

Old Pulaski: A Lumbering and Rafting Legacy

Part I

by Lynn Morrow

Prologue

This is an extension of “Piney Sawmillers at Gasconade Mills” in the 2008 *Old Settlers Gazette* [available online at www.oldstagecoachstop.org]. The present compilation of vignettes shows the maturity of the lumber industry from the late 1820s into the 1850s. So brisk was the trade by 1835 that Missouri legislators, acting upon complaints from sawmillers statewide, passed a law that enacted “penalties for malicious destruction of rafts, planks, etc. or rafts cut loose and set adrift.” The Missouri General Assembly passed a law in 1849 designating the “Big Piney Fork of Gasconade River a public highway.” The act allowed suitable passage by commercial rafts, a welcome aid for citizens exploiting the area’s forest resources.

This essay updates previously published historical locations of the earliest sawmills along the Big Piney River. Missouri Supreme Court case files and township surveys of the 1830s, along with records of new county organizations and their offices, reveal a premier commercial mill corridor in modern Texas County stretching from Mineral Spring to Slabtown. Those quaint place names came years after the mills began sawing. “Slabtown,” for example, suddenly appears in court records after the Civil War. It seems to have been coined by Yankee teamsters hauling lumber to Waynesville or by soldiers patrolling from Rolla. A lumberman who’d lived at Slabtown dated the beginning of his rafting career to 1863, and other sources suggest that the Union army permitted limited downriver rafting from Slabtown, at least by James A. Bates and a few Unionist supporters. Before the war, the place later called Slabtown ran from George W. Bradford’s sawmill below the Pulaski-Texas County line up Big Piney to the mouth of Big Paddy Creek and extended to the ridges edging the river valley to the west and east.

This was the era of the water-powered sash saw. For more details about the industry’s historic beginnings,

see the *Old Settlers Gazette* mentioned above. Driven by wooden waterwheels, sash saws cut more than twenty times the lumber of manual pit or whip saws. Cranks converted water power to horsepower, driving gears powering a vertical saw blade of thick iron. Modern old-house hunters look for the distinctive vertical saw marks on boards to estimate the age of historic buildings. The widespread introduction of large circular saws after the Civil War gradually replaced sash saws, but they were money-makers in their day. In this writing, dollar figures in brackets are modern valuations to help establish relative worth of the antebellum economy.

Historically, travelers seeking to go to the Southwest from St. Louis and the Missouri River entered the Ozarks at the mouth of the Gasconade River. Metaphorically, that was the gateway to what became “Old Pulaski” County, one of eleven counties created in 1833 to provide legal jurisdiction for rapid population growth in the Northern Ozarks. The Old Pulaski concept is defined and further discussed by John Bradbury and Terry Primas in *Old Pulaski in Pictures: Rivers, Rails, Roads, and Recreation*, Pulaski County, Missouri, 2012. Today, the area includes all or parts of Camden, Laclede, Wright, Texas, Phelps, Pulaski and Maries counties. This work concentrates on the central part of Old Pulaski. Germane to its business history is the litigation conducted at James Harrison’s house/tavern on Little Piney Creek near today’s Arlington (picture, page 32.) The judicial proceedings held there were among the few regular, public occasions on Old Pulaski’s annual calendar when its scattered residents congregated for conviviality.

The north-flowing waters of the Gasconade River were key for adventuresome pioneers looking to carve futures from the backwoods. The river flows 280 miles from its headwaters to its junction with the Muddy Missouri. Downstream toward St. Louis, settlers occupied a series of major river

bottoms that had become well-known during the War of 1812 as strategic sites of camps, forts, and established places of market exchange. Following the war, the bottoms became markets and labor pools for Piney woods lumbermen.

The Big Piney, the Gasconade’s major tributary, courses 105 miles before reaching its confluence only eight miles above the mouth of its sister, Little Piney Creek. Sawmillers had exhausted the Little Piney’s small concentration of yellow pine by the time surveyors arrived in the early 1820s, but the larger Big Piney lay entrenched in primeval woodlands. Investors developed the Ozarks’ first large-scale, commercial lumber industry there, giving rise to associated occupations such as rafter and ox-driver. Sawmills and rafts were portable, and sawyers erected mills at multiple locations along the river’s spring-fed tributaries. The mills of territorial and early statehood years represented partnerships among localized, small-scale investors. Individual lumbermen often owned their mills outright and their descendants tended to remain in the region, but by the late 1820s some mill sites included absentee landlords at St. Louis. By the 1830s, lumbering radically impacted the woodlands. Cut-over bottoms and nearby slopes opened the land for crops, grazing, and settlement. The ensuing creation of local governments brought lumbermen to preeminence in local society. Mill sites became quasi-governmental places for elections and probate sales, places where court-appointed commissioners arbitrated financial disagreements. They were also lending places where mill owners with surplus money extended credit to those without. Mill sites became milestones along public roads; county road districts commonly led from mill-to-mill.

Old Pulaski was a very large geography and the following overview presents many topics. It identifies nodes on the antebellum lumber map along with perceptions and descriptions of the timber country by outsiders. It includes tales of lumbermen, mechanics and millers, the vicissitudes of rafting

planks and marketing lumber; barter and labor agreements, and difficulties in filing land claims. The themes apply to all counties in Old Pulaski. Throughout it all, the relationships of interconnected families play crucial roles in the economic success of long distance trade. Judicial records are a particularly unique resource, not only for the individuals and families involved, but for us, too. The generation of the 1820s-50s replicated the spread of American democracy and its concomitant bureaucracy of justice, but the collective effort was neither simple nor easy for the participants.

Harrison Landing

In 1816, James and John McDonald, and Sylvester Pattie and his brother-in-law, blacksmith William Harle, constructed mills on the upper Big Piney. In March 1817, the St. Louis press reported hundreds of thousands of board feet of yellow pine plank arriving at the St. Louis wharf from two sawmills (the McDonald’s mill at Hazelton Spring and Pattie and Harle’s at Slabtown). The millers proved that forest products could be rafted economically northward toward St. Louis. The first place on the Gasconade, at the mouth of the Little Piney, began around 1817 with the establishment of a sawmill by Archibald McDonald and Alexander Willard, his brother-in-law (previously a blacksmith, gunsmith and the object of a court martial during Lewis and Clark’s famous Corps of Discovery expedition). The existence of these Piney mills in the Ozarks backwoods became known and useful to strangers. Traveler Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, for example, spent several days at Ashley’s Cave in November 1818 with the “hunter Roberts.” However, the inexperienced Roberts chose to chase deer westward toward the Big Lick (Licking) and got lost for a week trying to return to explorer Schoolcraft. Finally, he got bearings at a Big Piney sawmill (probably McDonald’s mill at Hazelton) and returned to his home on Courtois Creek.

The Ozarks and St. Louis always had a special economic relationship in the nineteenth century, the pine trade represents just one example. Missouri

Territory's population tripled between 1815 and 1820. The increase brought in skilled labor, accelerated commercial activity, and increased demand for all resources, especially lumber. Big Piney lumber at St. Louis was half the price of white pine brought down the Ohio River. By 1823, according to gazetteer Lewis Beck, it fell to a quarter of the cost. Piney plank at the St. Louis levee cost \$1.50 per hundred board feet, but Pittsburg plank commanded \$6.00. Since the business of sending high volumes of lumber downstream was risky, the first year of exporting pine to St. Louis in 1817 resulted in a Missouri law giving "one-fourth salvage rights" in either planks or shingles, or both, to those recovering them from broken-up rafts. Identifying legal ownership, however, was another challenge and the effectiveness of this statute is unknown.

More critical to development of the lumber trade was the establishment of a midway point where smaller "cribs" of lumber could be assembled into longer rafts. That place became Harrison's landing. Virginian James B. Harrison and Lovisa Duncan Harrison married in 1808 and a decade later were emigrants at St. Louis. Their arrival in 1818 was part of a group migration of inter-related Duncan and York families traveling overland on the Boone's Lick Trail with slaves, livestock, and goods in wagons. Harrison stopped at his brother John Harrison's farm on Loutre Island, one of the dozens of improvements in the ten-mile long bottom opposite modern Hermann, where he must have heard of or seen planks floating to Loutre Island and on to St. Louis. Perhaps that piqued his family's curiosity about the Ozarks.

At the upper end of Loutre Island, the band crossed the Missouri River, entered

the Gasconade, and traveled south to Little Piney Creek. The Harrisons remained on the smaller creek, near the sawmill of Archibald McDonald and blacksmith Alexander Willard, both residents of Bonhomme Bottom in St. Louis County. The two Duncan families settled north across the Gasconade River, later attaching their name to Duncan Creek. John York's family settled eastward, up Little Piney.

Harrison was neighbor to another new arrival, Daniel Morgan Boone, his slaves, and two of his Van Bibber relatives. The early combination of the upper Big Piney plank and milling on Little Piney Creek was commerce enough to commence seasonal work at the mouth of the Little Piney. Harrison's Landing, adjacent to the Gasconade, became a lumber yard until the Civil War. James Harrison and Lovisa birthed fourteen children. Their sons matured into talented men of enterprise who became merchants and speculators in Big Piney timberlands. The extended slaveholding family and the Harrison businesses clearly thrived, in part buoyed by the

toil of slaves.

