The Legacy of the Log Boom
Humboldt County Logging from 1945 to 1955
Logging in Humboldt County in northwestern California began in 1850. When settlers first saw the giant old growth coast redwoods in Humboldt County they were in awe of them. These trees had diameters up to 30 feet and heights up to almost 400 feet. Old growth redwood trees are the oldest living things on earth; they can live about two thousand years. The settlers of Humboldt County had a respect for the redwoods; however, the settlers saw an immediate profit to be made. Old growth redwood lumber was used to build houses, railroad ties, shingle bolts, fence posts, and grape stakes.\(^1\)

Redwood timberland in Humboldt County was located near the coast and extended twenty-five miles inland. The mills that cut the redwood logs into dimension sized lumber were located on the shores of Humbolt Bay. Humboldt Bay was a safe place for ocean vessels to pick up loads of redwood lumber to be sent to San Francisco Bay. Lumber vessels were often overloaded with redwood lumber. Because the vessels were piled with lumber, the vessels were believed to be unsinkable.\(^2\) Redwood lumber was sent all over the world for its preference in woodworking. In 1878 the United States government passed the Timber and Stone Act which allowed loggers to buy 160 acres of timberland for $2.50 per acre as long as the loggers “improved” the land through logging and ranching. Loggers acquired thousands of acres of redwood land and often formed partnerships to begin lumber companies. By the end of the 1800’s, all of the redwood timberland in Humboldt County was in the hands of loggers and ranchers.\(^3\)

The dramatic expansion of the lumber industry in Humboldt County began with the arrival of railroads in the 1870’s. Logging began to occur farther away from rivers. Mills could be built closer to the area of timber extraction. By the late 1880’s all of Humboldt County’s logging mills were dependent on railroads that extended only to the redwood timberland. The most popular engine used on the main logging roads was a Baldwin locomotive, which could haul sixty, 70,000-pound capacity flat cars. The most famous railroad in Humboldt County used in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s was the Arcata and Mad River Railroad.\(^4\) Up to 1906, lumber transportation to San Francisco Bay was
dependent on ocean shipping. In 1906, lumber transportation to San Francisco Bay was made more efficient by the construction of the Northwest Pacific Railway. The railroad had to be built over rugged mountainous terrain. It took ten years to complete the railroad from Tiburon to Humboldt Bay. The railroad was operable in 1915.5 Lumber mills were no longer dependent on ocean shipping. In Tiburon the flat cars were loaded on barges bound for San Francisco.6 “A long string of logging cars pushing noisily, whistle blowing, echoing sharply through the timber, was a majestic sight.”7

The creation of the State Board of Forestry in California in 1885 was the first of its kind in the United States. The State Board of Forestry addressed the concerns related to the protection of the timber industry such as fire prevention and slash disposal. There was little or no concern in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s for regulation of logging on company owned land or privately owned land in Humboldt County. It was not until after World War Two that increasing concern was given to logging practices.8

The federal government reserved the forestland in the eastern interior of Humboldt County, too far away from the coast for logging. The Forest Reserve Act, passed by Congress in 1891, empowered the president of the United States to take lands from the public domain to reserve and protect the watershed. In 1891 President Harrison reserved 900,000 acres of forestland in Humboldt, Del Norte, Trinity, and Siskiyou Counties in California, to be used for recreation, ranching, and logging. The forestland was called Six Rivers National Forest. A third of Six Rivers National Forest is located in the eastern interior of Humboldt County. Six Rivers National Forest was only a fraction of the total forestland reserved in the United States. The Organic Act of 1897 required the Forest Service to manage timberlands for logging and recreation and to promote the continuous supply of clean water.9

The construction of Highway 101 from San Francisco to the redwood forest of Humboldt County began in 1917, two years after the completion of the railroad. The “Redwood Highway” was completed in 1920, so the first automobiles could make their
way to the beautiful redwood forest of Humboldt County. Bay Area tourists who saw the old growth redwood forest for the first time immediately wanted the redwoods preserved.\textsuperscript{10} In 1918 a group interested in saving the old growth redwood trees, The Save the Redwoods League, asked for donations from Americans to buy the privately owned and company owned redwood lands. In the 1920's the Save the Redwoods League purchased almost 18,000 acres of old growth timberland in Humboldt County.\textsuperscript{11}

