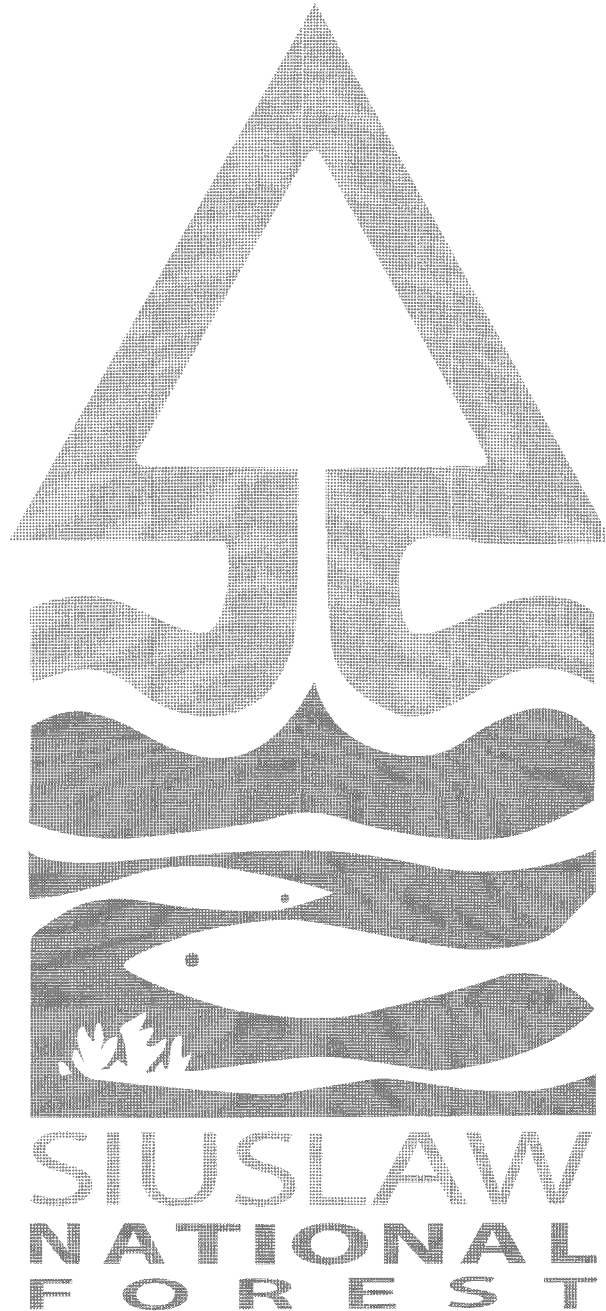


CHAPTER FOUR

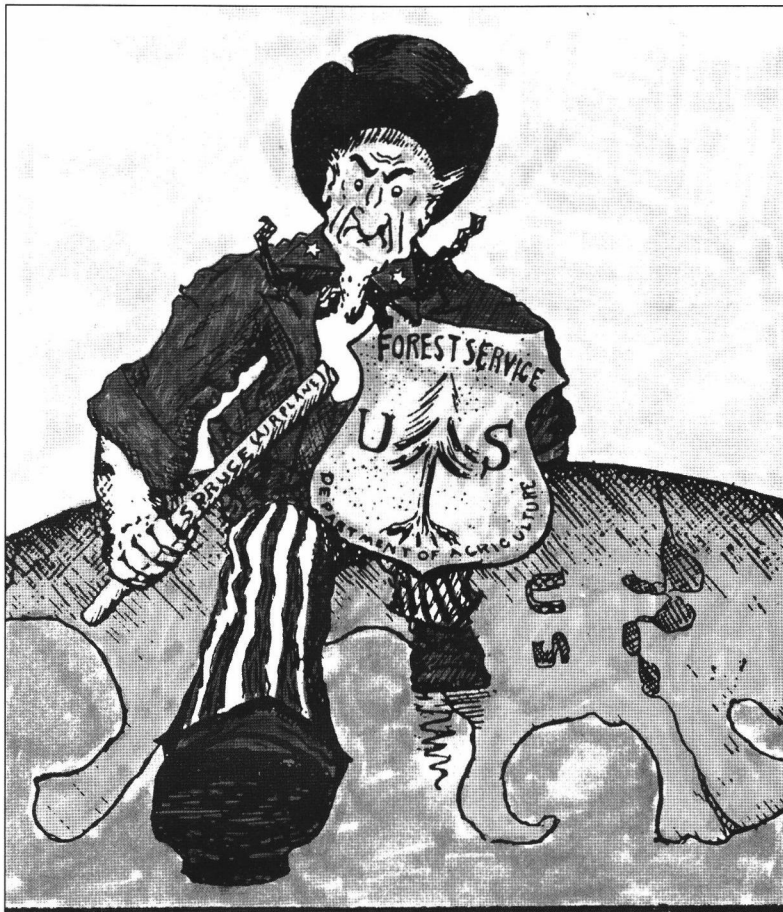
**THE SIUSLAW AND THE
WORLD WARS**



WORLD WAR I

The Siuslaw National Forest occupies a comfortable location on Oregon's coast, remote by some standards, and usually considered far enough from the events of the outside world to provide tranquility. During the great wars of the twentieth century, however, the people of the Siuslaw found themselves caught up in the events occurring half a world away, in Europe and Asia.

During World War I the Sitka spruce timber on the Siuslaw became a strategic material for making military aircraft. During World War II, the Siuslaw and the Oregon coast in general found itself exposed on the western fringe of the continent, closest to Japan's imperial ambitions. In 1942 the Japanese military invaded and occupied some of the Aleutian islands in Alaska. In Oregon, they shelled Fort Stevens, bombed the coast near Brookings, and sent balloon bombs which killed six people near Bly. Civilians on the coast served as aircraft observers, formed citizen militias, and blacked out all lights at night. During the Cold War, the radar stations at Mt. Hebo scanned the skies for enemy aircraft.



HERE COMES THE KNOCKOUT!
A Cartoon by R. H. Browning, Forest Guard

WORLD WAR I — AIRCRAFT FOR THE WAR AND SPRUCE FOR AIRCRAFT

World War I began in Europe in 1914. By 1916 both the Allies and the Axis were bogged down in trench warfare in which neither side could gain an advantage. The U.S. entered the war early in 1917 convinced that bringing fresh troops and the additional industrial capacity would help the Allies prevail in the “stalemate in the trenches.” This was true, but the situation was complicated by several factors. The U.S. military needed time to mobilize, and American industries were not producing the right products for the war.