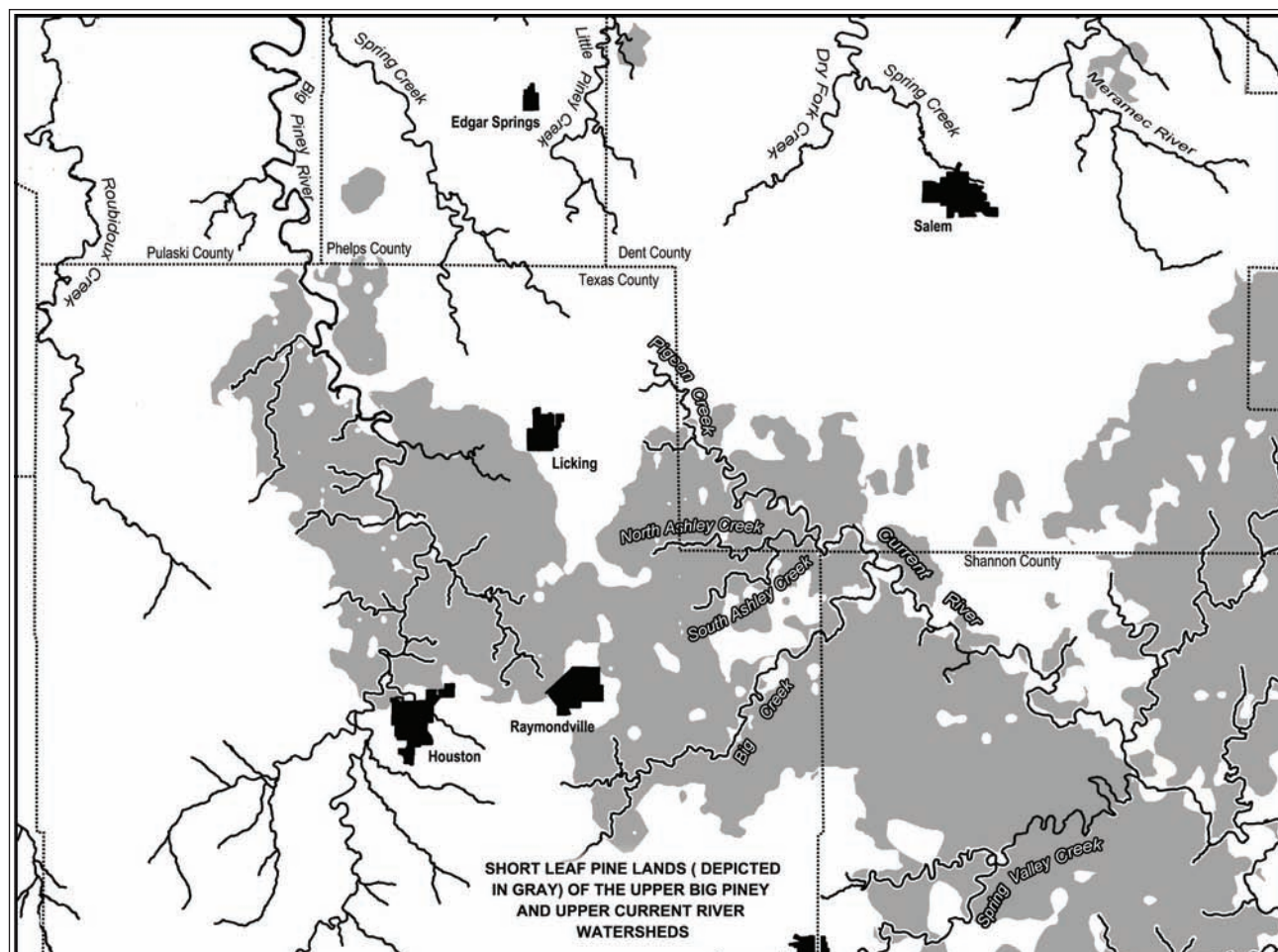
Joining the long-term pioneers on Little Piney were the Virginia Coppedges. They were a family of mechanics and merchants who built a factory to process bat guano (saltpeter) from cave deposits for shipment to St. Louis, and also managed a grist mill. Saltpeter production was not unlike salt boiling in kettles, but crystals of saltpeter were the product. The Coppedges had prior powder-making experience in Kentucky, part of a "classic saltpeter belt that ran from the Appalachians to the Ozarks." Future interlocking of the "first families" around Little Piney by the second generation of children, included John B. Harrison's marriage to Cynthia Coppedge in 1828. By the mid-1820s, Adam Bradford's family migrated south to Big Piney and up Spring Creek. Adam's eldest son, Isaac Bradford, married Martha Duncan. More Coppedge marriages and descendants brought Bates, Burnett, and Yowell families into the complex and connected genealogies in the Ozark valleys. These families and additional

new immigrants created an economic nexus at the Little Piney offering blacksmithing, merchandising and the products of agricultural improvements.

The Harrisons, Duncans, Coppedges and others were uniquely placed for trade in a woodlands economy. Hunters and trappers, roaming Indians, Indian traders operating between Ste. Genevieve and Delaware Town in southwest Missouri, migrating Cherokees, lumbermen and rafters, and, eventually, soldiers all walked or boated by their improvements. Few Ozarks families became involved in as many multiple-county developments as the Harrisons. By 1828, James's home housed the Little Piney post office and he was a road overseer, election judge, and justice-of-the-peace. Later he served two terms as state representative. From this cultural hearth, his sons helped found county seats at Tuscumbia and Lebanon, and local men elected his progeny to county government offices in Pulaski, Miller, Gasconade, and Phelps Counties. Brothers James P. and John B. Har-

rison likely influenced the wagon shipments of pine lumber along a new 1830s postal road to Tuscumbia for use in the construction of the town's new mercantile establishments.

The elder Harrison operated a tavern in the frontier sense, a profit center for public space, when he rented his house for Crawford County functions, 1829-36. These rented taverns generated early cash flow for owners in a day when most people lived by multiple sources of income. Other examples included lumberman and surveyor David Waldo, who was landlord to Gasconade County government and a public official in his own house at Mt. Sterling, James A. Bates, who had a brief stint in Old Pulaski local government on Roubidoux



Distribution of short leaf (yellow) pine based upon projection by James D. Harlan. Map by James Denny, 2016.

Creek, and David Lynch, who earned

1840s benefits at Houston. As government surveys brought public land to sale, James Harrison invested in local “Congress lands” in 1833 and purchased three more tracts in 1837. He served as county clerk and recorder, and son Robert B. Harrison was deputy clerk and justice-of-the-peace, an apprentice in the administration of local government. Their overnight company frequently included judges, lawyers and litigants.

Harrison’s tavern was also one of the few places where travelers might conduct trade. The store furnished a minimum of goods, but provided staples that were a considerable convenience in the backcountry. However, the pineries’ barter economy spawned abundant small disputes over the value of what was traded at Harrison’s and other stores. Competition in the pine plank trade created more expensive disagreements, ensuring that the activities of regular terms of court at Little Piney reverberated up and down the river valleys. Symbolically, while lawyers argued at Harrison’s courthouse (January 1829-May 1836), the growing interior commerce with St. Louis led one businessman to christen his new Mississippi River ferryboat Ozark in 1832. Water transport was the basis of a successful lumber trade flowing to landings in the river bottom settlements and on to St. Louis. The lumbermen, in effect, were itinerant merchants steering their products over water rather than land.

Harrison called his log house “Liberty Hill.” It was a commodious 16’ x 24’ room, two-story building with attached porch. It functioned for years as a government services site, the tenure of the post office, 1829-68, being the longest. The Harrison’s bonded servants, Arch, Bob, Betsy, J, and Sooky, named in James’s will, were active participants in the family economy at Liberty Hill. Harrison sons and slaves raised country produce for sale to traveling guests and maintained the agricultural dependencies. At the landing, Piney lumbermen assembled cribs into larger rafts for deeper water ahead, and purchased whiskey and consumables for the trip from Har-

ison. If they needed a blacksmith’s talents, James Harrison could oblige.

Without question, Harrison’s blacksmithing skills were valuable for a merchant on a primary road. In 1829, the Maramec Iron Works began shipping iron into the southwest Ozarks, crossing the Little Piney at the landing after 1829 and bringing economic benefits to Harrison. In fact, John Stanton, a fellow tavern owner north-east of Maramec Iron Works and an early supplier of black powder from Meramec Cave, was one of three commissioners who organized Crawford County and designated Harrison’s as seat of justice. John Duncan and lumberman Barney Lowe became two of the first justices in the new court (Duncan was elected state representative in 1830 & 1836). By 1835, iron retailers dotted a trail leading from Ben Wishon’s at Little Prairie (Dillon), to Little Piney, thence to Lebanon, where the next-generation mercantile firm of John B. Harrison and Benjamin Hooker (styled Harrison & Hooker) encouraged travelers to locate. In 1836, the Missouri General Assembly funded the survey of a new road that passed by Harrison Landing, continued to the merchants Hooker and Harrison and on toward Springfield. One of the road commissioners, who advised on specific locations, was industrialist Samuel Massey at the Maramec Iron Works.

Due to their public nature, taverns held reputations as places of hospi-



James Harrison’s landmark log home/tavern near present-day Jerome, although in modern Phelps County, was the first courthouse for Old Pulaski. Courtesy of The State Historical Society of Missouri.

tality. James Harrison, however, held his own prejudices, not uncommon during any day. One was revealed in February 1839, when a contingent of forced Cherokee migration headed his way. Contract physician Dr. William I. I. Morrow left a slim commentary about the journey from Caledonia to Massey’s Iron Works and a respite at the John Brinker farm. In the snow and bitter cold of February, four Cherokees died, “2 of Mills family, old Byrd, and Mary Fields,” and were buried near or on the Brinker property. The others walked westward to a bivouac at Benjamin Wishon’s on Little Prairie, then continued toward the upper Little Piney. Morrow wrote that they “passed a complete desert,” but “saw some fine gangs of deer.” The Cherokees camped on Beaver Creek and then in a “narrow rich bottom, but a sickly mean country” at the mouth of Mill creek, where a period map places merchant James A. Bates’s establishment.

Scouting the trail ahead, Morrow talked with James Harrison about his services. The weather had turned most foul and a disgruntled Morrow recorded in his famous diary, “James Harrison, 2 miles below Bates, was a mean man—will not let any person connected with the emigration stay with him.” After Morrow and the Cherokees spent a night in the Little Piney valley, they crossed the creek the following day and walked ten miles up the Gasconade Valley until

resting at “Harrisons on Big Piney;” where James’s sons, John B. and James P., had recently filed patents on land at the Big Piney-Gasconade junction. James Harrison’s sons did not turn down the opportunity to make a few dollars from the abject travelers.

The next day, the Morrow contingent moved on to “Roberdeau Creek” at Waynesville, where Morrow stayed with Pulaski County clerk, Col. Edwin Swink, one of the town founders. He was “a genteel man, & pretty wife and quite familiar,” wrote the contractor. The contingent moved on the next day to Stark’s Ford and met William Moore, who had donated the land for Waynesville and earlier hauled Boone’s Lick salt from Jefferson City back to the Gasconade. Dr. Morrow did not record whether or not he purchased salt before going on to southwest Missouri.

As institutions stretched across the Ozarks, “Uniformity of government and law gave continuity to frontier life.” Few men escaped the reach of the county court for very long and all settlers treasured “court day” as a fundamental frontier entertainment. We know that James Harrison’s famed log house became a regional icon for the next century; twentieth-century photographers made postcard images of the home for tourists who knew it as an “old courthouse.” But what business did visitors and government clients witness there in the 1830s? This study presents a sampling of judicial events in Old Pulaski that help define the lumber-producing region known generally in antebellum St. Louis as “Gasconade Mills.”

