

Woodcutting

Part I. Wood for Construction

Gerald R Noonan PhD © February 2019

(Excerpt from book manuscript about the human and environmental history of the San Pedro River Valley and adjacent areas from the Gadsden Purchase to statehood.)

The discovery of valuable ores in the Tombstone and Bisbee areas and elsewhere sparked a mining boom that attracted people to such places and to the San Pedro River Valley. Wood was urgently needed for the development of mines, mills, businesses, and homes. The Tombstone mines and mills were most active during the Tombstone Bonanza years from June 1879 through December 1886 (Bahre and Hutchinson, 1985, p. 181). The Copper Queen Company and other mines in the Bisbee area continue to need large amounts of construction timber after the Tombstone mines declined.

The largest stands of construction grade lumber near Tombstone and Bisbee were coniferous forests of approximately 20,000 acres in the Huachuca Mountains and 50,000 acres in the Chiricahua Mountains (Kellogg, 1902; TDE, 1889). These forests occurred at elevations of 7000 feet or above because only such higher reaches had enough precipitation for the trees. The *Pinus ponderosa* species complex was the predominant type of tree at these higher elevations and furnished almost all the lumber first used for construction in the Tombstone area. While this type of tree was the principal source of local lumber, its quality was poor, knotty and often with rotten streaks and many blind knots. In the early days of the Tombstone Bonanza, this lumber was in great demand because it was cheaper than wood brought from outside of Arizona by wagon trains.

The army apparently was the first organization to harvest construction timber from the Huachuca Mountains (Spring and Gustafson, 1966, p. 58, 111). The short-lived Camp Wallen on the Babocomari River sent soldiers in 1866 to the vicinity of present-day Fort Huachuca to cut timber for rafters and lintels for buildings being constructed at the camp. In 1867 eight soldiers were still harvesting timber at a temporary camp in the mountains.

In the spring of 1879, Captain Whitside, first commander of Fort Huachuca, had soldiers begin running a sawmill near the mouth of Huachuca Canyon to obtain lumber for constructing buildings on the post (Lage, 1949; Smith, 1981, p. 26). Soldiers had to climb considerably higher into the Huachuca Mountains to cut down pine trees and then skin the trunks and snake the large logs down the mountainside. They used their own muscle power and that of mules to get the timber to the sawmill. Men who committed misdemeanors were condemned to hard labor at the sawmill camp. Those who volunteered or were detailed to this work received extra pay of \$0.20 per day for enlisted soldiers and \$0.35 for sergeants, corporals, and enlisted men whose expertise or training qualified them to work as masons, carpenters, or blacksmiths.

In 1867 a Tucson Catholic Church that needed lumber for a schoolhouse roof cut it from the Huachuca Mountains because it was easier to reach the pine woods there than those in the Santa Rita Mountains (Farish, 1916b, p. 298-299, 314-315 abs.). The Huachuca Mountains were

conveniently close to Tombstone and its mills, and people knew about their timber (O'Leary, 1877).

Four commercial sawmills in the Huachuca Mountains initially supplied construction grade lumber (AC, 1879c,h; ADS, 1880c,d; AQL, 1880, p 4; Bahre, 1991 p. 168-169; Bailey, 2004, p. 66; Bailey and Chaput, 2000a, p. 54; Garner vs. Gird, 1885, p. 59, 150-15 2, 160; Matheny, 1975, p. 5- 8; MSP, 1881; Spencer, 1966; Underhill, 1979, p. 64). Richard Gird and his associates arranged for 24,000 pounds of sawmill machinery to be transported by ship around Cape San Lucas, up the Gulf of California and then via the Colorado River to Yuma where it arrived on November 16, 1878 (AS, 1878; Fulton, 1966; LAH, 1878). The mining partners chartered a wagon train outfit from Meyers & Bowley at extra rates to speedily deliver the machinery to the Huachuca Mountains. The exact location of the Gird Mill is unknown. The Gird sawmill was described in July 1880 as located on the western side of the Huachuca Mountains "high up on the northern side of McCloskey cañon." The name McCloskey was a misspelling of McCluskey and referred to one of the partners who owned the mill and did not become an accepted designation of a place in the mountains. Bailey and Chaput (2000a, p. 54) regarded the mill as in Sawmill Canyon within the Huachuca Mountains, Matheny, (1975, p. 35) placed it in Ramsey Canyon, and Wilson (1995, p. 208) believed it was in Carr Canyon. People who went into Carr Canyon to see part of the Huachuca Water Company's pipeline in 1882 could see the Gird Mill in the distance (TWE, 1882). The June 10, 1880 issue of the Weekly Nugget, as quoted by Bahre (1991, p. 168), said that the mill originally began operations at Saw Mill Canyon and after harvesting the timber in that area was moved to the top of the mountains at 8000 feet. The region of the canyon is on the western side of the mountains west of Ramsey Peak (1958 and 2018 Miller Peak topographic maps).

