The Madera Sugar Pine Lumber Company

The California Gold Rush of 1849 brought people to the state by the tens of thousands. Everyone wanted to get rich by simply going out and picking up the gold that was just laying around in the mountains. When they arrived, they found a harsh reality. There wasn't much in the way of infrastructure, and the gold wasn't just laying around. Obtaining the gold was very hard work, and many were not cut out for that kind of struggle.

Some began to look at the scenery around them. Some folks became farmers, others became businessmen, selling goods to miners who were still toiling away. While the mountains were certainly daunting, and they were also quite beautiful, and there were other sources of income there that were staring you right in the face, if you knew how and where to look.

The earliest California sawmills were created during the Gold Rush to serve boom towns and mining operations. In fact, gold was discovered in California while an early sawmill, owned by John Sutter, was being constructed in 1848. These early mills were small and once the surrounding area was cleared of trees, the mills were closed and were often dismantled and moved elsewhere.

By the end of the Civil War there were small lumber mills all over the mountains. The demand for lumber was made great by the growing population of the state and the need for lumber for houses, mines, and industries. Eastern lumbermen (especially from Michigan) began looking at Central California for ways to expand their operations. The timberlands in the east were rapidly becoming exhausted and these men needed new sources of timber, even if it meant moving their operations 1500 miles to the west.

Mariposa County was one of the first counties in California, created at statehood in 1850. And it was one of the largest,

containing nearly one sixth of the state's area. In time, other counties broke off, like Fresno County in 1856 and Madera County in 1893. These counties contained some of the best timber land that was available, a seemingly inexhaustible supply of timber. The land was relatively cheap to purchase and there was plenty of water nearby. The proximity of the Central Pacific Railroad and later the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad made the area ideal for transporting lumber from the valley to markets elsewhere.

Farmers like Isaac Friedlander saw the potential of the mountains and began purchasing mountain lands for the timber but also for the water rights. Eventually, Friedlander and a few others would build a system of canals and ditches that would convey water to the valley floor for use by farms and towns that would be established there in the days coming. Those water rights that Friedlander held would also be important to the lumbermen, but more on that in a minute.

So, we're ready to start lumber operations in the Southern Sierras, but how do we get the timber from the mountains to the valley? One way would be to build our mill on the valley floor and then use ox teams to haul the uncut logs from the mountains to the mill, a distance of 50 or 60 miles. Another way would be to build the mill in the mountains and haul the milled lumber to the valley floor by ox team, over the same 50 or 60 miles. Either way, we're still using ox teams. They are very slow, they need to rest and eat, and require huge effort and expense for a limited profit. There must be a better way.

In 1873, barely a year after the Central Pacific RR ran their line down the San Joaquin Valley, a group of businessmen from Merced proposed a big project. They would build a mill high in the mountains of northern Fresno County, surround it with lumber camps where trees would be felled, mill the logs into lumber, and then send the rough milled lumber down a V shaped flume to the valley floor to another mill for finishing. This would negate the need for ox teams and would allow much faster and more efficient transport of the milled lumber. It was already proven technology, for there was already a flume in northern California that was nearly 40 miles long! The mill would be located north and east of Fresno Flats (Oakhurst). The lumber company would be known as The California Lumber Company.

Businessmen associated with this company were:

Peter Dinwiddie Wigginton as President. He was a very successful lawyer from Merced who served as Merced County District Attorney from 1864 -1868 and again from 1879 -1882. In 1888 he was a Candidate for Vice President of the United States.

Mark Howell was the Secretary and Engineer of the company. He was Merced County Surveyor and was also associated with a local Merced real estate company.

Henry Miller and Charles Lux were stockholders in the company. We should be familiar with them because together they owned more West coast real estate than anyone else. They were huge cattlemen. It was once said that a person could walk from the Mexican border to the Canadian border and never leave their properties. They owned huge tracts of land on the west side of the valley.

