

Old boy,



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did you get enough of pie?

A Social History of Food in Logging Camps

By Joseph R. Conlin

We never got very far from thinking about grub in the old Chippeway camps," Louie Blanchard remembered, and small wonder.¹ Ten or twelve hours' labor deep in the woods every day for five months offered few diversions other than meals. And it burned a lot of energy. It was not only the incredible exertion of old-time, muscle-power logging. There were also the caloric demands of the bitter winter cold in New England and the Lake states and, in the Pacific Northwest, the steeping forest rains that are physiologically almost as exacting.

For a society that feels compelled to run around in sweatsuits in order to shed a few pounds, it may be difficult to imagine a "lifestyle" in which vast *fueling* was essential to survival. But the old lumberjacks bolted three, four, and, on some river drives, five enormous meals per day.² And they used them. One can leaf through as many stacks of old photographs as a proud archivist can trot out without seeing a potbelly. Indeed, a common superstition among loggers was that when they saw a fat man in the woods it was time to blow the whistle. There would be three accidents in quick succession.

Loggers always ate plenty of food. Before the turn of the century, they began to eat very well, too, of a variety of fresh, wholesome, and well-prepared foods. As an occupational group, they and the millhands in the industry were probably the best-fed workers in the country.

This calls for an explanation. The "timber beast" and the "sawdust savage" are not typically remembered for their lives of comfort. Wages were not good, well into the twentieth century. Employment was unsteady; job security did not exist. Bunkhouse conditions appalled the roughest of outsiders. (Sled drivers delivering supplies to the camps often preferred to sleep in the snow.) Lumberjacks were despised and feared by much of conventional society. During the years of the First World War and just afterwards, employer-employee relations in the indus-

try were among the worst in the country. The Industrial Workers of the World — the Wobblies — the union of last resort, won thousands of adherents among woodsmen of the Northwest. In no other industry did the federal government, through the military, find it necessary to intervene so directly.³ Yet, while much of the working class of the time was marginally nourished, loggers ate extremely well. Why?

This article attempts the explanation. It is inferential in parts. If food is third only to air and water as a basis of life, the historian of the subject is soon reminded that it is also a highly unhistoriographical thing. Unlike the terms of treaties or strike settlements or even residence data, records of "food gone by" are always fragmentary, even when, as in lumbering, the provision of it was an intrinsic part of the operation.⁴

³See Robert L. Tyler, *Rebels in the Woods: The I.W.W. in the Pacific Northwest* (Eugene: University of Oregon Books, 1967); Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All. A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1969); Harold M. Hyman, *Soldiers and Spruce: Origins of the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen* (Los Angeles: University of California, Institute of Industrial Relations, 1963).

⁴I began this study as a historian of diet rather than of forests and logging. Unsurprisingly, I soon began to feel something like a Delmonico's busboy might have felt had he found himself on a river drive without so much as a pair of calked boots to help his footing. Luckily, "the boys" were good to me and without laughing out loud. They helped steady me on the short logs so that, whatever the result (hardly their fault), I made it! I am grateful for their assistance: Ronald J. Fahl of the Forest History Society directed me to a hundred sources including Andrew Genzoli of the *Times-Standard* of Eureka; Isabel Roper of the Louisiana-Pacific Archives; Richard M. Thompson of the Georgia-Pacific Archives; Cathy deLorge of the Oregon Historical Society; Sally Maddocks, who oversees the archives of both Pope & Talbot, Inc., and Simpson Timber Company; Arthur J. McCourt of Weyerhaeuser Historical Archives; and the courteous and unfailingly helpful staffpersons at the Humboldt Room of the Humboldt State University Library at Arcata, the Seattle Public Library, and at numerous collections at the University of Washington Libraries. Finally, to Anna M. Lind of Nehalem, Oregon, whose days as a camp flunkey instilled in her work habits so awesome that she repeatedly provided book-length reminiscences describing practices in and anecdotes of cookhouse life in the 1920s and 1930s.

¹Walker D. Wyman, *The Lumberjack Frontier: The Life of a Logger in the Early Days on the Chippeway* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), p. 28.

²For the "five meal system," see William G. Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States Lumber Industry, 1840-1918* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1953), pp. 93-94.

What the Loggers Ate

In Maine, where American commercial logging was born, living conditions were brutish. "Comforts for the drivers didn't mean much to the employers," wrote Marsh Underwood.⁵ The men covered by night in rude shanties, the warming fire in the center of the hut doubling as cookstove and oven. The first lumberjacks ate standing or off their laps from the "deacon seat." They hired a boy to feed them, or they did their own cooking, taking turns, and it did not much matter. Escoffier himself could not have done much with "the great trinity" of beans, pork, and bread that was served thrice daily. A youth or a ham-handed sawyer could not do much harm.⁶

There were other items in the Maine larders: pickled beef, baled codfish, sourdough biscuits, flapjacks, molasses, and tea "strong enough to float an ax."⁷ But everything was nonperishable. Except for occasional venison, no fresh meat nor vegetables, fruit, or eggs appear in the records.

The problem was supply. As with the sailor's life, with which the logger's is often compared, the paramount fact of nineteenth-century logging was its isolation. Only so much could reasonably be ported into the deep woods by bateau against the current or by sled after the seasonal freeze, and these were necessarily the staples. As for the monotony of the diet, the norms of the period must be kept in mind. Although New England farmers of the nineteenth century were generally enjoying various preserves and the like during the winter months, their own dependence on bread, salt meat, and molasses must not be underestimated. "The men were satisfied mainly, perhaps," a Vermont boy cook thought, "because the time did not afford a higher standard by which they might measure the shortcomings of their lot."⁸ In any event, there is no record of food *shortage* in even the most primitive operations. The loggers' insistence on "plenty" as a condition of labor — their simple biological need for what one remembered as "twenty pounds of food apiece" — dates from the beginning.⁹

The first logging ventures in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota followed closely on New

England patterns. As back east, the menu was rude and monotonous.¹⁰ By 1870, "all the common and substantial articles of food and drink" of the country were being served in the Lake states logging camps, and good, varied diets appeared in the Pacific Northwest about the same time. A. R. M. Lower dates the "revolution in camp diet" in Upper Canada at about 1880.¹¹ By

ern Argus, December 8, 1884; David C. Smith, *A History of Lumbering in Maine, 1861-1960* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1972), pp. 15, 18; Jensen, *Lumber and Labor*, p. 38.

There must have been other items, because this diet alone over five months would have laid crews low with scurvy. While the disease is mentioned in contemporary accounts, it does not appear to have been a plague. Scurvy is a vitamin C deficiency long associated with seamen and other people restricted to diets lacking in fresh fruits and vegetables. There is no "C" or ascorbic acid in the early loggers' diets as recorded. And yet, scurvy was *apparently* not a major problem. Memorialists "hear tell of it elsewhere" but never where they were working. Either the early loggers did have the dried fruits so conspicuous in later diets, and did not mention them (or maybe lemon juice, which Alfaretta Cooley says the cooks "added . . . to everything" in Wisconsin in the 1920s, having learned about the vitamin) or, like the sailors, they were plagued with the ailment so routinely that it seemed undeserving of special note. There is little evidence that this was so, but scurvy was not an unusual disease at the time, especially in the ports to which the men brought their logs. It may be that the lumberjacks' scurviness simply excited little notice, especially in that recovery is fairly rapid and complete as soon as the deficiency is remedied. Another intriguing possibility is that Maine loggers routinely swallowed black ants that had fed on pine needles, a rich source of vitamin C, as a reflexive folk antiscorbutic. See Isaac Stephenson, *Recollections of a Long Life* (Chicago: privately published, 1915), p. 107; Alfaretta Cooley, "Paul Bunyar's Cook," *Nutrition Today* 5 (Spring 1970): 25; Robert F. Fries, *Empire in Pine: The Story of Lumbering in Wisconsin, 1830-1900* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1951), p. 229; James Trager, *The Bellybook* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1972), p. 97.

⁸Stephenson, *Recollections*, p. 43.

⁹Underwood, *Log*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰Theodore C. Blegen, "With Ax and Saw: A History of Lumbering in Minnesota," *Forest History* 7 (Fall 1963): 11; Rector, *Log Transportation*, pp. 70-71; Stephenson, *Recollections*, p. 85; Underwood, *Log*, p. 36.

¹¹*St. Croix Union*, March 6, 1855; Rector, *Log Transportation*, p. 71; Ralph N. Andrews, *Timber!: Toil and Trouble in the Big Woods* (Seattle: Superior Publishing, 1968), p. 55; A. R. M. Lower, *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest: A History of the Lumber Trade Between Canada and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), p. 31; Isabel Roper, "The Samoa Cookhouse," unpublished manuscript, Louisiana-Pacific Archives, Portland, Oregon.

⁵Marsh Underwood, *The Log of a Logger* (Portland: By the author, 1938), p. 25.

⁶Richard G. Wood, *A History of Lumbering in Maine, 1820-1861* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1935), pp. 91-94; Stewart H. Holbrook, *Holy Old Mackinaw: A Natural History of the American Lumberjack* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), p. 45; Vernon H. Jensen, *Lumber and Labor* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1945), p. 23; Robert E. Pike, *Tall Trees, Tough Men* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), p. 91.

⁷Holbrook, *Yankee Loggers: A Recollection of Woodsmen, Cooks, and River Drivers* (New York: International Paper Company, 1961), p. 46; Pike, *Tall Trees*, pp. 92, 132, 138; *Portland (Maine) East-*

way of contrast, only the “good” camps in Maine seem to have been doing much more than beans, pork, and biscuits, even after 1890. Any number of Yankee loggers who trekked from New England to the Lake states commented on the superiority of the “cuisine” out west. One historian says that real improvement in New England came only after the passage of progressive legislation in 1910.¹² There was, simply, not the same intense competition for labor in the older region.

Improvement took five forms: (1) the introduction of fresh meats, vegetables, fruits, and even eggs, butter, and milk — in abundance and as a matter of course; (2) variety — no more same-thing-every-meal-every-day; (3) baking — often with extraordinary skill; (4) professional, specialized cooks to handle the job; and (5) distinctly separate, sit-down dining halls — the famous “cookhouses” — with tableware and table service.