The Great Depression in the 1930's allowed wealthy lumber companies to purchase timberland from small lumber companies. The small lumber companies could no longer afford to maintain their sawmills and equipment. The larger timber companies established logging camps and maintained cookhouses to feed the hungry lumberjacks. Somoa Cookhouse, which is used today as a restaurant and museum, used to be Hammond Lumber Company's cookhouse. Cookhouse cooks made sure that the last logging crew that came in from the forest ate otherwise the loggers would tear up the mess hall looking for food. The Pacific Lumber Company at Scotia expanded the logging camp into an entire town. When World War Two began, the lumber industry increased a little due to the increase in factories for war materials. The lumber industry was in for a big surprise following the war years.\textsuperscript{12}

From 1945 to 1955, the lumber industry in Humboldt County was booming. Millions of returning soldiers from World War Two were soon going to be the parents of the "baby boomers" and they needed houses. In 1945 there were 19 sawmills in Humboldt County that owned all the redwood land that was not in preserves and parks. The largest lumber companies were Malarky and Malarky Timber Company, Sage Land and Timber Company, Hammond Redwood Company, The Pacific Lumber Company, Holmes-Eureka Lumber Company, and Northern Redwood Lumber Company. Standing redwood was worth five dollars per one thousand board feet. One board foot in one-inch thick, twelve inches wide, and twelve inches long. One square mile of virgin redwood timberland cost
$20,000. The lumber produced from one square mile of redwood trees was worth ten million dollars. Quite a deal back then. Douglas fir was not logged in Humboldt County because it was not profitable. The old growth forests of Douglas fir in Oregon and Washington were still being clear cut, so there was not a need for additional Douglas fir to be cut down in Humboldt County. Humboldt County loggers killed the Douglas fir trees that grew within the redwood forest for more growing space for redwood trees. Loggers girdled Douglas fir trees to kill them by cutting a three inch deep ring around the base of the tree, which destroyed the growth region of the tree. The girdled tree would be dead a year later.\textsuperscript{13}

The huge increase in logging operations in Humboldt County in order to meet the demand of the housing boom, endangered many species who made the redwood forest their home, including Roosevelt elk. In 1948, the Save the Redwoods League managed to receive enough funds from donations to purchase 1,600 acres of virgin redwood land from Pacific Lumber Company. The purchased land became the Madison Grant Forest and Elk Refuge and became a part of Prairie Creek State Park. By 1955, California's Roosevelt elk population had risen to over a thousand.\textsuperscript{14}

In the early 1940's, loggers working for the large redwood timber companies were attempting to form workers unions in order to secure better wages. Some loggers wanted labor unions, others did not. As a result a "split" occurred at all the large lumber companies which even split families apart.\textsuperscript{15} On January 14, 1946, a labor strike occurred in all the large redwood lumber companies in Humboldt County. The strike lasted twenty-seven months.\textsuperscript{16} Lumber production fell from 418 million board feet in 1945 to 271 million board feet in 1946.\textsuperscript{17} The labor strike's conclusion was no labor unions and wages stayed the same. Loggers either went back to their jobs for the lumber companies or left Humboldt County.\textsuperscript{18}

During the labor strike, loggers from Oregon and Washington came down to Humboldt County.\textsuperscript{19} They were known as the "gyppo" loggers. To meet the requirements
of the housing boom the gyppo loggers took advantage of the Douglas fir resource. By
1950 there were 252 sawmills in Humboldt County, almost all of them affiliated with
gyppo logging. In 1950, Humboldt County ranked second in logging output for the
entire United States. Lane County, Oregon had the highest output of timber in the United
States. According to estimates, the 1950 lumber output for Humboldt County exceeded
one billion board feet valued at 70 million dollars, exceeding all past records. When the
gyppo loggers arrived, new modes of production were introduced to Humboldt County’s
lumber industry, drastically transforming the forest environment. The new modes of
production between 1945 and 1955 expanded the logging industry and increased the
population and the pace of society in Humboldt County, which contributed to the
emergence of conservation in the forest industry.

The Forest Practice Act authored in 1945 by the State Board of Forestry became
operative in 1947. The Forest Practice Act required loggers to leave four trees per acre for
regeneration. Loggers were willing to leave a small amount of trees behind after a clear
cut; however, they left behind the trees that were not worth taking. Loggers did not want
to waste money hauling logs out of the forest that had too many knots in them or were
partly rotting. The logging practice of leaving behind only “inferior” trees was called
“high-grading,” which led to poor genetics in the re-seeded second growth trees since only
the inferior trees were available for regeneration. Demand for wood was high due to the
housing boom; questions of correct forestry practices could not be answered when it was
time to cut. Environmentalists called this practice of logging “cut and run” logging.
Loggers often made excuses to environmentalists suggesting that clear cuts were good for
wild animals because predators could see prey more easily in the open. Few
conscientious gyppo loggers left top quality trees. Their motto was to leave a tree standing
for every tree they cut down. Unfortunately conscientious loggers were few.