James Dickinson and William Thurman were both lumbermen with many years' of experience, who would be in charge of the day to day operations of the company.

By September of 1874 the flume was seven miles long and construction of the flume used up the entire 30,000 board feet of lumber per day. Ox teams were still being used to drag the cut trees to the mill, so the operation was slow. The logs were all maneuvered by hand into the mill by the mostly Chinese crew. This would all come to halt when the winter snows came, which happened by early November of 1874. Only eight miles of flume were complete at this time. Work resumed in February of 1875, and by November of 1875 only 15 miles of flume was lacking. But where was the terminus of the flume going to be? Borden was the only nearby railhead with the Central Pacific. Borden was near the intersection of Highway 99 and Avenue 12 in Madera County. There is a new large truck stop there now, and seemingly constant freeway construction projects.

When the railroad came through the valley Leland Stanford, Central Pacific Railroad President, visited the area in 1872 as construction was still occurring. He was entertained in this area by Doctor Joseph Borden, a Southerner who had come to the area from Alabama in 1868, and helped establish the Alabama Colony. The name of the town then was Arcola, the name of the farm in Alabama where the farmers had come from. But when Stanford, visited the town, he was so taken with the charm and Southern hospitality of Dr Borden, that he decreed the town would be called "Borden."

Borden became the biggest town in the area, sporting two hotels, two stores, a saloon, a restaurant, a butcher's shop, two livery stables, two blacksmiths, a barber shop, a post office, and of course, a doctor's office.

Borden also had a Chinese section of town because the majority of the workers building the railroad through town were Chinese immigrants. They lived in a tent city just outside the town. In fact, there were so many Chinese that they created their own cemetery since they weren't allowed to be buried in the white cemetery. When the funds were available, the remains were normally shipped back to China. But at least seven graves reamain at the Borden Chinese Cemetery to this day.

Surely Borden would be the terminus of the flume. The railroad was already there and the town was already there. But it seems that the terrain leading to Borden began going uphill after leaving the Fresno River channel. Since water doesn't flow uphill very well, especially while carrying logs and lumber, the decision was made to stop the flume before it reached Borden. Another reason is because AW Scholle, who owned the land next to the railroad in Borden, refused to sell it to the lumber company for a decent price...or give it to them for free.

But Isaac Freidlander donated land 3 miles north of Borden to the lumber company for their finishing mill and yards, as long as he got the water that came out of the end the flume from the mountains to use as irrigation water. He also donated the land for a townsite for the lumber company workers. And thus, the city of Madera came to be. Madera means "lumber" in Spanish.

The mill would be constructed at 6th and E Streets in Madera. The company would use 40 acres for their own needs and would sell roughly 1500 acres for homes and business in the new town. In a very short time Madera would boast a butcher shop, a hotel, a stable, a general store, a post office, and a blacksmith shop. More businesses would follow, including many that would be moved from Borden, which slowly began to disappear. The Central Pacific was a bit miffed at the California Lumber Company because they didn't end the flume and build their mill at Borden. They refused to build a depot in Madera, which forced the lumber company to build a depot.

The flume was completed and in full operation by 1877. The first sale was to H C Daulton for 280,000 feet of fence boards. The Daulton Ranch still exists just northeast of Madera. I wonder if any of those fence boards are still around? When the flume was torn down the wood was given to local ranchers. Some of the wood was repurposed as barns and outbuildings. In 2021, when my Clamper chapter built a monument inside the Madera County Courthouse Museum, we used wood from a collapsed barn whose wood came from the original flume.

Unfortunately, the summer of 1877 was a very bad drought year. Crops withered, pastures died, and cattle and sheep perished by the thousands. The economy of the area was devastated. Lumber wasn't selling and the operation of the flume was a huge learning experience. The boards were sent down one at a time, but they would hang up in some areas causing the flume to jam. These jams would cause the boards to fall out of the flume or worse, cause the water to fall out of the flume, which then fell sometimes a hundred feet or more to the ground below and eroded away the foundations of the trestle bents. Something had to be done.