Beyond the Bottoms:

Yellow Pine in the Upland Ozarks

St. Louis and the Missouri river settlements consumed all lumber and logs that could be brought downriver from the hinterlands. Merchants also negotiated prices for other products from the interior, such as ginseng, saltpeter or gunpowder, whiskey, furs, salt pork, and more. Rafting made the trade possible, a method of conveyance dating to colonial times in the East. The techniques came west with immigrants and arrived early around St. Louis. Prior to the War of 1812,

Charles Lucas took whiskey and flour north from St. Louis up the Mississippi River to Wisconsin. He traded for lead, plank, cedar posts, and pickets that he rafted back to the city using bull hide-straps as fasteners for boxes and goods, and probably to bind portions of the raft itself.

The St. Louis Gazette in 1818 complained that even high-priced lumber was scarce in St. Louis, but it had already run ads for wealthy landowners like Pierre Chouteau who threatened to prosecute anyone who cut his timber. American mechanics moved their animal-driven mills up the Missouri River and installed them in the bottomland settlements (readers can see a partially reconstructed animal mill at the Daniel Boone Home, St. Charles County). Bonhomme, Boone's Settlement, Point Labadie, Pinckney-Charrette, and the ten-mile long Loutre Island all had investors in timber. The boom in post-war immigration created a seller's market;

goods and services were expensive, but in high demand.

West of St. Louis, Stephen Long's 1819 expedition reported "remarkable dense forests along the Missouri River" and up the Gasconade. Upon inquiry at Loutre Island, Long continued that the Missouri River settlements received their pine timber from the new "Gasconade Mills." Contemporary Americans in Missouri harshly criticized the French for not developing permanent industries, such as milling. Stephen Long's report, for example, said that the French and profits from the Indian fur trade had "in great measure failed" to improve St. Charles, but the new American agricultural population with "more permanent though less lucrative exchange" was replacing the old economy. Henry Bingham wrote the "New houses lately erected by Americans who have commenced improving the place rapidly" included sawn yellow pine. Material culture specialist

Charles Van Ravenswaay wrote that pine had "the advantage of being less liable to warp than many other local woods." Carpenters wanted it for cabinets, "seats of painted chairs and benches, kitchen tables," and used it in all sorts of applications in house interior construction. Accordingly, St. Louis markets consumed great quantities of yellow pine lumber rafted to the city. The work of Kentucky's grist and sawmill builders was among the most noticeable change in the landscape of improvements along Missouri waterways.

Carpenters and blacksmiths, known generically on the frontier as "mechanics," built and maintained the mills. Most also considered themselves farmers, but every farmer in the Ozarks was at least a part-time logger who cleared forest for fields and cut firewood for fuel. Many mechanics were also coopers who fabricated barrels and kegs and set the hoops around them. Barrels housed any

number of goods for shipment by raft or wagon, including salt pork, saltpeter, gunpowder, ginseng, and whiskey. Just as flatboat men did, workmen mixed loads for export. One writer reported ginseng hunters who could "pull up to 8 or 9 pounds of roots per day," but whiskey was a more lucrative load. Amos Stoddard declared in his 1812 volume that Westerners "have invented many ingenious arguments to prove the absolute necessity of a copious use of ardent spirits." Wherever sawmillers worked, whiskey was nearby. Perhaps Ozark distillers continued a flavoring tradition by placing green pine cones in their whiskey to impart a bitter but pleasant taste.

In practical terms, the Big Piney Valley was simply an outback of trans-Appalachian immigration. Kentucky sawmillers on Big Piney had seen corn whiskey floated from Frankfort and Louisville distilleries and white pine plank from New York rafted down the Ohio and as far as

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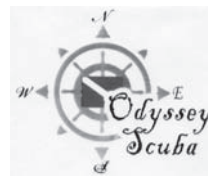


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New Orleans. In Old Pulaski in 1839, census-takers counted eleven commercial distilleries, ranking the county first in southwest Missouri and indicating that locals exported more than they drank. Old Pulaski was the leading exporter of ginseng, and marketed tobacco, cotton, wool, and maple sugar. Enumerators counted twenty-two sawmills in Old Pulaski, making it first in commercial pine lumber production. It also led in the production of pine tar and pitch used as sealants and in wound treatments. By the 1830s settlers could go to the Maramec Iron Works with a few pounds of tar in buckets and trade for bar iron, blacksmith services, or goods from the store. Pulaski's state-leading illiteracy rate for adults does not seem to have impeded the local economy,

By 1840, Old Pulaski had more men employed in manufacturing trades (111) than did Crawford County (73), where Maramec Iron had been in full blast since 1830. A few sources show specific trading between Piney lumbermen and Maramec. For example, middlemen merchants like James R. Gardner employed blacksmiths Patterson and Johnson near Boiling Spring and sought iron prices from Maramec Iron in 1839. It is unknown whether or not Gardner became a customer, although "Johnson and Roberts" did operate a blacksmith shop on Big Piney in the 1850s using bar iron and steel, no doubt shoeing oxen for the loggers. Gardner became one of Texas County's first officers in 1845 and served variously as presiding judge, circuit clerk, county clerk, and superintendent of buildings.

The chief concern of mill mechanics was erecting mill frames strong enough to withstand the stresses of operation, but they also built hewn log houses and braced timber frame dwellings. The Big Piney settlements had more planked floors, walls, and ceilings than other backwoods Ozarks settlements except places like the lead-mining center at Potosi. In comparison with hastily-built, round log cabins for temporary occupancy by laborers, the houses of the mill owners were more permanent and certainly less drafty. The favored

Southern Upland house in Missouri was a hewed log, double cabin with a multiple-use breezeway in-between, termed a dog-trot house. The open space was a multi-purpose area for relaxation, domestic work, and storage that might include lumber stacked for seasoning. Once sawmilling got underway, log houses began to be improved with variable-width plank sheeting in roofs, walls, and floors, and exteriors sealed with clapboards. These refinements were more common in the settlements to the Missouri River bottoms and St. Louis.

Isaac Bradford's dog-trot house on Spring Creek is a fine surviving example of this evolving tradition from the 1830s although it presently lacks its two-story porch veranda [see cover]. Wide pine planks are evident in the interior of the summer kitchen behind the house and in another detached structure that may have been a rare loom house where women fabricated textiles for domestic use and trade. Loom houses commonly contained spinning wheels as well. Although references to weaving houses are common in county histories along the Missouri River, none have been documented in the Ozarks. The slave and free women plying the looms and wheels of this cottage industry made a significant domestic contribution when store-bought textiles were scarce and beyond the means of most. Isaac Bradford's loom house



Isaac Neely Bradford (1805-1872) built a fine house on Spring Creek, ca. 1832 (cover photo). Photo of tintype from *Bradford Descendants* by Dr. Vance Bradford.

may be the last standing example in the Ozarks.

On the eve of Old Pulaski's founding in 1833, Crawford and Gasconade Counties reported a combined population of 3,300 whites and 200 slaves. Most important to Old Pulaski were 6,000 folks counted in Missouri's expanding gateway city at St. Louis by 1831. Within five years, the number doubled to 12,400. St. Louis construction stimulated the market for Piney joists, and plank, but more importantly, opened the Big Piney Valley as a settlement area. Sawmilling on an industrial scale attracted occupational immigrants but, more importantly, also provided opportunities for young bachelors and families alike. It also established a black presence in the Ozarks. Owned and hired, one or more slaves worked at most mills, making them integral to the lumber industry.

By 1830, surveyors had run section lines in the lower Gasconade River Valley and the Government Land Office (GLO) in St. Louis began issuing contracts for the upper valley. These surveys enhanced the evidentiary basis for disputed preemption claims by providing clear, legal descriptions for purchases of real estate, particularly valuable mill seats. Citizens in the new county governments with justices-of-the-peace and circuit courts more easily appealed neighborhood disputes to the Supreme Court, where new surveys and depositions referenced sawmills on the land. By then, most of the early founders of Missouri's pine lumber commerce had long since sold or traded their preemption claims and relocated. John McDonald, who had spent fifteen years at Hazelton Spring (not Spring Creek as reported earlier in the Gazette), and whose daughter Mary married his mill hand, Solomon King, went to the upper Roubidoux River, where he became justice-of-the-peace. Sylvester Pattie spent less than a decade on Paddy Creek and went west. Daniel Morgan Boone, who spent his last sawmilling years at Burnett Spring, just upriver from the creek that bears his name, likewise moved west. John Baldrige, who rafted plank for all of the above millers, built his own sash

mill at Boiling Spring (not Baldrige Creek as reported earlier), and Capt. Joshua H. Burckhardt, surveyor, miller, and justice-of-the-peace, owned a mill frame at Slabtown Spring. Dozens more sawed livings from the timber of the great bottoms of the Big Piney and on the slopes and ridges above.

Big Piney — From a Desert to a Commercial Woods

Perception of the Gasconade River Valley during the colonial period and early nineteenth-century was that of a "desert," that is, a country not fit for agriculture. Even after the War of 1812, Ozark uplands did not appeal to visitors looking for fertile agricultural soils or easily marketable resources. When Yankee explorer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft crossed the Ozarks, 1818-19, he bestowed a few local natural landmarks with names such as "Grand Spring, Serpentine River, and Tower Creek," but none of his place names stuck in Ozark vernacular speech. Mostly he recorded ridges, rocks, and briar patches. After a day in Texas County's West Piney Creek area, Schoolcraft concluded that the estimated three-cents per acre price of the Louisiana Purchase lands, if they resembled what he'd seen, "could be considered dear at that price."

Surveyor James Brown Campbell walked overland in modern southeast Osage County and into the Gasconade River Valley in 1821. Young Campbell wrote that "this tract of country formerly condemned by the surveyors as [not] being worth surveying is now, however, being surveyed." Sixty miles beyond was "Piney Fork where pine is plenty and many sawmills are erected." The earliest access to the pineries was by following water upstream. When Gasconade County formed in 1821, it was Daniel Morgan Boone, already a Little Piney Creek sawmiller, who surveyed and marked the first overland road from the Missouri River. It ran from the bank opposite Loutre Island to the Little Piney, crossing near James Harrison's house. It was not a highway by any means, but a bridle path by which travelers could thread their way around stumps and through brush into the Ozarks interior.

The new county government and new road also brought lumberman and county assessor David Waldo. Unaccustomed to paying taxes during the 1820s, many of the millers and rafters immediately became delinquents and later had to catch up on their public debt. These included Joshua H. Burckhartt, Nathan French, Archibald McDonald, John W. Ormsby, George Walton, Mathias Van Bibber, and others who, by the mid-1820s, had worked in the lumber trade for years. Probate court was closer, too. Morgan Boone and John Baldrige appraised James McDonald's "farm, saw mill, oxen, and carpenter's tools" following his death in 1821 and oversaw the transfer of ownership at Hazelton Spring to his son, John McDonald, and his non-resident mother.