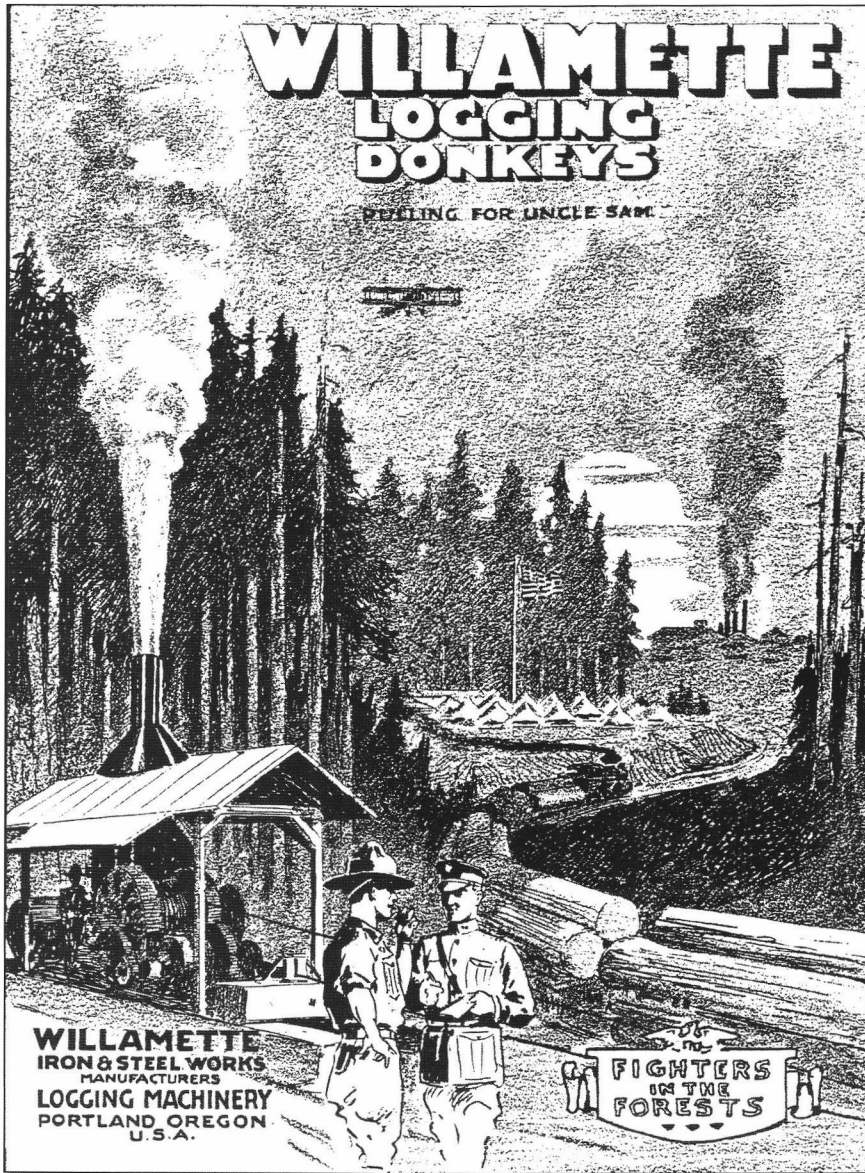
One of these products was aircraft, which was recognized as a technological solution to trench warfare. Aircraft could fly over the lines, bomb the enemy, and return to base. Military aircraft were made of lumber and silk. The lumber needed to be flawless, light, and strong. The best material was Sitka spruce, which was available only in the coastal forests of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska. During the winter of 1916-1917, the European aircraft manufacturers discovered Sitka spruce and placed large orders with west coast lumber companies. Prices for Sitka spruce rose, and supplies went down. When the U.S. entered the war, there was very little Sitka spruce lumber available.¹

Spruce is really a by-product of our other woods, and can as a rule only be produced as it comes in with cedar, fir, or western hemlock. There are some small tracts of timber along the coast where spruce predominates. The greater proportion of the spruce on these lowland tracts is of inferior quality, so that only a very small percentage of upper grades [of lumber] is produced from it. Growing in with this spruce is a very inferior quality of cedar and western hemlock which must be logged at the same time as the spruce. By the time the logger or mill man disposes of the low grade cedar and western hemlock ... and 50 percent of the spruce for box lumber, he begins to realize that he needs a very fancy price for the shop lumber and aeroplane stock which remains.

**Ralph Burnside, Willapa Lumber Co, Willapa, Washington, in *The Timberman*,
January 1917**

The U.S. Army created the Aircraft Production Board and the War Emergency Spruce Council. They ordered 100 million board feet of clear spruce lumber to be delivered during the fall of 1917. The American aircraft manufacturers could not use this amount of spruce since they were not yet capable of producing aircraft on a wartime scale. Throughout the war, 70 percent of the spruce went to aircraft factories in Europe.

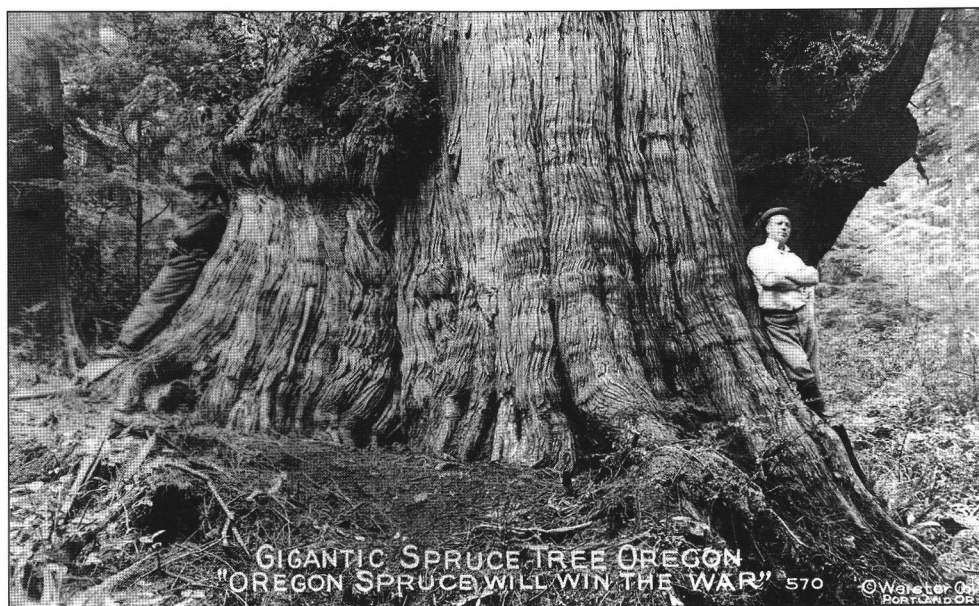
Oregon and Washington lumber companies were eager to fill the order. Labor organizations were quick to see that the war presented an opportunity to strike for better working conditions. As the West Coast lumber industry prepared to meet the wartime