Eventually, William Thurman would come up with the idea of making clamps made of iron, resembling a large staple. Two clamps, one at each end, would secure a stack of boards together as a group. The stacks would also be tied together with ropes to make a log train. The trains would be tended along the way by "Flume Herders" who lived in "Flume houses" along the flume route, usually at the same elevation as the flume (sometimes up in the air).

The California Lumber Company was in a dire situation financially. They moved their offices from Merced to Madera and tried to issue new stocks, but seemingly all was to no avail as the debts kept rising. Unfortunately, to raise money for the lumber operation, they had mortgaged some of the land for home sites that Isaac Freidlander gave them. They mortgaged that land for \$100,000 to a bank called the Commercial and Savings Bank of San Jose. On February 20, 1878, the lumber company filed for bankruptcy. On April 4, the bank foreclosed and gained legal title to the California Lumber Company.

The bank gained assets worth over \$350,000. The flume alone was a marvel of engineering for its time. It crossed many creeks and streams, ran along mountain sides, down steep canyons, and in places it was over 60 feet off the ground on trestles. Constructed entirely out of wood, it was 52 miles long with about 1 inch of fall for every 16 feet, mostly. This equates to about 27 feet per mile, but in reality it was not easy to keep that grade constant. In some places the lumber raced down the flume at breakneck speeds. In other places you could walk faster than the lumber was moving. But in any case, the flume cost about \$250,000 by itself.

But this outlay of money would not be wasted. Other men would reap the profits of this enterprise, and they got it at a bargain price. On May 21, 1878, a mere month and a half after the bank foreclosed, the Madera Flume and Trading Company would be born. The officers were, interestingly enough, all officers of the Commercial and Savings Bank of San Jose. A man named Return Roberts, or "Turn" as his friends called him, would be the vice president and general manager of the Madera Flume & Trading Co. An 8 year old child when his parents brought him California in 1849, he lived in Tulare County while his father made lots of money as a cattle rancher. His family moved to the Santa Clara Valley in 1869 and he worked through several jobs and in several capacities, making money all along the way, until he became one of the original incorporators of the Commercial and Savings Bank. James Dickinson of the California Lumber Company would stay on to help run the everyday mill operations.

Roberts added many of his own touches to the expanding company. He added a sash and door factory, improved the flume, and built a new mill at a site about two miles upstream from the old California Lumber Company mill at a place called Soquel Meadows. This mill would operate profitably from 1881 to 1892

Soon a second mill would be built at a place called the Fresno Grove of Big Trees, today known as the Nelder Grove. But this mill, California Mill Number 2 was never connected to the flume due to the lack of water in the area. Logs would be felled in the woods and then loaded onto a gravity tramway, or they were dragged by ox teams, necessitating about a mile of travel to the flume. The entire trip down the flume took about 12 hours from here to Madera. The California Mill Number 2 operated from 1882 to 1892.

Sadly, several Giant Sequoias were felled in this area, leaving their large stumps high in the air. Thankfully, Sugar Pine was what the lumber company was after, and white pine and fir. Redwood was just not their focus.

By the late 1880's, the area immediately around the two mills was nearly entirely logged off. The timber in the surrounding areas was too far away to be brought to the mills by ox teams, wagons, or by the new Dolbeer Steam Donkey engines that the company had brought in. The steam donkeys had a cable that would be attached to the logs and then the logs would be dragged through the forest to the mill.

In the Spring of 1889, a four-mile 3 foot narrow gauge logging railroad was built around the Soquel Mill, one of the first logging railroads in this part of the state. A small, light two axle locomotive named "Betsy" was used on this line. She pulled some small homemade bob tailed log cars. This railroad would do away with the need for ox teams in the area. Betsy did a marvelous job during her four years at Soquel and continued working at Sugar Pine to become the longest-lived logging locomotive in the southern Sierras.