Gird had persuaded his brother William to run the sawmill. William partnered with John McCluskey to run it. The two partners owned the mill and initially had an arrangement with the Tombstone Mill and Mining Company to supply its lumber needs. Lumber not needed by the mining company was shipped to the mining company which then distributed it to other parties. The arrangement with the mining company specified that the partners would furnish lumber at \$50 per thousand feet and that the partners could sell excess wood at whatever price they could obtain. The money from the sale of all lumber went to the mining company until it was paid for the cost of the mill. The mining company received a bargain because the price to other parties in May 1879 was \$100 per 1000 feet (AC, 1879k).

William Gird and McCluskey laid the foundations and then erected the mill which began shipping lumber to Millville and Tombstone on January 14, 1879. In March 1879, the partners agreed to Thomas Bidwell's proposal that he and W. H. Harwood sell lumber not needed by the mining company for a commission of 5% of the proceeds. Bidwell stopped selling timber in June 1879 when he went East. Harwood continued selling it until January 1880.

The sawmill's need for logs resulted in an August 1879 advertisement seeking lumbermen and teamsters for logging in the Huachuca Mountains and hauling logs to the sawmill (AC, 1879j). The Tombstone Mill and Mining Company sought a total of 1 million feet of logs and would receive bids until August 20, 1879.

Ownership of the mill changed in 1880. McCluskey transferred his interest to William Gird in February, and James Carr bought the mill in April. Carr specialized in lumber for mining purposes and provided it not only for the Tombstone Mill and Mining Company and a yard in

Tombstone but also filled contracts for the Boston and Arizona Mill and The Tombstone and Charleston Ice Company (Matheny, 1975, p. 36; Rose, 2012, p. 30).

By April 1880, the sawmill had produced approximately three million feet of lumber which was sold primarily in the Tombstone District. Six men worked the mill, 25 more men cut timber and served as teamsters, and 12 yoke of oxen and 35 span of mules pulled wagons and sleds with timber. The lumber was primarily used for mine timbers and for constructing mining and milling facilities, and boarding houses. The remaining accessible supply of uncut timber was estimated at 3,500,000 feet. Demand for lumber was so high that a night shift began running



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The Tombstone Mill and Mining Company used large amounts of timber. Teamsters initially brought lumber down from the Huachuca Mountains in ox drawn wagon trains, similar to the one here that was photographed somewhere in Arizona in approximately 1890. Transport by mule drawn wagons became more common as time went on.

the mill in the spring of 1882 to increase its output.

Early in 1879 John Campbell and other Mormons set up a sawmill in the Huachuca Mountains in Miller's Canyon, sometimes called Mormon Canyon because of the Mormon sawmill (ADS, 1880c; Bailey, 2004, p. 66; McClintock, 1921, p. 236, 301 abs.). By October 1879, the sawmill was producing 3000 to 5000 feet of lumber a day (ADS, 1879c). Most lumber went to the Contention Mill, with the rest going to Turner's lumber yard in Tucson. In November

1879, the Mormons had a disagreement among themselves and decided to sell the mill. John N. Turner acquired the mill in late 1879 or early 1880 and moved the mill, which was designed to be portable, to Ramsey Canyon (AC, 1879g; AQL, 1880, p. 4; AS, 1879b; Bahre, 1991, p. 168-169; Bailey, 2004, p. 25-31). Turner in March 1880 built a good wagon road up Ramsey Canyon along an old burro trail (AC, 1880). In April of that year he refurbished the former Mormon sawmill and soon had it running at full capacity (ADS, 1880d; AQL, 1880, p. 4; Bailey, 2004, p. 66; Bailey and Chaput, 2000b, p. 161).