The gyppo loggers were independent loggers that made up the bulk of the logging
industry from 1947 to the mid 1960’s. The gyppo loggers did not invest in a land base.
They bought cutting rights off of the private timber owners of Douglas fir. As a result, the gyppo loggers devastated the land. The private timber owners of Douglas fir were mostly ranchers who owned just as much timberland as the large corporations. Sixteen billion board feet of Douglas fir were not committed to the lumber industry and not owned by the large lumber companies. The Douglas fir land owners and gyppo loggers often met at Eureka Inn to buy and sell Douglas fir land. It was one big party. Douglas fir cost fifty cents per one thousand board feet, which equaled roughly $2,000 per square mile of Douglas fir land. The loggers would make about one million dollars from the lumber produced in one square mile of Douglas fir land. Some of that one million dollars paid for equipment and man power to fall the redwoods and haul the logs to the mills. The sale of Douglas fir land was a good deal for loggers. Many agreements when buying and selling timberland were made verbal. Many of the old time loggers were proud of their reputations for trustworthiness. Timber sales involving thousands of dollars were often secured with nothing more than a handshake. Some gyppo loggers formed partnerships that resulted in prospering businesses, such as Sierra Pacific.

Douglas fir land was divided between many private owners. This slowed the larger companies from making huge purchases of the Douglas fir land. The sixteen billion board feet of Douglas fir, however, did not last long. The federal government forced private landowners of Douglas fir to exploit their resources. All standing timber, timber land, and logging equipment was taxed. The federal government, however, would eliminate the standing timber tax completely if 70% of the timber on a private plot of timberland was logged. Many of the Douglas fir landholders logged 70% of their land. The standing timber tax devastated the gyppo logger’s business because private landholders logged most of their Douglas fir land. By 1955, gyppo loggers had less timber to cut down so many sold their logging equipment to the larger timber companies and left. Small timber companies and ranchers who owned Douglas fir land were not allowed to manage their
own land. By not adapting taxation to the situation, the federal government greatly increased the timber harvested. Taxes should have been kept in line with income from the land in order to ensure a continuous contribution from that source to government. Finally, in 1977 the Yield Tax emerged.\textsuperscript{31}

Some gyppo loggers were just “timber fallers.” A timber faller is the logger who chopped down the trees. Other gyppo loggers only worked the mill. The timber fallers would sell the logs they cut down to the mills. These logs were called “open market logs.” They were sold to the mill that offered the best price. Many loggers advertised the prices of their logs in the local newspapers. A log scaling service opened just for the purpose of weighing logs in order to determine how much a log should be sold for so that “rip-offs” would not occur. Some mills had their own scales; however the timber fallers seemed to distrust them.\textsuperscript{32}

It was the re-manufacturing sector that provided the bulk of employment during the log boom. Re-manufacturing mills cut “studs,” dimension sized lumber, such as two by fours and produced plywood. Douglas fir “studs” held nails much better than second growth redwood and therefore was an improvement in the construction of houses. Old growth redwood was the best for building; however, old growth redwood was not being cut at the quantities that had been previously been demanded for it was not available at a reasonable price. Douglas fir was much cheaper than old growth redwood and was valuable for the construction of houses. Douglas fir became a very valuable resource.\textsuperscript{33}

Gluing thin pieces of Douglas fir wood perpendicular to each other made plywood. Plywood was cheaper in the construction of houses than Douglas fir “studs.” The siding of most houses built in the late 1950’s began to be made of plywood. Only the best redwood was used for “expensive” houses. Eureka Plywood, Arcata Plywood, and Mutual Plywood were major plywood companies in Humboldt County.\textsuperscript{34}

Cal Barrel was the biggest re-manufacturing company. They made shipment containers, pipes, barrels, and water tanks out of wood, mainly redwood. By the early
1960's, plastic was used for many commodities, such as pipe, so Cal Barrel went out of business. Redwood is still used for water tanks, septic tanks, and wine barrels.\textsuperscript{35} People in Humboldt County during the log boom did not have to worry about jobs. There were hundreds of sawmills that offered jobs to anyone who could face the work demands. Logging companies never had to worry about a job shortage. On Monday morning if a couple loggers did not show up for work, the supervisor of the logging operation just had to go to the local bar during his lunch break; the supervisor would find as many workers as he wanted. Gyppo loggers often invested in retail stores, bars, and grocery stores, for “back-up” businesses, initially in case the lumber industry declined. Once the logging industry declined, however, their businesses usually went out of business. The Humboldt County community had an unrealistic expectation of the employment potential during the log boom. When the log boom ended, the vast amounts of jobs were no longer available. The largest employer in Humboldt County became the federal government. The post offices, the schools, the highway department, and the fire department are a few examples of federal government jobs that offered financial security for some of the citizens of Humboldt County.\textsuperscript{36} Humboldt State College’s football team became very good during the log boom because many logging companies promised star football players jobs after college. As the log boom tapered away after 1955, Humboldt State College’s football team’s record declined.\textsuperscript{37} Good baseball players received good jobs with the lumber industry as well.\textsuperscript{38} The success of the gyppo industries was the result of the new modes of production the gyppo loggers brought with them to Humboldt County from Oregon and Washington.

