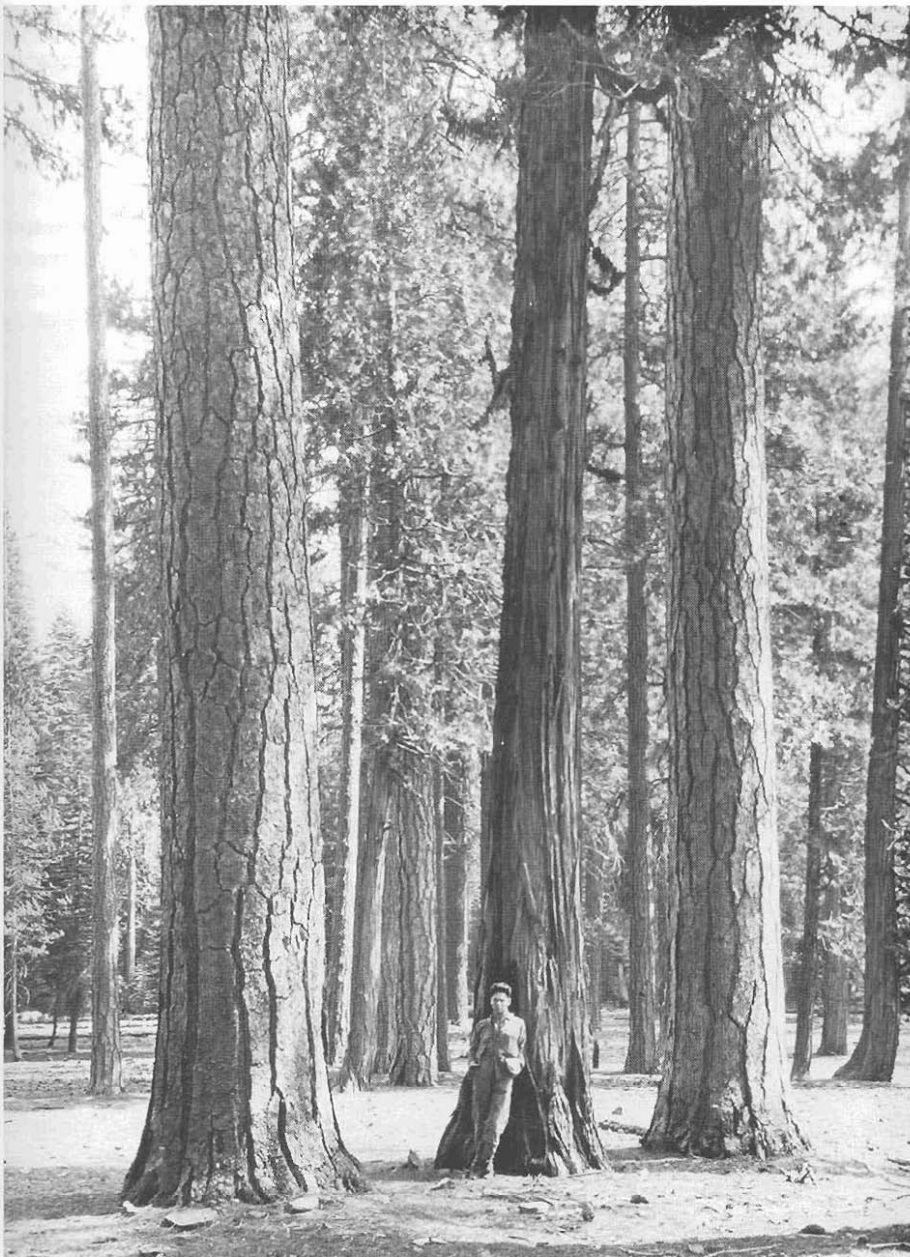


Sixty-five years ago the Collins Almanor Forest was certified as a Tree Farm. In 1993, the Almanor forest became the first industry-owned forest in the U.S. to be certified as a sustainable forest by a third party certifier. This article provides a historic look at the last 100 years on the forest associated with the Collins family.