Perhaps because there was now something worth noting, scores of menus survive in newspapers, travelers’ accounts, reminiscences, ac-



count books, and company communications. They are impressive. Pancakes and beans were ubiquitous. But in addition, in the final third of the nineteenth century, company commissaries were ordering forty and sixty items a month from wholesale grocers and farmers. A broad selection of camps ranging from Washington, Oregon, and California to the Lake states and, by the 1900s, to New England, regularly served all of the fol-

¹²Pike (*Tall Trees*, pp. 92, 138) may well be correct. Holbrook waffles a bit on the question, dating improvement in New England rather vaguely “between 1880 and 1914,” and the surviving sources are in fact too sketchy to warrant much precision. Whatever, it is notable that the loggers of the Lake states and Northwest required no laws to have their tables set well, early or late. The difference surely reflects a relative surplus in labor in the Northeast as the industry temporarily declined in the late nineteenth century. See Holbrook, *Yankee Loggers*, p. 46; Smith, *Lumbering in Maine*, p. 15; Underwood, *Log*, pp. 25, 36.

lowing foods, almost all of them at each individual location.¹³

fresh beef	clam chowder	berries
codfish	cold cuts	rutabagas
fresh pork	potatoes	turnips
ham	rice	jellies
bacon	barley	jams
salt beef	macaroni	canned fruit
corned beef	boiled oats	biscuits
pickled beef	carrots	bread
sowbelly	beets	pies
fresh fish	cabbage	cakes
partridge	sauerkraut	doughnuts
sausage	pickles	puddings
chops	raisins	custards
steaks	currants	condensed milk
hamburger	figs	coffee
oysters	dried fruits	tea
chicken	fresh fruits	chocolate

Consumption and Nutrition

“Powder Box Pete” could eat three T-bone steaks or seven pork chops. Anna M. Lind saw “hungry fallers come into the dining room, sit down at their place at the table, and empty an entire platter of steak onto their plate.” “A working logger such as Dad,” Sam Churchill recalled from his boyhood in Clatsop County, Oregon, “could usually handle around nine thousand calories a day of hearty foods including ample servings of pie, cake, cookies, homemade breads and other delicacies.” This incredible figure recurs in the recollections of Alfaretta Cooley, a nutritionist, who calculated that the Wisconsin loggers she waited on as a girl wolfed down about that much daily as a matter of course.¹⁴ A federal

¹³The list is compiled from, among other sources, Holbrook, *Yankee Loggers*, p. 44; Donald MacKay, *The Lumberjacks* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978), p. 214; Irene M. Hargreaves and Harold M. Foehl, *The Story of Logging the White Pine in the Saginaw Valley* (Bay City, Michigan: Red Keg Press, 1964), pp. 14-17; Frank Hartman, “Life in a Lumber Camp,” *LaCrosse County Historical Society Sketches* (1937), p. 20; Jensen, *Lumber and Labor*, p. 55; Wyman, *Lumberjack Frontier*, pp. 9-10, 25-26; Rose Bussiere reminiscence in Andrew Genzoli, “Redwood Country,” *Eureka Times-Standard*, September 4, 1974, p. 20; Fred H. Davidson in Genzoli (September 6, 1974); Ben Nichols, “My Day in a Logging Camp,” *Humboldt Historian* (January-February 1969), p. 1; Hyman Palais, “Pioneer Redwood Logging in Humboldt County,” *Forest History* 17 (January 1974): 20; Cloice R. Howd, *Industrial Relations in the West Coast Lumber Industry*, Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin No. 349 (Washington: GPO, 1924), p. 43; Sam Churchill, *Big Sam* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 46, 139; Irma Lee Emmerson with Jean Muir, *The Woods Were Full of Men* (New York: David McKay Company, 1963), p. 40; George Erickson, letter to Isabel Roper, n.d. [1979], Louisiana-Pacific Archives.

¹⁴Emmerson, *Woods*, p. 30; Anna M. Lind, letter to the author, January 8, 1979; Churchill, *Big Sam*, p. 46; Cooley, “Paul Bunyan’s Cook,” p. 24.

investigator in the early 1920s was more conservative. He estimated that logging work burned about 5,000-6,000 calories a day (merely twice an adequate contemporary regimen).¹⁵ That is probably a minimum.

Although only a few sets of figures lend themselves to reliable analysis, the consumption of food was patently monstrous. Between 1875 and 1878, the Sierra Flume and Lumber Company of California (later part of Diamond Match) annually supplied a work force of 1,200 with, in part, 75 tons of beef, 75 of flour, 10 of beans, 20 of potatoes, 5 of butter, and 5 of dried fruit.¹⁶ In West Virginia in 1907, forty-five men stowed away in one week: a tub of lard, a sack of turnips, a sack of onions, a box of yeast, a case of cream, a barrel of sweet potatoes, 7 sacks of Irish potatoes, a case each of pears and peaches, 2 cases of eggs, a case of tomatoes, a barrel of apples, 112 pounds of cabbage, a case of corn, 22 pounds of cakes, 10 pounds of tea, 12 cases of strawberries, 2 barrels of flour, 15 cans of baking powder, and 300 pounds of beef.¹⁷

In 1918 Dan Kelliher cooked for a hundred men at Scott Bog in New Hampshire and daily shovelled out 75 to 100 pounds of beef, a bushel of cookies, 3 bushels of potatoes, 30 pies (apple, mince, cherry, raisin, lemon, and — of course! — prune; another New England cook, Joe Buckshot, summed it up when he said, "For me, I'll take the prune. It makes even better apple pie than the peach."), 21 pound cans of condensed milk, 2 gallons of tinned tomatoes, 3 gallons apples, 16-20 double loaves of bread, and 200 doughnuts. He used 10 yeast cakes a day, 400 pounds of

sausage, 25 pounds of liver, 2 gallons of molasses, cabbages in fall and turnips in winter, and tea, coffee, oatmeal, and beans.¹⁸

In 1887 the operations of Isaac Staples in Minnesota went through 18,000 pounds of beef, 104 barrels of pork, 200 barrels of flour, 9,000 pounds of sugar, 1,100 pounds of tea, 1,700 pounds of dried apples, 1,500 pounds of currants, and 1,400 pounds of turkey and chicken.¹⁹

A series of camps working about a thousand men around 1900 consumed half a ton of fresh meat daily, 200 pounds of smoked meat, a ton of fresh fruit and vegetables, 900 pounds of flour, 600 pounds of sugar, 190 pounds of butter, 2,880 eggs, plus unspecified gallons of coffee, tea, and milk.²⁰ For the somewhat dyspeptic record, this rounds off to 7,610 calories per iron-bellied logger.²¹

They needed every one. According to the British physiologists, J.V.G.A. Durnin and R. Passmore, "There is probably no harder physical work than lumbering in the forest, particularly in winter." Based on research among woodsmen in eight European countries and Japan, they calculate that chopping a tree at a moderate rate of 35 strokes per minute burns 10 calories per minute. (At 50 strokes per minute — contest speed — usage rises to an astounding 19.3 calories.) Buck-

¹⁵Howd, *Industrial Relations*, p. 42. The biggest eaters of all, according to Anna M. Lind, were the fallers and buckers. She recalled a flunkey (waitress) in a Washington camp who wanted to lose some weight. She asked to be assigned to the fallers' and buckers' tables so she "could run some fat off." Lind, "Women in the Early Logging Camps: A Personal Reminiscence," *Journal of Forest History* 19 (July 1975): 132.

¹⁶William H. Hutchinson, "The Sierra Flume & Lumber Company of California, 1875-1878," *Forest History* 17 (October 1973): 20; Hutchinson, "Early History of the Lumber Industry in the Sierra-Cascade Section of California," unpublished manuscript, Chico, California, 1956, p. 12, and Hutchinson, "Descriptive Material to Accompany Sierra Flume and Lumber Company Drawings by Will L. Taylor, 1877," typescript, 1956, p. 2, both in Special Collections, California State University, Chico, Library.

¹⁷The commissary's bill for this order was \$149.95. H. H. Farquahar, "Cost of Mountain Logging in West Virginia" (1909), quoted in Roy B. Clarkson, *Tumult on the Mountains: Lumbering in West Virginia, 1770-1920* (Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Printing Company, 1964), p. 77. See Emmerson, *Woods*, for comparable data (if somewhat different prices) from the Pacific Northwest in the 1950s.

¹⁸Pike, *Tall Trees*, p. 139.

¹⁹Agnes M. Larson, *History of the White Pine Industry in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), pp. 82, 197.

²⁰Richard L. Williams, *The Loggers* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1976), p. 144.

²¹This figure is, of course, speculative. "Smoked meat" has arbitrarily been defined as bacon, "fresh fruit" as prunes, and so on. But I have been mostly conservative in assigning values. The diet is also, and not incidentally, rich in all the traditionally problematic nutrients: all vital minerals and the B vitamins (thiamine, riboflavin, and niacin), exceeding the National Academy of Sciences "Recommended Daily Dietary Allowances" (1974) by 50 percent (niacin) and 300 percent (riboflavin and thiamine). The diet is rich in protein (246.7 grams: 54-56 grams are recommended by the NAS, but it is also, curiously, because there is no mention of scurvy in the western camps, somewhat deficient in vitamin C. This is undoubtedly due to my conservatism in assigning values and because there are no potatoes on the list (surely an error). And I have not included cabbage as one of the "fresh vegetables." Cabbage is a superb source of vitamin C and was common in the camps.