Turner had a lumber yard in Tombstone that sold wood from the Huachuca Mountains. The estimated uncut timber in the canyon as of July 1880 was four million feet, 400,000 of which would be processed before the mill was moved a mile or two higher up the canyon. Turner found an eager market in Tombstone for his lumber at an average rate of \$55 per thousand feet. In June 1880 Turner sold his lumber yard to Philip Morse, who had W. H. Harwood, former mayor of Tombstone, run it for him (Bailey and Chaput, 2000b, p. 161).

The nearest settlement to the first mill site in Ramsey Canyon was two miles below the sawmill and was named Turnersville in April 1880 after John Turner. The small town served as a local social hub (ADS, 1880d). For example, a dance at the home of Richards and Hill on June 15, 1880 attracted 20 ladies and approximately 50 men. Several participants came from Tombstone. The hosts provided the music for the dance. Brown's hotel supplied excellent accommodations for travelers and visitors. Enough funds had been pledged to build a schoolhouse, and a teacher had been hired. Residents in the area were looking forward to a pleasant time in the town on July 4 and expected 200 people to take part. Turner was scheduled to give a talk after which there would be dancing.

Francis Tanner and William L. Hayes established a sawmill on the eastern side of the Huachuca Mountains in the fall of 1879, with its output supplying the Patagonia District (AC, 1880; ADS, 1879a; AQL, 1880, p. 4; Bahre, 1991, p. 168; Bailey, 2004, p. 66; Bailey and Chaput, 2000b, p. 149). By the latter part of September 1879, the mill was furnishing excellent quality lumber at a cost of \$65 per thousand feet, with the output being bought the moment it was delivered in Harshaw for use in buildings that were being constructed. The mill continued in 1880 to find a ready market for its output and employed more than 30 men, but a boiler explosion destroyed it. A new mill soon was producing 7000 to 8000 feet of lumber a day and by July 1880 had cut more than 400,000 feet of lumber.

A religious commune in Sunnyside Canyon on the southwestern side of the Huachuca Mountains set up a sawmill late in 1894 to augment revenues from a mine it ran (LAT, 1896; Peterson, 1999; Wilson, 1995, p. 208). The mill's principal market was Washington Camp, a mine in the Patagonia Mountains, and the mill ran for approximately 25 years until it lost that market.

The army was the first organization that logged within the Chiricahua Mountains (Bennett, 1865; Meketa & Meketa, 1980, p. 19-20; SFWG, 1864; Wilson, 1995, p. 209). On July 10, 1864 Captain T. T. Tidball left Fort Bowie on a scout for Indians with 16 California and New Mexico volunteers. His report mentioned the abundance of pine timber in the upper part of Pine Canyon and that much of it could be reached by wagon "without difficulty." Tidball noted the plentiful timber at other locations and suggested that all the lumber needed for building Fort Bowie could be obtained from the Chiricahua Mountains. Lieutenant Colonel Bennett, commander of Fort Bowie, in early 1865 sent 17 New Mexico Volunteers to the Chiricahua

Mountains to establish a lumber camp with sawpits and to harvest timber. In July 1865, 20 soldiers and a sergeant from the New Mexico Volunteers went to Ajo del Carrizo to obtain lumber for construction. Another detail of soldiers left the fort on August 31, 1865 to relieve the first group. During October 1865, a group of California Volunteers went to protect the loggers from Apaches thought to be near the lumber camp.

Citizens also knew about the abundant timber in the Chiricahua Mountains. The Arizona Citizen on October 26, 1878 published an article about wood in southern Arizona that mentioned the abundant timber in the Chiricahua Mountains (AC, 1878). The first commercial sawmill in the Chiricahua Mountains began operations in 1879. Philip E. Morse convinced Jacob Grundike, a prominent banker and cattleman in California, to accompany him to southeastern Arizona and invest in a sawmill. The two men arrived in Tucson from San Diego in early April 1879 and searched for a suitable place for erecting a large sawmill that would produce lumber at prices below that for lumber imported from California (AC, 1879a,b,d,f,i; ADS, 1879c,d; ADS, 1880a,b; Bahre, 1991, p. 170; Matheny, 1975 p. 37-38; Patt, 2013; USDA, 2003, p. 16; WAC, 1880a,b). They found such a site on the western slopes of the Chiricahua Mountains in Turkey Creek Canyon 22 miles south of Fort Bowie. (The canyon was sometimes termed Morse Canyon or Morse Creek [Barnes, 1988, p. 290, 458-459].)