THE COLLINS ALMANOR FOREST

AN EXPERIMENT IN SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

COMPILED BY STEVEN ANDERSON



COLLINS ALMANOR FOREST PHOTO

The Collins Almanor Forest (CAF), part of the resource base of Collins Pine Company, comprises about 95,000 acres located about 180 miles northeast of San Francisco. It straddles the transition of the Western slopes of the Sierra Nevada Range and the Southern Cascade Range. In 1993, the Collins Almanor Forest became the first industrial forestland in the U.S. to be certified for sustainable forestry under the Forest Stewardship Council standards. But the story begins almost 100 years ago.

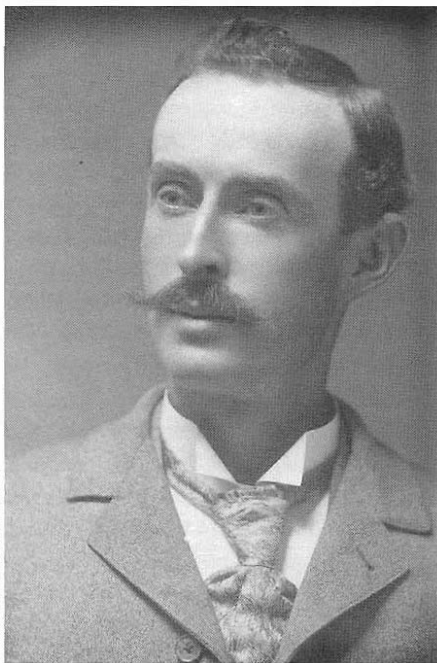
In 1901 Everell S. Collins was sent by his father T.D. Collins to scout timberland in northern California for the Curtis, Collins and Holbrook Company (CC&H). He found open park-like stands as a result of repeated burning of the understory. Many of the fires were set by the Maidu Indians to promote better travel, hunting, and crops of wild food. The main logging road, which was later constructed out to the west end of the property, closely followed the original Lassen Trail. Peter Lassen established the trail in 1848, as a cut off from the Applegate Trail to the Sacramento Valley. Heavy gold rush traffic moved through this area in 1849, with J. Goldsborough Bruff remarking in his diary that "the woods are alight with fires."

Everell wrote to his father in October of 1901:

"The Company's timber lies on a tableland with low hills crossing it,

Chester timber stand on Almanor Flat. Timber Cruiser leaning on a sugar pine with ponderosa pine and white fir trees in the background, 1924.

and here and there a tall mountain. The timber is chiefly bull pine or yellow pine, now called California white pine (Ponderosa Pine), with ten percent of sugar pine. There is also some white fir or silver fir, tamarack (Lodgepole Pine) and very little larch (Douglas-fir). The sugar and other pine runs 140 feet to 160 feet in height and up to six feet in diameter on the stump for yellow and eight for sugar pine. Average stump diameter is about two and a half and four feet. The timber is scattered with little undergrowth. Trees hold their size well towards the top(and) limbs (start) about thirty feet off the ground. Chief defect seems to be knots (and) some trees are very cross grained causing the lumber to warp badly. I estimate the (pine) timber would average twenty thousand to the acre cutting as we do in Washington, or forty to sixty thousand as you cut and saw in Pennsylvania. The fir is rough and I think quick rotting and is not worth anything. Average diameter is two feet and height 140 feet. The tamarack is about a foot in diameter and twenty-five feet high and considered



COLLINS ALMANOR FOREST PHOTO

Everell Collins was a second generation lumberman who established his base of operations in Ostrander, Washington in 1888. He scouted and acquired most of the Collins Almanor Forest lands in 1902

worthless. The country is not all timbered. There are large open places on the lower ground that are used for sheep range and on the higher mountains there is rock and chaparral. The timber is on the low hills and slopes. The ground is very fine for Ry (railroad) building.”