The chain saw, the logging truck, and the “Caterpillar” tractor were three of the many new modes of production in the logging industry during the logging boom. The result was an accelerated cut of virgin forests. Bulldozer and truck logging overcame previous geographical limitations. Logging operations did not just occur a mile or two from the nearest river or railroad; it occurred everywhere. The trees fell quickly leaving no
man any time to ponder their demise. The familiar human voice yelling “timber” was usually drowned out by the sound of chain saws and tractors.

After World War Two, tractors with bigger engines and heavier metals were being built. Tractors called Caterpillar D-8’s and D-7’s were the primary transport machines of logs. The “Catskinner” was the driver of a tractor. The Catskinners hauled the logs out of the forest, built roads, and made “beds” for a tree to fall on which prevented a tree from breaking. By saving the whole tree from breaking or slivering upon impact on the ground after if fell, loggers could save more of the tree for profitable lumber. Caterpillars could push or pull up to 70 tons, and the “blade” attached to the front of the tractor helped immensely in pushing dirt around; however, they cost $46,000 each. Loggers believed the price was worth it because it was cheaper to move dirt and increased efficiency of logging more than it ever had been. In the past natural barriers had to be avoided. By the 1950’s they were simply removed. By cutting down on time it took to haul logs out of the forest, loggers could send more trucks to the lumber mill each day and increase income.39

“Cats” completely plowed the ground when they operated. When tractor drivers came to a stream they dropped logs and debris into the stream and bulldozed dirt right across the top of it in order to make a road. Loggers used to put log landings in the middle of creeks. Fish biologists working under the State Board of Forestry told loggers to clear the streams of all logging debris after cutting near stream watersheds. Fish biologists know now that it was a mistake to have loggers clear the streams of all logging debris, because some logging debris would have offered protection and habitat for the fish.40 Prior to 1952, salmon runs on the South Fork of the Eel River, averaged over 25,000 adults per year. Nine years later, salmon runs averaged 8,000 per year.41 Logging caused silt to fill in the loose gravel bottom of streams. After salmon and steelhead spawned, their eggs could not survive because oxygen was not allowed to flow through the loosely packed gravel bottom. Loggers suggested that fishermen should realize the necessity of sometimes logging across steams, which ruined the fish habitat. By the late 1950’s, loggers were
expected to log in a manner that would avoid compacting the soil by logging equipment mainly so trees could regenerate. In addition, loggers had to have permits to use “Cats.”

The tractors drug the logs to where Mack trucks powered by 200 horsepower diesel motors took over the log transportation to the mill. Railroads were pulled up for the use of logging roads and trucks. The cost of truck roads into the timber areas were inexpensive compared to railroad construction so a “honeycomb” of roads were created in the timberland of Humboldt County. Most of the new roads were built where the Douglas fir was located since most of the logging operations were gyppo loggers. Logging trucks used “cheese blocks” to rest the logs on. Logs were stacked like a pyramid on the cheese blocks. By the mid 1960’s, logging trucks used “stakes” to keep the logs from falling off, which are still used today. Stakes are a lot safer. Logging trucks would often be way over loaded, scarring the truck drivers, ruining the trucks, and ruining the roads. Loggers would sometimes hall logs out using two trucks because the logs were too long to put on one truck. Some logging truck drivers were killed at the sawmills after undoing the binders that held the logs on the truck. The logs would roll off and crush the truck driver. The only paved routes during the log boom was Highway 101 and 299, which were torturous two lane highways that often needed repair due to the heavy logging trucks. In 1959 the State Division of Highways bulldozed a freeway through Humboldt Redwood State Park for efficient logging truck transportation. Preservationists alerted to the new road were not pleased.

