bread on there and shove it in and slip the peel out from underneath it — bake it on the hearth. I think Dad

said there was 50 thousand bricks in that thing when they tore it down.

"The later machinery was right up to snuff," Terry said. Flour and other ingredients went into the mixer. In about 10 minutes it was transferred to a big trough which held three or four hundred pounds of dough. "Boy, that mixer, when it started throwin' three hundred pounds of dough around, it would shake and thump the whole building. It was on a great big concrete base, but it still shook things up pretty good," Terry said.

The dough raised in the trough, and was punched down by hand. "They'd roll the trough out to this divider, and they'd cut it up into thirty-four pound chunks, throw it in the hopper and the divider would cut it into weight



First delivery fleet, ca. 1922. 1918 Studebakers.

size — pound, three ounces. They'd allow three ounces for what was known as loss. Then from that into what was known as the rounder, then the bucket conveyer took it upstairs. The rounder kneaded it into the round loaf. Upstairs it was put in the proof box. It went back and forth across all those belts and rose a second time, then dropped through the floor and came down the chute to the molder. It was just a blob, a round ball, and when it came through this thing it was stretched out into a long oval shaped hunk o' dough and the drum would catch the end of it and start rolling it into a loaf of bread.

Then you picked it up off of there and threw it in the pan and set the pan on the rack. Then it would go into this big old steam heated, moisture laden proofer, and it would rise up above the edge of the pan. In the oven it went slowly through a series of trays to bake it, which took twenty-eight minutes."

"Nowadays you just punch a computer and the ingredients are all measured out. You feed the stuff in one end and it comes out, sliced, on a rack and into the cooling room on a conveyor to the wrapping machine. I don't think it is ever touched by hand." □



Korn Bakery commercial booth at a trade show in the old Armory Building.



"The machinery was right up to snuff."

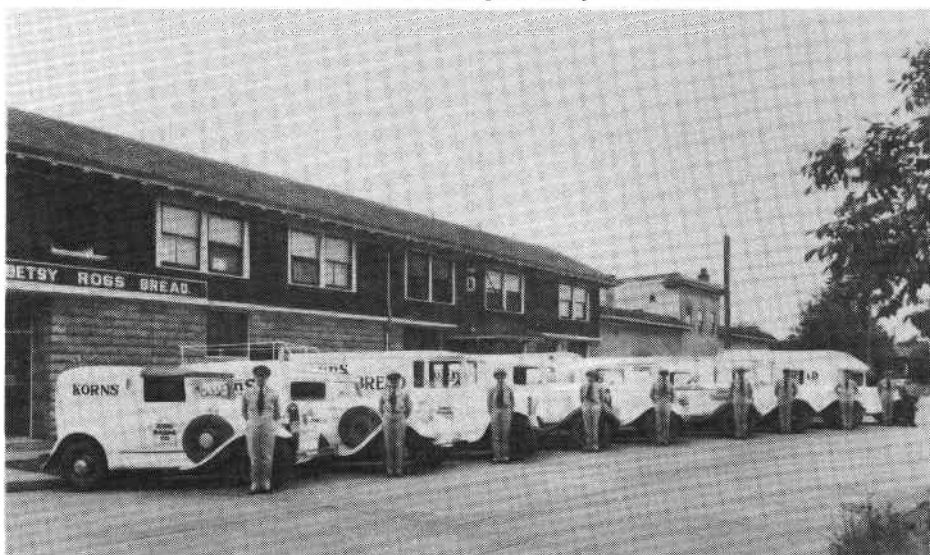


Korn Bakery ca. 1930. Original "University Bakery" is stucco building at right.





Then you picked it off there and threw it in the pan." Terry Korn at work.



1930s delivery fleet. Some of the drivers were Howard Callwell, Ernie Didever, Harris Hurd, Gordon Hower, Edgar Glen.

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Membership entitles you to receive THE HISTORIAN, published three times a year by the Society. Members are eligible to participate in periodic public interest meetings and in projects to preserve and collect Lane County History.

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I would like to become a member of the Lane County Historical Society in the classification checked:

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