By 1892, the forest that was easily attainable by the logging railroad was also logged out. The Madera Flume and Trading Company simply didn't have enough forest land under their control to continue operations. Return Roberts and his partner Elmer Cox had created the very prosperous Commercial Bank of Madera and were awash with other projects. The two mountain mills were closed, but the Madera mill kept working until 1898, using wood supplied by small contract loggers who would deliver the logs to the flume at various places and then would be paid on the spot.

By 1898, the Soquel Mill had been partially destroyed by a wildfire, the California Mill number 2 was in ruins, and the flume was badly in need of repair. Elmer Cox saw the potential that still existed in the woods. With enough money and the connections to get access to the timber lands around the area, he felt that the

operation could succeed on an even grander scale than previously thought.

It just happened that the area to the north of the Madera Flume and Lumber Company was owned by a Michigan lumberman named Arthur Hill. Hill was one of the most prominent lumbermen in the entire country. His land was heavy with Sugar Pine over a foot in diameter. After a trip to visit Arthur Hill, Elmer Cox came home with the plans to create the Madera Sugar Pine Company, with Arthur Hill and several of his business associates as partners. Principal stockholders would be Arthur Hill majority stock holder with 629 shares, Elmer Cox with 350 shares, Return Roberts with 200 shares, and Eldridge Fowler, one of Hill's wealthy buddies at 310 shares. Because Elmer Cox was not wealthy, he had to mortgage all his assets to buy his shares (at a cost of \$100 per share for a total of \$35,000 investment).

The new company began work in 1899 with the construction of a new mill. They had absorbed the assets of the old Madera Flume and Trading Company and set about to build the new much bigger mill, a new company town, install a complete logging railroad, and rebuild and add an extension to the flume to meet the new mill. This extension would join the old Soquel Flume about three miles above Fresno Flats (Oakhurst). The flume would be completely rebuilt along the entire route through the mountains from Sugar Pine to Madera.

The new mill would be built along Lewis Creek at a site south of Wawona and just about a mile off of the Yosemite Stage and Turnpike Company's stage road from Madera to Yosemite. At the time, there were two large competing lumber operations in the southern Sierra. The first was the Kings River Lumber Company which from 1888, operated a 54-mile-long flume from the Millwood area near Sequoia National Park to the town of Sanger where their mill was located. The second was the Fresno Flume and Irrigation Company, created in 1891, which operated a mill in the Stephenson Creek area of the mountains above Clovis. Their flume ran 46 miles from the Shaver Lake Mill to the town of Clovis, which was created in 1891 by Marcus Pollasky as he laid out his San Joaquin Valley Railroad. The flume didn't reach Clovis until 1894.

Each town and each lumber company felt that their flume was the longest. Newspaper articles would add mileage to each flume, until the competition reached a fever pitch. The various towns each wanted to boast that they possessed the "World's Longest Lumber Flume." Bill Schwartz of Madera was determined to prove that the Madera Flume was the longest.

When they built the flume, they erected flume houses along the route. They were spaced from 2 1/2 to 7 miles apart and had been erected to house the lumber herders who had to maintain a 24-hour vigil to make sure there were no lumber pileups along the way. From Sugar Pine, the flume stations were located in such exotic places as Salt Springs, Poison Switch, Confidence, Zubra, Ellerbrock, Canyon, French Graveyard, Ralls, the Hump, China Store, 12 Mile house, Six Mile House, and Four Mile House. Schwartz was living at Salt Springs when he decided to show the world once and for all the exact length of Madera's flume. He walked all the way from Sugar Pine to Madera, twice, to prove it.

Schwartz started out in Salt Springs with a stick about three feet long and a knife and began to walk toward Sugar Pine. As he went, he counted the 16-foot sections, and when he got to 100, he made a notch in his stick. When he got to Sugar Pine, he turned about and walked back down to the next flume house below Salt Springs, which was Poison Switch. Taking up another stick, Schwartz walked back up the mountain to Salt Springs, again making a mark for every 100 sections he passed.