The use of automobiles took away the need for logging camps. Loggers began to live with families in neighborhoods and drive an automobile to work where they had to bring their lunch. They had a “picnic” in the woods everyday. They would go home after work. Most of their neighbors all worked in the lumber industry. A next door neighbor may have been a choker setter. The person who lived across the street may have worked in the mill. Automobiles allowed some loggers to go into town after work and party. Loggers went to the bars to relax and socialize and make new friends or got in fights.
Often when a logger would receive a paycheck, he would spend it all in one night at the bars or at a whorehouse that were usually involved in the hotel businesses. There was no drunk driving law then; however, police officers would often drive the drunken loggers home after a night spent in the bars. A drink back then cost ten cents. Gasoline cost twelve cents a gallon.45

The modern chain saw, called “chisel bits,” was invented due to the eating habits of timber beetles. A logger from Oregon named Joe Cox examined timber beetles in action turning good timber into sawdust. He watched the beetle cut from left to right using its head armed with two sharp woodcutters, rather than burrowing directly ahead. Applying the principal of cutting left to right, Cox invented a flexible chain with saw teeth that curved outward. The chain moved around the perimeter of an oval bar powered by a gasoline engine. After testing the chain saw, the chain saw cut fast and could be used longer than the drag saws without re-sharpening. Cox patented the idea in 1947. The demand for Cox’s “bug chain” became worldwide.46 When a logger in Humboldt County purchased a chain saw for the outrageous price of $1,100, other loggers would come examine the new invention. At first the loggers were scared of the chain saw, thinking the chain would fly off and hurt someone. Once they saw what the chain saw could do, the popularity of chain saws spread quickly. The first chain saws were electric powered. They required big generators, long extension cords that were heavy, and a lot of maintenance. The extension cords could be 1000 feet long.47

The first gasoline chain saws had the brand names, the Mercury-Disston and the Titon. They weighed about 110 pounds and had “stingers.” The electric chain saws had stingers as well. A stinger was a handle that was connected to the end of the chain saw’s oval bar, where the chain revolves around, so that two people were required to operate it. The chain saws weighed too much to turn sideways to cut standing timber, so the oval bar could rotate sideways for cutting standing timber. The logger would hold the chain saw’s two handles standing upright.48
In the early 1950’s, a new chain saw was invented with the brand name, McCulloch. The McCulloch increased the efficiency of timber falling. One logger could operate them. The stinger was no longer a part of the chain saw and they weighed twenty-five pounds. The chain saw competitors had to go back to the drawing boards or go out of business. The bigger McCullochs that had more horsepower for a faster moving chain, had the option of attaching a stinger for two people to operate. By the mid 1950’s, another new chain saw was invented that is the most similar to the chain saws used today. It had more horsepower than any chain saws in the past, 16 horsepower, weighed less than twenty pounds, was affordable, and cut very fast. Their brand name was I.E.L. It could fall a tree six feet in diameter, under ten minutes. The biggest trees that were up to 30 feet in diameter, took less than one day to be cut down with chain saws. It used to take weeks to cut a tree down that size. The longest chain saws were twelve feet long.

The loggers who operated the chain saws, the “timber fallers,” had the toughest and most dangerous job in the industry. Part of the challenge of going to work in the woods everyday was coming home alive. After a timber faller finished cutting through the tree, he would have to get out the way fast along with the heavy chain saw. Timber fallers often had to dodge falling branches called “widow makers.” After the giant trees were on the ground timber fallers had to split the logs length wise, into halves or quarters, in order to fit them on the truck. It took a big chain saw and a strong man.

The timber fallers could not fall a tree on stumps, which would damage it. A timber faller sometimes had to spend almost the whole day using a Caterpillar building a trench for a place for the tree to fall. A trench allowed the logger to haul the log out of the forest to the log landing much easier. The tree had to land in the trench that was the width of the Caterpillar blade. The logger had to calculate the undercut on the tree perfectly and use the gunstick to fall the tree right in the trench. It was the best feeling for a logger when the tree fell right where they wanted it. Then they would breath a sigh of relief, “Phew, got that one.”
Safety in the woods increased in the late 1950’s. Many of the logging companies required first aid training, so the first aid classes were held at the lumber mills. The heavy machinery used for timber operations increased the danger of logging. Logging was extremely dangerous and accidents cost money. Safety competitions between logging companies took place. Hammond Lumber Company won it many times during the log boom. Loggers joked that hard hats were not only worn in the woods but also to church. Accident prevention committees policed the Pacific Lumber Company’s timberland.52