The timbers and hardware of sash mills were portable, which is a reason that their historic sites are so difficult to locate. After statehood, investors transported, assembled and relocated them on all major Missouri streams during the 1820s. However, portability does not mean that it was cheap or easy to build a sash saw. Naturally, owners wanted a minimum of problems with their mills and spent considerable time studying topography for the appropriate technical combination of water power and construction. Builders had to know their way around tool boxes of carpenters and blacksmiths, and have a working knowledge of wood-working, masonry, and mechanical and hydraulic engineering. Planning a mill site could take a week; construction of dams, mill frames and associated structures took much longer. Afterwards, skilled workmen had to be available to make repairs. Want of a blacksmith's services, for example, could stop mill production, and sources suggest most sawmills had a separately-equipped blacksmith shop nearby. Among the Old Pulaski mechanics and millwrights, no one developed a more enviable reputation than Lindsey L. Coppedge. He built and serviced mills

on Little Piney Creek, Spring Creek, and Big Piney River, and probably some southeast of Licking and on the upper Current River. He was a key figure in keeping the Coppedge-connected families foremost in the lumber business, especially members of the Bates-Bradford-Burnett-Yowell group.

Building a mill dam could consume 45-60 days labor alone and required carpenters to install plank, sills and hewed timber at the dam and forebay, and a gate to regulate water flow. Then came the braced frame, covered sawmill building, 52' x 12' more or less. Among the first fabrications were ladders for use in framing and roofing. The miller had a choice of wood or metal to craft and install the carriage, wheels, and head blocks for moving logs to the saw blade. There was no choice but to carefully level it all, for an un-level carriage was an accident waiting to happen. A blacksmith brought a "set of saw mill irons with a crow bar" and installed cogs on the water wheel shaft to drive

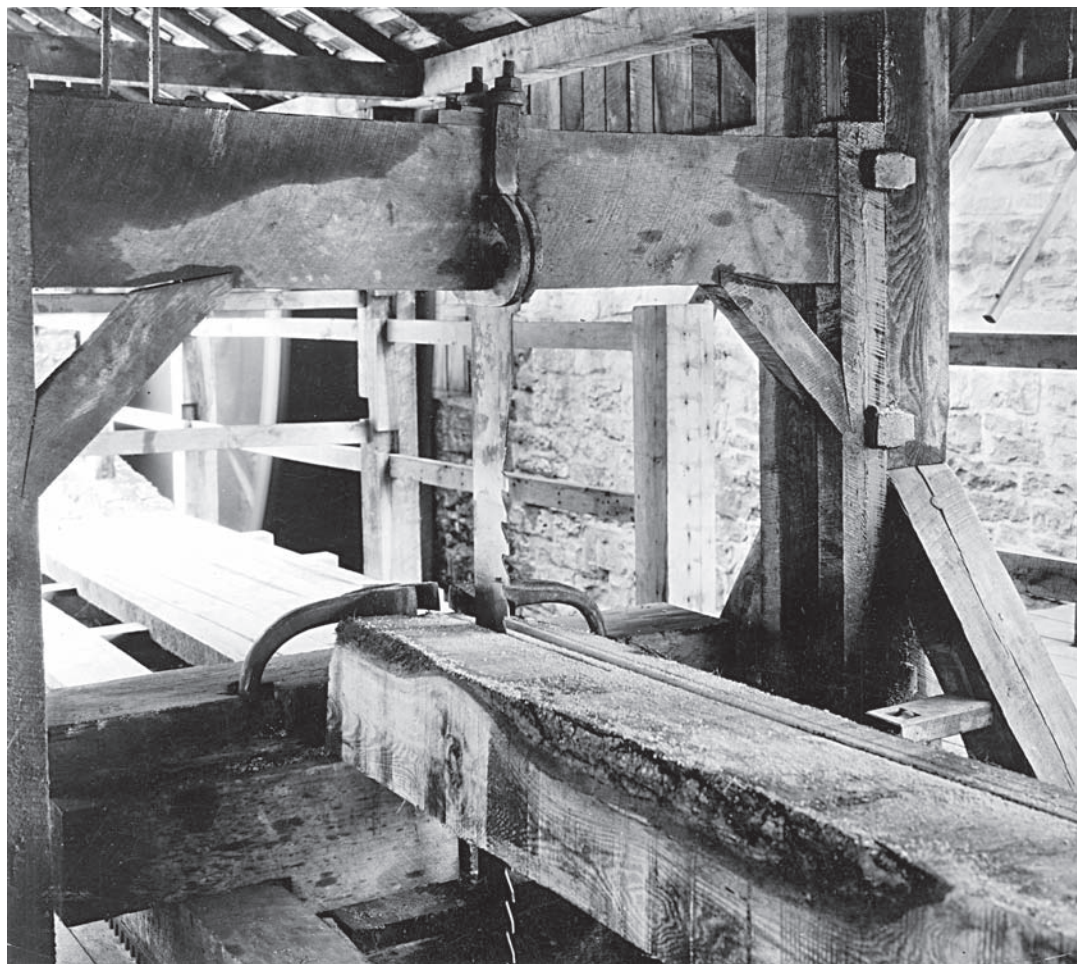
the thick vertical saw blade. He used special files to sharpen the blade. Other appurtenances common to most mill sites included wooden buckets, barrels and kegs. They were useful for holding all sorts of things, not the least of which was whiskey for the workers.

Portability enabled a variety of business arrangements. Affluent families purchased machinery, food and livestock, and employed mechanics, boatmen, teamsters and slaves for transportation and installation. Once the equipment was operative, owners speculated on mills as one might with real estate. Risk to capital spawned partnerships to lessen liability. Partners made annual agreements with contractors to manage mills and raft plank downriver to middlemen at market destinations. Early owners hoped to sell mills and improvements on preemption claims for profit, exactly what Morgan Boone and James Morrison did in 1825 at Burnett Spring.

On the Big Piney, the financial

arrangements between millers and prominent St. Louis builders and real estate investors, Joseph Laveille and George Morton, represent a unique urban-backcountry association. Laveille was St. Louis's first important architect and the politically-active Morton was a major real estate investor and purchaser of lumber from incoming steamboats. Laveille and Morton's booming construction business in the center of the St. Louis wharf district was an economic magnet for pine lumber. By 1837, Laveille valued his "first rate" yellow pine at \$5.00 per hundred feet, and "second rate" at \$4.00-\$4.50, both higher prices than hardwoods brought. Their carpenter, joinery, and construction shop was adjacent to the Catholic Cathedral (which Laveille built) and near the Mississippi River on the former business site of Joseph Roubidoux. Laveille and Morton's ventures into Big Piney sawmill production led to contracts for millers and rafters to deliver dimensional plank and joists to the city wharf, a short walk from their shop. Laveille and Morton eventually split into two lumber companies in the mid-1830s, but both knew well where James Harrison's "courthouse" stood.

The first exports of plank to the St. Louis wharf by the McDonalds and Pattie in 1817 had been an immediate success. Yellow pine undercut higher-priced white pine imported by flatboats, keelboats and finally steamboats from Pittsburg to St. Louis. By the mid-1830s, white pine rafts from the Wisconsin River floated down the Mississippi to St. Louis, but their immense volume did not stem the demand for native yellow pine. The burgeoning St. Louis market consumed every stick that millers could deliver. By 1835, St. Louis lumber dealers had so many board feet on hand that they sent Big Piney lumber to the Deep South. St. Louis's growing population continued to devour dimensional lumber until the city suffered a devastating cholera epidemic and major fire in 1849. Big Piney millers didn't have to wait long for new orders. Rebuilding St. Louis during the



The sawing apparatus of a sash mill featured a six foot saw blade rigidly fastened to a sash (much like a window sash) that moved up and down in a greased groove. The blade only cut on the three foot down stroke.

1850s provided the last major stimulus for sawing and rafting pine plank to the city.

In the pineries of the early nineteenth century, one might simultaneously encounter hand-labor pit saws, animal-powered mills, and water-powered mills. But it was the sash saw—water-powered and vertical—that dominated manufacturing during the rafting era. It was not until 1841 that Henry Franklin Ormsby imported the first steam boiler to provide power for a sawmill, giving rise to the Texas County place name, “Steam Mill Hollow.” Ormsby sold his boiler to another miller in 1845; by 1850, several more had arrived. These machines were smaller than the steam-powered traction engines pictured in late nineteenth-century photographs. The census enumerator reported that most steam mills generated forty horsepower, but some produced only seven. On Big Piney, two steam and thirteen water-pow-

ered sawmills sawed nearly nine million board feet of pine plank in 1849 alone. During the 1850s, James Spilman, Lewis M. Trusty, and Robert W. Rodgers all operated Big Piney steam mills. Young Stephen A. Taylor, backed by Isaac Bradford, managed another southeast of Licking. During this period, with a regional market available, several mills offered cord wood for domestic fuel.

Both steam and water-powered sawmills could generate well over a million board feet annually, but water-powered sash mills only occasionally topped a million. All lumber was stacked to season prior to rafting. The milling landscape in the Piney bottoms must have been a sight to see. A traveler coming upon a mill seat at one of the great springs saw thousands of stumps on hillsides and ridges, bottomlands cleared for oxen and hay fields, mill frames and ponds, log and timber frame houses with accompanying gardens, and stack after

stack of curing lumber. In season, the sounds of lumbering permeated the valley. Mill seats frequently concentrated populations larger than most of the postal hamlets in the Ozarks as men arrived seasonally from the lower Gasconade and St. Louis to work as millhands and rafters. These pockets of lumbermen provided local agricultural markets for nearby farmers lucky enough to get their patronage.

Sawmills did not run all year, some “sat at rest” for weeks or months of the calendar year. To plan a season, owners balanced the cost of labor of timber cutters, ox-drivers and millhands, and a host of sundry expenses with the projected volume their saws would cut. It took a lot of felling, hauling and sawing before a miller was ready to ship his product, and, as in any manufacturing enterprise, disruptions in resources, breakdowns and injuries negatively affected production. Nevertheless, lumbermen marshaled hundreds of logs and

stacked thousands of feet of green lumber long before laborers prepared the cribs that made up the rafts. The great majority of the stumpage that oxen brought to the mills came from federal “Congress lands” euphemistically referred to as “grandma’s” land. After all, why pay taxes on back country real estate, when “waste wild land” was free for the taking from the “Ozark desert”? In a real sense then, government timber comprised the Piney rafts. As surveys and profits allowed, capitalist lumbermen purchased their mill seats (springs) and valley land, then invested in limited upland acreage for their farms.


