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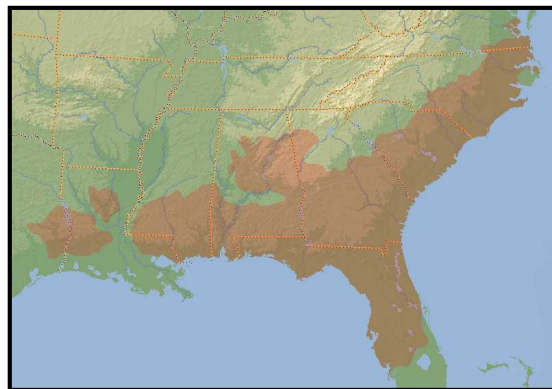
THIS IS INCOMPLETE - A WORK IN PROGRESS

Andrew Jackson left his mark on the sparsely populated region of Northwest Florida in the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pursuing his political ambition, he went back to Tennessee and on to bigger things, eventually becoming our nation's 7th president. However, many of his soldiers stayed in the Gulf coastal region and managed to sustain a living farming, hunting, and logging. The loggers believed their future lay in the virgin pine forests which extended from Panama City, Florida, west to the Mississippi River and north about the same distance. In 1743, the first commercial export cargo left the Port of Pensacola, and consisted of pine, pitch products, and the wooden masts and spars for sailing ships from northwest Florida pine forests.<sup>1</sup>

Longleaf heart pine became the most economically important tree in America. It was in fact the favored tree for all construction. The wood itself is dense, rigid and as strong as red oak with inherent resistance to rot, decay, and insects. Its amber to reddish heartwood is hard and durable and these slow growing trees were almost all heartwood with little sapwood.

Longleaf's growth form, tall with straight trunks also multiplied inherent value of the lumber. Longleaf masts consistently sold in England at prices 25 to 30% above other conifers from North America. Trees took 200-400 years to mature and some might have reached 500 yrs. The typical height of the tree at maturity was 80 to 100 ft. with a maximum height of probably 125 feet. The diameter of longleaf pine at chest height at maturity was typically 24-32 inches with a maximum of 120 inches.<sup>2</sup>

When young, they grow a long taproot, which is usually 2-3 m (6-10 ft) long; by maturity they have a wide spreading lateral root system with several deep 'sinker' roots. It grows on well-drained, usually sandy soil, often in pure stands. In northern Alabama, it sometimes occurs on clay soil. The scientific name, *Pinus palustris*, meaning "of marshes" is a misunderstanding on the part of Philip Miller who described the species, from seeing Longleaf Pine forests with temporary winter flooding. Longleaf pine is also known as Southern Yellow Pine or Longleaf Yellow Pine, and in the past as Pitch Pine (that term was dropped since it caused confusion with Pitch Pine, *Pinus rigida*). Long leaf pines are found in the upland pine forest habitat, not directly on the coast.



**Range of pines of all sorts including longleaf, loblolly, cypree, and cedar.**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mybaseguide.com/navy/pensacola-nas/community.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.heartwoodassociates.com>

Small sawmills appeared throughout the Northwest Florida and South Alabama area by the early 1800s with the majority being water-powered. One of these was the pioneer in northwest Florida. Joseph Forsyth, a fugitive from a violent argument in New Orleans where a Frenchman was killed, made his way to Pensacola. He found work near present-day Bagdad at a brickyard owned by a John Hunt. Forsyth, already well off from his time in Louisiana, saved his pay and made the acquaintance of John de la Rua, a wealthy landowner and a prominent Pensacola businessman. De la Rua had been the beneficiary of land granted to favored citizens by the Spanish king in 1817. For about eleven years de la Rua had partially cleared the property and may have even begun construction of a small dam. De la Rua's efforts to develop the land, however, were frustrated by labor shortages due in large part to hostile Indians who roamed the area. Finally in 1828, he sold the property to Joseph Forsyth for \$400.00.<sup>3</sup>

Forsyth erected a dam across the creek to produce water power and started the construction of a small saw mill. He ran short of money for his venture and enlisted the financial help of brothers Ezekiel and Andrew Simpson. Thus in 1830 the firm of Forsyth and Simpson was established, and with the added capital of the Simpson brothers, the sawmill on Pond Creek was soon completed.

A dam was built, nearly a half mile in length and some two stories high and began to fill what became a pond of about 160 acres. A two-story sawmill was constructed on the dam and from that, about 100 yards downstream, another sawmill with a sluice 700 feet long from the pond to deliver the water power.

This mill, Arcadia, is the site of the first and largest Early American industrial complex in Florida. The industries included water-powered sawmills, planing and lathing machines, a grist mill, bucket and pail factory, shingle mill and a cotton textile mill. Arcadia had a stone quarry, a tannery, silk cocoonery, blacksmith shop, storehouses, kitchen, community well, and living quarters. A mule drawn railroad and a sixteen-mile-long log flume provided means of transportation for the industries.<sup>4</sup>

Sawmills had been built near rivers and streams which were their primary source of power and were the means of transportation to the mill and then the finished product to market. Steam power, however, was introduced to northwest Florida in the 1830s. Now, the logistics of transportation and power was practically eliminated. Lumber producing mills became a ubiquitous sight in the forests of northwest Florida..