The computations are based on Charles F. Church and Helen Nichols Church, *Food Values of Portions Commonly Used* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1975), and Bernice K. Watt and Annabel L. Merrill, *Composition of Foods*, USDA Handbook No. 8 (Washington: GPO, 1975). For a nutritional analysis of a Wisconsin lumberjack diet that comes up with even larger figures, see Cooley, "Paul Bunyan's Cook," pp. 24-25.

ing burns 8.6 calories per minute (lending scientific corroboration to Anna Lind's observation that the fallers and buckers were the biggest eaters); trimming, 8.4; and barking, 8.0. There are no data, unfortunately, on river driving, but "carrying logs" and "dragging logs" burn 12.1 calories per minute!²² For reference purposes, this compares to 6.1 calories per minute drilling coal, 4.0 laying bricks, 2.0-2.9 at general housework, 2.3 working on an automobile assembly line, and 1.4 sitting at a desk writing an article on an electric typewriter.²³

It may be surmised that loggers did not work at full tilt for every minute of their ten-hour day (the exertion of which, for fallers, would account for 6,000 calories). But they did not loaf much either, and experiments have shown that body metabolism does not slow down immediately after violent activity has ceased but may continue at a high rate for many hours (a phenomenon that is commonly experienced in the continuing euphoria of the athlete whose actual activity is done).²⁴ Loggers working in the winter, moreover, burned considerable calories merely in order to maintain their body temperature. Heavy clothing and footgear impose a resistance to movement that increases energy use by 2-5 percent.²⁵ In a word, the estimates that some men consumed 9,000 calories per day are by no means distorted by memory or exaggeration.

Complaints about the quantity of food served in the camps do not exist. Meals were "gargantuan" in Minnesota. "Cooks wasn't stingy" in Wisconsin. "They never counted out anything one by one. . . . There was always plenty of grub." "Plenty of everything is the only thing we go by," a Washington lumberman responded to a questionnaire. Even James Rowan, the able and militant leader of the Wobbly lumberjacks of the Pacific Northwest, who had few good words for the policies of lumber companies, stated that food was "fairly substantial and plentiful as was necessary to enable the men to endure the long hours and hard work." If it is a grudging testimonial, it is all the more persuasive for its author and the



bitterness of labor relations in the industry at the time Rowan wrote it. "There has seldom been any complaint about the quantity of food served in a logging camp," wrote a government investigator reporting on that conflict; "serving dishes are kept supplied until everyone has finished."²⁶

The Wobblies' Lumber Workers Industrial Union No. 500, founded in Spokane in March 1917, did include a plank on food among its general demands: "Wholesome food in porcelain dishes, no overcrowding; sufficient help to keep kitchen clean and sanitary."²⁷ But, in fact, for almost two generations previous, food and cookhouses seem to have figured significantly in labor disputes only on a few occasions when the men demanded that Chinese kitchen staff be fired.²⁸

The great Wobbly strike of 1917 technically began with a walkout over bad food at the Humbird Lumber Company camp at Sandpoint, Idaho, on June 15. But the big strike was in fact

²²J. V. G. A. Durnin and R. Passmore, *Energy, Work, and Leisure* (London: Heinemann, 1967), pp. 71-73; Cooley, "Paul Bunyan's Cook," p. 25; Lind, letter of January 8, 1979.

²³Durnin and Passmore, *Energy*, pp. 76, 63, 51, 57, 49.

²⁴H. T. Edwards, "The Energy Requirements in Strenuous Muscular Exercise," *New England Journal of Medicine* 213 (1935); Anne Scott Beller, *Fat and Thin: A Natural History of Obesity* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1977), pp. 172-73.

²⁵Durnin and Passmore, *Energy*, p. 107. The standard work on the relationship between temperature and calorie cost is J. R. Brobeck, "Food and Temperature," *Recent Progress in Hormone Research* 16 (1960); see Beller, *Fat and Thin*, p. 158.

²⁶Blegen, "With Ax and Saw," p. 11; Wyman, *Lumberjack Frontier*, p. 25; James Rowan, *The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry* (Seattle: Lumber Workers Industrial Union No. 500, 1919), p. 10; Howd, *Industrial Relations*, 42; Jessie Rothgeb Mueller, "Feeding Problems in the Lumbercamps of the Northwest," *Journal of Home Economics* 13 (June 1921): 241-45; Bruno Kehele, reminiscences, Notebook 16, Pope & Talbot Archives, Port Gamble, Washington.

²⁷Fred Thompson, *The I.W.W.: Its First Seventy-Five Years* (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1978), pp. 115-16.

²⁸Watson Kimball and J. W. Smith, interviews, Notebook 16, Pope & Talbot Archives.

already in the works, scheduled for July 1. The IWW moved the date up only because of the emotional impact of the Humbird protest.²⁹ As the great conflict progressed (and was settled), the issues were hours (the eight-hour-day), wages, sanitation (principally lousy bedding), and employment agencies, the notoriously corrupt "job sharks."³⁰

It is the rare old-timer today who does not fully credit the IWW with revolutionizing bunkhouse conditions in the logging industry. But few mention food as, indeed, the Wobs did not. It was not an issue because, long before the turn of the century, loggers quite "unorganized" had resolved the matter in their favor, and where there were lapses, after that time, the men retained extraunionist measures of resolving them.

The Quality of Food

Contemporary accounts and latter-day reminiscences are monotonous in their praise of cookhouse meals, typically comparing them with restaurant food. An Ottawa River song goes:

**Now the board at the Caldwell,
The truth for to tell,
Could not be surpassed
In the Russell Hotel.**

"I tell you," said Sam Churchill, "there wasn't a Portland or Astoria hotel that could match the Western Cooperaage cookhouse on Sunday." Pope & Talbot's cookhouse at Port Gamble was, likewise, "better than any Seattle hotel." A booster pamphlet published in Eureka in 1904 touted the Humboldt County cookhouses: "The very best of food is furnished, and in great variety. In fact, visitors have often remarked, after partaking of the hospitality of the camps, that they had been better fed than at many first-class hotels." The Manary Logging Company's "Cafe-

teria" at Toledo, Oregon, was reputed as "making good as a comfortable and high-class place to eat and has become very popular with the travelling public passing through . . . in addition to the employees of the operation."³¹

Of course, the men who ate at cookhouses did not frequent elegant hostleries when off the job, and that is a large part of the point.³² They were "casuals" who were little regarded by conventional society. They earned between \$3.20 and \$4.25 a day in 1923 (in the Northwest), half that much before the strike of 1917. This was only a little more than half the average remuneration of "lower-skilled" workmen countrywide.³³ C. R. Howd described the quality of their food as "usually about the same as that served in the better class of workingmen's homes," and another modest evaluation had it as "slightly better than the average home."³⁴ But even if these are accurate assessments (and the preponderance of evidence indicates that they understated it), most camp workers were not among "the better class of workingmen" by virtue of income, skill, or status. In the important matter of food, however, they were practically privileged. Why so?

They had made it so. Requiring large quantities of food merely in order to work, the loggers insisted on every improvement made possible during the last third of the nineteenth century, and without delay. When fresh meat could be carted into the woods, they got it. If a farmer with a dairy herd was within range, there was fresh milk on the table. There would be no "pick and choose" by the commissary from the wholesale grocer's catalogue; the lumberjack would have the whole line. There was little lag between

²⁹Rowan, *I.W.W.*, p. 37 ff.; Howd, *Industrial Relations*, p. 76.

³⁰*Spokane Industrial Worker*, July 14, 1917, p. 1; Rexford G. Tugwell, "The Casual of the Woods," *Survey* (July 3, 1920), p. 473; William F. Ogburn, "Causes and Remedies of Labor Unrest in the Lumber Industry," in University of Washington, *Forest Club Annual* (1918), pp. 11-14; Tyler, *Rebels*, pp. 89-94; Nick Lutzon, reminiscences, Notebook 16, Pope & Talbot Archives; Rowan, *I.W.W.*, pp. 22-23; Oscar W. Blake, *Timber Down the Hill* (St. Maries, Idaho: By the author, 1967), p. 110; U. S. Army, Spruce Production Division, *History of the Spruce Production Division, U. S. Army* (Washington, [1920]), pp. 15-16; "Pacific Spruce Corporation and Subsidiaries," *Lumber World Review* (February 10, 1924), p. 82; John Anderson, letters to Phoenix Logging Co., December 19, 1921 and December 15, 1922, Phoenix Collection, Simpson Timber Company Archives, Seattle.

³¹Edith Fowke, *Lumbering Songs from the Northern Woods* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), p. 62; Sam Churchill, *Don't Call Me Ma* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), p. 131; "Humboldt County Souvenir" (Eureka: Times Publishing Company, 1904), p. 64; Torger Birkeland, *Echoes of Puget Sound: Fifty Years of Logging and Steamboating* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1960), p. 20; C. W. Olsen, reminiscence, Notebook 16, Pope & Talbot Archives; "Pacific Spruce Corporation and Subsidiaries," *Lumber World Review*, p. 85. For survival of the tradition into the 1940s, see W. H. Hutchinson, *The California Investment: A History of the Diamond Match Company in California* (Chico: Diamond Match Company, 1957), p. 371.

³²The kind of place where they did dine between jobs, "the dark and dirty restaurant" of the skid road, was listed by an angry Wobbly as one of the reasons "Why I Am a Member of the I.W.W.," *4 L Bulletin* 4 (October 1922): 9.

³³*Historical Statistics of the United States*, Part I, Series D, 765-778 (1949), p. 168.

³⁴Howd, *Industrial Relations*, p. 43; Bert Webber, *Swivel-Chair Logger: The Life and Work of Anton A. "Tony" Lausmann* (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1976), p. 140.



Mustachioed loggers enjoy a hearty breakfast at a camp dining room near Sedro Woolley, Washington, ca. 1900.

U. S. Forest Service photo. FHS Collection

the time when a commodity was available, when provision of it was possible, and when loggers were eating it.³⁵

It is interesting to compare the loggers' attitude toward food and their indifference to the weather, lice, filth, and even, relatively, to wages. Weather was a constant. No one could do anything about it. Until 1917, when the Wobblies showed that it was possible to provide louse-free bedding and baths in the woods, the men regarded their tiny companions fatalistically, too.³⁶ As for wages, when they did not themselves seem controlled by some remote, unalterable force, they were less important than food.³⁷ J. B. Ran-

dall showed this as early as 1864 when, in Wisconsin, he reported to Orrin H. Ingram that labor was short and his men asking \$4 per day. He did not take this seriously, he said, but in order to settle things down, he had to "give them plenty of treats."³⁸ Emil Engstrom, a logger with no love for his employers ("In reality we were oppressed, we were in chains"), recalled of British Columbia in 1914 that "the small fly-by-night logging camps were paying up to five dollars a day, but that was too much for me; I'd rather work for a dollar less in a real camp" where the food was good.³⁹ A logger "would work in the mud, rain, summer heat and dust," an Oregon account reads, "risk life and limb a dozen times a day, do without company showers, sleep in

³⁵J. C. Ryan dates the arrival of canned goods in the Lakes camps in the early 1890s. "Come and Get It," *Timber Producers Association Bulletin* 26 (April-May 1971): 10. Irma Lee Emmerson observed that loggers had cucumbers on their tables first thing in the season when they were still extremely expensive in the cities. *Woods*, p. 28.