Willamette Iron and Steel ad in *The Timberman*.

At close range it appears that the powerful, unseen, foreign hand, which has directed this campaign of industrial unrest, is bent solely on the destruction of the social fabric. When the entire facts are known this country will be shaken to its very depths.

The Timberman, July 1917



order for spruce, the labor groups prepared for a conflict of their own. On March 5 and 6, 1917, the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) organized the Lumber Workers Industrial Union in Spokane. They demanded better wages, improved camp conditions, and an 8-hour working day. The union set a strike date for July unless their demands were met. The shingle weavers' union in Seattle convened in May and made similar demands, with a July 16 strike date. The American Federation of Labor International Union of Timber Workers joined them. The stage was set for a major confrontation between the West Coast lumbermen and the workers, and on July 16, the strike began. By August 1, no more than 15 percent of the mills were running.² Total Sitka spruce production for the summer season of 1917 was 300 thousand board feet, rather than 100 million. The mill owners blamed the workers, and the workers blamed the owners.

**I love my flag, I do, I do,
Which floats upon the breeze.
I also love my arms and legs,
And neck, and nose, and knees.
One little shell might spoil them all.
Or give them such a twist,
They wouldn't be of use to me;
I guess I won't enlist.**

Wobbly (IWW) song quoted in Tyler, 1967

THE SPRUCE PRODUCTION DIVISION

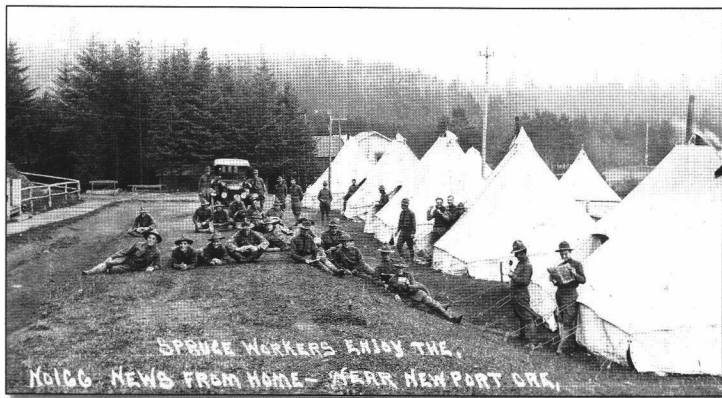
As a result of the industry's failure to produce enough spruce for the war, General Pershing, U.S. Army Commanding General, appointed Colonel Brice P. Disque to create a "Spruce Production Division" (SPD) within the Army to supplement the recalcitrant West Coast loggers and mill workers. By January of 1918 Disque had



Colonel Brice P. Disque.

created 34 squadrons of SPD soldiers to work in the logging camps and lumber mills. He developed plans for three new government mills, at Toledo, Oregon; Vancouver, Washington; and Port Angeles, Washington. He also created the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen, a government-sponsored labor organization to neutralize the radical Wobblies and represent workers' goals to the mill owners.

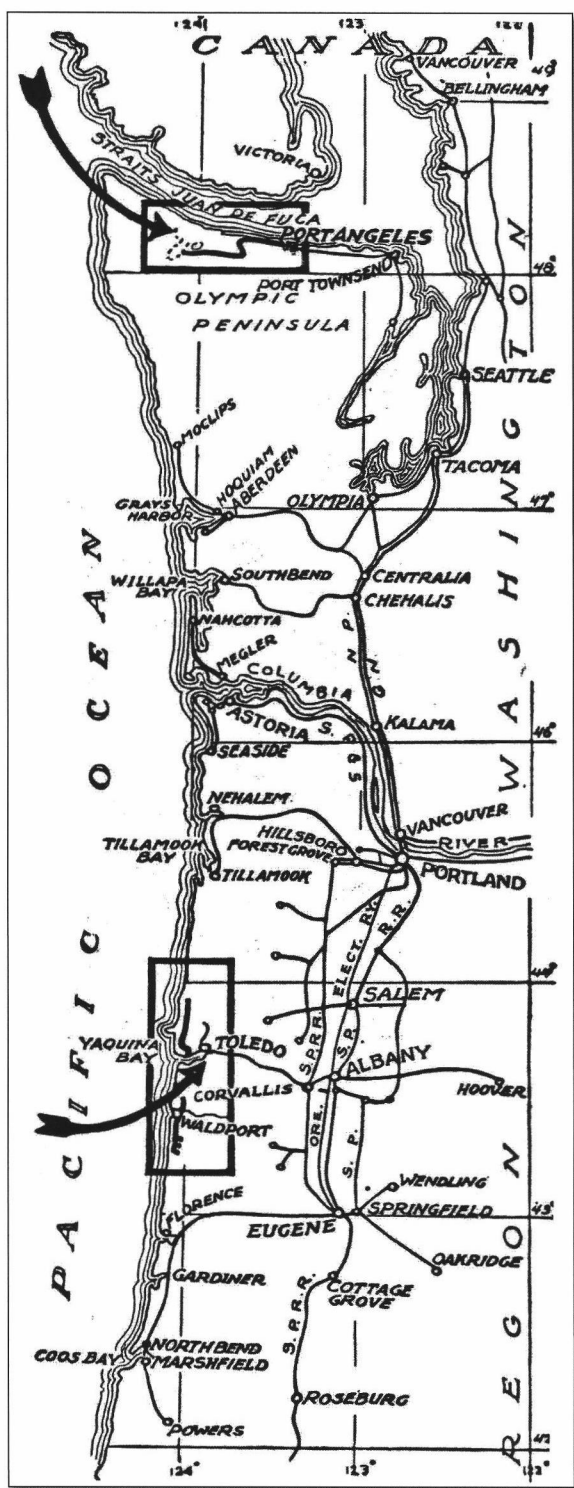
Amazingly, the Spruce Production Division and Colonel Disque were successful. Folk humor records that Disque "came to see and stayed to saw." The result was one of the most unusual and controversial actions of the military during the war.