*Due to the wood shortages in Europe, large quantities of fine Heart Pine timbers were also exported during the 19th century. All this lead to the end of the vast forest lands of Longleaf pine and today only about five percent of the original Longleaf Pine forest remains.*

In the 1870s, with a rapidly expanding industrial boom in the U.S. and Europe, many factories were built and cities mushroomed. There was a need for low cost building materials with one obvious answer the good quality pine construction timber from Northwest Florida. The vast tracts of giant pine trees extended for miles to the north of Pensacola and such bountiful natural resources created the Northwest Florida and South Alabama logging industry; then steam gave rise to a dominant commerce. Much of the

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<sup>3</sup> <http://uwf.edu/anthropology/research/industrial/arcadia/>; Sammy Hinely, newspaper article, *History of Century*, **The Sentinel**, Pensacola, Florida 1980

<sup>4</sup> <http://uwf.edu/anthropology/research/industrial/arcadia/>

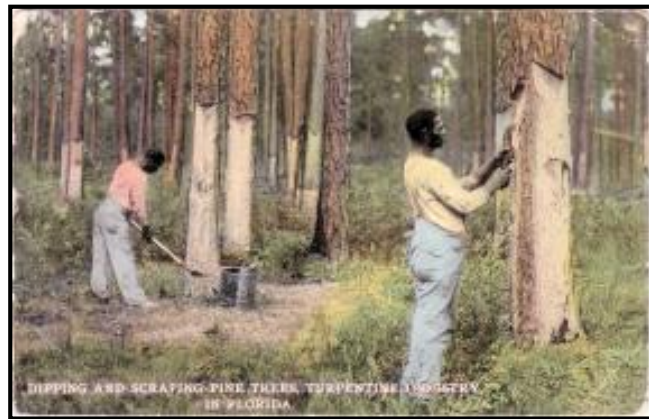
harvested timber eventually passed through Pensacola, being either manufactured into building lumber or exported overseas aboard sailing schooners docked at one of the many city wharfs.

Longleaf pine was the most important of the southern pines. It was the source of naval stores used to waterproof ships and sails. Early settlers burned longleaf heartwood or "lightered pine" in shallow pits and collected the boiling pitch in sunken barrels. Tar was extracted from the pitch, and those involved were sometimes called "tarheels," a nickname much beloved in North Carolina.

Near the end of the 18th century, settlers learned how to tap living longleaf pine trees (much like sugar maples) for the gum which was distilled into turpentine and rosin (a small turpentine industry still collects longleaf sap for specialized uses like oil painting), but today most turpentine and related products are synthesized from crude oil.

A business was created around naval stores: tar, pitch, turpentine, and rosin. Naval stores refer to tree by-products used extensively in early ship building. For hundreds of years, boat builders used pine pitch to waterproof the seams between the planks of their wooden ships. Sailors coated the rigging of sails with tar to protect the ropes from the corrosive salt air. They also used the tar to patch leaks. Hundreds of ships from all over the world anchored in the ports of the South to load barrels of naval stores "mined" in the deep longleaf pine forests.<sup>5</sup>

Turpentine and rosin were produced from the gummy resin contained in the living trees. The longleaf pines were opened by hacking into the trunks low on the tree so the sap could be collected -- not unlike the process of collecting maple sugar sap in the production of syrups. The gum was collected every few weeks and taken to a distillery, where by heating it was separated into a clear liquid called turpentine and a darker solid called rosin. Unfortunately, the destructive methods of the turpentiners killed many trees and left others vulnerable to storms and fires.



<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:PostcardTurpentineWorkers1912.jpg>

The endangered red-cockaded woodpecker is the only American bird that excavates its nesting cavity in a living pine tree, and nearly all their cavities were in old (more than 100 years old) longleaf pines. The woodpecker is nearing extinction because old longleafs are so rare.<sup>6</sup>

By the 1880s and 1890s, longleaf pine was among the most sought after timber trees in the country. Its slow growth created wood of great strength. Longleaf lumber was shipped all over the world as giant squared timbers for use in building bridges, factories, and wharves. Thousands of heartwood crossties were made from longleaf pine and used

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fws.gov/carolinasandhills/longleaf.html>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.floridata.com/ref/P/pinu\\_pal.cfm](http://www.floridata.com/ref/P/pinu_pal.cfm)

by railroads throughout the country.

The period between 1900 and 1930 witnessed the establishment of large inland mills and some of the most intensive forest liquidation the world had ever seen. Some refer to this period as the "railroad logging era." The longleaf pine harvest peaked in 1909, and by 1935 the once vast longleaf forest was reduced to one-third of its original size, or about 20 million acres.<sup>7</sup>

As they stripped the woods of their trees, loggers left mounds of flammable debris that frequently fueled catastrophic fires, destroying both the remaining trees and seedlings. The exposed earth left behind by clear cutting operations was highly susceptible to erosion, and nutrients were washed from the already porous soils. This further destroyed the natural seeding process.

At the peak of the timber cutting in the 1890s and the first decade of the new century, the longleaf pine forests were providing millions of board feet of timber each year. The timber cutters gradually moved across the South so that by the 1920s most of the "limitless" virgin longleaf pine forests were gone.

In an attempt to protect the remaining longleaf pine forests and to encourage regeneration, turn-of-the-century foresters made a classic mistake: they blamed the frequent fires used by the Native Americans, cattlemen, and turpentiners, and turned instead to a policy of fire suppression. This policy caused natural fuels (needles, limbs, cones, and scrub-oak leaves and twigs) to accumulate rapidly in the remaining forests, creating even worse fire hazards.