³⁶Underwood, *Log*, pp. 8, 54; Churchill, *Ma*, p. 129; Wyman, *Lumberjack Frontier*, p. 24; W. M. Leiser-son, *Labor Camps in Wisconsin* (Madison: Industrial Commission of Wisconsin, 1913), pp. 18-20.

³⁷See, for example, T. W. McDonald, letter to McDougall and Johnson, February 22, 1901, Phoenix Logging Company Letter Book, Simpson Timber Company Archives.

³⁸Quoted in Charles E. Twining, *Downriver: Orrin H. Ingram and the Empire Lumber Company* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1975), p. 86. See also R. L. McCormick, letters to Laird Norton Co., August 7, September 11, and December 1, 1882, quoted in Larson, *Minnesota*, p. 89. According to Claudia White of the Hammond cookhouse at Samoa, California, food rather than wages remained the arena for competing for labor even after unionization of the industry. Interview with Isabel Roper, Portland, January 9, 1979.

³⁹Emil Engstrom, *The Vanishing Logger* (New York: Vantage Press, 1956), pp. 29, 38-39.

drafty bunkhouses, all with a minimum of grumbling, but start cutting back on the quality and quantity of cookhouse meals and he would quit immediately and spread bad words about that camp's food wherever he went."⁴⁰ Louie Blanchard said, "Yes sir, we lived good in the pineries as long as the sleighs got through with the grub and the cook stayed on his hind legs and fed us all we could eat. Good grub was about all we had to look forward to all winter long."⁴¹ Not a word about the bone-freezing Wisconsin weather nor the months without a bath.

Good and varied food became a condition of labor because competition for workers proved at an early date that food quality was something an employer could control. Just which lumberman it was who first lured timberbeasts from his competitor's camp with the aroma of a better pie is long lost in the woods. But food is what counted. "The camp that served the best meals got the best men. It was as simple as that." "A camp was rated primarily by the quality of food served. It went without saying that quantity was always there." Writing of the Lake states loggers, J. C. Ryan said the same: "Nothing caused so much grumbling as did poor food or a poor cook." The loggers literally told time by the meals. In bunkhouse tales, things always happened "just before first lunch" or "just after supper."⁴²

With pressures of their own with which to contend, employers were quick to succumb. Serving good food was "good business." "It was an urgent matter that we hire good cooks," noted an Oregon lumberman, "because if the food didn't suit the loggers, they would quit and move to a camp with better chow. It didn't pay to buy low quality food for the same reason so we bought the best available."⁴³ Some employers were graceful, like A. J. Pope who wrote in 1859, "We have some valuable men here and if we can make them contented by laying out a few hundred dollars I think it a good investment."⁴⁴ Others were positively annoyed (although they, too, went along): "In former days we got along with less high-toned notions among the men. Now they want

Good grub was about all we had to look forward to all winter long.

Louie Blanchard

accommodations equal to that of a first class hotel."⁴⁵

A camp manager in the Northwest echoed management's problem. "Through this part of the country a large expense has been added to feeding the men from the fact of each camp vying with every other to see who can feed the men the best, thinking by so doing they will be better able to retain their men." Along the same lines, Paul Hosmer wrote that as the camps moved to more isolated, less attractive locations, "the company offered something different in the way of victuals to get the pick of the men." Food preoccupied the operators as intensely as it did the men. "'Anything at all' won't do for the choppers at this camp," a Seattle journalist reported. "They know what good living is, or they think they do."⁴⁶

Responding to a survey, an executive from the same region sounded as if he were advertising for workers: "The workmen of today demand the very best that money will buy regardless of cost. We set a regular table as all logging camps do, so everybody can help himself to anything he wants." Another less graciously complained that "these men are the type that expect the best without reason," and Howd reported to the federal government that the men would change jobs in search of mere variety. They always found the same kind of food in the end, he claimed, "but prepared and served differently."⁴⁷ A University of Washington researcher of the 1920s concluded: "Some companies believe that they must give the food the men want in order to hold them. . . . Sometimes a company will spend more on food and make up the loss by paying the men less."⁴⁸

The competition could take a piquant turn. In 1923, A. E. Hillier of the Phoenix Logging Company turned down a request for a bacon slicer for one of the company's cookhouses. Hillier cited the cost and added, "You will, of course, understand that if we placed it in one camp the other

⁴⁰Churchill, *Ma*, p. 129.

⁴¹Wyman, *Lumberjack Frontier*, p. 24.

⁴²Webber, *Swivel-Chair Logger*, p. 140; Emmerson, *Woods*, p. 49; Ryan, "Come and Get It," p. 10; MacKay, *Lumberjacks*, p. 198; Wood, *Maine*, pp. 91-94.

⁴³Webber, *Swivel-Chair Logger*, p. 136.

⁴⁴Quoted in Edwin T. Coman and Helen M. Gibbs, *Time, Tide, and Timber: A Century of Pope & Talbot* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), p. 134. In 1907, Pope & Talbot hired an underground agent to discover troublemakers among the work force. The detective found no complaints about the food. E. G. Ames, letter to W. H. Talbot, April 16, 1907, Ames Correspondence, Pope & Talbot Archives.

⁴⁵Cyrus Walker, letter to W. H. Talbot, November 25, 1888, Pope & Talbot Archives.

⁴⁶Mueller, "Feeding Problems," p. 243; Paul Hosmer, *Now We're Loggin'* (Portland: Metropolitan Press, 1930), p. 127; Clara Iza Price in *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 17, 1907.

⁴⁷Mueller, "Feeding Problems," pp. 242-44; Howd, *Industrial Relations*, p. 43.

⁴⁸Mueller, "Feeding Problems," p. 242.

one would want a duplicate of it or they would think that they were slighted, and it would undoubtedly run us into complications that we had better avoid."⁴⁹ A delicate matter, the labor relations of the table! In the 1950s a cook in Southwestern Oregon noted that "leftovers is a dirty word in a logging camp. . . . I wouldn't dare try to feed any to the men." She sent the leftovers to the bosses' lunchroom.⁵⁰

Supply and Vertical Integration

Providing plenty, wholesome, fresh, and varied food depended first of all on improvement in the mechanics of supply. Almost by definition, commercial logging develops in an area before agriculture (and is a stimulus of it). So, it was not until there were good road connections to the isolated camps (and eventually railroads) that fresh meat, eggs, milk, butter, and vegetables could be incorporated into loggers' diets. Only then could frequent deliveries of perishable commodities be

⁴⁹A. E. Hillier, letter to Katheryn Wilson, January 31, 1923, Phoenix Collection, Simpson Timber Company Archives.

⁵⁰Emmerson, *Woods*, p. 48.

made.⁵¹ Agnes Larson made the case that the Minnesota white pine industry was retarded by the remoteness of the state's forests; even flour had to be bought in Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and as far away as St. Louis. In 1853 crews on the Rum River had to be sent down simply because they could not be properly fed. In such a strait, fresh food was out of the question. Even as late as 1914, an operator who was very sensitive to the "food factor" was unable to provide fresh meat because of the isolation of his camp in Idaho, and he worried about what the dearth might mean.⁵²

⁵¹On river drives, purchases were made of farmers along the route. See, for example, Glenn Mason, "River Driving in Lane County," *Lane County Historian* 18 (Summer 1973): 32.

⁵²Larson, *Minnesota*, pp. 72-73. An excellent survey of supply in the later history of this region is J. C. Ryan, "Supplying the Lumber Camps," *Timber Producers Association Bulletin* 32 (August-September 1977): 36-38. See also William K. Dyche, "Log Drive on the Clearwater," *Forest History* 5 (Fall 1961): 6; George S. Kephart, "The Pulpwood Camps," *Forest History* 14 (July 1970): 30; Lower, *North American Assault*, p. 30; *Humboldt Times*, October 24, 1889.



The Hammond Lumber Company butchered hogs at its camp at Big Lagoon, California, in the 1920s.

Georgia-Pacific photo, Oregon Historical Society Collections

The national integration of transportation and technological progress in food processing also played a role. The improvement of the loggers' diet was only one facet (if a particularly dramatic one) of the general "democratization" of diet in the nineteenth century described by Daniel Boorstin.⁵³ Canning and new packaging techniques meant loggers could have previously seasonal and perishable foods, and, as has been seen, what they could have, they got. A Redwood Country journalist commented in 1889, "We have seen more trouble over a keg of poor butter, that by mischance had strayed into camp, than occurred during a whole season over wages."⁵⁴ But it was by then a mishap that the American consumer culture was ready to resolve. In 1874, when T. D. Stinson Company of Michigan angrily returned just such a bad crock of butter to P. L. Haines and Otis, wholesale grocers of Kalamazoo, the supplier obsequiously credited the cost of it (\$14.04) and rushed a gift of winter apples to the camp as a peace offering.⁵⁵ The new panoply of mass-produced foodstuffs could create its own little anxieties, of course. A Washington lumberman regretfully declined a chance to make a volume purchase of "Quail Brand" canned goods in 1912 because he worried that a feared downturn in the lumber business would leave his company with a mountain of food.⁵⁶

Despite such accountancy woes, the consolidation of the lumber industry generally meant an improvement at the loggers' table. The large, finely integrated giants that came to dominate Pacific Coast logging around the turn of the century had the resources necessary to maintain their own ranches and farms. They could provide the incredible quantity of foodstuffs necessary to run a string of camps at a bearable expense.⁵⁷

The hog at the cookhouse door was a primitive

⁵³Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: Volume II, The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 309-30, *passim*.

⁵⁴*Humboldt Times*, October 24, 1889.