SPD troops at Toledo.

In its short life, the SPD provided Army labor in logging camps and lumber mills. It built and operated 13 logging railroads, purchased timber lands, and built three lumber mills of its own. The SPD mill at Toledo was a conventional sawmill, as was the mill at Port Angeles. The Vancouver mill was a re-manufacturing plant or, as

the Army called it, a "cut-up" mill. The spruce logs were first cut at other mills into cants or large square timbers, and then they were shipped to Vancouver to be finished into airplane stock. Since aircraft spruce required rigid quality control, Disque felt that he would have the best success by doing his own final milling in an Army-run plant.



SPD projects at Toledo and Port Angeles.

The scale of the SPD operation was impressive. The SPD soldiers cut one million board feet of finished spruce aircraft stock per day at Vancouver, with a crew of 6,000 men working three shifts. The SPD divided the West Coast into six divisions—Puget Sound, Grays Harbor, Vancouver, Clatsop, Coos Bay, and Yaquina Bay—extending its influence into virtually all of the Northwest coast logging area. The strength of the Division grew to 27,685 men and 1,142 officers by May of 1918. By the end of the war six months later, it would surpass 30,000 men.

The Spruce Production Division was successful at producing aircraft quality spruce, but the demand for that product ended when the war ended and military aircraft of the next generation were not made of spruce. The legacy of the SPD was its success at solving the problems of labor-management relations in the lumber industry.

Visits to logging camps and mills convinced Colonel Disque that the IWW propaganda had not exaggerated the miserable living and working conditions that the loggers had to endure. Loggers lived in crowded camps without bathing facilities and with no provision for bedding or laundry. The food in some camps was inedible. "Disque was filled with sick dismay that American workers in the twentieth century had to live as the loggers did."³

Disque's policy was to make SPD soldiers available to work in the mills



Group photo taken at Toledo, 1918.

and camps, but the trade-off was that the lumber companies had to meet strict Army standards for hours, housing, and sanitation, and to pay a reasonable wage. "It is the present plan that troops should board with the logging company...if this cannot be done without crowding, a separate mess hall should be built for the troops." All troops were to receive "the same pay as civilian labor," and that pay was to be \$3.50 per 8-hour day for loggers and less for common laborers. Pay was to be drawn every two weeks, and no charges were to be deducted for medical service. The document goes on to list specifications for "recreation rooms," "bathing facilities," "latrines," "sleeping facilities," and "dry rooms." These very issues—especially the pay scale, the 8-hour day, showers, and bedding—had been the crux of the IWW's campaign for the previous ten years. The mill owners became apoplectic, but they had to comply if they wanted to sell lumber to the government.



SPD camp, Toledo. Canvas was a poor shelter in the coastal rain, 1918.



WOMEN MEMBERS OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF LOGGERS AND LUMBERMEN

LLLL women working in a Coos Bay mill. *Timberman* photo.

LOYAL LEGION OF LOGGERS AND LUMBERMEN MEMBERSHIP CARD

This is to Certify, That *H. H. Robinson*
has become a Member of the **Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen** for the duration of the war by taking oath to devote his efforts to the production of Logs and Lumber for Army Airplanes and Ships, to be used against our common enemy, and to do every act and thing within his power to further the cause of the United States of America in the present conflict.

By authority of the Secretary of War.

No. 59789

M. E. Quinpacker

1st Lieut. Signal Corps, U. S. Army, Officer in Charge

Dated this *Sept 3* day of *Sept 1915*

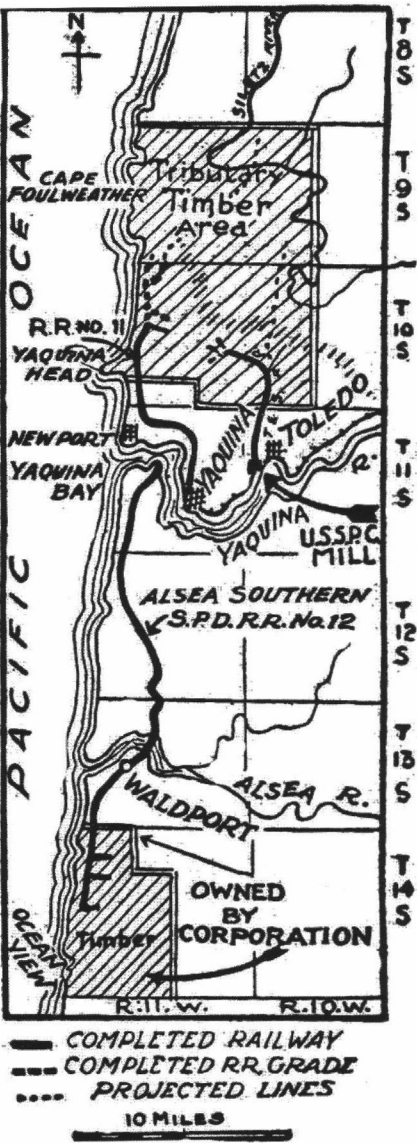
LLLL membership card.



Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen Code

- To maintain the 8-hour day
- To ensure a "just and equitable wage"
- To standardize conditions in camps and mills
- To create a community spirit
- To encourage cooperative hospitals
- To provide health and accident insurance and pensions
- To institute employment service
- To further recreation and education
- To establish a common ground among labor and owners
- To promote better relationship within the industry
- To provide the means for amicable adjustment of issues
- To provide information within the industry
- To promote settlement of logged-over land
- To develop loyalty to the U.S.