Morse began superintending the cutting of logs and their transportation to the future mill site. Grundike departed Tucson on April 17 for San Francisco to buy a sawmill. He ordered from H. R. Rice of San Francisco a large sawmill with a 12x12 engine powered by a boiler capable of producing 30-40 hp. The 20,000 pounds of machinery for the mill was shipped by railroad on May 20, 1879 to the end of the Southern Pacific Railroad where it was loaded onto a Barnett & Block wagon train that subsequently trundled through Tucson on June 14, 1879 on the way to the Chiricahuas.

The sawmill began running on July 18, 1879, and a shingle making machine was shipped from A. D. Otis & Company on July 24, 1879. By July 1879 Morse & Co. was advertising that through a lumber yard in Tucson it provided "All Kinds of Lumber," along with "Matched Flooring" and shingles. The Morse sawmill in 1880 produced the first tongue and grooved surfaced flooring and ceiling materials made in Pima County. The demand for lumber was greater than the capacity of the mill. During the first nine months of operation the mill shipped more than 1 million feet of lumber, mostly to Tombstone and adjacent mills. In May 1880 it was cutting 50,000 feet of lumber per week. By July 10, 1880, the company was advertising that its agent in Tombstone had on hand 200,000 feet of lumber suitable for mining, building materials, seasoned flooring, rustic shingles, etc. The sawmill shut down in early November 1882 (AWC, 1882). Morse returned to San Diego and by September 1887 was worth \$250,000 in lumber and real estate (TE, 1887).

William Downing erected a substantial sawmill in December 1879 in Pinery Canyon in the Chiricahua Mountains 20 miles south of Fort Bowie (ADS, 1880a,e; AS, 1879a,b; Bailey and Chaput, 2000a, p. 100-101; Patt, 2013). The mill began working in January 1880, with many orders already on hand. It supplied lumber to Tombstone for buildings and mines and shipped considerable wood to Tucson (ADS, 1891; Matheny, 1975 p. 37-38). The Cochise County delinquent tax rolls for the year ending 1887 showed that Downing had delinquent taxes of \$37.41 on property valued at \$1125 (TWE, 1888). The property included a ranch in Pinery

Canyon, improvements to the ranch, a sawmill, a house in Dos Cabezas, and miscellaneous items such as harnesses and tools.

In the spring of 1888 Downing moved the sawmill higher up within the Chiricahua Mountains to an area where he believed there was enough timber to run his mill for several years (ADS, 1888). The sawmill temporarily closed in the summer of 1889 when the Copper Queen Company briefly reduced its operations and was using very little lumber (ASB, 1889). A fire of unknown origin destroyed the sawmill and 30,000 feet of lumber in mid July 1891 (ADS, 1891; TWE, 1891a). Downing immediately rebuilt the mill.

In approximately 1895 Downing sold his mill to the Riggs Bros. & Co. (Bailey and Chaput, 2000b, 82-83; Patt, 2013; Potter, 1902; Wilson, 1995, p. 211). The many members of the Riggs family were developing a large cattle operation along the eastern flanks of the Chiricahua Mountains and collectively in time owned approximately 100,000 acres of patented land, controlled about 25,000 acres under forest reserve permits, and held about 50,000 acres by leases. The family operated the former Downing mill in Pine Canyon and later moved it higher within the canyon and then to Barfoot Park, approximately 7.5 miles west of Portal (1994 Chiricahua Peak topographic map 31109-E1-TM-100). The mill eventually logged most of the Barfoot region (Russell, 1982, p. 69-94). Brannick Riggs, Jr. estimated in 1902 that the forest near the mill would supply 4 million board feet of lumber. In 1903 he contracted to supply the Detroit Copper Company at Morenci with 600,000 feet of lumber that would be hauled 15 miles to the Rodella station of the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad and then shipped to the company by rail (BDR, 1903; CS, 1903).