In the early 1950’s, the timber mills used “teepee” burners to get rid of sawdust, bark, and scrap lumber. The flames in the teepee burner created an upward pressure that caused sawdust and ash material as well as the smoke to be dispersed throughout the area. Two-thirds of the timber went up the smokestack and littered the area with sawdust and soot.53 In Arcata there were dozens of sawmill “teepee” burners disposing of tons of tree fiber and causing substantial air pollution. As mills increased in number the sawdust and ash and smoke spread by the mill burners became a nuisance. The biggest thing people complained about in Arcata was sawdust. Everyone was disgusted at the mess made by the teepee burners. People did not hang their cloths out to dry after washing them because the ash would make the cloths dirty. People’s houses and yards were constantly dirty. A half-inch of sawdust was found on cars every day from teepee burners.54 Lawton Backhill of Arcata invented a “cap” to be placed on the top of the smokestack of teepee burners. The “cap” was centered around a vacuum principal. The heavier matter descended where the lighter gaseous matter was allowed to rise. California Barrel was the first to install one with 100 percent success.55

Concerned about the pollution teepee burners were causing Humboldt County, Simpson Lumber Company, which was established in Humboldt County in 1948, began research with the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin. The research was focused on using timber waste to make paper. Second growth redwood and tan oak were included in the pulp test. The test proved that second growth and timber waste pulping had
a future. The pulp mill Simpson wanted needed a large, dependable water supply. In addition the pulp mill had to be close to Simpson's redwood operations which was near Eureka. Simpson could not find groundwater in Eureka, so they turned to Eureka's water supply for the city. Eureka's water supply was held in a reservoir on the Mad River and could not provide sufficient water for a pulp plant. In addition, earthquakes had damaged the small, old redwood pipeline from the reservoir into Eureka.56

Simpson Lumber Company wanted their pulp mill so they met with the Eureka Chamber of Commerce and the Humboldt County Supervisors in 1955. Simpson Lumber Company convinced them that Eureka had potential for industrial development, urban expansion and a pulp mill, if an adequate water source could be found. Simpson took the initiative and helped Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District with the construction of Ruth Dam and a pipeline about 90 miles from the mouth of the Mad River. The dam had a capacity to hold 75 million gallons of water a day that supplied Simpson's pulp mill and the Humboldt Bay Area. Part of the agreement to build the dam was that Simpson had to pay for 30 million gallons of water a day for 40 years. It cost Simpson $22,000 a month. Simpson built their pulp mill on the Samoa Peninsula, near Eureka. Georgia Pacific liked the idea of the pulp mill so they built their own pulp mill right next to Simpson's. Georgia-Pacific agreed to help Simpson pay for the water. By the late 1950's, logging companies picked out trees to use for pulp and sent logging debris, such as branches, to the pulp mills. The last teepee burner to be relinquished, however, operated in Arcata until 1970.57

Many of the local people in Humboldt County complained about the contaminated streams and rivers from logging. At Scotia, The Pacific Lumber Company in 1950, was the first to erect a modern sewage disposal plant. The plant was the first in California. Arcata was in the process of constructing a plant and Eureka's plans were in the blue print stage. Pollution from logging and the increased population of Humboldt County effected the Eel River. Engineers from all parts of the state came to view the plant. Eddy Oliver had been given credit for the supervision of the construction.58
As the number of mills increased in the 1950’s, competition for timberland began to bid up prices for live trees, also called stumpage. The increased price of stumpage was the cry for the professional forester. Beginning in 1950, to determine which trees should be cut and which trees should not be cut in order to maximize profit, the corporations hired foresters. The forester was considered a necessity for a successful long-range program called “permanence.” Permanence meant for the timber industry to leave stands of old growth and second growth and allowed the rate of growth of those trees to be equal to that rate of timber extraction.  

Destructive logging practices in the virgin forests of Humboldt County left 80% of the cut over land in unsatisfactory condition for production. After a clear cut of virgin timber, bush and hardwood, such as manzanita and oak would take over the cut over land in a process called ecological succession. Succession is when a new assortment of species enters and replaces what was there before. The increasing concerns over environmental regulation and the sustainability of the timber industry resulted in changes in the Forest Practice Act. Permits were required every year for the lumber companies to log. The permits included rules for restocking timberlands. Forty seed trees, 24 inches or more at the diameter at breast height (d.b.h.), or not less than eighty seed trees, 18 inches d.b.h., or a combination, were required to be left standing within each ten acres of cut over land. The diameter at breast height (d.b.h.) is a standard measurement four and half feet from the base of the tree for measuring the diameter of trees.

Enforcement of the Forest Practice Act included fees, fines, the denial of logging permits, and the denial of permit renewal to operators in violation of the Act. In 1953, Humboldt State University began forestry instruction and Arcata and Fortuna High Schools began forestry in their curriculum. Foresters predicted that if the rate of cut continued, the old growth forests would last 60 years.