THE SPRUCE PRODUCTION DIVISION ON YAQUINA BAY _____



Timber lands accessed by SPD railroads from Toledo.

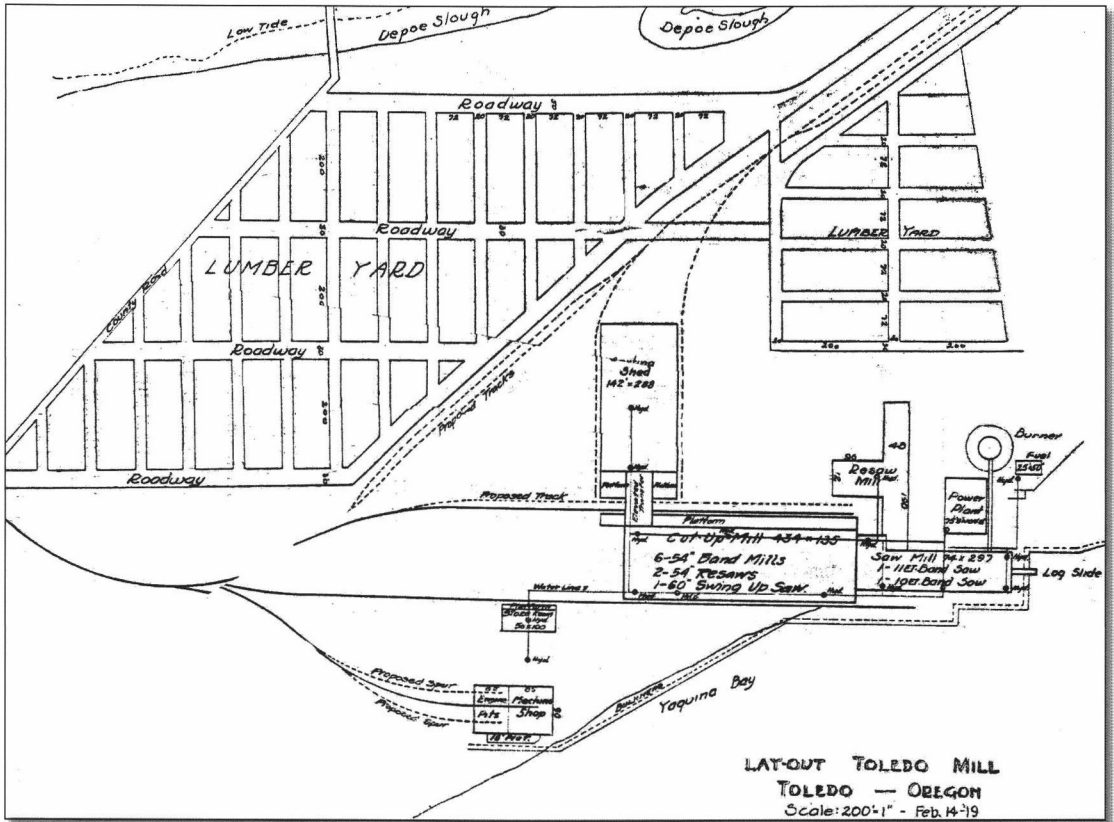
Yaquina Bay was one of the Spruce Production Division's best regions for obtaining old-growth Sitka spruce. Their plans for the area included a mill in Toledo and three new logging railroads. One railroad, designated Spruce Railroad X, would run north from Toledo to tap the spruce timber in the Siletz valley. This was an improvement of an existing railroad built by Toledo lumberman J.P. Miller.⁴ The second railroad, Spruce Railroad XI, would run north along the coast to reach the spruce stands between Yaquina Bay and Cape Foulweather. The third, Spruce Railroad XII, would run south from Toledo and cross Alsea Bay to tap the spruce timber on a private tract owned by Michigan lumberman John W. Blodgett. This land was located between Waldport and Yachats and contained some of the best Sitka spruce timber in the U.S. Disque calculated that the Blodgett Tract could provide one million board feet of spruce each day until the estimated 300 to 500 million feet of spruce was exhausted.⁵

In January of 1918 Disque and the SPD obtained an option to buy spruce timber on the Blodgett Tract. In February the first squadrons of SPD soldiers arrived in Toledo and began work on the mill and the railroads.

Spruce Railroad XII, also called the Alsea Southern, was an ambitious railroad that compared to the Spruce Railroad I, built on the Olympic

SPD soldiers build Railroad XII, 1918.





Plan of Toledo mill.

Peninsula in Washington. It ran south from Toledo requiring a trestle across Alsea Bay and sophisticated civil engineering to get through the coastal hills and over the numerous creeks along the route. Construction began in April of 1918 at South Beach on Yaquina Bay, where a new terminal and pier would become the booming grounds and the ferry port.

The Warren Spruce Company was the prime contractor for the new line. They built an average of two miles of railroad each day. The construction crew consisted of 4,200 soldiers and civilians working from 33 separate construction camps. Photographs taken



by the Army show that the earthwork was done by horses and Fresno scrapers. Huge crews of soldiers laid the steel rails by hand. Bridge and trestle building preceded the railroad and required

Building Railroad XII, 1918.

Piling and large bridge timber was put in rafts and towed outside the [Yaquina] bar. When off its destination it was turned loose and washed ashore by the waves. Here horses were attached to it and it was snaked through the sand to the point where it was to be placed.

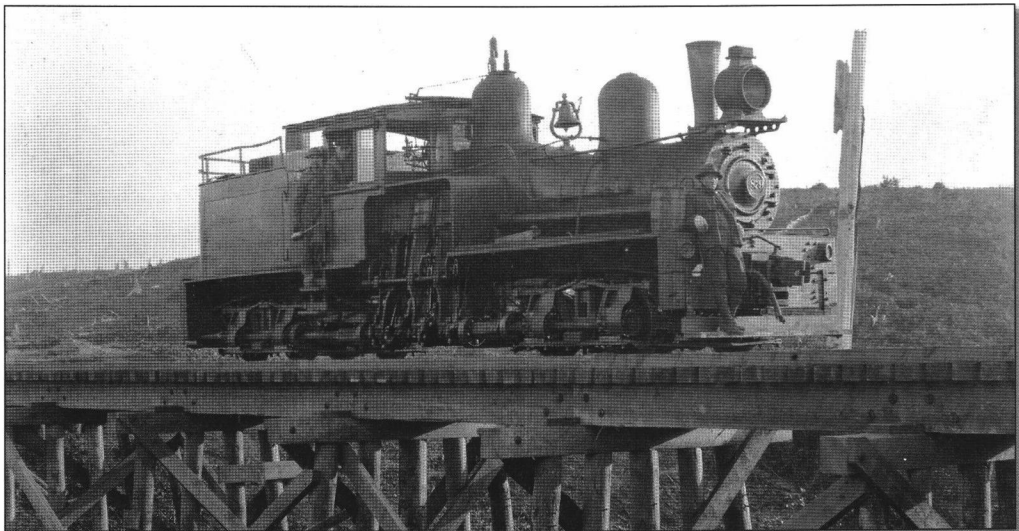
The Timberman, October 1918



SPD at the Agate Beach Hotel, Newport.