With that, he grabbed some more sticks and turned around toward Madera. He walked back to Poison Switch and began counting again — every 100 sections. Past Confidence, Zubra, Ellerbrock, Canyon, French Graveyard, Ralls, the Hump, China Store, 12 Mile house, Six Mile House, and Four Mile House he walked, making his notches in his sticks. When he got to Madera, he had a huge bundle of sticks, each with a notch in it. Then he went to one of the bosses at the mill and threw them on the floor. The two men counted up the notches on the sticks and did some calculating. Bill Schwartz' sticks showed that the Madera Sugar Pine Flume was 65.9 miles long, proving that the Madera Flume was the longest.

Do you think this really happened? I don't know, it might be an urban myth, but it's a great story in the legend of the Madera Flume. The Sanger Lumber Company Flume at 59 miles from Hume Lake to Sanger was officially the record holder.

A side road from the stage road was extended into the townsite and the mill area. Soon a company office, a store, and a cookhouse were in operation. The mill would soon be completed. An earthen dam was built across Lewis Creek and the pond created behind it would become a log pond for floating the logs into the sawmill instead of dragging them. The railroad would dump the logs down a chute into the pond where they would be cleaned and then hoisted into the mill. Lewis Creek would also be the source of water for the flume.

Residence cabins, a bachelor's dormitory, a post office, barber shop, machine shop, foundry, hospital, railroad repair shop, warehouse and all the structures needed to facilitate a working railroad and lumber mill were soon complete and in operation. The name of the new town and mill would be "Sugar Pine."

By October 27, 1900, the new enterprise was complete, and a huge two-day celebration was held at the mill and yard in Madera.

The fluming operation was nearly a ballet of boards and working men. Chinese workers, and later some Mexican workers, would assemble different sizes of lumber into bundles at the mill. The bundles would be clamped together on each end using the clamps created by William Thurman, which were either eight, twelve, or sixteen inches long. Each bundle was then roped end to end to another bundle, and then another bundle, until a train of four bundles was formed. From 6:30 am until 5 pm the trains would be sent down the flume.

The flume was the steepest between Sugar Pine and Salt Springs. There flume herders would check the bundles to make sure they were still tightly held together. Then they would reassemble the trains into lengths of twenty bundles each. At the next flume house, the same checking the bundles procedure was executed and more bundles were tied together. As the flume reached Madera, the train could be as much as six or seven miles long, slowly arriving at the mill. Each flume house was connected by a telephone line, so that flume herders along the way could discuss the progress of the trains. Approximately 35 herders were employed at all times.

There were also a few feeder flumes that entered the flume at three locations. For example, at Salt Springs there was a shingle factory owned by the company. The shingles would be added to the train there. At Confidence and French Graveyard there were also feeder flumes. The names of the stations were taken from landowners or from local landmarks. Poison Switch was so named because there was a saloon nearby and the local teamsters would get "poisoned" there. French Graveyard was because....well, there was a graveyard nearby with Frenchmen in it. There was a Chinese Store near the flume that was once Jim Savage's trading post. 12 mile house was 12 miles from Madera, etc.

The flume had a ten inch wide catwalk for the herders to walk on. Obviously, this was not a very safe occupation. The wooden catwalk was always wet and slippery, and in places it was 60 feet high. One slip and a herder could be injured, maimed, or even killed. Jams were frequent, and the flume herder had to find the jam and clear it using whatever tools he could muster, usually a pickaroon. Flume boats were used to transport herders, equipment, repair crews, and sometimes lumberjacks downhill, although these rides were usually limited to the hours after work when the lumber had ceased being sent downhill. Speeds downhill near Salt Springs, the steepest part, could reach up to 50 miles per hour.