Claiming the Congress Land

The efforts of claimants to create a base of operations were not easy. Squatters outpaced government organization, but the federal government encouraged settlers to improve the land with an expectation to file for land patents when regional land offices finally opened. However, the first

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sawmillers were but temporary residents as demonstrated by Alexander Willard, Sylvester Pattie and Morgan Boone. American pioneers typically lived off the land with a few imported goods, then sold their improvements to a succession of occupants until finally one of them entered a formal claim—this is what happened at Big Piney sawmills seats. There were no fenced enclosures except to contain animals or small food plots, so pre-emption improvements included free access to woodlands.

The open woods attracted risk-takers with capital or credit lines and visions of turning pine into gold. Old Pulaski's antebellum decades witnessed archetypal struggles by entrepreneurs who established the milling industry. Investors began on un-surveyed lands, managed their improvements, and then filed for fee simple ownership at the Government Land Office (GLO) in Jackson, Mis-

souri. Federal land surveys were by Congressional townships. A surveyor contracted for a specific township and range such as Township 33 North and Range 10 West. After surveying, contractors turned in field notebooks for review by the St. Louis administrative office. Once approved, a GLO district office, such as the one at Jackson, announced in the newspaper that preemption claims and new filings would be accepted after a certain date. Ozarkers intending to remain on their preemption improvements watched the newspapers closely for those sale dates. That frequently meant a long journey lasting several days and involved more than simply filing legal documents. There was socializing in camps and roadside taverns, hunting along the way, and shopping to be done at the mercantile establishments in town. However, those who became the "first families" had to hurry before the hired agents of land speculators

entered claims to the choicest locations. However, for settlers, sawmillers and speculators alike, making a profit on a claim was another matter altogether.

The heart of Old Pulaski's commercial pine lay in modern north-west Texas County. By the 1830s, marketing relationships with buyers in the Missouri River bottoms, St. Charles and St. Louis were in place. Piney millers had also developed a seasonal-to-fulltime labor pool of slaves (both owned and hired) as well as whites. Ultimately they employed white women as unskilled laborers around mill sites, an unusual if not unique occurrence in the Ozark backwoods at that time. As a class, the principal Piney lumbermen mostly hailed from Kentucky families who had earlier migrated to the lower Missouri River Valley. Many had relatives or friends in the valley settlements and back in the Blue-

grass State. As elsewhere in Missouri, families in business intermarried and pursued common interests. When it came to make the trip to Jackson in 1831, the day must have held special significance for mill owners who had worked long and hard in the back-country to create a viable commercial industry.

The men who first appeared in Jackson to file on Piney sites knew one another from the sawmilling business, and would become better acquainted as they became litigants and witnesses in subsequent legal matters at the courthouse. The first Texas County land filing in April 1831 was for Morgan Boone's former preemption at Burnett Spring, one of the more valuable properties. The desirable real estate immediately became the subject of an historic court battle between rafter-turned-miller Newell Hayden, lumberman Barney Lowe, and Laveille and Morton (case



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discussed later).

Less contentious land filings followed. In May 1831, Adam Bradford and son Isaac entered Spring Creek land. The same month, John Baldrige filed on Boiling Spring, near a saltpeter cave. Baldrige traveled to Jackson with St. Louisans William Truesdale and George Hines, who had set up a sawmill and company store on Arthur's Creek in the late 1820s. In January 1832, Hines returned to Jackson to file on land downriver near Miller Spring, below today's Ross Access. Years later, William and Alexander McCourtney gravitated to that premium locale.

Lumbermen waited to leave for Jackson until late August, when streams were low and rafters idle. George Hines filed for more Big Piney land at Burton Branch (below Mineral Spring) on September 1, 1831. His traveling partner, Henry F. Ormsby, claimed land at Hazelton Spring (his brothers, George W. and

William T. Ormsby, added more in 1837). During the same month in 1831, Joshua H. Burckhardt filed at Slabtown Spring, and his traveling associate from Maramec Iron Company, Samuel Massey, filed for timber lands needed for charcoal production near the furnace. Massey stayed in Jackson for several days to make additional claims. The iron furnace and associated operations (coaling, stockraising and merchandising) formed an industrial complement to sawmilling, similarly attracting permanent residents and developing regional trade.

In days following in the fall of 1831, John Baldrige filed on land that later became Licking. Thomas Caulk, a Kentuckian from Bonhomme Bottom, entered at Mason Bridge. On September 12, 1831, pioneer settlers and friends James Harrison, Larkin Bates and John Duncan, Jr., all claimed bottom land near Harrison's Landing. The upshot of these earliest Jackson filings in 1831-32 resulted in fee sim-

ple ownership of prime mill and marketing seats at Arthur's Creek, Boiling Spring, Burnett Spring, Mason Bridge, Hazelton Spring, Slabtown Spring, Miller Spring, and Harrison's Landing. Those sites were the heart of pine lumbering and the upper part of the riverine avenue supplying the Missouri River bottoms and St. Louis.

Early filings in 1833 included James Stevens at Arthur's Creek. Henry Ormsby partnered with Thomas Caulk for more acreage near Mason Bridge and Hazelton Spring. Ormsby purchased nearly thirty parcels over the next three decades, plus 480 acres in forty-acre tracts each of school lands in Section 16 of Township 32, Range 10, land that the White River Trace traversed. Other risk-takers in Ozarks manufacturing followed.

A group of expanded filings between January-November 1834 helped stabilize local lumber history for the following generation. They included familiar names: John

Baldrige, James A. Bates, the Bradfords (Isaac, John B., and William), Thomas Caulk, Lindsey and George Coppedge, John and John Jr. Duncan, James Harrison, the Ormsbys (Henry, George, and William), William Truesdale, and the Waltons (Joseph, Lewis, and William). Ormsby became the longest-tenured lumberman, working in Old Pulaski from about 1828 to the Civil War, and for several years afterwards until his death. His family had a migration history typical to many in the lumber trade. They came incrementally down the Ohio River, through Kaskaskia, and on to St. Louis prior to statehood. Later they moved up the Missouri River and eventually to the Piney. These families were not simple pioneers eking out a subsistence living on the land. All of them brought affluence and lines of credit from earlier successful economic endeavors.

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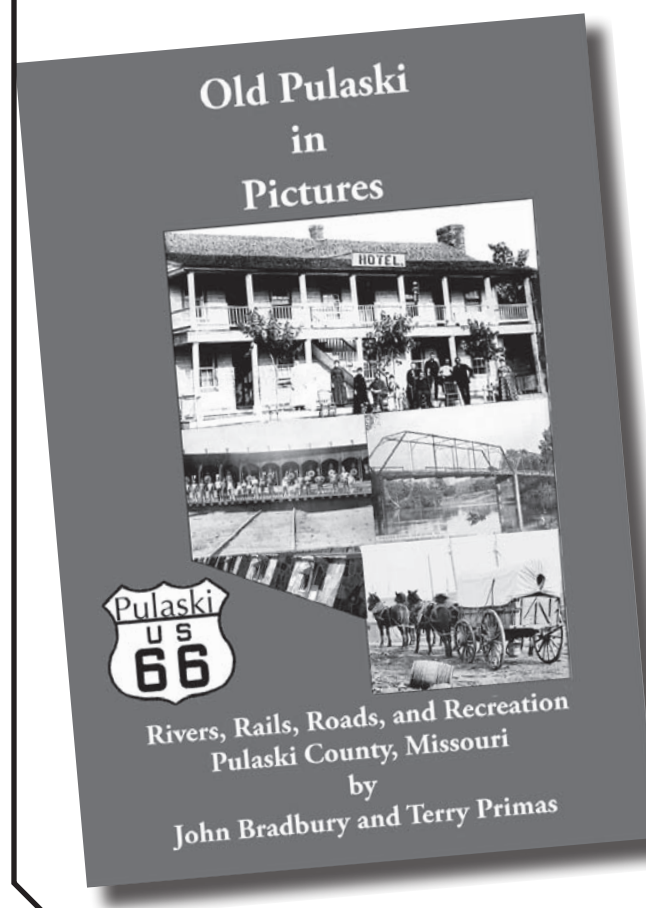
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(kin of John Baldrige and Joshua H. Burckhartt) claimed several parcels around Arthur's Creek. David Lynch, a carpenter and blacksmith at St. Charles and later Warren County, invested with brother-in-law John Fourt at Mineral Spring and at Arthur's Creek (1837). Thomas Caulk added land at Boiling Spring (1837). This purchase gave partners Caulk and Ormsby premier lumbering locales at Boiling Spring, Mason Ford, and Hazelton Spring. In June 1837, Joshua H. Burckhartt sold his mill and 147 acres to Kentuckian James A. Bates. The entrepreneurial Bates, like Henry F. Ormsby, would eventually buy nearly thirty tracts of pine. For some reason Bates, the single most successful of the lumbermen with a career lasting into the late 1870s, did not record his deed for Burckhartt's mill seat in Houston until January 1872. He did so then in order to clear the probate estate of Alfred Merrill, who had purchased Bates's 1840s

frame house at Slabtown Spring in 1857. Bates built a grand house along Slabtown Road in 1855-57, now in ruins. His success was measurably aided by his timber-investing brothers-in-law, William, Isaac, James and George Washington Bradford, and by other Coppedge relations.

Open range near Big Piney bottoms began to disappear as ever-increasing surveys locked landholders around the great springs into definable areas and as investors clustered near previous improvements. By 1837, GLO record books began bearing notations indicating on which side of the river bottom entries were located. For example, the GLO recorder wrote in the land register the phrase "on the west [or east] side Piney Fork, Gasconade River" for all purchases by James A. Bates (around Slabtown), John B. and James P. Harrison (at mouth of Big Piney), William Ormsby (near Boiling Spring) and William and son James Truesdale (near Mason Bridge

and south of Slabtown). Representative of clustered patents were those at Slabtown, where several lumbermen registered large tracts within two miles north and south of the spring. Opposite many of the mill sites were Piney River bluffs where loggers shoved logs down "slides," a technique pre-dating the better known "tie slides" of the post-Civil War railroad era.