rafting the timbers from Yaquina Bay, then sending them through the surf to the beach.

Construction continued through the summer and fall of 1918. On November 8, 1918, the construction crews had the railroad complete to Camp 1 on the Blodgett Tract. On November 11, the armistice was signed, and the war was over. Although the Army cut very little spruce from the Blodgett Tract before the armistice, building the railroad and the logging operation in seven months was a substantial achievement.



SPD Shay locomotive on Railroad XII.

THE BLODGETT TRACT

The Blodgett Tract was a parcel totaling 12,700 acres of land south of Waldport and north of Yachats. It is now a part of the Siuslaw National Forest, having been incorporated into the Forest as the Yachats Purchase Unit in 1941. The tract had a remarkable history. It was wrested from the public domain by a fraudulent timber operator, then bought by the Army, then logged by a lumber company, then bought by the Siuslaw, and re-forested by conscientious objectors.

John W. Blodgett bought the tract from C.A. Smith on May 31, 1917. Apparently, Smith was in default on some bonds Blodgett held, and the tract was in part compensation for the bonds. Blodgett's agent in Portland, P.S. Brunby, warned Blodgett that Smith was under indictment, and that some titles on his lands were being disallowed by the courts.⁶

Nevertheless, Blodgett completed the purchase. The SPD identified the tract as one of the best stands of Sitka spruce available. In January of 1918 the SPD contacted Brumby to arrange an option to buy the timber on the tract. The SPD began building the railroad south from Toledo to reach the tract in April of 1918, but negotiations for the timber were not complete. Blodgett was uncertain about selling the spruce on the tract without selling the fir as well. Disque and the SPD did not want the fir. Negotiations dragged on through the spring of 1918. The SPD was spending \$30,000 per mile to build the railroad to the Blodgett Tract, but they had no assurance that they would be able to log the tract when they got the railroad finished.



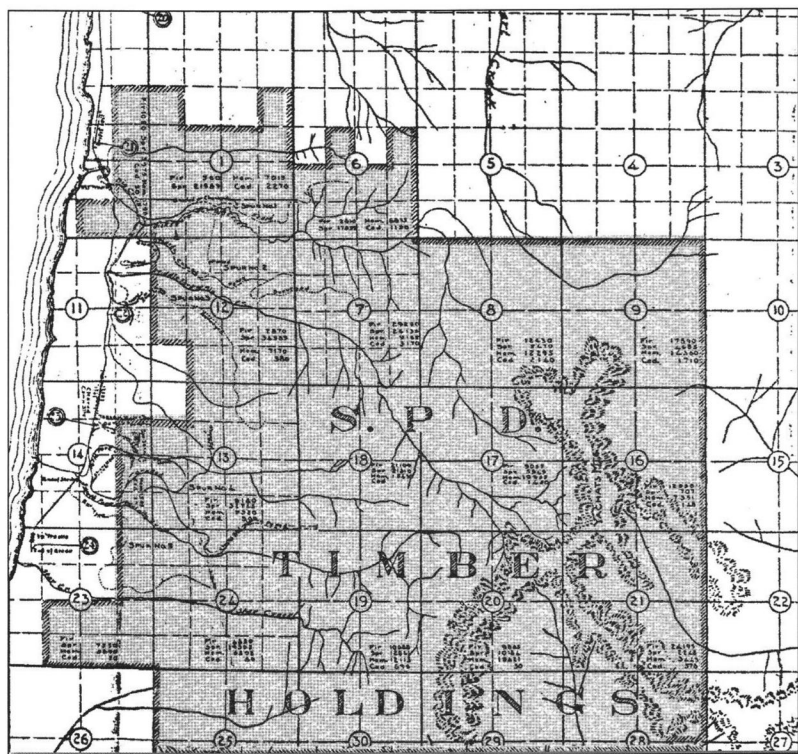
Mature Sitka spruce on the Blodgett Tract, ca. 1927.

By July Colonel Disque was fuming about Blodgett's intractable stand against selling the timber. On July 20, Disque sent a telegram to Blodgett threatening to commandeer the tract. The sale was finally settled in December of 1918 after the armistice had ended the war in November. The SPD paid Blodgett \$635,000 for the tract. The deed recorded the acreage as 12,700 which brought the price to \$50 per acre.

We must have permission to start operating in your timber commonly known as the Wright-Blodgett Tract south of Alsea Bay [stop] Will you agree to this entry with the understanding that if we cannot agree on price that the same will be legally commandeered [signed] Disque

Disque to Blodgett, Blodgett Papers, July 20, 1918

After the war, the Army held a sale of all the SPD assets, including the mills at Toledo, Vancouver, and Port Angeles, timber lands, railroads, logging equipment, and even a hotel the SPD had bought in Port Angeles. The Blodgett Tract timber inventoried at 300 million board feet of Douglas fir, 250 million board feet of spruce, 200 million feet of western hemlock, and 15 million feet of cedar.⁷ The mill at Toledo, the Railroad, and the Blodgett Tract languished on the



SPD map of the Blodgett Tract.

auction block for several months until a group of investors agreed to purchase the package for \$2,000,000 in December of 1920. They formed Pacific Spruce Corporation. The government's terms were very favorable, asking only \$50,000 down on the properties, and carrying the sales contract for 10 years.⁸

SPRUCE PRODUCTION DIVISION SOLDIERS IN LINCOLN COUNTY

Health Problems

Hernia	8
Heart problem	6
Varicose veins	5
Rheumatism	4
Mental deficiency	2
Flat feet	2
Leg injury	2
Tuberculosis	2
Old injuries	2
Arm or elbow	1
Appendicitis	1
Bullet wound	1
Asthma	1
Lead poisoning	1
Indigestion	1
Bright's disease	1
Undiagnosed	2

**Yaquina District SPD,
Weekly Medical Reports,
August 27, 1918**

By the fall of 1918, the troops' energy had diminished:

"The camp was a little tent city, and like the last days at Waldport, it was full of men playing cards, rolling dice, and just plain loafing."¹¹

On November 11, 1918, the armistice ended the war in Europe. The war in Lincoln County dragged on for a few more months as Spruce Production Corps troops and equipment left the area for Vancouver Barracks. There, the troops were mustered out of the Army, and the logging and railroad equipment was assembled for the final auction sale held the following year.