Without fire, the diverse ground cover was slowly smothered beneath the dense carpet of pine needles and oak leaves. Longleaf pine seeds could no longer germinate because they could not reach the mineral soil. Scrub oak, normally shrub-sized in the natural longleaf forests swept by frequent fires, grew into dense, tall thickets, further preventing light to the forest floor and competing with the longleaf seedlings for soil nutrients and moisture.

The wildlife accustomed to the open longleaf pine/wiregrass ecosystem - wild turkeys, fox squirrels, bob-white quail, and red-cockaded woodpeckers - virtually disappeared, replaced by the inhabitants of denser pine forests. The intricate interplay of life adapted to longleaf pine ecosystem was slowly dying.

Today, longleaf pine is an ecosystem in trouble everywhere in the South. Of the estimated 90 million acres in the pre-settlement forests, only about 2 million acres of mostly second-growth longleaf pine remain in scattered patches. Less than half of that is found on public lands. Those stands of longleaf in private ownership continue to decline, as landowners replace the longleaf with faster growing species such as loblolly pine. And, despite our increasing knowledge about the beneficial role of fire, especially fire during the growing season, many landowners still do not burn their longleaf pine forests, or do not burn them often enough.<sup>8</sup>

However, for nearly 50 years, these longleaf yellow pine forests and their majestic 70 to 100 foot tall pines of the counties of Escambia in Florida and Escambia, Monroe, and Conecuh in Alabama echoed daily to the lonesome whistle of Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company log trains enroute to the booming sawmill at Century, Florida. Tiny iron horses

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<sup>7</sup> <http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2201.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.fws.gov/carolinasandhills/longleaf.html>

belched clouds of wood smoke with a heavy exhaust as they pulled their countless trainloads of virgin timber. Today, the trains have vanished along with the primeval forest. All is quiet.<sup>9</sup>

The community of Century owes its existence to those pine forests of south Alabama. In 1900, General Russell Alexander Alger of Michigan and Martin H. Sullivan of Pensacola formed the Alger-Sullivan Syndicate to establish lumber operations in the South and located a mill near the tiny black village of Teaspoon. The company named the new community “Century” in light of their optimism for economic development and the dawn of the new century.

Alger and Martin Sullivan, both Union soldiers (Daniel Sullivan served in the Confederate Army during the War Between the States) and both here in the Deep South during the War of Yankee Aggression, Sullivan near Pensacola, Alger in Mississippi, saw the massive longleaf pines. A little more than 30 years after the War they partnered to form the syndicate from which was spawned the Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company.

The local logging industry got a major start with Martin Sullivan, the early Pensacola businessman. During the Civil War, Sullivan supplied beef from wild and range cattle to Federal troops occupying the area. He amassed a small fortune from such activities and after the war purchased about 100,000 acres of virgin woodlands from the Federal government.

Sullivan brothers Daniel and Martin, natives of Ireland, immigrated to this country at a very early age (about 1851). They resided in New York State until about the time of the Civil War. They became prominent businessmen in Pensacola, having founded the First National Bank in 1880, built the Pensacola Opera House (in the same building as the bank) and constructed the Sullivan Wharfs, considered the principal wharf in the city in the 1890s.

Daniel Sullivan was instrumental in establishing the Sullivan Timber Company in 1891-92 which operated in southwestern Escambia County, Alabama. A community grew around one of his mills that was called –and to this day is still called – Sullivan. They were very successful in the real estate and timber businesses, purchasing several mills in the region and wharfs on Pensacola Bay and the large areas of timber in parts of both Florida and Alabama. The Sullivan Timber Company soon established the Escambia Railroad, which led into the Alabama logging woods.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Zadnichek, Louis II, “Forest, Iron Horse... The Boom That Made Century”, Bay Magazine*

<sup>10</sup> *“History of Escambia County, Alabama - The Timber Business 1880-1900,” by Ted Sanford (website now defunct)*

Early logging was done by ox teams dragging felled trees to a dammed creek or hand-dug ditch. Many variables would dictate the way these streams and ditches were used. Until the late 1800s, it was common for loggers to float the felled trees down existing streams, sometimes straightened by ditches. Trimmed logs were dragged to a staging area near the stream or ditch by oxen, horse or mule teams (more commonly by oxen). The logs would be assembled and linked together end to end with heavy chains (“dogs”) to form a boom, so that none of them would float alongside others thereby causing a jam. Then the logs would then be floated downstream to a holding pond with a spillway.



During periods of high water, the spillway would be opened and the log boom would float down the waterway until it reached either one of the ubiquitous sawmills throughout the region or a river such as the Escambia-Conecuh system. By 1891, the company had twenty miles of log ditches and a large railroad system in Alabama.

Much of the lumber was planned for shipment to other areas of the country or for export around the world, so the logs, instead of being cut into planks right away, might be squared off into timbers. This made it easier to lash the flattened timbers together and float them in the shape of a raft to holding areas such as Ferry Pass or even the Pensacola

#### LOG BOOM

A log boom was a barrier placed in a river, designed to collect and/or contain floating logs timbered from nearby forests sometimes called a fence or bag. The term is also used as a place where logs were collected into booms, as at the mouth of a river. With several firms driving on the same stream, it was necessary to direct the logs to their owner's respective booms, with each log identified by its own patented Timber Mark.

As the logs proceeded downstream, they encountered these booms in a manner that allowed log drivers to control their progress, eventually guiding them to the river mouth or sawmills. Most importantly, the booms could be towed across lakes, like rafts, or anchored while individual logs awaited their turn to go through the mill. Booms prevented the escape into open waters of these valuable assets.