⁵⁵P. L. Haines, letter to T. D. Stinson, October 19, 1874, Georgia-Pacific Archives, Portland, Oregon.

⁵⁶J. Hambie, letter to George W. Johnson, July 19, 1912, Pope & Talbot Archives.

⁵⁷Conversely, Vernon Jensen shows that conditions, including diet, deteriorated in the Great Lakes region when, with the forests depleted, the big operators removed to the West Coast. What opportunities for exploitation remained were taken over by scrambling family operators, the "shackers," who needed to skimp on food as on much else. See *Lumber and Labor*, pp. 5, 66. This is also the message conveyed by Charlotte Todes, *Labor and Lumber* (New York: International Publishers, 1931), pp. 72-74, who comments that the smaller camps were "reverting to the unsanitary conditions of earlier days" and quotes several 1930s loggers' criticisms of food that recall the earliest days in Maine.

No. 1	BREAKFAST		
		Oatmeal Mush	
	Rye Bread	Cornbread and Syrup	Doughnuts
	Apple Butter	Cornmeal Cookies (made with corn syrup)	Coffee
		Creamed Potatoes	
		Codfish Cakes	
No. 2		Boiled Rice	Oatmeal
		Cornmeal Pancakes	Syrup
	Molasses Cookies		Bread and Butter
	Hashed Liver and Onions	Brown Potatoes (cooked in oven)	Coffee
No. 3		Cornmeal Mush	
		Rice Pancakes	Syrup
	Gingerbread		Rye Bread and Butter
		Fried Potatoes	Coffee
		Sausage (Frankfurters)	
No. 4		Hominy Grits	
		Buckwheat Pancakes	Syrup
	Apple Butter	Oatmeal Bread	Butter
			Doughnuts
		Hash	Coffee
No. 5		Fried Cornmeal Mush	Syrup
		Bread and Butter	
	Boiled Potatoes		Creamed Dried Beef
			Orange Marmalade
		Oatmeal Cookies	Coffee
No. 6		Graham Mush	
		Cornmeal Muffins	Syrup
			Molasses Cookies
	Lyonnais Potatoes		Scrambled Eggs
		Coffee	

form of "vertical integration." Swine were fed on table scraps and cooked in their time. The story was told that a job-shopper's first stop in a camp was the sty. If the hog were too fat, it augured poorly for the camp cook: the men were leaving too much on their plates.⁵⁸

As early as 1831, Canadian lumbermen were establishing their own farms in order to support isolated camps. In the 1850s Daniel Shaw was forced into the farming business in Wisconsin to provision his logging ventures (there were only 100 people in Eau Claire County when he got started) and, within a few years, had developed the 900-acre Flambeau farm, which produced cabbages, onions, rutabagas, potatoes, green vegetables, wheat, hay, cattle, and hogs. Isaac Staples of Stillwater, Minnesota, and Knapp, Stout and Company of Menomonie, Wisconsin, licked the problem when they established their own sources of supply. In 1874 the latter was farming 7,000

⁵⁸Hargreaves and Foehl, *Saginaw Valley*, p. 18; Glen Nash, reminiscence in Genzoli, "Redwood Country," *Eureka Times-Standard*, September 4, 1974; Ryan, "Supplying the Lumber Camps," p. 37; Kathryn Wilson, letter to A. E. Hillier, January 15, 1923, Phoenix Collection, Simpson Archives; Williams, *Loggers*, p. 143. An interesting reflection on this practice is that during the labor strife of 1917-1925, the most important worker complaint having to do with food fastened on the fly-infested heaps of garbage near the cookhouse. It may be that with the ready availability of pork on the West Coast, the pigs disappeared from the camps and, with that exeunt, the sanitation problem increased. See Howd, *Industrial Relations*, p. 42.

1917

LOGGING CAMP MENUS

(Suggested by U. S. Food Administration)

DINNER

Rice and Tomato Soup

Roast Beef and Gravy Mashed Potatoes
 Bread and Butter

Boiled Onions Hulled Corn

Apricot Rolls Blackberry Jam

Bean Soup

Meat Pie (using mashed potatoes or cooked cereal crust)
 Baked Potatoes Carrots—Creamed Cold Slaw
 Apple Tapioca Strawberry Preserves
 Bread and Butter Cheese

Vegetable Soup

Meat Loaf Boiled Potatoes
 Turnips Beets

Rye Bread and Butter Green Tomato Pickle
 Chocolate Bread Pudding

Potato Soup

Boiled Beef and Dumplings Baked Potatoes
 Oatmeal Bread and Butter
 Baked Carrots
 Apple Pie and Cheese

Pea Soup

Mutton Stew (Barley, Potatoes and Onions)
 Rice and Tomato (Baked)
 Bread and Butter

Indian Pudding (Cornmeal or Oatmeal Jelly)

Corn Soup

Baked fish and Mashed Potatoes
 Creamed Cabbage
 Oatmeal Pudding with Milk as Sauce
 Bread and Butter

SUPPER

Soup, if desired

Baked Potatoes Boiled Cabbage
 Bread and Butter

Hominy and Cheese Spiced Cake Stewed Prunes

Soup, if desired

Mashed Potatoes Rutabaga
 Rice, Tomato and Meat Cornbread and Butter
 Stewed Apples and Gingerbread
 Cheese

Fish and Potato Chowder

Bread and Butter Graham Gems
 Fried Cornmeal Mush

Stewed Apricots Oatmeal Cookies
 Peanut Butter

Potato Salad

Baked Beans
 Hulled Corn with Gravy
 Nut Bread and Butter
 Stewed Prunes and Molasses Cookies

Scalloped Corn

Peas
 Hash

Nut Bread and Butter
 Rice Pudding

Boiled Rice

Meat Stew with Vegetables
 Creamed Asparagus
 Rye Bread and Butter
 Stewed Peaches Spice Cake

acres in Wisconsin and grinding 60,000 bushels of wheat annually at its own gristmill. By the turn of the century, large camp farms dotted Minnesota like the state's lakes, with gigantic operations at Blackduck, Farley, Island Lake, and Cloquet.⁵⁹

The Whitney Company ran farms in Tillamook County, Oregon, and Pope & Talbot at Squamish Harbor, Washington.⁶⁰ Well aware of the provisioning problem by 1902, the Lamb Lumber Company Ranch at Hoquiam, Washington, was under construction while the timber was still being felled around the site. Photographs in the Georgia-Pacific Archives show a huge, model barn already completed, with logging operations still in progress in the yard.

In California the Hammond Lumber Company's famous cookhouse at Samoa was practically self-sufficient. The company operated its own vegetable gardens, ranches, hog farms, slaughterhouses, and dairies. Only items such as canned goods (and refuse disposal) were contracted outside the corporation.⁶¹ Diamond Match planted odd acres of its Barber Plant in Chico with hay,

grain, and alfalfa for stock, and, beginning in 1915, it supplied prunes for workers in its Sierra operations.⁶²

Cooks and Cookhouses

There is no question, and there never was to anyone concerned, that the key to quality in the lumberjack's diet was the camp cook. The first physical change in the structure of the deep woods logging camp was the separation of the cooking and dining facility from the sleeping quarters.⁶³ The only real division of labor in the camps, outside of the logging function itself, was the replacement of cooking-by-turns with a professional cook and, soon enough, a cortege of "cookees" (assistant cooks) and "funkeys" (waiters and general dining room helpers).⁶⁴ As a figure in logging folklore, the cook is bigger than Paul Bunyan, who never put in an appearance in New England, while the fabled cook certainly did.⁶⁵ Few documents relating to logging camps do not repeat piously that "the cook was the most important man in camp next to the

⁵⁹Lower, *North American Assault*, p. 30; Arthur R. Reynolds, *The Daniel Shaw Lumber Company: A Case Study of the Wisconsin Lumbering Frontier* (New York: New York University Press, 1957), pp. 47-48; Larson, *Minnesota*, pp. 197-98; Ryan, "Supplying the Lumber Camps," p. 37.

⁶⁰Daniel D. Strite, "Up the Kilchis," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 72 (December 1971): 298-99; Squamish Ranch Papers, Pope & Talbot Archives.

⁶¹Andrew Genzoli, "Samoa Cookhouse Memories," Samoa Cookhouse brochure (n.d.); Roper, "Samoa Cookhouse."

⁶²Hutchinson, *California Investment*, pp. 193-95.

⁶³See Appraisal of Coos Bay Lumber Company, May 1, 1918 (in Georgia-Pacific Archives), for an example of company investment in cookhouses.

⁶⁴Holbrook, *Yankee Loggers*, p. 46; J. C. Ryan, "The Lumber Camp Cookee," *Timber Producers Association Bulletin* 33 (December-January 1978): 25-27.

⁶⁵Paul's own cook was his cousin, Big Joe, who was from three weeks below Quebec and made hotcakes on a griddle so large you could not see across it when the steam was thick. It was greased by boys who skated over it with hams on their feet.



A cookhouse crew of the Silver Falls Lumber Company near Silverton, Oregon. From left: baker or second cook, cook, dishwasher, and bull cook.

Drake Brothers photo, Oregon Historical Society Collections

foreman.”⁶⁶ Another common observation was that “a boss usually stepped softly around his cook.”⁶⁷

The cook was almost always a man in the early days. Later, married couples were hired in both New England and the Lake states. Female head cooks were common in the Redwood Country after the turn of the century.⁶⁸ In Maine the cook's wages were comparable to the teamster's, and in Minnesota they were higher. Before 1900, cooks in the Lake states camps were receiving \$70 a month, second only to the foreman's \$100. In West Virginia in 1909, a cook made \$3 per day compared to \$2 for teamsters and filers and \$2.50 for the blacksmith. About 1920 in forty camps of the Northwest, cooks' pay ranged between \$125 and \$200 per month, averaging \$150.⁶⁹

⁶⁶See, for example, J. C. Ryan, “Come and Get It,” pp. 15-17; *Humboldt Times*, October 24, 1889.

⁶⁷Pike, *Tall Trees*, p. 132. Of the Maine pulpwood camps, George S. Kephart wrote, “Outside of meal hours no one set foot in the cookhouse uninvited except the camp boss and clerk, the walking boss, and the infrequent visitors from the downriver office, like the forester.” Kephart, “Pulpwood Camps,” p. 29.