Once the mill, the rebuilt flume, and the company town were built and operational, the company began to build the 3 foot narrow gauge railroads that would transport the logs from the forest to the mill. Little Betsy, the seven ton 0-4-0 oil burning saddle tank engine was used as a construction locomotive because she was light, but very mobile, and quick. So quick that if you weren't careful she would jump the track. She was hauled from the remains of the Soquel Mill over eight miles of mountain terrain by horse and mule team, and began work on a line running north from the Sugar Pine Mill into the forest. She would eventually haul the first logs from the area in the old homemade cars used at Soquel.

Deeper in the forest, steam donkeys were used to drag the fallen logs close to chutes that were made from logs. The fallen logs would be loaded onto the chutes and then dragged to the railhead by horses or mules. Later very large steam powered stationary engines would be used to drag and lift the logs onto the log cars.

By 1903 business was so good that the Sugar Pine Mill was completely rebuilt, using modern bandsaws instead of the circular saws that had been in use since the California Lumber Company. The railroad track was upgraded from 25 pound rail to 35 pound rail and it was extended deeper and farther into the woods. The company purchased a brand new two truck 37-ton Shay geared steam locomotive from the Lima Locomotive Works of Lima Ohio. But there was no railroad that went from Madera to Sugar Pine, so the Shay was partially disassembled and loaded onto a special wagon, pulled by 16 mules. After a week of travel, it arrived at Sugar Pine and was quickly reassembled. The locomotive was named the "Arthur Hill" after the majority stockholder. It would be MSP locomotive Number 2, as Betsy was Number 1.

Shay locomotives were created by Ephraim Shay, a logger in Michigan. Shay's logging operation first used horses pulling log cars on wooden rails. But sometimes the log cars would run away and would kill the horses. When he used a rod locomotive instead of the horses, but his maple track would be ruined in a short time. Normal rod locomotives when hauling a heavy load up steep grades tend to slip their wheels and they tend to pound the track under hard working conditions. So, Shay built a locomotive that featured pistons mounted on one side of the locomotive with the boiler offset slightly to the left. He attached the pistons to driveshafts that run horizontally front and rear along the axis of the locomotive. The shafts connect to be veled gears that in turn connect to rim gears attached to the wheels of the locomotive. The wheels are attached to trucks that are very similar to the trucks on regular flat cars, dissipating the load more evenly over the track. A Shay can also traverse sharper curves than a rod locomotive. The gearing of Shay locomotive makes it very strong but not really fast. 10-15 MPH is nearing top speed, but a Shay can easily pull a heavy load up a 10 percent grade and can go even steeper than that. Mainline railroads like to keep their grades below 2 percent. As I recall, The Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine RR Shays go up a 14 percent at one point.

Ephraim Shay was a logger, not an engineer or a locomotive builder. When other loggers wanted him to build a locomotive for them, he sent them to the Lima Machine Works, who at the time were a small manufacturing company. In time, Lima would build some very large locomotives, and their Shays would dominate the logging and mining market. Other locomotive manufacturers such as Heisler and Climax produced geared locomotives, but they didn't have the popularity around the world that the Shays did. Today there are more Shays in existence and in operation on tourist railroads than probably any other type of steam locomotive. Accompanying the Arthur Hill to Sugar Pine were ten 8 wheeled J S Hammond flat cars built in San Francisco. Arthur Hill had air brakes and burned wood, which was easily accessible for the logging company. The Arthur Hill immediately became the workhorse of the company's operations in the mountains around Sugar Pine. In 1904, the Number 3 "E.M. Fowler," another two truck 37-ton Shay would be added to the roster. In 1910 the Number 4 "E N Briggs," a two truck 42-ton Shay would join the railroad. In 1912 the Number 5 (no name given to it) a three truck 60-ton Shay was added, and in 1927 Number 6, a three truck 67 ton Shay was delivered.