Log boom foundations were commonly constructed of piles or large stones placed into cribs in a river to form small islands. The booms were themselves large floating logs linked together end to end, like a large floating chain connecting the foundations while strategically guiding the transported logs along their path.

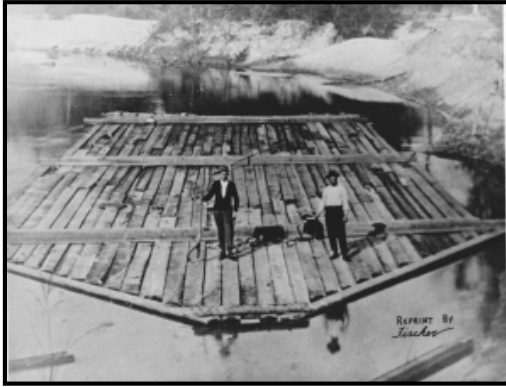
*[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Log\\_boom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Log_boom)*

harbor, where they would be loaded onto ships.

The trip down the Escambia River to Ferry Pass or the harbor at Pensacola was quite an adventure even by today's standards. Since the trip could take many days, even weeks, depending on the stage of the river, the men might put a pile of mud toward the front of the “raft” upon which they would build fires for warmth or cooking. Most often they

would steer the raft toward the bank and tie up overnight.

A raft (sometimes referred to as a “boom”) might involve a series of similar rafts linked together and at least one account from those days said they could be “miles” long. It took a crew of several men to navigate the twists and turns of the Escambia River. Of course, the river was much different than today. There was much more traffic, especially steam-powered boats plying the river, called “snag boats.” The purpose of these boats was to keep the river clear of anything that might hinder navigation such as roots, stumps and trees that had washed down from upstream. The last of these boats traveled the Escambia-Conecuh as late as the 1920s.



**Boom of logs traveling down the Escambia River**

When the trip was over, the men had a couple of choices to get back home, which might be 40-100 miles away. They could walk, or perhaps take a train ride back. That might depend on whether the price of the timber allowed them enough profit to purchase a ticket.

At the time Sullivan and Alger formed the Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company, the Escambia Railroad was part of the arrangement and became the Company’s reach into south Alabama. The tracks ultimately ran one hundred plus miles into Alabama, covering much of central Escambia County, Alabama, and it also ran into Monroe and Conecuh Counties.

After railroads were commonly used to bring the logs from the woods, the ASLC used the Escambia Railroad to haul the prime virgin longleaf logs for manufacture of lumber and export timbers at the Century mill, the largest in Florida. Logging crews lived in railroad camp cars on sidings during the week and rode the railroad home on weekends. The railroad discontinued operation in 1942 as it became more cost-effective to use trucks to haul the logs.

One of the reasons the mill at Century was located where it was is due to its proximity to the L&N railroad. The property abutted the L&N right-of-way and it was quite efficient to load just-cut lumber and timbers onto railcars and ship them to Pensacola or toward the north to the interior of the country. Occasionally a log ditch from Century to the Escambia River at Bluff Springs would be utilized.

Col. W. D. Mann, a veteran of Custer's Brigade and publisher of "Town Topics," in New York City, (also at one time the owner and publisher of the Mobile Press) was a friend of Martin H. Sullivan of Pensacola. He was also a friend of Gen. Russell A. Alger of Detroit and Duluth, who had lumber operations in Michigan and Minnesota. It was largely through Col. Mann's friendship with the large timberland owner of the south and the northern lumber operator that the idea was born that developed into The Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company.

General Alger, President McKinley's Secretary of War in 1898, then was past middle age. Born on Feb. 27, 1836, in LaFayette, Ohio, he had studied law and entered the Union army at the outbreak of the Civil War. For gallant conduct he had, in 1865, been

brevetted brigadier general and major general. In 1884, he had been elected governor of Michigan and, four years later, had been one of the contenders for the Republican presidential nomination.

Alger was quite the businessman as well, evidenced by his timber holdings and businesses in the north. He was involved with rail car manufacturing there and even considered building such a facility in Pensacola. <sup>11</sup>On June 5, 1900, the New York Times reported that Alger planned to build railroad cars in Pensacola and large sawmills (notice the plural) in Alabama and Florida. Also there was to be an immediate expenditure of \$100,000 to “improve Sullivan’s wharf” in Pensacola, “one of the best located export wharfs here” (meaning Pensacola). If Alger’s rail car plant ever was begun, it is not certain it was productive for long, because Alger passed away in 1907.

<sup>12</sup>Some ten years General Alger's junior, Col. Frank J. Hecker, of Detroit, was, at the turn of the century, a man of substance and reputation. Born July 7, 1846, at Freedom, Michigan, he enlisted in the Union Army. After the Civil War he was attracted to the railroad industry and 1869 found him acting superintendent of the Union Pacific. Later he became general superintendent of the Rondout & Osewego Railroad.

In 1879 he organized the Peninsular Car Company and served as its president. He remained president when it was expanded into the Michigan Peninsular Car Company until 1900 when he retired from the car building field. Subsequently his company, with others, was merged into "American Car & Foundry Company."

When the United States became involved in the war with Spain, Hecker became a colonel in the Quartermaster Volunteers and served as chief of the division of transportation of the army during the Spanish-American War. Some time later, in 1904, he was appointed to the Isthmian Canal Commission, serving the better part of a year.