Edward F. Sweeney of the Duluth & Chiricahua Development Company bought the Riggs mill in May 1904 for \$8000 along with related items such as adjacent track, cars, horses, a logging truck and wagon, and the right to harvest and sell timber from the Chiricahua Forest Reserve under a contract with the federal government (Patt, 2013). The new sawmill company was alternatively called the Sweeney Lumber Company and the Chiricahua Lumber Mills Company. The sawmill supplied lumber to the nearby developing mining town of Paradise and to the Paradise Mining District in the Chiricahua Mountains (BDR, 1904; BDR, 19005; BDR, 1906a,b; GNIS, 2018; TWE, 1906).

In June 1906, the company sold out to Boyer and Sanders with the sale including the mill machinery and all buildings on the ground, all the cut and cured lumber, all wood left over from earlier timber logging, and the right to all standing timber near the mill and in Rustlers' Park. The new firm announced plans to fill a contract with a mine at Pearce for 2,000,000 feet of mining timber produced at the rate of 50,000 to 60,000 feet per month and to supply mining timber and other lumber to anyone who wished to buy it. In the spring of 1907, the sawmill was removed from Barfoot Park (Pilsbry and Ferriss, 1910).

The sawmill of Daniel Ross harvested thousands of feet of lumber from the Chiricahua Mountains during the 1880s and early 1890s (ASB, 1889; Bailey and Chaput, 2000a, p. 92; AWE, 1890; Douglas, 1906, p. 27; Patt, 2013; DT, 1886d; TDE, 1886a,b; TDP, 1890; TWE, 1891c). In 1883 Daniel D. Ross and Jacob Scheerer partnered to buy a sawmill in either John Long or Mormon Canyon. Scheerer sold his share of the facility to Ross in 1886, and the latter subsequently moved the mill into Rock Canyon. After the mill gained the Copper Queen Company as its major customer, it sent most of its output to Bisbee for the company. Most of the timbers wanted by the Copper Queen were 12 x 12 and 10 x 10 in thickness. The mill in

April 1890 was cutting 15,000 feet of timber per day and hauling it to Bisbee. The Copper Queen Company was taking all the native lumber it could obtain and importing a significant amount from Oregon. However, the company then preferred local timber because managers believed it was tougher and would stand more severe strains.

In April and May of 1886 and in July 1890 the mill advertised for heavy teams for hauling lumber from it to Bisbee. In the summer of 1889, the sawmill temporarily closed because the Copper Queen Company had momentarily reduced its operations and was using little lumber. The Ross Mill in November 1891 was running full time and producing about 20,000 feet of lumber per day, all of which went to Bisbee. The mill shut down in March 1894 because Ross concluded that it was impossible to make a profit because of the expenses of defending against a federal lawsuit.

During at least the latter part of 1886 Holmes & Thompson sold lumber from their mill at the head of Morse's Canyon in the Chiricahua Mountains (DT, 1886a,b,e).

Attention, Ranchmen!

The undersigned has for sale, in lots to suit, at their mill at the head of Morse's Canyon,

SHAKES, SHINGLES,

and MINING TIMBER.

Juniper Timber, 30 Feet in Length,

And other kinds of lumber, which will be sold at prices that defy competition. Every foot of our lumber is guaranteed.

Address, **HOLMES & THOMPSON.**

November 24, 1886 advertisement in The Daily Tombstone (DT, 1886e) for wood from mill at the head of Morse Canyon in the Chiricahua Mountains.

The Copper Queen Company and other Bisbee mines first harvested timber from the Mule Mountains (AWC, 1893; Douglas, 1906, p. 27; Douglas, 1910, p. 429, 496 abs.; Schwantes, 2000, p. 90; TWE, 1891b; USDA, 2003, p. 16). However, these mountains were relatively low in elevation compared to the other mountains in southeastern Arizona and supplied only limited amounts of what Douglas termed "stunted wood."