While reforestation was proceeding on cut over land, Humboldt County loggers shifted their harvesting operations to Six Rivers National Forest. The Douglas fir timberland mixed with sugar pine, Port Orford cedar, Ponderosa pine, and white and red
fir, made up 85% of the land on Six Rivers National Forest, and it was all virgin timber. The administration of Six Rivers National Forest was begging the federal government to give them funds to create logging roads so they could make money from the housing boom as well. Six Rivers National Forest rangers declared that hunters and forest travelers should shoot porcupines on sight. The porcupines climbed to the tops of trees and ate its tender bark, which killed or deformed the trees. Gradually throughout the 1950’s, more and more public land, Forest Service land, accounted for the cut. By 1954, Six Rivers National Forest contributed 2.7 percent of their total timber to harvest, much less than the timber companies hoped.

Loggers and foresters believed that old growth trees were seen as wasteful if they were not growing anymore and were just “decaying.” The decaying old growth redwood trees were logged for the “good of humanity.” Foresters believed, in order to start effectively managing the land for re-seeding and timber growth, all the old growth must be cut down. Second growth trees grew much faster than old growth trees and were perceived as productive. By “thinning out” second growth forests through selective logging, the trees left standing called the residual trees, had less competition for light and grew faster. The logging truck proved useful for selective logging.

The Hammond Lumber Company was the first logging company in Humboldt County to have tree farms. Tree farms were designed to make the lumber industry permanent and to stabilize the towns dependent on the lumber industry. Hammond had two tree farms of 22,000 acres each, one on the Van Duzen River and one on the Eel River. The tree farms were established on August 26, 1950, sponsored by the California Redwood Association and the State Department of Forestry. The tree farms were extremely successful. Emanuel Fritz, known as Mr. Redwood, Professor of Forestry at the University of California at Berkeley from 1919 to 1954, believed that trees are like wheat; however, they take longer to mature. Any landowner in the north coast counties could apply to the association for a tree farm. The Hammond Lumber Company was not as
compassionate as one may be led to believe. The Hammond Lumber Company asked hunters, with the cooperation of the Fish and Game, that all black bears be shot on sight in their forests because they were eating the young trees grown in their tree farms. By the end of 1950, Hammond Lumber Company claimed that bears had destroyed 313,000 of their trees.  

The 1955 flood in Humboldt County marked the end of the log boom in Humboldt County. The sawmills that were too close to the rivers were destroyed. These logging companies did not have enough money to continue their business, so that was the end of their logging experience in Humboldt County. Restaurants, bars, and grocery stores were also destroyed if they were too close to a river. There were never as many sawmills operating after 1955. Some lumber companies had exhausted their timber supplies before 1955; however, an enormous decrease in the number of sawmills in Humboldt County began in 1955. “There was a ten year period, between 1945 and 1955, where the lumber industry was cookin’ pretty good.” Hotels and restaurants that served middle class tourists took the place of sawmills. The larger companies began buying up the smaller ones during this time. Many of the small timber companies were advised by foresters that the best thing to do would be to sell to the large corporations. Some of the small timber companies made a lot of money when they sold to the large timber companies. They often did not have to work again because they had enough money to get by. Many of them still worked in the logging business because the “sap was in their blood.” Georgia Pacific, Simpson, and Pacific Lumber Company bought many of the smaller mills and their timberland in order to eliminate the competition. The large lumber companies that did not buy the small timber company’s land after the flood of 1955, soon came to an end, because they did not have enough timberland to compete with the timber companies that did buy the smaller timber company’s land. In 1956, Georgia-Pacific purchased the Hammond Lumber Company. In 1956 the Simpson Logging Company purchased the Northern Redwood Lumber Company, Sage Land and Timber Company, and Malarky and Malarky
Woodworking Company. Holmes-Eureka Lumber Company came to an end in 1958 when the Pacific Lumber Company of Scotia purchased the company. Pacific Lumber Company, Simpson Lumber Company, Georgia Pacific (now Louisiana Pacific), and Sierra Pacific are the largest timber companies in Humboldt County today.75

The 1955 flood created a tragedy for Humboldt Redwood State Park. Massive amounts of logging debris, such as dead trees, branches, and dirt, rushed down Bull Creek into the park. The debris caused a blockade of debris in Bull Creek, ruining habitat. Humboldt State Park was supposed to have been preserved. The gyppo loggers were blamed for the tragedy. The gyppo loggers that clear-cut in the Bull Creek watershed above the park left huge amounts of logging debris.76

By the mid 1950’s, the American public became involved in the outdoor recreation movement. American citizens searched for quiet and serene places to go hiking and camping. The increasing amount of access roads to secluded areas, along with the increasing use of automobiles gave people the chance to see places they have never seen. Their search took them to Humboldt County. When tourists saw the majestic virgin redwood forests being logged in Humboldt County they complained to public officials their animosity for logging. In the 1960’s when the environmental movement began, it was a gradual transition from the outdoor recreation movement of the 1950’s, rather than a sudden outburst of environmentalism.77 Loggers who worked for the large timber industries during the log boom exclaimed that tourists did not realize the size and quantity of lumber in Humboldt County and how it was logged and sustained.78 Unwanted brush grew where tall trees once stood; however, electricity, improved roads, retail stores, and school districts in Humboldt County attracted people to its secluded and beautiful areas to live.