⁶⁸Hargreaves and Foehl, *Saginaw Valley*, p. 16; Twining, *Downriver*, p. 228; Lind, “Women,” pp. 130-31; and Lind, letter to the author, December 1978.

⁶⁹Jensen, *Lumber and Labor*, p. 56; Blegen, “Ax and Saw,” p. 11; Mueller, “Feeding Problems,” p. 244.

The cook's status likewise reflected his peculiar value to company and men. Walter St. George of the West Branch camp at Butte Meadows, California, always dressed impeccably in sparkling apron and chef's starched hat. When he invited the boss to his home for Thanksgiving dinner, the boss went. Others flexed their muscles by virtue of extraordinary eccentricity and even colossal unpleasantness. If they were good cooks, it was tolerated. “What's the use of having a nice fella if you get raw biscuits?”⁷⁰ If alcohol was unwelcome in isolated logging camps for obvious reasons, the cook's nips at lemon extract were not only winked at, they and his remarkably large orders for that irregular cocktail became a coveted part of logging lore. The cook had nearly absolute control of his cookhouse and crew; the men maintained a remarkable decorum at meals at his behest.

Individuals developed reputations that their employers trumpeted when advertising for workers.⁷¹ “A camp's ability to attract and hold men,”

⁷⁰Interview with Isabel Roper, January 9, 1979; MacKay, *Lumberjacks*, p. 210; Clarkson, *Tumult*, pp. 68-69, 73. W. H. Hutchinson puts it thus wryly in *California Investment*, p. 364: “Cooks . . . are qualified, in their own minds, to discuss pontifically upon every angle of the operation where they are employed.”

⁷¹Interview with Andrew Genzoli, Eureka, December 15, 1978.

wrote George Kephart, "rested primarily . . . on the cook's reputation. . . ."⁷² During the 1920s the *Camp and Mill News*, a chatty industry journal of the "one big family" mold, ran page after page of items about cooks changing jobs, cutting off their fingers, opening restaurants, and dropping dead.

Phil Burns has quit at Twin Rivers and is now cooking at Cherry Valley's Camp 3.

H. E. McKinzie, who has been cooking at the Delvan Camp of the Bloedel-Donovan Lumber Mills, is now standing over the hot stove at Darrington for the Washington Spar Co.

John Gistafson, the expert camp cook, has returned to the Pacific States Camp 25 after a vacation in the city.

G. B. McKee, the classy baker, is now doing night duty at the Page Lumber Company at Eagle Gorge.

H. C. Reetz has accepted a position at Campbell Logging Co., Woodenville, Wash.⁷³

The Pacific Lumber Company in California named a way station for one of its cooks, and others were memorialized in song.⁷⁴

**Our cook's name's Jack Dunnigan,
The best in the woods.
His beans they are great,
And his bread it is good.**⁷⁵

In New England, Tom Brackett had a comparable reputation. "During the three years when I often hired woodsmen for the Van Dykes," Charles Hadley remembered, "I couldn't make a better pitch than to tell prospects Tom Brackett was cooking." With wages more or less uniform in a district, the cook was trump. Once, a crew on Vermont's Nulhegan River threatened to quit unless Hadley fired the cook. He did and, while recruiting a successor, was delighted to discover Brackett in Berlin "getting his teeth fixed" (that is, on a tear). Virtually shanghaiing the helpless *chef de cuisine* back to the office, Hadley was chided by his boss for troubling with a drunk. Hadley identified his sotted companion as Tom Brackett and it was all right: "Nothing was too good for a cook of Tom's high reputation."⁷⁶

Joe Bully (Joe Boulay), a cook for Connecticut Valley Lumber, was another prince of the woods despite his peculiar failing, an appalling appearance. "Joe was always so dirty and greasy that you couldn't hang on to him with a pair of sharp ice-tongs," said one who knew him. "The dirty cuss put out food that was palatable, as long as you didn't see him. I have seen his cook-

room floor so dirty that the spaces between the half-hewn poles were filled with cooking refuse. It was as much as your life was worth to try to walk on it without calked boots." But crews threatened to leave when a sanitation-conscious boss tried to fire him.⁷⁷

Conversely, bad cooks have "made more short-stakers than have bad foremen." A more than twice-told tale of the Maine woods has a bateau rowing wearily downriver, spying smoke on the shore, and calling, "Whose wangan?" "Mickey Dunroe's," came the reply. "Head boat," the first man shouted sadly, and the boat moved on.⁷⁸

Foremen fretted constantly about culinary staff. In 1873, one in Wisconsin wrote sarcastically to the head office that it did not pay "to have the kind of man to come up here to learn to cook," as the company had apparently sent. He was in danger of losing his crew, the foreman wrote, because the cook "fails very much. . . . I will mention a few things. In making gravy for potatoes he would season it with all kinds of essence. No man could eat it and he tried to make mince pies. He made them all out of meat. They made good meat pies if every one liked them dry. This is a specimen of his fixing up every thing."⁷⁹

Loggers never put up long with this sort of thing. If they did not walk off, they put the unsuccessful cook on notice that it was time for him to leave by nailing some of his hotcakes to his door. Anna Lind remembers a cook at a camp who was treated more gently. He was merely hurt that the loggers used his biscuits to throw at chipmunks. M. B. ("Pug") Huntley of Lane County, Oregon, on the other hand, was threatened with dunking on a river drive unless he improved.⁸⁰ "The new camp cook is a man of mystery to the crew for a few days, at least," wrote one analyst. "His ability in the performance of his tasks is a subject of no little conjecture and speculation. If you could listen to the crew talk on these occasions you might imagine they were all pupils of Epicurus."⁸¹ A cook in Oregon allegedly was fired when a logger caught him wiping his nose with his apron.⁸² The cook may have had status, but he had to earn it.

William K. Dyche, who ran a tie operation on the Tongue River of Wyoming in 1906, pointed out that he took great pains in hiring men. He

⁷²Pike, *Tall Trees*, p. 135.

⁷³Quoted in Holbrook, *Yankee Loggers*, p. 46; Pike, *Tall Trees*, p. 133. See also E. H. Crosby in *4L Bulletin* 1 (June 1919): 20.

⁷⁴Quoted in Twining, *Downriver*, pp. 227-28.

⁷⁵Samoa Cookhouse brochure; Lind, letter to author, January 8, 1979; *Eugene Register-Guard*, July 23, 1950.

⁷⁶Charles Sharkey, "Department of Camp Cooking," *4L Bulletin* 1 (April 1919): 18.

⁷⁷Emmerson, *Woods*, pp. 126-27.

⁷²Kephart, "Pulpwood Camps," p. 31.

⁷³*Camp and Mill News* 2 (June, July, and September 1920).

⁷⁴Genzoli, "Redwood Country," *Eureka Times-Standard*, August 28, 1974, p. 8.

⁷⁵"All Over the Ridges," from the Lièvre River c. 1910, Fowke, *Lumbering Songs*, p. 65.

⁷⁶Holbrook, *Yankee Loggers*, pp. 47-48.

always avoided the “job sharks,” the employment agencies that “would send out any kind of man who had the money to pay the fee, no matter whether he could do the work wanted of him or not.” To obtain good cooks, Dyche went all the way to a Spokane loggers’ supply merchant, who, like him, needed the goodwill of men in the industry.⁸³ As the industry stabilized at the end of the century, the big companies were inclined to keep their prized cooks over the long term and assigned hiring of new ones to a special commissary department.⁸⁴



The camp cook of the Meadow River Lumber Company, Rainelle, West Virginia.

FHS Collection

What was expected of a camp cook? He or she need not be what contemporary society calls “gourmet,” although, in a case like Tom Brack-

⁸³William K. Dyche, “Tongue River Experience,” *Forest History* 8 (Spring-Summer 1964): 8.

⁸⁴See, for example, Dolores Gardner, reminiscence in Genzoli, “Redwood Country,” *Eureka Times-Standard*, September 20, 1974, p. 14; Roper, “Samoa Cookhouse”; Hutchinson, *California Investment*, p. 364.

ett, he might be just that.⁸⁵ In fact, according to one source, “Loggers are the most conservative of men when it comes to food. They simply do not care for exotic adventures in eating or new taste sensations. They appreciate good cooking; they can tell in a second if their beans are properly seasoned and the roast beef just rare enough. But try an unfamiliar flavor on them and they immediately became antagonistic.” Irma Lee Emmerson told of an extraordinary cook named Lucien at a camp near Coos Bay, Oregon. The loggers complained incessantly at his experiments with crepes suzette and celery Victor.⁸⁶

Basically the camp cook was a chef, the executive coordinator of a large and complex food service operation. Cookhouses might feed as many as 500 men three or four times a day. (Most, of course, were much smaller.) There was a crew of cookees and flunkeys (who waited on up to 40 loggers each) to supervise, as well as the “bull cooks,” men or boys who cut firewood and generally maintained the premises.⁸⁷ The cook arranged the hauling of the noonday meal to those men who were working too deep in the woods to walk back (over a mile from the cookhouse meant dining in the field), or, by the 1920s or 1930s, the preparation of box lunches.⁸⁸ And, most important of all, he needed to manage an unruly gang of lumberjacks when they were eating.

The Silence Rule

Out of this tricky requirement emerged the curious and universal loggers’ custom of silence at meals or, more precisely, the rule against talking at meals.⁸⁹ It was one of the laws “everyone

⁸⁵“Tom had imagination,” Charles Hadley remembered. “With the limited variety of supplies fifty years ago [ca. 1908], he set a table that was never monotonous. I never knew his secrets, which doubtless had to do with seasoning. Either in camp or on the drive Tom’s food was consistently good. His stews were not just mulligan, they had *flavor*. Every little while he’d turn out a pudding so different as to astonish you. His breads, pies, doughnuts, cakes, and cookies could have competed with the womenfolk’s entries at the Upper Coos County Annual Fair.” Quoted in Holbrook, *Yankee Logger*, p. 47.

⁸⁶Emmerson, *Woods*, pp. 140-44. They complained except when he prepared a chocolate soufflé, which they thought was “swell pudding.”