By the end of the 1880s the Mule Mountains' supply of lumber suitable for construction was mostly exhausted and could no longer meet the needs of the Bisbee mines. The Copper Queen switched in the middle 1880s to obtaining construction timbers from the Ross mill. Because of the legal expenses incurred in defending itself against a federal civil suit

resulting from the purchase of Ross lumber, the Copper Queen Company in 1892 began looking elsewhere for suitable lumber. It found that it could obtain Oregon pine delivered to Benson or Fairbank for \$19-\$20 per thousand feet versus \$32 per thousand feet for lumber from the Chiricahua Mountains delivered in Bisbee. The Southern Pacific imported the timber through San Pedro, California and transported it to Benson.

For several years, the inadequate supply of cut lumber was a limiting factor on the erection of buildings and the development of mines in southeastern Arizona. There was a great scarcity of lumber in Tucson in the latter part of 1879 (PH, 1879). Thirty-four buildings, mostly business houses, were under contract in Tombstone, but builders were waiting for the arrival of lumber so that they could construct the buildings. The Arizona Citizen noted on November 8, 1879 (AC, 1879e) that a dispute among the workers at a sawmill resulted in a shortage of lumber that hampered operations of the Contention Mill. The demand for lumber during 1880

was so great that sawmills could not meet the demands of Tombstone based mining companies (WAC, 1880c).

L. W. BLINN LUMBER COMPANY,
 WHOLESALE AND RETAIL DEALERS IN ALL KINDS OF
Mining and Building Lumber,
DOORS, WINDOWS, BLINDS, MOULDINGS. ETC.
 Special Attention Will Be Given to Mining and Mill Orders,
 SPECIAL PRICES NAMED ON CARGO OR JOB LOTS,
Main Office and Yard, at Tombstone, Ariz
 BRANCHES AT
 Fairbank Benson, Wilcox, Bisbee, and Nogales, Arizona, and
 Lordsburg and Deming, New Mexico.
 The Company have recently erected a large and commodious warehouse at the siding of the N. M.
 & A. Railroad, at Fairbank, where a full stock of
DOORS, WINDOWS AND MOULDINGS,
PORTLAND CEMENT, SANTA CRUZ LIME,
OATS AND BARLEY, CORN AND CHOPPED FEED,
 ARE OFFERED TO THE TRADE AT THE
Lowest Living Price.
 We solicit correspondence from any parties purchasing goods in our line. All communications
 will receive prompt attention when addressed to the general office.
L. W. BLINN, General Manager.

From p. 4, Daily Tombstone Epitaph. June 5, 1886.

The prominent merchant Lewis Blinn noted the demand for lumber and in May 1880 established a 185 by 210-foot sized lumberyard in Tombstone and by 1885 also had yards elsewhere (AQI, 1881; Bailey and Chaput, 2000a, p. 31; DT, 1886c). He initially sold lumber from the Chiricahua and Huachuca mountains at \$60 to \$65 per thousand feet. However, he found such lumber unsatisfactory for building purposes because it warped and twisted and therefore switched to selling only seasoned lumber from California.

Blinn was a major provider of lumber by the summer of 1885 and felt secure enough to threaten a rival who offered lower prices. On July 11, 1885 he wrote from Tombstone to Messrs. O. S. Merrill & Co. at Saw Mill, Carr Canyon to express outrage that the latter firm had offered to

supply Mr. Warrington with lumber for a livery stable at the price of \$35 per thousand feet. Blinn wrote, "I can be very disagreeable, and make things very uncomfortable." He further threatened that "[I]f you supply one single foot of lumber into Tombstone market at any such rates as those proposed, or in any way enter into direct competition with me here, I will see that you cannot make enough out of your lumber to pay the freight."

The arrival of railroads in the San Pedro River Valley facilitated importation of construction wood from outside Arizona. Even before the Southern Pacific reached Tucson, the A. D. Otis & Company in Tucson in addition to supplying timber from the Chiricahua Mountains was importing in October 1879 large cargoes by rail from California via the Casa Grande railroad terminus and then by wagon to Tucson (ADS, 1879b). The Arizona Daily Star noted on June 10, 1894 that lumber brought by railroad to Fairbank cost \$25 per thousand feet, \$5 more than lumber transported from the Ross Mill to Bisbee (ADS, 1894). The paper opined that the latter lumber was better suited for mine timber but was not yielding a profit for the Ross Mill because of the legal cost the company was incurring defending itself against the United States government. A future article will discuss the federal lawsuit, government attempts to protect forests, and the harvesting of fuelwood.

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