The lumber company and the railroads would eventually cover thousands of acres of land. Through lease and other arrangements, the MSP was able to expand its operations north nearly to Wawona, northwest past Iron Mountain almost to Hite's Cove, west almost to Darrah, northeast nearly into the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias, and southwest past the former Soquel Meadows Mill site and past Graham Mountain east of Bass Lake.

This didn't all exist at the same time. The lumber company would remove the rails and place them in a new spot once the forest was logged out. So some tracks only lasted in that spot a year or two, some lasted longer. From1908 to 1918, the area directly north of Sugar Pine to west of Wawona was logged. From 1918 to 1924, the area east of Fish Camp nearly to the Mariposa Grove was logged. From 1923 to 1927, the area southeast of Sugar Pine to nearly Bass Lake was logged. And from1927 to 1931 the area from Sugar Pine west and northwest nearly to Hite's Cove was logged. The trackage was crude, not well ballasted, and was temporary by nature. Tracks were laid, then removed, then relaid, then removed again over and over again.

The town of Sugar Pine was quite diverse. Workers consisted of many nationalities and temperaments. There were Irish, Swedes, Danes, Norwegians, Poles, local Indians who were excellent at making things out of wood, French Canadians always looking for a fight, Spanish speaking Mexicans, and the Chinese with their strange other worldly ways, and the odd American of whatever ancestry. The cookhouse must have been a cacophony! Of course, the Chinese lived apart from everyone else in a small Chinatown in Sugar Pine.

The entire town was burned to the ground in 1922, a loss of 75 buildings, plus the mill, the bunkhouse, the powerhouse, the store, the cookhouse, the boiler house, the lumber yard, and all the lumber, and the theatre where most of the 300 workers were watching a Jackie Coogan film when the fire started. No one was injured or killed, but all the cigarettes and tobacco from the company store burned, much to the chagrin of the workers. Only a box of crackers and a chunk of cheese was saved from the inferno of the Company Store.

The company immediately hauled in temporary housing for the displaced workers, and set up a store, a supply warehouse, and a dining hall. A small mill was brought in from Los Angeles to create lumber to rebuild the town. A bigger and better sawmill would be in place by Spring of 1923, and operations resumed. This new mill would increase production to 350,000 board feet per day, and 50 million board feet of Sugar Pine lumber annually. This was a 20 percent increase over the old mill. There were only primitive dirt stage roads leading into the area around the mill, so all the equipment and materials had to be hauled up that dirt road, during the wettest time of the year. It was 60 miles from Madera to Sugar Pine, so it amazes me that they got the reconstruction finished so very quickly.

In the midst of all this work, we should endeavor to discuss the after hours activities of the loggers and mill workers. Many mills, such as the one at Shaver Lake, were very serious about how the workers comported themselves, and thus kept away any loose women and madams. Elmer Cox, the Madera Sugar Pine administrator took a more worldly approach. He felt that as long as the logs got to the mill in Madera efficiently, he wouldn't concern himself with the after hours activities and desires of the workers. So, the first bordello was set up four miles down the road from Sugar Pine. It was called "Kamook" for some unknown reason. It was populated by women who had lost their workplaces in the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 who had moved on to greener pastures in these mountains. Accommodations there were limited.

Soon another place would spring up, this one a tent camp two miles south of Fish Camp, just west of today's Highway 41. It was called "Happy Camp." I wonder why it was called that? Later, the girls managed to convince some of their logger friends to build wood houses for them instead of the tents.

In 1910, logging reached the Big Creek area near the Chowchilla Wawona road. A new parlor house was built there called "Tipperary." This was an actual house with a main parlor, three bedrooms, a kitchen, a front room, and four individual cabins. Because it was so close to the logging worksite in the woods, it quickly became the most popular house. It wasn't really fancy, but it was comfortable. It even had a player piano and a console phonograph.

The prices at these parlor houses were not negotiable and were the same at all the houses. An ordinary visit was \$2, overnight was \$10. Overnight stays were usually confined to Saturday nights because the loggers had to get up for work on the other nights.