⁸⁷Lind, “Women,” p. 132; Lind, letter to the author, January 8, 1979.

⁸⁸See, for example, Wyman, *Lumberjack Frontier*, pp. 28-29; Hargreaves and Foehl, *Saginaw Valley*, p. 17; Jensen, *Lumber and Labor*, p. 54; Pike, *Tall Trees*, p. 134; J. C. Ryan, “The Hot Lunch Program,” in *Early Loggers in Minnesota* (Duluth: Minnesota Timber Producers Association, 1973), p. 42.

⁸⁹Not perfectly universal, apparently. Isabel Roper, in “The Samoa Cookhouse,” and the brochure at the cookhouse restaurant state that on one occasion



A crudely lettered sign above the stove in this Minnesota cookhouse (1911) reads "Notice: No Talking at Tables."

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lived by," Louie Blanchard remembered, "even if they had never been passed by the state legislature. . . . When you was eating, no talking was allowed, except to say 'Pass the meat' or 'Shoot the beans' when the things didn't come around fast enough. . . . If we'd ever had any stylish visitors, they would of thought a logging camp crew the most polite people who ever broke bread together. Seeing all this politeness, they might of thought it was the Last Supper."⁹⁰

Any number of explanations of the custom have been ventured. One claims that it was company policy so that the men would not dawdle at meals when they should be chopping.⁹¹ But, considering the problems with maintaining a stable crew and the pains companies otherwise took with food matters in order to solve them, it is unlikely that such a discipline originated at the head office. More likely, it was the cook who insisted on "all business" at mealtimes. (It is impossible to imagine a silence rule in the shanties before there were real cooks and separate

there, "A steward believed he could speed up the feeding of the men by having them dine in silence. When he tried to enforce this rule, he was 'laughed out' of the dining room." If this is correct, it must relate to the fact that Samoa was a *millworkers'* cookhouse and not a loggers', because the rule was accepted quite without laughter or protest everywhere else in the industry.

⁹⁰Wyman, *Lumberjack Frontier*, p. 26. For a geographical and chronological sampling of the rule, see Smith, *Maine*, p. 15; Pike, *Tall Trees*, p. 137; Churchill, *Ma*, p. 130; Kephart, "Pulpwood Camps," pp. 29-30; Ryan, "Come and Get It," p. 17; Emile Leavitt, reminiscence in Edward D. Ives, ed., *Argyle Boom* (Orono, Maine: Northeast Folklore Society, 1977), p. 119; Clarkson, *Tumult*, p. 63.

⁹¹Pike, *Tall Trees*, p. 137, quotes a written rule to this effect from the T. E. Henry and Sons Company in New Hampshire.

cookhouses.) It has been suggested that he did not want to be aggravated by complaining, but he had an even better reason: the cook's day was necessarily several hours longer than that of the loggers. He wanted his patrons in and out of the cookhouse quickly in order to get dishes done and preparations for the next feed under way. It might also be kept in mind in considering this custom that, in the nineteenth century, with the exception of a tiny mannered aristocracy, Americans generally did not regard mealtime as an occasion of conviviality. It was a constant source of irritation and amazement to European travelers that Americans "ate and ran." Mealtime was for fueling. Dawdling was pretentious in the land of utilitarianism. The loggers had plenty of precedent.

After women gained employment in cookhouses, the last thing a cook needed was flirtation, on his time, between the men and the young female flunkeys. Anna M. Lind recalls that "hanky-panky" was not extremely common anyway. But the Hammond Lumber Company refused to hire married women in their kitchens and as flunkeys, presumably in order to avoid disruptive liaisons. Finally, the obvious needs at least to be suggested; the men themselves, out of simple famishment and exhaustion, wanted to be at nothing but eating when at the cookhouse. As a Quebecois shrugged, "*Quand on parle, on mange pas.*"⁹²

In any event, there was no tarrying. Anna Lind insists that the loggers "could lay away a big meal in eight minutes or less," and others say ten, twelve, and fifteen. J. C. Ryan remembers having "seen a crew of 200 men file in and out of a cook camp in 25 minutes," presumably bolting 3,000 calories in the interim. This is reliably documented by the mill schedules. At Pope & Talbot's mill at Port Gamble, Washington, the whistle sounded at 5:20 a.m. to wake the hands. A second whistle at 5:40 signalled the opening of the cookhouse door where, photographs reveal, a line had already formed. The machinery was turned on at 6:00!⁹³

Pastry

As for the food, the cook was, curiously, prized less as a *cook* than as a *baker*. Cooks were "about on a par" in the meat department, according to

⁹²Lind, letter to the author, January 8, 1979; Roper, "Samoa Cookhouse"; Adélard Beaulne, quoted in MacKay, *Lumberjacks*, p. 210; Churchill, *Ma*, p. 130.

⁹³Lind, "Women," p. 129; Lind, letter to the author, January 8, 1979; Emile Leavitt in Ives, *Argyle Boom*, p. 119; Underwood, *Log*, p. 21; Ryan, "Come and Get It," p. 17; Coman, *Time, Tide, and Timber*, pp. 17, 70; Churchill, *Ma*, p. 130; Ralph W. Andrews, *Heroes of the Western Woods* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1960), p. 85.



Cookhouse Tasks



The men and women pictured above worked in cookhouses in Washington and northern California during the 1940s. All photos are from the FHS Collection.

George Kephart. Hence the “staples by which the ability of the cook was judged” were baked beans, cake, cookies, doughnuts, bread, hot rolls, and biscuits. “Loggers love pie,” Anna Lind recalled, and she is echoed by every logging camp menu after the “revolution” of the mid-nineteenth century. “All those pie-eating, pancake-consuming men!” exclaimed another ex-flunkey in introducing her loggers. A bitter ex-employee of Pope & Talbot complained of every aspect of working for the company, including the cookhouse, “except for,” he allowed, “the mince pies.”⁹⁴ At the same company in 1885, when workers at Port Gamble demanded that their Chinese cooks be replaced with Caucasians, Cyrus Walker told the Chinese to hang around. When the white cooks arrived, he told them to make a hundred pies. They could not and Walker sneered, “And you call yourselves cooks.” They lasted a week. In the Lake states, the isolated lumberjacks paid no attention to Christmas except in that work was optional and pay therefore a bonus and, second, “The cook did have an extra-special dinner that day, more pies and cakes and good things like that.” When an ameliorist writer in the *4L Bulletin* offered nine “new recipes” toward improving camp food, all were pastries.⁹⁵

Pastry was what counted. It was the one comestible commemorated in a verse from “Anstruther Camp,” a song out of Buckthorn, Ontario, about 1900:

Then at length the cook calls, ‘Supper boys!’ We
crowd in to our seats —
It is a sight for all sore eyes to see those brave
boys eat.
And then the supper it being over, we talk of the
days gone by,
And Jack will say to Jim, ‘Old boy, did you get
enough of pie?’⁹⁶

When a fancy new hotel opened in Seattle, its pastry chef was hired out of a logging camp.

This sweet (or starch) tooth makes sense in terms of the extraordinary energy demanded by logging work. Carbohydrates, especially the sugars, are digested almost immediately. If proteins and fats were required to withstand the rigors of the life over the long haul, it was carbohydrates that raised the body temperature immediately on a freezing morning and brought more or less instant relief from weariness when the day was over. The diet analyzed nutritionally above included a boggling 1,200 grams of carbohydrates,

worth something over 4,200 immediately usable calories in itself, at least half the day’s total.⁹⁷

It is telling that loggers’ food was not served in courses. Everything came out at the same time. “The pie is on the table to be eaten, and if so inclined they begin with pie, and if soup strikes their fancy later on they end with soup.” The same reporter stated that loggers were given to binges, calling for a time for “nothing but the plainest food,” but when “a sweet wave strikes the dining room, then enormous quantities of pies, puddings, cakes and sweet sauces are consumed.” There is a great deal more to human tastes in food than physiology, but this account rings clearly of a group of men working off every calorie they consumed and then some (the “sweet wave”), and later “catching up” on the proteins and fats needed for rebuilding. When management fired a hideously greasy cook off the upper Kennebec in Maine, a group of Finnish loggers protested. “We need the grease!” they said.⁹⁸

Milltown Cookhouses

The cookhouse and its traditions of good food in plenty were transported almost intact from the camps to the sawmill towns despite the fact they were not so essential there. That is, the millworkers were not isolated. In the towns there were plenty of private eateries and retailers where, like factory workers elsewhere, the millworkers might easily have provided for themselves. Mining and smelter towns, for example, otherwise very much like milltowns in social structure, were far less likely to have maintained cookhouses. But in places like Coos Bay, Samoa, Port Gamble, Port Talbot, Tacoma, and elsewhere, the “all-you-can-eat” cookhouse continued to flourish until the era of the Second World War.

The cookhouse survived in part due to the lumbermen’s commitment to the “company town” principle. They wanted the fullest possible control of their work force, and that entailed obligations as well as advantages. There was the same goal of a stable working force that held in the camps, which purpose a well-reputed cookhouse still served. A substantial proportion of the work force was still homeless and wifeless (about one-third of the workers at the Puget Mill Company in the 1880s were classified as transients; probably more were bachelors) and needed accommodation.⁹⁹ Moreover, the quality of food served by

⁹⁴Kephart, “Pulpwood Camps,” p. 30; Lind, “Women,” p. 129; Emerson, *Woods*, p. 1; C. E. Stone, Notebook 16, Pope & Talbot Archives.

⁹⁵Mrs. R. M. Eames, Notebook 15, Pope & Talbot Archives; Kephart, “Pulpwood Camps,” p. 30; Lind, “Women,” p. 131; Samoa Cookhouse brochure; Wyman, *Lumberjack*, p. 22; Sharkey, *4L Bulletin*, p. 18.

⁹⁶Fowke, *Lumbering Songs*, p. 60.

⁹⁷Advertisements for sweets were a minor mainstay of the *4L Bulletin*. “Get a box of Vogan’s candy and stow it in your bunk. Nibble its delicious contents after a cold, wet day in the woods, and you will find that disagreeable chill oozing quickly from your bones.”

⁹⁸Clara Iza Price in *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*; Pike, *Tall Trees*, p. 137.