Lumbering nurtured the economy of Humboldt County and the United States by providing wood for the housing boom. Before the housing boom, Humboldt County was
not a fast growing area; you either worked for a lumber company or you were not employed. The only business in Arcata before the logging boom other than logging companies were two stores that sold everything, and one theater. After World War Two billboards along Highway 101 declared Humboldt County the "lumber center of the world." The lumber industry brought business, tourists, and increased the population of Humboldt County. More than half of the income from businesses in Humboldt County came from people involved in logging. There were many machine shops and supply stores for the lumber companies and the local public. Without logging...banks, shoe stores, cloths stores, movie theaters, barbers, and all other stores would nearly go out of business. In the 1950's, lumber in Humboldt County was the largest source of tax revenue in the State of California. Seventy percent of the economic activity of Humboldt County came from the forest industries. Naturally, business owners in Humboldt County were interested in a permanent supply of timber. The citizens of Humboldt County were much friendlier towards the lumber industry during the log boom than they are now. During the log boom the wives of loggers would often exclaim that they were sweeping the gold off the streets when sweeping the sawdust off their porches and sidewalks. Houses built in California from the wood logged in Humboldt County allowed a person of lower income to purchase a cheap house. New home payments were lower than rentals in the average city or community. "Why not buy a $12,000 house when payments are less than rent on a $6,000 house?"

The loggers became legendary. Loggers knew the forest was being destroyed; however, individually they were proud of what they were doing. The logging boom was the last episode of the Wild West. "People who did not know them do not know what a special breed they were." The modern loggers were tough physically and mentally because of the work demand. They usually worked all day, everyday, and the environment was tough on the body and soul. Those few who were lucky enough to survive the punishing work and still retain a sense of humor were admired.
Foresters knew that the future of logging was in the second growth forest. Most loggers realized that money would be spent on improving forestland and utilizing waste from forest products in order to profit. The loggers cared about the environment and the trees; they were not going to let Humboldt County's forests become a wasteland. After all, without the trees, the loggers would not have jobs. Logging practices after World War Two came under severe criticism in a more environmentally conscious era. This does not take away from the contributions of the loggers themselves to the growth, not only of Humboldt County's economy, but to the nation as a whole.

The loggers of Humboldt County, from the earliest worker to those of today, are good people, good workers, and mostly, family oriented. There was music, outdoor dances, rodeos, barbecues, and drive-in theaters. Televisions were not popular in the late 1940's and early 1950's in Humboldt County so there was more social interaction in the communities. The social life in Humboldt County during the log boom was a good feeling of prosperity. They are survivors and in order to survive developed common sense and a sense of community. It is a good life for them and they left an indelible mark on the area and all those that come to it.

The logger's contribution to the development of science and technology has led to a change in building styles. Steel posts and beams, instead of old growth lumber, began to be used for the construction of buildings, first in large buildings and now, more and more in residential size buildings for studs and siding.

The loggers of the logging boom in Humboldt County have left a legacy for us to live by. Locally, the lumber industries in Humboldt County and the northwest contributed to the social relationships of Humboldt County and the emergence of actual towns and cities. Nationally, loggers have contributed to the welfare of America and America was moving forward. New research and marketing of the northwest has revealed new use for the land, ecotourism. One hopes for a balance to meet our building needs and our spiritual and recreational needs.
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**Interviews**

Corky Nordstrom, wife of a gyppo mill owner, interview over the phone, 9/13/00

Dean Salinski, retired forester, interview at his house, Trinidad, Ca., 9/22/00

Jack Liboldt, retired logging truck driver, interview at V and N Burger, Arcata, Ca. 10/24/00

Mel Byrd, logger, interview at his house, Korbel, Ca., 11/4/00

**Personal Communications**

Bill Sise, Professor of Forestry, Humboldt State University, interview in his office, HSU Forestry building, Arcata, Ca., 9/18/00

Crawdad Nelson, maintenance worker, personal communication, Arcata, Ca., 10/27/00

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