Charles L. Freer was closely associated with Colonel Hecker as one of the principal owners of Michigan Peninsular and they both retired from its direction in 1900. John Millen, of Duluth, Minn., was an associate of General Alger in one of his northern lumber operations. Edward A. Hauss was associated with Colonel Hecker and Mr. Freer at Michigan Peninsular Car Company. E. Manne Vynne was a business associate of Colonel Mann's. These became interested with General Alger and Mr. Sullivan in the incorporation of The Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company. General Alger was elected president; Mr. Sullivan, vice-president; and Mr. James G. McCaul, secretary and treasurer.

The Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company was incorporated in July, 1900 and the principal incorporators were Martin H. Sullivan of Pensacola, Florida and Gen. Russell Alger of Detroit, Michigan. With increasing demand and better prices, a new centralized sawmill was needed and the company purchased about a quarter-section of land near what was once called Teaspoon, Florida. Since the company had been formed in 1900, Gen. Alger selected the name, Century.

Following its incorporation, Alger-Sullivan acquired the Foshee & Fuller Lumber Company mill at Foshee, Ala., about 15 miles from the main mill site in Century, Fla. The Sullivan Tract was largely in Escambia, Baldwin, Conecuh and Monroe Counties, Ala. The ultimate holding of land was over 226,000 acres. . The newly organized

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<sup>11</sup> *New York Times*, June 6, 1900

<sup>12</sup> *A Sawmill Scrapbook*, Volume 2, *Alger-Sullivan Historical Society*



company purchased Sullivan's timber holding in Alabama for one million dollars

Martin Sullivan died on 15 October 1911 in Baltimore, Maryland. He was buried on 17 Oct 1911 in St Michaels Cemetery, Pensacola, Florida.  
(<http://www.trackingyourroots.com/data/nwspapr.htm>)

<sup>13</sup>On the circular mill at Foshee were cut the timbers for the mill at Century. Work started on the latter in January, 1901, and it was in operation, cutting the first lumber in early 1902. The new Alger-Sullivan mill was engineered from pond to car. It was a professional job, performed by Allis-Chalmers, and the various mill operations were so closely coordinated that subsequent modernizing changes necessitated changes throughout the plant, since a change at one station required changes at all the rest.

The massive sawmill was an industrial marvel of its day. The mill structure measured about 100 feet wide by 250 feet long. Power was supplied by 10 horizontal wood-fired steam boilers. The steam was fed to a huge Corliss stationary engine with an 18-foot diameter fly wheel. The main leather drive belt connecting the fly wheel and the mill measured one inch thick by four feet wide by 210 feet long.

The sawmill consisted of two nine-foot band mills with double-cutting saws. Logs were pulled into the mill by steam-powered machinery, placed into position and efficiently cut to specification. Square timber was shifted to an area where it was made into either planks or beams. Trims were turned into either shingles or fuel for the boilers. Slabs also ended up as fuel, or were transformed into plaster lath. Nothing was wasted.

Virtually all finished timber was shipped out of the sawmill over the tracks of the L&N Railroad south into Pensacola. Special orders were occasionally placed. Even as late as November 17, 1941, when most of the virgin pine had been cut, it was still possible to obtain in one shipment, 25 pieces measuring 12 x 12-inch to 16 x 16-inch and varying from 42 to 60 feet long. There was a total of 14,484 board feet in that one shipment which took two railroad flat cars to handle.

Lumber was shipped all over the world. One former soldier stationed in the Philippines after World War II was in charge of remodeling some Japanese-built barracks and found lumber inside walls that was stamped "Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company, Century, Florida."

Possibly the first engineered mill in its area, it was among the first in the Southern Pine region. It was, in the vernacular of the industry, a two-sided double-cut mill. By that is meant that each of two bands had teeth on each edge. Thus a line was sawn every time the carriage traveled past the saw, going and coming.

Fire destroyed the original mill in 1910, but the engineering principles embodied in it were duplicated in its rebuilding. The only change was the substitution of a vertical resaw for a gang. The only other fire of size experienced by Alger-Sullivan was one that destroyed the planing mill and dressed and finished lumber shed in 1939. This was replaced by a completely electric and modern plant that was placed in operation in May, 1940.

The incorporators set up shop with the original intention of cutting out in 10 or 15 years. In the first year's operation, the new mill at Century produced 58,000,000 board feet of lumber. In 1903, the combined output at Century and Foshee was 84,000,000 feet.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Had the company persevered, it might, indeed, have attained its objective, but something happened to the management's thinking. Teddy Roosevelt, a man of many interests, was then preaching against clear cutting. "The rapacious assaults on our virgin timber," he was saying, "would, without thought of reforestation, one day rid the country of a lumber supply."

Whether inspired by the Rooseveltian pronouncements or taught by its own observations, the ASLC throttled down production and advanced its sights somewhat further into the future. The company ran night shifts for only one year and gradually logging practices were modified to reduce their destructive effects.

Like other large integrated operations, Alger-Sullivan operated its own railroad, the Escambia Railway. With steam-operated donkey engines and booms, logs were skidded into the log cars from as far away as a thousand feet on either side. Both rail transport and steam skidders were later abandoned in favor of crawler-type tractors and motor trucks. With production scaled down, the Foshee mill was closed in 1922. By the late 1940's the output of the Century mill was down to 20,000,000 board feet a year. The cut of the company to December 31, 1950, was one billion, 800 million feet.