⁹⁹Coman, *Time, Tide, and Timber*, p. 173.



Food in the Southern Pineries

The story of food in the southern lumber industry followed different patterns than elsewhere. Where the cookhouse appeared in the South, meals were gargantuan and varied, albeit with a southern flavor — much more pork and ham than other meats and cornbread at every meal. But cookhouses were less common in this region. Southern logging was rarely carried out in such isolation; hence the workers were more often local men, roughly half were married, and most made their own arrangements for meals. Above: A camp commissary of the Dierks Lumber Company in Arkansas or Oklahoma. Left: A camp kitchen of the Sumter Lumber Company, Electric Mills, Mississippi. Both photos are from the FHS Collection.

a company had gone beyond being a mere element of the competition for labor to become a tradition on the basis of which companies built their newly discovered sense of civic responsibility. While the Fourth of July celebration at Port Gamble was largely a family affair, the cookhouses chipped in with baked hams, suckling pigs, and bread. There would be similar cookhouse-catered celebrations for special occasions such as Pope & Talbot's launching of the *Tyee*, the most powerful tugboat in the United States, at Port Ludlow in 1884. The Samoa Cookhouse served as relief headquarters when a navy cruiser ran aground on Humboldt Bar in 1917. The civic tradition also included free meals for retirees at Port Gamble and probably at other cookhouses in the sawmill towns.¹⁰⁰

Finally, many millworkers, at least at first, came out of the woods and the camp tradition. Unlike the hard-rock miners become mill and smelter workers, with *their* highly individualistic "prospector" tradition, loggers looked back to an inheritance that was somewhat "collectivist," at least in matters of bed and board. Western miners had been entrepreneurs before they became workers; loggers were employees in highly rationalized operations from the beginning.

One significant change in the transplantation of cookhouses from camp to town was that, in the milltowns, a fee was charged for meals. (Pay in the woods was *usually* wages *plus* bed and board.) But these were not large, especially considering the high standard of the food. In the Redwood Country in the 1920s, an ordinary millworker made about \$3.50 per day and paid 60¢ for three meals. A faller in the woods paid \$1 for the same, but out of daily wages of \$5.20.¹⁰¹ In Washington, pay was less but the cost of meals also dropped, to between 35¢ and 50¢ per day.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, p. 166; Andrews, *Heroes*, p. 84; Roper, "Samoa Cookhouse"; Will Thompson, Notebook 16, and E. G. Ames, letter to W. H. Talbot, April 16, 1907, Ames Correspondence, both Pope & Talbot Archives.

¹⁰¹Roper, "Samoa Cookhouse"; Kate Clement, reminiscence in Genzoli, "Redwood Country," *Eureka Times-Standard*, September 20, 1974, p. 14. A good sampling of cookhouse fees may be seen in the Latourell Falls Wagon Road and Lumber Company Collection (1898), D. N. Nelson Accounts, and Carver and Creason Lumber Company Collection, all Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

Industry workers paid 15-20 percent of income for their food, less than the government calculated as a reasonable allotment of income.¹⁰²

Because of the spottiness of the records, and the fact that most companies attempted to provide as much as possible of their cookhouse provisions from within the corporate structure, it is difficult to determine whether or not the food services ran at a profit. Diamond Match claimed that its cookhouse operations around Stirling City, California, lost an average of just under \$3,000 a year. Half of the respondents to a survey of companies in Washington in 1921 claimed they lost money on their cookhouses, one claiming a \$600 monthly deficit. The same data, however, showed an average cookhouse fee of 49¢ and an average company cost for three meals of 46¢. Probably, the cookhouse was the arena for eternal cost-jockeying. Paul Hosmer of Brooks-Scanlon summed it up nicely when he wrote that the company's interest was in just shading a 40¢ fee, while the workers' was to be served meals costing 42½¢.¹⁰³ The final word on the question, however, must be the silence of the IWW. Even when most powerful among millworkers of the Northwest, the union complained little if at all about cookhouse fees.

The End of a Lovely Meal

Over the last quarter of a century, historians of labor have moved decisively away from an institutional approach to their subject, that is, away from seeing the history of the working class exclusively in terms of trade unions and institutional interactions among unions, businesses, and government. At least since the publication of E. P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* in 1964, they have placed greater emphasis on aspects of working-class culture and modes of working-class action, which predated the union movement and continued to function independently of it.

This essay provides a humble example of this sort of action. Loggers never were especially good union men. While thousands in the Pacific Northwest threw in with the IWW (a very uninstitutional labor union) for a time, even the Wobblies never secured a permanent organization in the woods. Nor did any other union, until lumbering was transmogrified into an industry on modern



lines by mechanization and forestry. Those early lumberjacks who were not aspiring lumbermen themselves — never likely trade unionists — were casual, footloose, ornery, and antisocial lumps who paid little heed to social conventions of any kind, let alone institutional means of action.

But they could and did act collectively, nowhere more significantly than at their mealtimes. Weather was inevitable. So seemed sleeping conditions (until the Wobblies). Even wages seemed to be decreed by distant, barely comprehensible forces. But the meal on the table was an intimate, eminently concrete reality, obviously a variable. Camps contending for a limited, mercurial work force could and did offer comestible inducements. By responding to this competition, the loggers continually pushed the stakes higher so that "good food," far better than a casual laborer could dream about in other kinds of work (harvesting, construction, mining, fisheries, and so on), became a tradition in the industry. So firmly rooted was it by the 1920s that employers themselves took pride in their dining halls.

In 1921, Jessie Rothgeb Mueller, a University of Washington dietician, made a time-honored academic play for some consultancy money. "At the present time there seems to be a gap between the university and the business world," she wrote. Professional buyers might be of use to the lumber industry. Among her proposals were "substitutes for expensive foods" and "standardization of food. This will eliminate the continual moving on the part of the men. Camps, at present, are competing with one another for men by serving better food." She also proposed money-saving cafeteria-style service, in which the men would

¹⁰²Mueller, "Feeding Problems," p. 242. A plate of ham and eggs alone at a working-class restaurant in this region cost 50¢. Blake, *Timber Down the Hill*, p. 30; Birkeland, *Puget Sound*, p. 28; *4L Bulletin* (March 1923), p. 13.

¹⁰³Hutchinson, *California Investment*, p. 354; Mueller, "Feeding Problems," p. 242; Hosmer, *Loggin'*, p. 125. See also Lewis Cressey, reminiscence, Notebook 15, Pope & Talbot Archives; Fredson Brothers Account Books (1921), Simpson Timber Company Archives.



Hungry Weyerhaeuser loggers pitch into a "lovely meal" at a big mess hall in Washington, ca. 1947.

FHS Collection

there are no potbellies in the old logging photos trotted out by archivists, there are plenty peeking out from under Pendleton shirts in the illustrations of the contemporary trade journals. No data are available, but it would not come as a surprise to discover that forest industry workers jog as frantically and frequently and as far as the national mean.

If they do, they are doing it in towns connected by fast highways that lead to interstate freeways and anywhere in the country to which they care to drive. The internal combustion engine not only revolutionized the transportation of logs from woods to mill, it nearly eliminated the isolated logging camp and the provincial milltown. When it was possible to live elsewhere than in a camp (which, even with *cordon bleu* cookery, was socially limited), loggers moved to towns, where, in the way of towns, they married and made families. With the necessary triumph of forestry and tree farming, moreover, they stayed in the same place. They ate at home, and the unmarried casuals disappeared or, at least, declined sufficiently in numbers that the cookhouse was no longer necessary. The Union Lumber Company's cookhouse in Mendocino County, built in 1885, closed in January 1951. "Fewer jobs were taken by single fellows from outside the area." The Samoa Cookhouse, opened in 1892, is today operated by Louisiana-Pacific Corporation as a restaurant and museum. It is billed as the "last surviving cookhouse in the West," and tourists can join locals for bountiful meals, "lumber camp style," seven days a week.¹⁰⁷

The passing of hundreds of small cookhouses in the woods was not much noticed. But it is reassuring to discover that the healthy traditions of yore are not entirely dead. Where camps survive in the United States, as in Alaska or at Weyerhaeuser's Camp 14 in eastern Oregon, the table still awes visitors. As recently as 1978, there was a flare-up at a camp in British Columbia when workers complained that there was too little shrimp in the shrimp salad.¹⁰⁸ □

pay for what they took.¹⁰⁴ Although Professor Mueller told the Home Economics Association that one lumberman had offered a camp for experimental purposes, there is no evidence that her proposals were put into practice during that era.

Indeed, workers would have emptied the pilot project cookhouse in short order. Good food and plenty of it was the sine qua non of work in the industry. As for standing in a line, waiting to point to the 9,000 calories' worth of items the logger elected to eat that day . . . Professor Mueller was out of touch.

What ended the world of the cookhouse was the transformation of the lumber industry by, above all, the internal combustion engine. Gargantuan meals were no longer necessary when trees were felled and logs bucked by chainsaw, and removed from the woods by the throw of a switch or the twirling of a hydraulically assisted steering wheel.¹⁰⁵ Studies of energy use by Durnin and Passmore indicate that sawing with a power saw burns about half the calories that hand sawing does. Driving a truck or other machine costs 1.3 to 2.6 calories per minute as opposed to 12.1 calories wrestling logs about manually.¹⁰⁶ The logger's need for food fuel, like that of the general population, declined steadily and drastically. If

¹⁰⁴Mueller, "Feeding Problems," pp. 244-45. See also *Camp and Mill News* 6 (April 1923): 7-8.

¹⁰⁵Strite, "Up the Kilchis, Part IV," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 73 (September 1972): 216.

¹⁰⁶Durnin and Passmore, *Energy*, pp. 61, 68, 72-73.

¹⁰⁷Ralph W. Andrews, *This Was Sawmilling* (Seattle: Superior Publishing, 1957), p. 127; Roper, "Samoa Cookhouse"; Samoa Cookhouse brochure.

¹⁰⁸Chet Lane: Not Your Average Short-Order Cook," *Growth Rings* [Weyerhaeuser, eastern Oregon newsletter] (November 1978), pp. 3-4; *Toronto Globe and Mail*, February 2, 1979, p. 9.