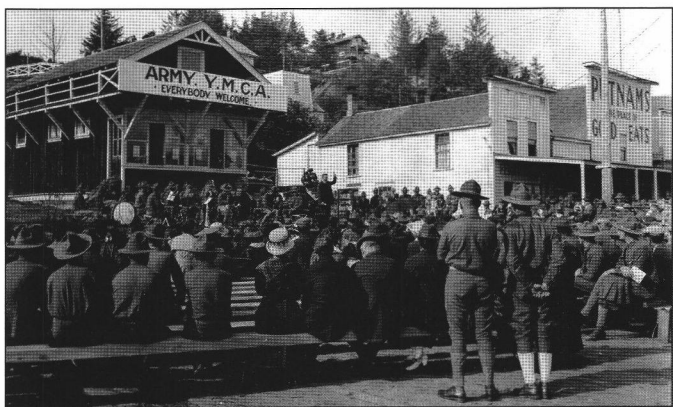
Spruce soldiers assigned to operations in Lincoln County were mostly employed in construction of the Toledo mill and the railroads. Some worked as loggers in the Siletz valley with the Warren Spruce Company. Contemporary photos show them living in squad tents, eating in mess halls, and visiting Newport when they were off duty.

One Spruce soldier has left a lively account of his experiences in the SPD in Toledo and Waldport. This was Floyd R. Marsh, who enlisted in the Army in Colorado and was trained as a pharmacy technician. He found himself assigned to the newly-formed SPD.

"If it had not been the Major telling me this, I would have thought it was some kind of a joke. I had never heard of the Spruce Division."⁹

Marsh found the Spruce soldiers busy in the spring of 1918.

The Spruce Division worked fast in the few days it took us to go to Waldport and set up our infirmary tent. They had started a sawmill, laid a track for a logging train and were logging. The government built railroads right into the forest to get the spruce out.¹⁰



Soldiers crowd Newport waterfront.

WORLD WAR II — THE WAR ON THE SIUSLAW

After the U.S. entered World War II in 1941, several changes affected the Forest Service and the Siuslaw National Forest. The first of these was a vigorous war market for timber. Between 1930 and 1939, during the Depression, the Siuslaw sold 22 million board feet of timber. During the war years, 1941-1946, the Forest sold 188 million board feet.

During the Depression, the Forest Service was adequately staffed, and the Civilian Conservation Corps was able to provide reserve manpower for fire fighting, road building, and maintenance work. When the U.S. entered World War II, 2,000 Forest Service staff nationwide joined the armed forces. Throughout the war, draft and enlistment reduced the Forest Service to the point that personnel for sale management, maintenance, and fire fighting were stretched thin.

The Forest Service put out a call for volunteers, and public-spirited Oregonians staffed lookouts and performed other duties on a volunteer basis. Thirty-two lookouts on the Mt. Hood National Forest and one on the Siuslaw were staffed with volunteers, who were called the Forest Service Reserve.¹²

Additional staffing of lookouts was done by the Aircraft Warning Service (AWS) during the war. This organization began in the late 1930s, and became active in 1941 as part of the



Observer station overlooking the Salmon River estuary.

Civilian Defense effort. AWS observers, also called the Ground Observer Corps, were civilians who volunteered their time to watch for enemy aircraft. Numbers of observers on the west Coast have been estimated at about 150,000.¹³ In general, AWS lookouts in and adjacent to the Hebo Ranger District reported to the Portland Filter Center. These included Buzzard Butte, Bell Mountain, Mt. Hebo, Little Hebo, and Cougar Mountain. Those south of Hebo on and adjacent to the Siuslaw National Forest reported to the Eugene Filter Center. These lookouts included Cape Mountain, Prairie Peak, Cummins Peak, Cannibal Mountain, Siltcoos, Fern Top (Oregon State Forestry), Roman Nose (BLM), Goodwin Peak, Henderson Peak, and Windy Peak.¹⁴ For firefighting, the Forest Service had access to trained crews from Oregon's three Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps, at Waldport on the Siuslaw, Cascade Locks on Mt. Hood, and Elkton on the Umpqua. The CPS also staffed lookouts.

Logging companies also felt the same shortage of experienced manpower. For the first two years of the war, logging was not a draft-exempt employment, so loggers who did not enlist could be drafted. Worse, many older more experienced loggers moved to shipyard jobs in Portland, which were considerably more remunerative than logging, and were draft-exempt. In the spring of 1943, the Selective Service Commission granted occupational deferments to loggers, and the situation improved. Most historians agree, however, that as a result of sparse crews and inexperienced men, the war-time industry moved towards new less physically demanding technology. This included diesel tractors, gasoline-powered chain saws, and motor trucks. The days of railroad logging, steam-powered yarders, and crosscut saws were numbered.

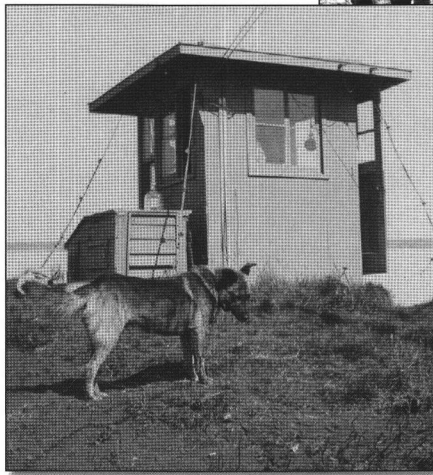
Rex [Wakefield, Forest Supervisor] tried to enlist, and they said they needed him more in the Forest than they did in the military. Some of his buddies tried to enlist. They said. "If you're doing anything at all, stay there, because we're just spinning our wheels here."