The most efficient means of supplying the Century sawmill with logs was by railroad. The Escambia Railway was built in a northerly direction, first crossing the L&N at Century and again west of Flomaton. At the height of its operation, tracks poked north to Fowler, Alabama, a distance of some 100 miles from the sawmill, with many additional miles as temporary spurs into the woods not counted.

Over the rails passed a steady stream of log trains. A train would consist of an engine and tender, 24 to 30 log cars and a caboose. The log cars were connected by long timbers with link and pin couplers on each end. Only the engine had brakes. Since grading and embankments were kept to an absolute minimum, the rails tended to run up one hill and down the next. At 50 mph, it made for a very exciting ride.

Since the railroad passed through a virtual wilderness, it became a lifeline and touch to civilization. Water tanks were built for the thirsty iron horses and small settlements soon sprang up along the tracks. Alger-Sullivan put on a daily passenger train for men working in the logging camps and people moving into the newly cleared land. As the trees were felled, the Escambia Railway was there to help settle the territory.

Logging railroads were extremely dangerous places to work. Although it was strictly against the rules to drink on the job, many train crews kept a jug of potent moonshine on hand to ward off snakebites. Missing fingers were commonplace due to the link and pin couplers. And, fast moving log trains occasionally struck stray oxen or wild cattle resulting in nasty smash-ups.

Major dangers were boiler explosions. The Escambia Railway purchased many old, nearly worn-out engines from other railroads and worked the last miles out of them with a minimum of maintenance. The company owned as many as 29 engines over the years, many used for spare parts. In November, 1911, Engine No.4 blew up at Camp 8 deep in the woods. The driving axles were broken in two and the boiler topped a 90-foot pine tree and landed 100 yards away. Fortunately, the crew was off the engine when it exploded and no one was killed.

Not so lucky was the engineer on No. 99, a Heisler type used on temporary track off the mainline to gather logs. In 1919, the engine was working on very steep track and the

engineer let the water get too low in the boiler. The resulting blast blew the poor engineer out of the cab into the woods. He was severely scalded and remained a cripple for the rest of his life.

Life in the isolated log camps was hard work, long hours and low pay. The workers lived in large wooden camp cars, resembling boxcars, mounted on railroad wheels so they could be switched from one location to another as logging progressed. The camps were tiny communities nearly lost in the deep woods. The daily passenger train brought in supplies and occasionally new workers. A passenger coach fitted with strongboxes served as a pay car and its arrival in camp was always an occasion to celebrate.

Logging was done by hand. Two-man crosscut saws and axes were the primary tools. Once felled, the pine trees were dragged by teams of oxen or mules to a spur line branching out from the main tracks. Alger-Sullivan owned at least 250 oxen and almost 300 mules for such tasks. At the railhead, a steam crane loaded the logs onto the waiting train. The men and animals worked from dawn to dusk, six days a week. And if a man was injured, it could take 24 hours to get a doctor.

From 1911 to 1922, operations were at their peak. Because it looked as if the timber might get scarce, Alger-Sullivan purchased the Michigan Tract of virgin timber covering 30,000 acres in Conecuh County, Alabama. During this boom time, the Century sawmill was cutting an average of 250,000 board feet daily, while the secondary mill at Foshee, Alabama handled 100,000 board feet daily. Such a combined operation made Alger-Sullivan the largest sawmill operation east of the Mississippi River.

Alger-Sullivan employees were never unionized and the company generally had few labor problems. Edward A. Hauss, general manager and later president, believed in taking care of his men and always tried to pay wages a little higher than his competitors. The camps were kept clean and orderly with good food being served. There were other big sawmills operating in the South and the workers had a song, "To Southern States and to Bogaloo, Back to Camp 8 to get your Lallyhoo."

After the Michigan Tract was logged out, Alger-Sullivan started gradually pulling back. During the Depression years, the Escambia Railway was shortened and the log trains became fewer. In an economy move, old army trucks were used to haul logs instead of building new tracks. The trucks proved very successful and by 1942 had replaced all log trains. The end had come.

The last miles of rusty track were left in place until 1945. With the war over, Alger-Sullivan could buy all the used army trucks they required. After pulling up the rails, the junkmen put the cutting torch to the aging log cars and other obsolete equipment. Most of the locomotives were shoved out in back of the sawmill on a spur track. They would later be stripped of usable parts and left to rust away.

The last operative Escambia Railway engine was No. 100, a Baldwin 2-6-2. It was saved for use as a switcher at the fading sawmill. With its distinctive cabbagehead smokestack, No. 100 huffed and puffed around mill tracks until 1953. It was then retired in favor of a new diesel switcher.

When the No. 100's last fire was extinguished, the curtain fell on a fascinating part of Escambia County history. There were no more whistles in the piney woods. Alger-Sullivan itself lasted only a few years longer than No. 100. The once vast virgin tracts of

long leaf yellow pine were gone. The cleared land was now home to either farmers or second growth slash pine suitable only for paper mills. The Century sawmill was obsolete and uneconomical to operate. Finally, on February 22, 1957, Alger-Sullivan sold out to paper mill interests. The new owners carried on limited operations for several more years, but in the end, plans were drawn to close the sawmill.

On June 18, 1977, Jim Walters Door Corp., owners of the property, had the abandoned Alger-Sullivan Sawmill auctioned off piece by piece to the highest bidder. Boilers, turbines, saws, motors, cranes, transformers, all that was of mechanical value went on the block. The rest was junked.