The folks living in the area didn't seem to mind that the parlor houses were in operation. Sometimes it was necessary for the Sheriff to make a call to try to dissuade the "rampant sin and corruption" that was on going. Of course, in the performance of his duties, and to insure a thorough investigation, it might be necessary for him to stay at one of the parlor houses overnight, or maybe for two or three nights. When he left he would post an abatement notice... that stayed there at least until he was down the road and out of sight. Interestingly, the girls were all in good health and diseases were kept at a minimum. The girls traded at the company store and were given health care at the company hospital. Food and other supplies were delivered to Happy Camp and Tipperary by the railroad and were carried in a box car with supplies that were headed further down the line. This service was done free of charge.

For nearly twenty years the parlor houses were in operation. Tipperary closed when logging activities moved to the east and out of the area in 1918. By the mid 1920's the other houses would close as well.

The Madera Sugar Pine Lumber Company was one of the most profitable and longest lasting logging operations in the in the southern Sierra. The rival camps at Shaver Lake and in the Kings River area were not nearly as profitable, and there were several economic downturns during the years of operation that were difficult to survive. But under the guidance and leadership of Elmer Cox, the company weathered all storms and flourished, earning its shareholders 45 times profit over their original investment. That is, until the Great Depression. By the early 1930's all construction across the country came to a screeching halt. Stacks of unsold lumber piled up at the mill yard, as was happening all over the country. By the end of the 1931 season, the mill at Sugar Pine was shut down. The remaining wood at Sugar Pine would be shipped downhill in 1932, and various small guantities of wood would be sent down the flume from the Ahwahnee area. But by 1933 the entire operation was shuttered for good.

The sawmill, and most of the mill equipment and machinery were sold to other logging operations. Two of the newer locomotives were sold to other companies, one for parts and the other to put to work. The Number 6 Shay was sold to Feather River Lumber Company in Plumas County for a few years, and was ultimately scrapped in 1951. The company had purchased a Plymouth 20-ton gasoline powered locomotive for switching and ballasting duties in 1927, and it was eventually sold to Grants Gravel Company of Friant. It came to rest along Friant Road near Willow Avenue at the Ball Ranch for many years, disappearing in the early 1990's when the Ball Ranch was sold. Betsy and the four other Shays were sold and scraped in 1937. Elmer Cox offered Betsy to the City of Madera for use as a display locomotive, but there was no interest.

In peak times, the lumber company employed 600 men in its logging camps and 1000 in the mills and flumes. The company produced 50 million board feet of lumber annually, most of that exported out of California. Sugar Pine is a clear, very pretty and well sought after wood. Two carloads were sent to Washington DC during President Teddy Roosevelt's 1902 renovation of the White House. In over thirty years of operation, the company logged over 6,200 acres and produced 1.3 billion board feet of lumber.

Many of the US Forest Service roads that exist today in the mountains of this area are the former roadbeds of the MSP. Highway 41 travels over the old roadbed near Fish Camp. Our train trip today will be over the original roadbed, although the tracks and ties have been rebuilt. The area around Sugar Pine is covered with miles and miles of old roadbed. In August of 2017, a massive wildfire fire started near the railroad. It burned for two months and did tremendous amounts of damage. There were evacuations of local areas and everyone was scared that the fire would burn the railroad and the towns of Fish Camp and Sugar Pine, the residential area around Sierra Sky Ranch, and the Nelder Grove of old growth redwoods. The fire burned through Nelder Grove and killed 38 of the massive trees growing there. It also burned some historical old railroad equipment that was stored at Yosemite Mountain Sugar Opine Railroad, but for the most part spared the railroad and Sugar Pine due to the diligence of railroad workers and firefighters.

I mention this because after the fire, the railroad discovered several miles of heretofore unseen and unknown old roadbed that can now be hiked by the hearty and brave...and by the young.