Mabel Wakefield Interview, 1989

THE WAR ON THE COAST

The Siuslaw's strategic position on the Oregon coast created extra pressure during the early years of the war. By 1941 the Japanese military had perfected a strategy of amphibious assault in its rapid advance across the Pacific. The strategy of "island hopping" had brought the Japanese occupation forces to the Pacific islands, southeast Asia, New Guinea, and Alaska. Coastal areas like Lincoln and Lane counties were perceived as especially vulnerable because of their relative isolation. Highway 101 and the major bridges were in place, providing a route for vehicles along the coast. The Coast Range was very thinly populated, however, and access from the Willamette Valley to the coast was limited to a few roads.

The military and the civilians were nervous. Japanese-Americans were removed from their homes in Oregon, Washington, and California lest they become a "fifth column" supporting invading forces, as German civilians had in northern Europe. The Japanese shelling of Fort Stevens and the bombing of Brookings in 1942 were other concrete events that ratcheted up the level of tension. The military responded by instituting civil defense programs, conducting increased surveillance by air and sea, supporting local militias, and stationing troops to patrol the beaches on horseback and on foot with dogs. For most Americans this level of defense would have seemed excessive or even paranoid, but people on the coast felt exposed, and public preparedness was no doubt reassuring.



Above: Soldiers on mounted patrol. Left: Dog patrol at Heceta Head lightstation

I was a dog trainer here [Heceta Head lightstation] during World War II. The dogs were used for beach patrol. One time the country had submarine alerts, so the Coast Guard had beach patrol dogs. We patrolled the beaches from the hill by Sea Lion Caves, where it's close to the beach then north to Yachats.

William Dean McCord Interview, 1997

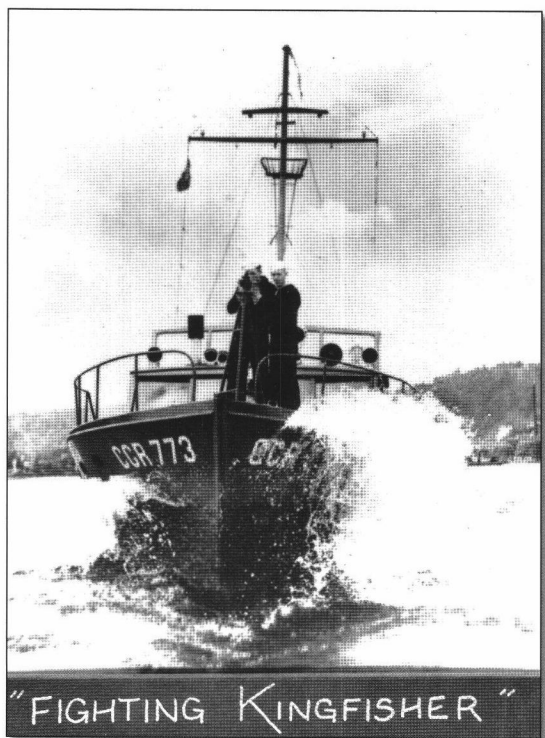


Blimps patrolled the coast. LCHS photo.

The military conducted coastal patrols by blimps which were based in hangars located at Tillamook. These slow-moving aircraft flew at low altitudes over the beaches. Civilian boats performed offshore patrol duties. The *Kingfisher*, a well-known charter boat based in



Blimp off Cape Foulweather.



The *Kingfisher* in military service. LCHS photo.

Depoe Bay, was outfitted for patrol service and painted grey to reduce her visibility. Now, over 65 years later, the *Kingfisher* is still in commission and one of the few Oregon vessels listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Army and Coast Guard personnel were stationed at lookout structures located at good viewpoints along the coast, like Cascade Head.

For people living near the coast, blackouts of all lights including automobile lights, were required. Failure to observe the blackout resulted in arrest and fine. By November of 1942, 64 people had been arrested in Lincoln County for blackout violations. In one instance, two young men were arrested, but later released to the custody of a Navy recruiting officer. They had agreed to enlist.¹⁵

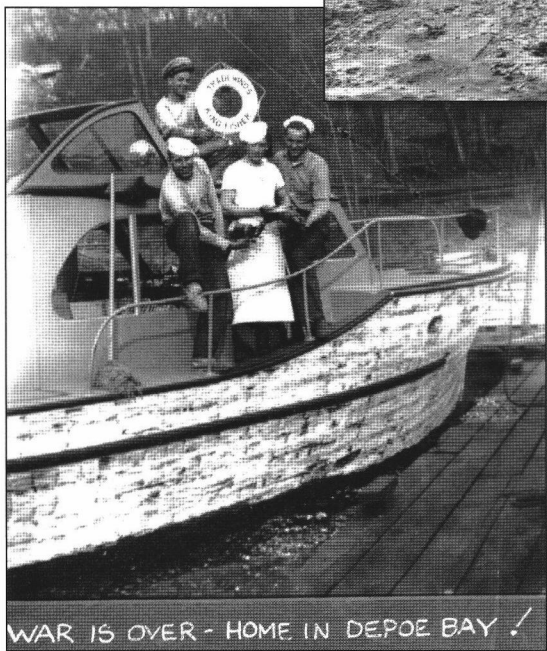
As soon as it turned dark you had black shades that you pulled over your windows. And you had a piece of material that went over the headlights of your car, and if you did any driving you could hardly see two or three feet ahead of your car.

Mabel Wakefield Interview, 1989

Men and women volunteered for the AWS, which stationed observers along the coast to watch for enemy aircraft. Men in Lincoln County volunteered for the Beach Patrol, a local militia armed with hunting rifles. They drilled on the weekends under the direction of Captain S.D. Campbell, who was a retired British Army officer living in Nelscott. The regular Army replaced the Beach Patrol after a year, but the AWS continued their observation duties until late in the war.



Militia at Newport. LCHS photo.



WAR IS OVER - HOME IN DEPOE BAY !

Kingfisher returns to civilian paint job. LCHS photo