Today, little remains except vanishing memories. A few houses still stand at Century, while deep in the woods foresters use the old railroad grades to drive on. A few rotting camp cars can still be found on farms where they ended their days as sheds and chicken coops. A lone Alger box car survives in a the James Houston Jones Historical Park in the Historical District in Century.

The No. 100 was saved from scrapping by three railroad historians from Mobile, Alabama. They moved the engine to Mobile, restored it to operation for the 1976 Bicentennial, and then sold it to the Whitewater Valley Railroad in Connersville, Indiana. The logging engine, complete with its authentic cabbagehead stack, pulled trainloads of tourists every summer for about 15 years until a boiler problem sidetracked it for some 15 more years. It was purchased in 2007 by the Alger-Sullivan Historical Society with private funds and a grant from the State of Florida grant and is now in the early stages of restoration in the Jones Park at Century.

Upon General Alger's death in 1907 (*Martin Sullivan died on 15 October 1911 in Baltimore, Maryland. He was buried on 17 Oct 1911 in St Michaels Cemetery, Pensacola, Florida*<sup>14</sup>), Millen was elected president of Alger-Sullivan and held office until his death in July, 1916. Colonel Hecker was chosen to complete his unexpired term and held office until February, 1917, when Edward A. Hauss was elected president.

Hauss, who had been one of the youngest of the incorporators, had, from the first, carried most of the burden of management and his succession to the presidency added little to his position in the company save a title. Meanwhile, Alger-Sullivan had developed a substantial export market. Millions of feet of original growth long leaf had gone to Europe in timbers and still there were logs for the mill. The original fifteen-year limit set on the company's operation had expired. Tracts logged in the first years of operation had been relogged, some as many as four times. Hauss coined the phrase, "prolonged operation," and made it company policy.

It's been said that Hauss was very interested in the early 1900s conservation approach used by George Vanderbilt in the Pisgah Forest in western North Carolina. Adopting some of the methods used by the foresters there, Hauss had reforestation on ASLC land undertaken on a substantial scale along about 1935. In 1937, M. C. Leach was brought in as forester. In that year selective logging was instituted on a strict basis, even though the selective cutting had been a general rule for some time..

The Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company was sold to the Alger, Tenants in Common, a combine of St. Regis Paper Company, International Paper Company, Koppers Company,

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.trackingyourroots.com/data/nwspapr.htm>

Scott Paper Company and Cyprus Mines Corporation, in 1957. The Alger Tenants in turn sold the sawmill at Century to Alger-Sullivan Sawmill Company. The Tenants then owned and operated the forest lands in Alabama.

## THE CLANCY YEARS 1957-1967

In 1957 when The Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company decided to sell out after more than a half century of lumbering and forestry leadership, the company with its mill and 227,000 acres of prime longleaf pine timberlands was sold to the Alger Tenants-in-Common, a combine of five great U.S. companies: Scott Paper, International Paper, St. Regis Paper, Koppers Company, and Cyprus Mines. The Alger Tenants in turn sold the sawmill at Century to Alger-Sullivan Sawmill Company. The Tenants then owned and operated the forest lands in Alabama. G. R. Swift of Atmore, Alabama, veteran lumberman and Alabama statesman and former U.S. Senator, directed the timber cutting operations for the Tenants. Mr. M. C. Leach, veteran Alger forester, was Swift's administrative assistant.

Sawmilling was really beneath the dignity of these industrial giants. They primarily wanted the timber and poles so they cast around for a sawmiller of repute to buy the mill in Century, buy the sawlogs on contract, and operate the lumbering end of the Alger holdings. They landed on Leon Clancy, an experienced and successful lumberman who was raised in the sawmill business. A tough, friendly, gracious, fair Irishman, born in Thomaston, Alabama, Leon Clancy was building logging railroads in his teens for his father. He struck out on his own in Midway, Florida, after marrying Gladys Gardner from Selma, Alabama. Subsequently he lumbered all over south Georgia (Albany, Pavo, Warwick, etc.) with the so-called "Georgia Roofers."

A family man, Clancy always took his family along from town to town, woods to woods. He ultimately built the Clancy Lumber Company mill in Grayson, Alabama. It had been a long road back from the depression of 1929 when most sawmillers went broke.

Clancy enlisted other lumbermen as investors in Alger-Sullivan: Hobart Manley of Savannah, Georgia; A. B. Carroll of Hurtsboro, Alabama; and Jim Reynolds of Grayson, Alabama. They formed the Alger-Sullivan Sawmill Company and purchased the mill property in downtown Century. They negotiated a contract with the Alger Tenants to cut the Alger timber in five years at \$40 per thousand board feet of saw timber on the stump, an unheard of price in 1957.

They all laughed, but Leon Clancy laughed last and cut over 250,000,000 board feet during his 10 years tenure. The Alger Tenants had amended the contract to lengthen the time of the cutting and to extend the life of the mill in order to permit a more reasonable, economic, and profitable cut each year.

So in 1957 there began a very happy relationship among one sawmill and 5 major industries, the Alger Tenants. The Alger Tenants obtained the valuable service of Senator Robin Swift of Atmore, Alabama, longtime successful lumberman, Alabama State Senator, and U.S. Senator (who replaced Senator Bankhead upon his death). The epitome of a gracious southern gentleman, Senator Swift supervised the cutting contract. Working with Senator Swift was Marion Leach of Century, respected southern forester and longtime Alger executive.