The 1837 filings signal a commercial vision between James A. Bates and Benjamin B. Harrison, but the details are in the wind. The young men journeyed to Jackson and filed on Slabtown land the same day, and four years later, in 1841, repeated the process. Then, in January 1844, Bates added land (then in Wright County) around Slabtown Spring, built a two-story frame house, and acquired downriver acreage in Piney bottoms. The following year, 1845, Bates purchased land at modern Arlington. Surely, this evolution of

real estate acquisition was connected to Bates's vision for rafting lumber to Harrison's Landing, where workmen restacked cribs of lumber and joined rafts together for the deeper water to the north. Bates's measured expansion during the depression years of 1837-43 is unusual, but occurred when St. Louis, the major lumber market, was doubling in population. His associate Benjamin Harrison, the sixth son of James Harrison, apparently filed on lands for the family businesses, as Texas County tracts later became part of James Harrison's probate estate. Bates and the Harrisons also had a kin relationship through the Coppedges. All of them had mercantile establishments along Little Piney Creek, so perhaps the 1837 land purchases represent the beginning efforts of these "first families" to invest seriously in the established Big Piney milling industry, starting with Bates's purchase of the Burckhartt Mill. Whether it did or not, Bates embarked upon a

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career at Slabtown that lasted past the nation's centennial.

It is no surprise that Ozarks yellow pine attracted new industrialists in a nation that boasted 31,000 sawmills by the 1840 census. Some who came down the Ohio Valley to Big Piney had previous experience in Kentucky's reported 700 saw mills, Indiana's 1,200, or Illinois's nearly 800. Energetic new arrivals stimulated competition in the 1840s for the remaining virgin pine. The pattern of new claims clearly began with the river bottoms and gradually moved up the tributaries and into the uplands. As elsewhere in the Ozarks, squatters entered numerous claims after the Graduation Act in 1854 that mandated reduced per-acre prices. A selection of lumbermen and their general locations follows. Dates reflect the award of land certificates; the actual filings in Jackson occurred earlier.

The wealthy Asa Ellis bought land at Piney River Narrows and Mineral Spring (1841), and sawmiller, local notary, and justice William C. Skinner filed further downriver (1841). One of the larger slaveholders in the pineries, St. Louisan Nimrod Snyder, eventually brought a steam mill to his Boiling Spring patent (1841). Snyder's large operation replaced that of John Baldrige after he, Thomas Caulk, and Henry F. Ormsby all relocated near the overland White River Trace. In January 1848, Snyder's St. Louis business partners, Bartholemew and Valentine Rice, acquired legal rights to use George Page's portable, steam-powered, circular saw mill in the pineries. It became a top producer of Big Piney lumber. The manufacturing concentration at Boiling Spring was well known but did not acquire the postal name, "Raftville," until 1916. Presumably, the name recalls the antebellum plank yard and raft assembly point at Boiling Spring. Through the 1840s, mill owners hired and boarded dozens of young men. Snyder alone boarded a couple of dozen mill hands and laborers. Virtually all millers hired single young women for the cooking and washing chores at the boarding house.

Population growth in the Missouri



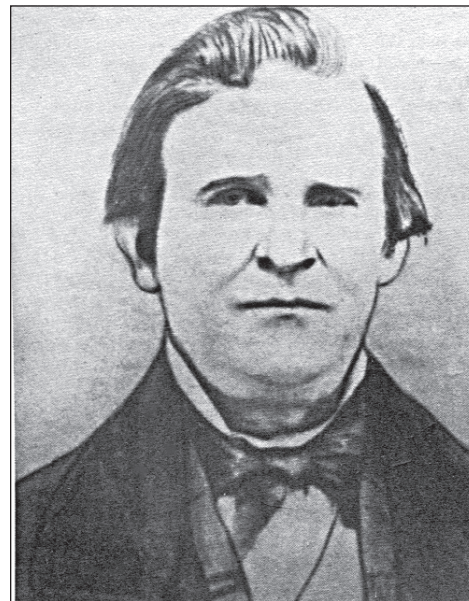
Oxen were the chosen beasts of burden, hauling logs from the forest to the sawmill. Texas County had the largest number of oxen in the state. Courtesy of John Bradbury.

River Valley, especially in St. Louis, drove industrial expansion on the Piney. The 1835 city had over 8,300 population. Ten years later there were over 35,000, and those urban folks needed dimensional lumber. Among those filling that need was Kentuckian Absalom Harrison, who chose property above Hazelton Spring (1841). Harrison, like Indianan David B. Commons, became a census-taker. Asa Ellis, a native Missourian and Texas County's first assessor in 1845 and sheriff in 1846, purchased land near Dog's Bluff (1841). In 1845 he sold two slaves to William Skinner (by then the first Texas County clerk) for 33,000' of plank [\$8,300]. He added property at Burton Branch and Horseshoe Bend, north of Mineral Spring (1842). By 1850 and until he left for California later in the decade, Ellis ranked as the largest landowner with over 1,000 acres. John E. Williams bought a parcel at Arthur's Creek (1843). James N. Bradford (Isaac's brother) invested in several parcels around modern White Forest and on Boone Creek (1848-59).

Those landowners and lumbermen during the 1840s and 1850s managed to construct, maintain, and operate eighteen commercial sawmills along Big Piney River in Texas County. The steady filing of land patents and commencement of new sawmills show the unabated trajectory of the lumber

business, slowed only briefly by floods or by injuries and sickness among the principals. Far downstream, Missouri builders collectively installed Piney planks in thousands of historic structures in the Missouri and mid-Mississippi River Valleys.

All sawmillers and loggers needed more than water power—they required strength and endurance of oxen, particularly as the edge of the forest receded and logs had to be dragged further. As a result, no county in Missouri counted nearly as many oxen as did Texas. By 1849, industry leader James A. Bates owned mills at



James Addison Bates (1813-1885) was the timber industry leader by the 1840s. Image from *Bradford Descendants* by Dr. Vance Bradford.

Slabtown and on Paddy Creek and kept 60 oxen at the spring. His brother-in-law, Kentuckian John Burnett Bradford, listed as an "ox driver" on the census, owned 40 oxen on Paddy Creek. Henry F. Ormsby managed the same number at Hazelton Spring while Nimrod Snyder fed 62 oxen at Boiling Spring. David B. Commons kept 29 for ox-driving boarders at his farm and sawmill on Arthur's Creek that he purchased from John E. Williams in April 1845 on \$2,500 credit. Commons issued three promissory notes and paid \$833 to Williams at the end of rafting seasons in November 1845, 1846, and 1847. Robert W. Rodgers fed 50 oxen on Arthur's Creek and boarded several hands, but his operation was most remarkable for its dozen slaves—the most bonded labor in Texas County. Asa Ellis, namesake of the proposed county seat at Ellsworth, worked 56 oxen. Individual loggers kept a half-dozen, or more, as did most folks who made regular wagon trips to St. Louis. Some settlers probably rented oxen for journeys to the city just as they did for breaking new ground and pulling stumps. At different times, Bates, Bradford and Ormsby oxen supplied more than one mill simultaneously. By 1860, however, statewide lumber competition significantly reduced the number of oxen locally.

Likewise, no other rural county in Missouri reported more women working at industrial sites than did Texas. The 1850 census reported more than three dozen. Five worked at one sawmill and there was at least one at all fifteen mills. Specific tasks were not listed. Likely, women labored with baskets or carts to remove the immense amounts of sawdust that accumulated under mill frames. They may also have removed and stacked waste slabs that were marketable for steam boiler fuel and domestic use, and may have occasionally stacked dimensional lumber for seasoning. Whatever their contribution, it is unfortunate that it has escaped preservation in Ozarks folklore.

A Saw Mill Agreement on Preempted Land

How did sawmillers agree to do

business before they officially owned a fee simple property deed? Fortunately, we have an excellent example of the costs and legal responsibilities. In 1827, William Truesdale, who came from Kentucky to St. Louis, then to Gasconade County, acquired an improvement on Arthur's Creek. Truesdale and former rafter Nathan French had earlier established this mill in the mid-1820s. On September 26, 1827, Truesdale executed a partnership with St. Louis merchant, George W. Hines. In the articles of agreement, Truesdale sold "to Hines the undivided half of his mills, mill seats [at Arthur's Creek and Mineral Spring], farms, pineries, [high-wheeled timber] carts, oxen, cows, etc. and all other of his property on the Gasconade River according to the full intent and meaning of a Bill of Sale for consideration of the sum of Two thousand dollars [\$41,200]." Note that this 1827 contract refers to the "Gasconade River," not Big Piney, as Piney and Arthur's Creek in St. Louisans' understanding were part of "Gasconade Mills," and everyone in the Missouri River Valley knew where the mouth of Gasconade River was.

Truesdale and Hines jointly managed the mills and farms, and also "in the sale of Plank in St. Louis, which is to continue from October 25, 1827, for the following five years." The partners agreed to build a second sawmill lying about three miles above the mill "now occupied by Truesdale" on Arthur's Creek. Truesdale's responsibility was for the management of both mills, while Hines received and marketed plank in St. Louis, and both shared one-half of the profits. Each partner agreed to keep "regular account of the receipts and expenditures," with settlements "made yearly" or more frequently if one partner requested it by "giving ten days' notice to the other partner."

Less than a year later, on June 3, 1828, Truesdale and Hines mortgaged the older sawmill "on Piney Fork" (the original Arthur's Creek mill) for \$4,143.59 [\$88,000] to George Morton, lumber dealer in St. Louis. Morton's purchase included "the undivided two-thirds of a new sawmill not yet finished [Mineral Spring] situ-

ated about three miles above this mill "with all the improvements, crops, appurtenances, etc. Also sixteen yoke of oxen with ten yokes – seven milch cows and all their increase. Six young cattle, one hundred hogs more or less, with increase, three horses, two timber wheels, one wagon, eight log chains, four ploughs – ten axes, hoes, etc. with all improvements" completed the agreement. Part-time lumberman and justice-of-the-peace, Barney Lowe, validated the contract before George Morton filed the agreement in the Recorder of Deeds office, St. Louis.

The June 1828 agreement included a bond that Truesdale and Hines would pay Morton \$4,143.59, plus ten percent interest, by November 1, 1828. Truesdale and Hines counted on sawing and rafting enough plank to St. Louis to satisfy their debt, but their plan failed and Morton revoked the bond.