CC&H held the timber near Chester, California for years without milling or marketing it, due to the lack of an economically feasible method to get the logs to a mill and the means to get the lumber to markets, the majority of which were back East. The coming of World War II, with the resulting high demand for lumber, suddenly made it worthwhile to develop the timber resources held in California. In addition, a railroad link to the east was established by the Red River Lumber Company.

When E.S. Collins died in 1940, he left a portion of the CC&H property to the Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Truman Collins was elected President of all Collins’ enterprises shortly after his father’s death. The CC&H was the largest of five ownerships then comprising the Collins Almanor Forest and a long-term harvest contract was established between CAF and the Collins Pine Company.

Truman’s commitment to sustained-yield forestry developed in the late 1930’s to early 1940’s. Through the Western Pine Association and the Pacific Logging Congress Truman knew Dave Mason, the father of sustained-yield forestry. In the Spring of 1941, Truman hired George Flanagan, who had been a partner with Mason in the early 1930’s, as the Chief Forester of his father’s estate. He also hired Wally Reed, who was knowledgeable about the early bark beetle risk rating systems, as the first Forest Manager of the Collins Almanor Forest. Wally established growth plots over the entire ownership (a circular acre plot for every 160 acres) and implemented selective harvesting. Truman was quickly convinced of the benefits of sustained-yield and planned for a perpetual supply of timber to the Chester mill and support to the community where jobs would be permanent. In 1943, because of its “dedication to growing trees for tomorrow,” the Almanor

Forest was certified by the Western Pine association as the third Western Pine Tree Farm. In the Tree Farm application Wally Reed wrote the following:

“Management for the area embraced in The Collins Almanor Forest is so planned that in the minimum of time as is possible the area will be placed upon a sound, economic sustained yield basis. Through the application of sound forestry practice, entailing the use of proper selective logging, fire and insect protection, maximum of utilization and care for the reserve stands of timber, a continuous supply of logs and other forest products will be assured. The continuous flow of forest wealth will make for a high standard and stabilized community which in turn will not only benefit the community itself, but the Country, State and Nation as a whole.”

The plan was successful as the Chester mill has run continuously for 55 years and only reduced its production to a four-day work week for short periods in 1982 and 1998. The Chester mill currently processes 62 million board feet of timber, 30 million of which is provided by the sustainable cut of the Collins Almanor Forest. It runs two head rigs and two shifts.

Forest management on the CAF has remained flexible and has adapted to new information. Because of its sound forest management, only minor adjustments in stream protection needed to be made when the California Forest Practice Act was passed in 1973. In the late 1980’s, the CAF management Plan was revised changing emphasis from maximizing growth to retaining a wider range of tree sizes; and from timber sustainability to managing for biological and structural diversity.

Then in 1993, the Collins Pine Companies were responding to fundamental changes in the forest industry. With the removal of many Forest Service lands from harvesting, lumber and log prices rose and began fluctuating. The company wished to pursue value-added products and market differentiation. The Collins Companies were quite interested when Vice president of Marketing Wade

Mosby came back from a 1992 meeting trip to Europe, where he had learned about the Green Cross product certification program. Since the Collins Almanor Forest had been managed on a select-cut basis for more than 50 years they figured it ought to be certifiable. The foresters and organization were especially pleased when the CAF passed with flying colors, receiving a score of 256 out of a possible 270 in three major categories: timber resource sustainability, ecosystem health and community benefits. Collins is certifying its forests and subsequent products under the Green Cross label, which states that Collins' forest management practices meet or exceed standards set forth by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an international umbrella group which has the goal of encouraging forest management that meet selected criteria.

In March of 1993 Scientific Certification Systems, the certifying company, issued this executive summary of forest management on the CAF: "Overall, the evaluation team was quite favorably impressed with the Almanor forest man-



Left George Flanagan (left) was hired by Truman Collins (right) in 1941, as the chief forester of Everell's estate. Truman and George had each been influenced by Dave Mason prior to that time.

Below Cat D8 Tractor with Hyster winch and arch. Maximum haul 1600 feet. Two outfits provided an average of 220,000 board feet per 9-hour day. September 28, 1941.

COLLINS ALMANOR FOREST PHOTO



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