



One of the timbers to be salvaged from the L1 shed at the former Edward Hines Lumber Co. mill is moved during dismantling.

Salvage Operation

Many memories remain in the shadow of once-thriving Hines mill

By B. Marie Jarreau-Danner

The flurry of activity taking place inside the L1 shed of the former Hines lumber mill is somewhat reminiscent of the past, but this time, L1 is being deconstructed.

Timbers from the shed likely will end up as structural beams or decorative woodwork for high-end homes in other parts of the Northwest.

A crew from Ashland-based West Coast Timber Co. has been salvaging usable beams from the iconic structure since last fall.

At more than a half-mile long, L1

was reported to have been the longest continuous shed structure in the world. The building spent years providing dry shelter for the lumber produced by the mill during its operations. It also was the staging site for loading the finished ponderosa pine products into waiting railcars.

The Edward Hines Lumber Co., with its mills, railroads and other holdings across the United States, was a major contributor of growth in Harney County for 50 years.

The L1 shed, constructed in 1930, was just part of the complex in Hines that processed pine logs into marketable lumber.

Then a depression in the timber industry, changes in political focus and environmental pressures led to the sale of timber interests in Hines to Snow Mountain Pine in the early 1980s.

As the logging depression became permanent in much of the Northwest, it led to the dismantling of the region's logging industry, including the Hines mill.

L1 and other mill buildings sat quietly among the blowing sagebrush and served as shelter for deer, coyotes, geese and other wildlife through the years. There were even reports that cougars used the upper

reaches of the shed as a den.

The shed and the rest of the mill property at the historic site were divided and sold. L1 was owned by Harney County rancher Andy Root from 1996 to 2006. His dad, Larry, worked for Edward Hines as a timber faller from 1971 to 1989.

Andy used the shed for hay storage until it was no longer practical.

“The building was deteriorating and it was just too costly to maintain,” he said recently.

Tom Phillis worked at the mill as a trimmer for 20 years, squaring off the ends of the timber.

“Once a log reached the Hines mill, it was kept completely under cover throughout the mill process.” Tom says.

That process ensured wood products were kept dry and did not suffer warping or discoloration before reaching their final destination. After being debarked, trimmed, dried and planed the finished boards were stacked inside L1.

Tom says train tracks ran through the L1 shed so finished wood could be loaded directly into the enclosed rail cars while still under cover.

“We graded about 60 boards a minute,” Tom says. “That ponderosa pine was valued because it was beautiful wood and easy to work with.”

The same could be said for the Edward Hines Lumber Co., Tom says.

“Hines was good to Harney County,” he says. “They offered a good family wage income that included cost of living, raises, insurance and they provided summer jobs for school kids.”

Hines resident Mike Masterson remembers working summers in the L1 shed to earn college money. He and other high school students spent summers going throughout the upper reaches of L1’s framework with huge wrenches to retighten loose bolts to ensure the structural integ-



Former Hines lumber mill secretary Joanna Corson maintains a collection of mill photos and memories.

rity of the building. The large, 2- to 3-foot long bolts that held beams together could be loosened by the constant vibration of mill activities.

Kenny Brinkley says he practically grew up in the Hines plywood mill.

During his high school years, he hired on as summer help, “working the slick chain.” Later he returned from college to work again in the mill.



Kenny Brinkley

Quality and production were the focus of the company. I eventually became maintenance supervisor.”

Kenny remembers the company had a good relationship with the community and even built the old wooden swimming pool that was a popular draw for families near and far.

Kenny’s dad, Lynn, was paymaster at the mill for more than 40 years.

“He knew employees by their man-number instead of by name,” Kenny says.

Shirley Mingus worked as a payroll clerk at the mill. Like others in the community, she feels a sense of loss about the deconstruction of L1.

Shirley says she wishes an engine and a caboose, which also were icons of the Hines mill, could have been kept here to showcase that part of the operation.

Instead, the loss of the L1 shed removes more evidence of the rich history of Harney County’s timber industry.

But memories of the timber era’s booming economy live on with those who were a part of those prosperous days.

Ken Thomas worked as a millwright at the mill and remembers making the trip

from Crane each day. His son Denny secured college funds in the summers as a handyman at the mill.

The sound of arriving trains wasn’t anything special to Joanna Corson when she worked as secretary to all the general managers at the mill from 1950 to 1983.

Now, Joanna says, that sound is among her favored memories, along with the sound of the whistle that signaled shift changes at the mill.

“We lived out at Lawen,” Joanna says. “On a clear day, you could hear the whistle even from there. The mill was just a way of life for the whole family.”

Not all of L1 will leave the county. Joanna says some of the wood has been secured for a civic project that will turn it into benches for Hines Park.

That those old timbers might gain new life and purpose—as a park bench or in a family home rather than being lost to the elements—is bittersweet consolation for those who might otherwise mourn its demise. ■