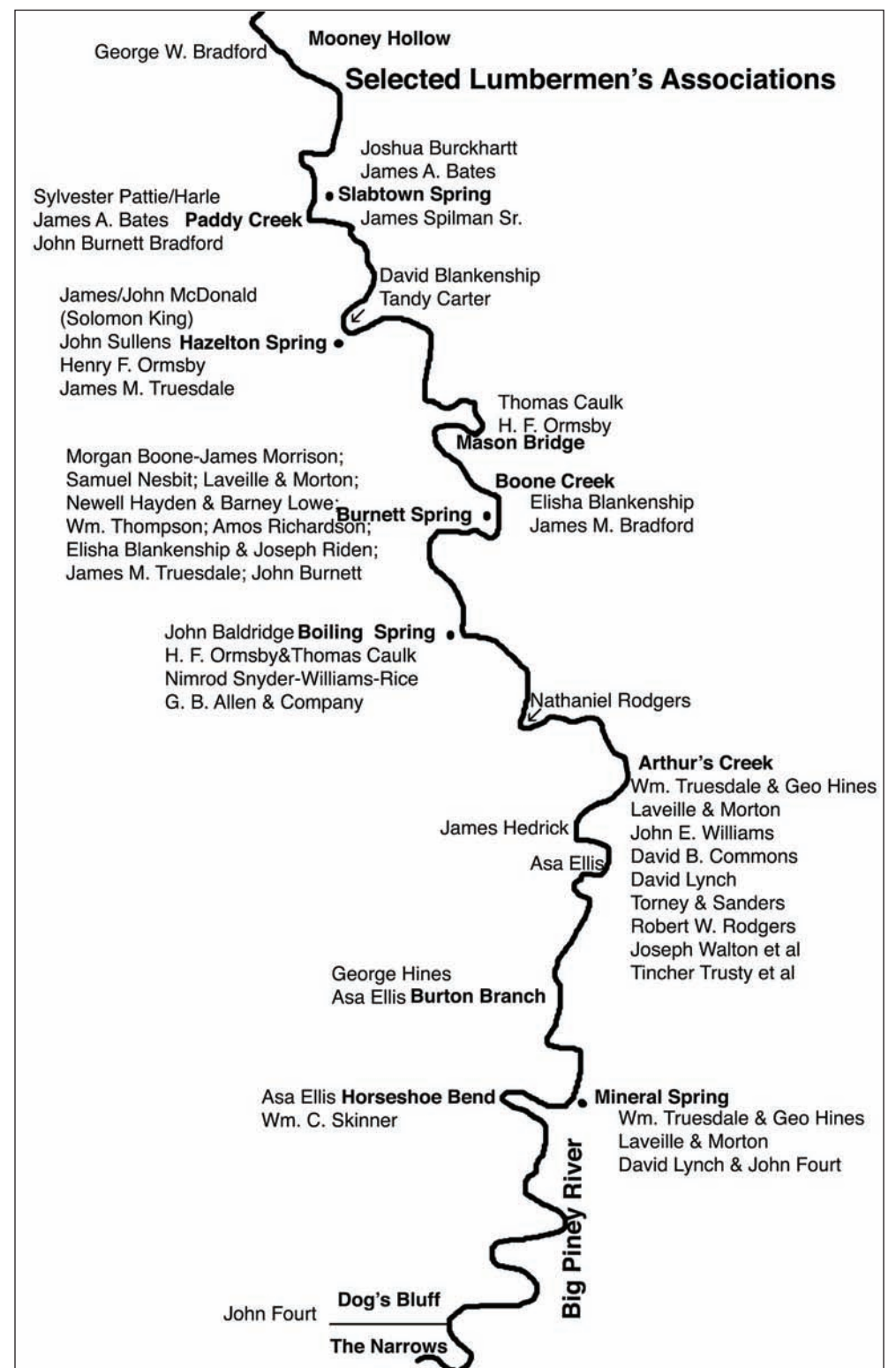
We don't know why Truesdale and Hines could not deliver the agreed upon plank. However, on January 9, 1829 the three men executed a revised contract. George Morton took ownership of "their mills on the Piney fork of the Gasconade River with their plantation, horses, boars, oxen, ox yokes, chains, with all other property as mentioned." The second sawmill at Mineral Spring was still not finished. Combined mill expenses put Morton's projected costs at \$6,339.72 [\$138,700]. Truesdale and Hines, however, did have 200,000 board feet of plank ready for delivery. They agreed to attend to the rafting and "furnish such Raftsmen as they in their opinion shall deem safe persons" to deliver to George Morton "plank to be clean washed and drawn on the beach at St. Louis." Morton promised to pay to Truesdale and Hines the cash market price for the lumber and further agreed to pay expenses in "carrying on the completion of the mills which shall be charged to the amount of Truesdale and Hines." Truesdale and Hines promised "to conduct and carry on said Mills to the best advantage, in order that the debt due George Morton may be speedily liquidated." In addition to the princi-

pals, Barney Lowe and Thomas Myers (rafter and future Old Pulaski county sheriff) attested to the agreement.

Truesdale and Hines sent plank downriver but argued over accounting at the mills and company store receipts. In July 1830, Morton sued Truesdale and Hines in St. Louis for the outstanding balance on his loan to them. Morton must have been frustrated as he and his partner Joseph Laveille had contracts of their own to fill in the booming St. Louis market.

Those commitments led Morton to continue his risk on Big Piney despite unpredictable labor in the Ozarks. As yellow pine stumpage continually receded from mill seats, labor costs gradually rose. In the end, Morton made arrangements with other lumbermen around Arthur's Creek.

The Truesdale family reorganized and continued as major players in Piney's lumber business. William's son, James, grew up in the trade and purchased an Ormsby sawmill at Ha-



Sawmills and some of the attendant lumbermen on the upper Big Piney River during the 1840s and 1850s are located on the above map.

zelton about 1837. In 1847, James M. Truesdale and John Burnett entered into a partnership at Burnett Spring. It called for Truesdale expanding his operation at Hazelton, in concert with James A. Bates, to market tens of thousands of board feet of plank at \$1.00 per hundred feet and joists at 75 cents per hundred to St. Louis.

James A. Bates sold to Truesdale over 300 acres and his sawmill inventory of fifteen yoke of oxen, chains, timber carts, two log wagons, blacksmith tools, farming utensils, "all hogs on the farm," a cooking stove, mill tools, etc. Bates threw in "sand boards and binders for rafting said lumber" at no cost to Truesdale. The inventory was a typical accounting at a sawmill. Truesdale gave promissory notes to Bates worth over \$6,300 [\$182,000] with the last payment due on May 1, 1849, payable "at either or both of Bates Saw Mills on Big Piney Fork of Gasconade River."

James Truesdale kept his part of the bargain until he died in early 1849. His father William died soon afterwards. The tangled scheme of debits and credits at Hazelton and Burnett Spring became so notorious that the census-taker sarcastically wrote his viewpoint following the recording of James Truesdale's name and premature death: "The malaise prevalent in this region is swindling - cause, love of money and natural predisposition toward same." Exactly what the census-taker heard is unknown, but the Texas County court canceled the deed of trust to Truesdale and the land reverted to Bates. Ownership of land



The building of a sawmill was a significant investment for the lumbermen. Partnerships were formed to lessen risk to any one party. Plank lumber is stacked in the yard above. Courtesy of Lynn Morrow.

around Hazelton Spring continued to be unclear until November 1910 when county government executed a quit claim deed that excluded Truesdale heirs from any property rights.

"Sand Boards and Binders"

Our best description of a Big Piney raft is by a German immigrant who settled in Franklin County in 1834. Young Gert Goebel and his father had walked from Newport to Washington, where they asked locals about the availability of transportation to St. Louis. The Goebels learned that at the junction of the Gasconade and Missouri Rivers workers assembled small rafts into larger ones for the Missouri downriver float. A German merchant told them that several pine rafts had just arrived from Gasconade Mills and that rafters sometimes accommodated travelers. Fortunately

for the Goebels, the lumbermen were obliging and invited them aboard.

Each raft had a crew of six-to-eight men, with one captain for the group; workmen used oars attached to the raft to steer it in the swift-flowing, multi-channeled Missouri. Goebel's description of his hosts parallels others in Ozarks folklore. "These raftsmen were a wild, rough crowd. Most of them had grown up in the woods and on the water and knew no regular home life. They were ignorant of any of the more refined pleasures, and their lives offered them no variety of change other than either work and the severest of hardships or absolute idleness. The quarrels that broke out among them not infrequently ended with the most horrible mutilations; bitten-off noses, ears, or thumbs, gouged-out eyes, and knife cuts were

not all unusual. But strangers who treated them kindly hardly ever had cause to complain about them."

The barefoot rafters wore dingy, heavily-used shirts and ragged trousers, with pieces of felt serving as hats to cover un-kept hair. Their blankets lay piled on the raft. Upon docking at the St. Louis wharf Goebel observed that the men purchased new wardrobes, visited barbers for haircuts and toiletries, caroused in the taverns and partied at night. The "steadier ones among them" purchased "tawdry finery" for their women and kids before the crew "set out on their march" to the pineries, a 150-mile walk, to begin again. Young raftsmen traditionally hailed from "the woods," but, according to Goebel in 1834, the "river rats" journeyed seasonally from St. Louis to Big Piney, where they teamed up with Ozarkers for the strenuous journey back to the Mississippi River. Rafting labor from St. Louis continued to show up on Big Piney until the Civil War. Surely, many of the quarrels described by Goebel were between the "city rafters" and the "resident rafters" of the backwoods.

Goebel praised "these dangerous-looking fellows" as their company on the raft showed them to be "friendly people who behaved very decently." Young Goebel pitched in and rowed with them. He said the raftsmen knew every house along the banks and pointed out Germans that would take in the strangers for the night. It was not uncommon for rafters with fiddling talents to perform in the evening after rafts were tied up






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along the riverbanks.

Goebel, writing after the Civil War, pleasantly remembered his experience on the lumber raft. He floated at water level on the Missouri River, free to absorb the romantic scenery. His view at the junction of the Missouri and Mississippi was magnificent and he felt privileged to see it at such close range, riding "not three inches above the surface of the water" and inhaling the vista of bluffs and bottomland forests. The Goebel men bid the rafters farewell at the St. Louis levee. Their return trip to Franklin County was by steamboat.

Ambitious young men in the Ozarks speculated in taking rafts downriver, just like their forebears had done and continued to do on the Alleghany and Ohio Rivers. An example was Harvey Woods, the eldest son of William Woods who immigrated to the territorial lead mines in Missouri before establishing a successful farm at the edge of Caledonia in the Bellevue Valley. His son, Harvey and wife, moved to Waynesville in 1834, where Harvey became the first postmaster, and where Woods collaborated in business and government with merchant/lumberman/justice James A. Bates. In 1839, the energetic Woods wrote his father William about his six-week "rafting tour," a springtime adventure he repeated the following year. After selling the lumber in the Missouri River bottoms, Harvey took his rafting wages to finance additional travel and inspection of real estate north of the Missouri River before returning to

Waynesville. Riding rafts and walking long distances were common experiences for many young men in the Northern Ozarks.