The original Alger mill of 1900 was built to cut the gigantic original old-growth longleaf southern pine. This manufacture required massive equipment for massive logs. By Clancy's arrival in 1957 most of this timber had been cut. It was time to renovate and modernize the plant to handle smaller logs on a high-speed basis.

Clancy brought in mechanized lumber handling vehicles to replace manual labor, adopted a package lumber system, rebuilt the dry kilns, installed a debarker and chipper, reduced the office staff, and began electrifying the actual sawmilling portion of the mill (sawmill unit) where the logs were cut into green lumber. Previously, the sawmill unit had been run by a fabulous but antique Corliss engine with a gigantic flywheel measuring 4' in width and 15 ft. in diameter. The engine utilized a leather transmission belt made of 285 cowhides, which drove massive but antiquated line shafts running the full length of the sawmill unit.

The modernization took two years to complete. On the very night the electrification of the sawmill unit was completed, careless welding burned the sawmill to the ground. It was time to start over...again. This time Clancy built smaller, high-speed steel and concrete mill to handle the smaller logs and increase productivity. Construction took about six months.

Most of the company's employees were furloughed on unemployment compensation during that time. Mac Bray, veteran sawmiller from Grayson, Alabama, was brought in to help design and build the new plant. Just as the mill was being completed, the recession of 1959 struck. So it was slow going cranking up production again. But that's "old hat" for the sawmill industry - "Feast or Famine." So Alger tightened its belt and sawed ahead...but slowly at first.

Mr. Edward A. Hauss' orders to the original company were to bring in only logs that would cut out a 12" x 12" timber 30 feet long. By 1957 those days were pretty much gone forever, but there were still lots of beautiful second-growth longleaf pine timbers to be cut. Alger was always a specialty mill because of its high-grade timber. Export construction timbers went to the Mediterranean countries and mine timbers to South Africa. Brunswick Balke Company used specially cut 5/4" x 3" pine flooring in its bowling alleys. The finest homes in Pensacola and surrounding territory came out of Alger stocks. Thousands of tons of wood chips went to St. Regis Paper Company for paper.

As time went on, Clancy added more specialty features. He added electronic gluing equipment and finger jointers. Rejects from bowling alley stock were end finger-jointed to 10' lengths and then glue laminated to make 3" x 12" X 10' heavy railroad freight car flooring which proved stronger than oak. The L & N railroad, longtime Alger friend, bought millions of board feet of this material. Other railroads did likewise. A new, modern planer mill was built to house all these functions.

Clancy next installed a Cellon wood treating plant by Koppers Company, the latest, most sophisticated, and most effective wood preserving treatment. This unique process actually used liquid butane gas under pressure to force the pentachlorophenol preservative into the wood. When the pressure was released, the gas extracted itself from the wood by vaporization, leaving only the preservative crystals inside the wood cells.

During good times, night shifts were added to keep up with the frantic production schedules of bowling alley floors and railroad flooring. Leon Clancy believed in being a good corporate citizen and contributing to the community that contributed to him and his

company. He donated land for the little league ballpark, the Century courthouse annex, and the sewer plant. For many years the company had provided water and sewer service to mill homes.

By the 1960's company towns were an anachronism, and all the company houses were sold to the employees for the tax assessor's appraised values. Vacant lots were sold for house building. Alger ran the Century Hotel for years, first overseen by Judge Earnest Mason's mother, Mrs. Sue Mason, and in the later years by Mrs. Meryle Lovett of Flomaton, Alabama.

Through good times and bad the company continued to prosper, so much so that it caught the eye of Jim Walter Corporation in Tampa, Florida, a large and diversified supplier of houses and building materials. In 1967 Jim Walter bought Alger-Sullivan Company, and a new Alger era began.

During the Clancy years the following were some of the key staff and operating personnel who helped make the operation a success:

Warren Briggs, vice-president  
Joe McNeel, finance  
Mabry Dozier, sales and marketing, replacing Edwin Bird  
Hank Wilson, forester and later general superintendent  
Sam Hamilton, yard superintendent, then planer mill superintendent, and later log purchasing agent  
E. A. Maness, Sr., logging  
E. A. "Gene" Maness, Jr., logging and later general superintendent  
Roy Myers, sawmill superintendent replacing Mr. Curenton  
Ed Levoy, head sawyer  
Louis Hudson, head sawfiler  
Aubrey Entrekin, powerplant, replacing George Thompson  
Russell Carden, yard superintendent  
Frank Hobbs, master mechanic

Jim Walter Corporation retained Clancy as president for a time. He retired in 1969, and Warren Briggs became president. Briggs retired from sawmilling in 1972, and Mabry Dozier took over as plant manager. Jim Walter had moved an extensive door manufacturing plant to Century from other parts of the country. Slowly the lumber manufacturing operation phased out and the door plant gradually became dominant. It was later sold, etc, etc, etc. Edward A. Hauss retired in 1957 and resided in Century as its distinguished senior citizen until his death in the 1960s. The ASSC carried on in the best tradition of the old lumber company which established such an enviable reputation for high quality long leaf southern pine lumber.

The next time you take a walk in the region's piney woods, take a second, close your eyes, sniff the wind and listen. Just maybe you will smell a trace of wood smoke and hear the muffled wail of a far away whistle as a log train traces the sky with a full head of steam. It's bound for glory!

**CREDITS:**

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*Photos from Jerry Fischer, Louis Zadnichek and the Alger-Sullivan Historical Society*



## END NOTES