Green Woods, Harvey's younger brother, came to Waynesville, too. He echoed contemporary complaints about uncertain postal deliveries at Waynesville, writing "the mail facilities have afforded us no satisfaction of late in this country as no mail packets come." The educated Green taught school, but also spent time "chopping and malling rails" to sell. Brother Harvey, however, left Waynesville for Big Piney again "to purchase plank to take to St. Louis next spring." Brother Green Woods, reflecting on the contemporary merchant trade with a Cherokee contingent that had just left the Harrison brothers on Big Piney, forecast in January 1839 that "We will have more corn in this country than the Indians will consume with the other markets, money is plentier here than any other place I have been." The plentiful money around Waynesville had a lot to do with increased American migration and commerce on the road past the Maramec Iron Works and James Harrison's tavern at Little Piney to Waynesville and then on into southwest Missouri.

Green Woods returned to Bellevue Valley and became a famed Methodist circuit riding preacher in the southeast Ozarks. Harvey Woods died in 1840 from unknown causes. Did he have an accident on his raft? Maybe it was sickness; maybe he made it back home, we don't know. However, in

each decade after statehood, lumber and log rafts were "found adrift" somewhere in the watersheds due to bad weather, theft, sickness or accident. "Homeless rafts" became topics of litigation in circuit courts, as owners demanded possession of property lost in long distance trade.

Rafts of sawed lumber like those belonging to Harvey Woods varied in size. Rafters stacked sawed planks in layers to make a "crib," a term common on the frontier that referred to a square or rectangular room with measured dimensions. A "crib of logs" made a room in a house that usually included a chimney lined with mud and rocks on one end. Piney lumbermen also called their cribs "squares." On Ozarks waters, we have reference to cribs six-plank deep on upper Current River, analogous to Big Piney cribs. Sawmillers predetermined the dimensions of the cribs according to the market demand for planks 16, 14, or 12 feet in length, then joined cribs to make linear rafts. Men secured the cribs with leather thongs and wooden pins, "sapling strips, ropes, or chain links." Did worn logging chains do double duty on rafts? Cribs, coupled with planks or poles laid lengthwise down the long axis of the raft, were secured by pins or thongs in holes bored by augurs. Men called the joined cribs a "string." "Sand boards" attached flat against the exterior edges of stacked planks kept sand from infiltrating between the boards and inside the crib. Workmen joined the sand boards with "binders," but

the contemporary contracts do not describe them.

Preparation of a string of cribs, as well as the depth of the layers of plank, depended on the size and depth of the waterway. Piney lumbermen litigated over "pine stacks" at riverside, but the height of them are not reported. On Big Piney one might see a small two-crib raft with 16' square cribs, or a 16' by 12' crib, and wide planks stacked five-to-seven layers deep. In a sash saw the only limit in board width was the size of the tree. Boards 1 ¼ inch thick meant that a crib was 7 ½ inches thick or better, depending on how flat the planks laid on top of each other. Once entering wider, deeper water, men beached the rafts at places such as Boiling Spring and Harrison Landing on the Gasconade or at the mouth of the Missouri River to reconfigure rafts into longer strings. This additional work at favored landings of making small rafts into larger, more stable ones was necessary for safe and successful delivery downstream. James Harrison owned the south side of the Gasconade at the Little Piney junction, and kinsman John Duncan had the north side. After 1845, James A. Bates extended the Gasconade landing downstream on the east bank. These downriver staging areas supported the export of pine plank from "Gasconade Mills" during the spring and fall rafting seasons. Rafts might be three, five, or more cribs long on the Gasconade, but the Missouri River accommodated rafts well over a hundred feet long,

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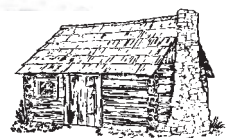
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so raftsmen joined the strings of cribs into longer lengths and commonly fastened two rafts parallel with each other. A mechanic installed oar locks for rowing and attached a sweep for steering at the tail of the raft. The result was a long rectangular platform of planks and joists.

Reflecting on the introduction of Wisconsin white pine rafts to St. Louis, an author in an 1885 trade publication recalled yellow pine rafts from Big Piney floating to St. Louis. He wrote that “up to 1840 the principal timber arriving here in rafts was yellow Pine and hard woods. From 1835 to 1840 the receipts ranged anywhere between 1,500,000 to 3,000,000 feet per week.” These figures reflected the seasonal nature of rafting, as the 1846 annual report for lumber received in St. Louis was over 13,000,000 board feet. The writer recalled that during the early days all the rafting originated within 300 miles of the city. During the 1830s, yellow pine rafts coming down the Missouri River were “100 feet in length, 30 feet wide [parallel rafts], and carrying 150,000 board feet of lumber.” (In contrast, the larger rafts from the upper Mississippi River region measured up to 100 feet wide and 600 feet long, with planks stacked fifteen high in the cribs.) He remembered the distance of the trip as 250 miles downriver from the source [upper Big Piney River] and that the rafters’ trip took seven days.

A good Big Piney water mill cut 2-3,000 board feet daily. By comparison, in St. Charles County, an ox-powered mill in 1821 reported 250’ daily; a four-ox mill, 6-800’; and a six ox-mill 1,000’ pine or 800’ oak daily, but ox mills required smaller diameter logs than water-powered sash saws. At a Big Piney mill, a 150,000 foot raft represented the labor of cutting and transporting logs to the mill by oxen, about 60 days of sawing plank, stacking and seasoning lumber, and assembling cribs into rafts. Production totals in 1849 indicate variations in production by various mills, but Piney mills individually produced 150,000 to 1 ½ million board feet annually. The rafters who departed from the heart of the industrial area between Arthur’s Creek, Boiling Spring,

and Slabtown traveled approximately 225-250 river miles to St. Louis.

James Spilman, Sr. was another eyewitness with a family history in the lumber trade and he managed a steam sawmill on Paddy Creek, 1848-72, for James A. Bates. Spilman floated 14’ and 16’ square “cribs” and up to 10-12 cribs “hooked together” for a string. He rode smaller rafts to “Harrison Landing,” where workers off-loaded planks at riverside onto wagons for transport to Rolla, where the town’s founder, E. W. Bishop, used 16” wide pine boards, marked with Spilman’s name, in his home (now razed). Spilman’s rafters continued north to the Missouri River with the rest of the shipment.

Likewise, James Harrison’s son, Thomas C. Harrison, commented on the occupation. Following his father’s death in 1842, Thomas remained with his widowed mother at the Harrison home place. He managed family business on Little Piney Creek that included regular trade with Maramec Iron, and also managed nearly a thousand acres of Harrison real estate. He rafted lumber himself for a time, floating all the way to St. Louis. Upriver, a youthful Samuel Harrison brought rafts down Big Piney to Harrison’s Landing and to Thomas’s steam mill near the mouth of Little Piney. Samuel said there was another mill at Jerome, and yet another was built after the war a half mile above the Gasconade railroad bridge. Thomas founded Arlington after the Civil War, managed a store in the new railroad town, and served Phelps County as a state legislator. In 1867, Thomas and partner James P. Harrison sold their land and steam saw and grist mill on the north side of the Gasconade River to W. F. Greeley, founder of the town of Jerome.

Rolla historian Clair V. Mann’s collection at the State Historical Society of Missouri contains a third reminiscence of a family working in the pineries in the mid-nineteenth century. Samuel A. Harrison, born at Hazelton, hailed from a family of Kentucky Harrisons who migrated to the Hazelton Spring area in the 1830s. He grew up in the timber business among Ormsby and Bates’ sawmills

in Boone Township. He described water-powered sawmills using blades 7’ long, secured “in a frame which operated vertically and had a stroke of some 3 feet ... logs fed to the saw by a system of gears ... saw could cut 1,500 board feet of lumber in 12 hours.” Samuel remembered eighteen such sawmills on Big Piney in the heyday of the 1850s. A Missouri Geological Survey map at the State Archives, published in 1860, displays natural resources and frontier industries, such as, saw and grist milling. That map confirms Samuel Harrison’s memory of eighteen mills during the 1850s. By then, lumber that Ozarkers sent to St. Louis was beached in industrial North St. Louis alongside the city’s logging and milling sector. Rafter James P. Bates recalled riding twenty-five rafts to St. Louis during the 1850s, while associate Gabriel M. Pike (a Unionist teamster in 1863) floated forty.

Not all yellow pine lumber went to St. Louis by water. Samuel Harrison recounted long ox wagon trips to St. Louis, a 145-mile overland trip

one-way. He and other teamsters once drove a three-yoke ox wagon loaded with Ozark bacon, but more often the wagons were loaded with pine lumber drawn by five teams of four-yoke oxen each. The lumber might bring \$350 [\$8,800 in modern value], with which the teamsters bought manufactured goods, sugar, coffee, groceries, and other supplies to take back to the Big Piney. For a few years, the Harrisons made the trip twice annually.

Part II will continue in the next Old Settlers Gazette. It will review mill disputes from Burnett, Boiling, and Hazelton Springs, and Harrison Landing. It will introduce new mill owners, including some from St. Louis, and describe upper Big Piney commercial connections with Spring Creek in modern Phelps County.

Lynn Morrow has published widely about Missouri history and the Ozarks. His latest book is **The Ozarks in Missouri History—Discoveries in an American Region**, University of Missouri Press.

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Born in Springfield, MO and raised in Independence, MO. I enlisted in the Army Reserves in 1985. After serving 20 years and six months of active service, I retired as a Chief Warrant Officer (CW2) Criminal Investigation Command Special Agent. While serving at Fort Leonard Wood from 1996—2000, my family and I decided Pulaski County is where we wanted to call home upon retirement.

Education:

Associate in Applied Science—Law Enforcement, Central Texas College
 Bachelor of Arts—Criminal Justice, Columbia College
 Master of Science—Criminal Justice, Columbia College
 Master of Science—Environmental Management, Webster University

Experience:

- Retired Army Criminal Investigation Division Special Agent
- 22 Total Years Military/Civilian Leadership and Management
- 18 Years Law Enforcement Experience with 14 of those years serving in a leadership/management position
 - Reserve Detective for the Pulaski County Sheriff Department
 - Full Time Officer with the Richland Police Department
 - Currently serving as the Assistant Chief of Police for the Crocker Police Department
- Civilian Contractor for the U. S. Government instructing National Guard Civil Support Teams in clandestine drug and chemical lab awareness

Law Enforcement Instructor:

- Missouri Peace Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) instructor at the Missouri Sheriff Training Academy wherein I instruct courses in Child Abuse and Neglect investigation, Property Crime and Death Investigations, Sexual Assault Investigations, Crime Prevention, Crime Scene Processing, Burglary and Robbery Investigations, Cultural Diversity, Report Writing, and several other areas.

College Professor:

- Instructor for the University of Phoenix teaching Criminal Justice and Terrorism courses

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