John Leiberg on forest fires, Indian burning, old-growth forests, logging history, and reforestation of southwest Oregon,
ca. 1400 to 1899.

Edited, with commentary, by Bob Zybach.
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Part 3. Early Historical Logging Practices & Locations: 1855 to 1899

(p. 266) . . . most of the timber estimates in this report are based on butt diameters of 11 inches.

The species of trees generally sawn in this region are limited to three, viz, yellow and sugar pine and red fir. In some localities the incense cedar is sawn into shingles, but its use for that purpose is not common.

(p. 267) West of the Cascades the various oaks and madrona are preferred for fuel purposes. Little or none of the timber is cut for railroad cross-ties or for telegraph poles.

(p. 267) The total quantity of timber, with sufficient diametrical and longitudinal dimensions to make it available for sawmill purposes, growing in the region under examination was 19,981,209,200 B. M. [19 billion board feet, Scribner Scale] in the year 1899, estimated on the basis indicated above.

(p. 272) Assuming that the average age of stands of first-class mill timber is 175 years (in reality, I think it may be somewhat higher) the above computations would mean that a forest in this region left to a natural course of growth for a period of 175 years would carry the amounts specified above.

(p. 274) Under practical, close scientific management I do not doubt the producing capacity of the forest in this region would greatly exceed the figures given above.

(p. 274) To accomplish this result would merely have required a complete suppression of forest fires, for to this cause, and no other, is due the impoverishment of the present forest in this region.

(p. 276) West of the Cascades 145,460 acres have been logged; east of the Cascades 57,000 acres. These operations involve the removal of all the way from 100 per cent to culling of the sugar pine alone. The most extensive operations have been in proximity to the Rogue River Valley settlements and the placer diggings southwest of the valley in the spurs of the Siskiyou Mountains. Sawmills have been erected in many places, then pulled down and moved elsewhere. The most extensive logging operations are now carried on in **T. 40 S., Rs. 4 and 5 E.**

*[Note: This must be a typo or some other form of error. The report lists "none" for acres of "logged area" in **T. 40 S., R. 4 E**. (p. 456), although the description also include 120 million feet of yellow pine, 60 million feet of red fir, 30 million feet of sugar pine, and 2 million feet of white fir in "heavy stands" of "mill timber." (p. 457) lists 1,600 acres of "logged area" in **T. 40 S., R. 5 E.**, by contrast, and was home to Pokegama Lumber Company in the late 1890s.]*

(p. 276) The forests in the sugar pine areas of **Ts. 34, 35, 36, and 37 S., R. 3 and part of R. 2 E.**, are littered with many millions of feet of rotting sugar pine rejected by the shake maker on account of slight imperfections of grain.

Consumption of timber for fencing material is not large. On the western side of the range firewood is mostly cut from the oak copses which grow at lower and more accessible elevations than most of the coniferous species.

Owing to the intermittent nature of the smaller logging operations, it is impossible to state with any degree of certainty the yearly consumption of mill timber. The probability is that it amounts to something in the neighborhood of 100 million feet B. M. per year, including the areas east and west of the Cascades and taking into account the quantities used by shake and shingle makers. The logging operations have been confined to areas of yellow-pine and red-fir forest types.

T. 32 S., R. 3 E. (see: Old-Growth)

T. 32 S., R. 6 E. (pp. 292, 349-351)

(p. 292) Its *["white fir's"]* reproduction is generally good, but in some locations on the eastern side of the range, as **T. 32 S., R. 6 E.**, brush growths are replacing burned or partially burned stands of the white fir.

(p. 349) With the exception of a few insignificant springs *[archaeological sites?]*, the township possesses no visible stream within its boundaries.

(p. 350) At present the tract carries an open and scattered growth of yellow and lodgepole pine. There is a thin sward of grass and sedge among the trees, and the land at present is used for cattle range.

(p. 350) The forest consists of yellow-pine and alpine-hemlock types. It is fire marked throughout. Most of the old and standard growth of alpine-hemlock type has long since been burned, and reforestations, made up of lodgepole pine, white pine, and alpine hemlock, of small size and in dense, thick stands, have taken the place of the former forest. The stands of yellow-pine type have been grievously thinned by the fires, and dense masses of underbrush, composed almost exclusively of the vellum-leaved ceanothus, have occupied the place of the burned forest.

(p. 350) The only mill timber in the township of any commercial value at the present time is the yellow pine *["42 million feet"]*. It is only of medium quality, being defective from fire sears and unusually knotty in the trunk. It is easy of access, as it grows only on the lowest levels. The white fir *["10 million feet"]* is generally too knotty and short of trunk to be of any value; besides a large proportion, fully 50 per cent, is defective, owing to rot induced by fire. The logging operations *["1,000 acres (culled over)"]* have been confined to culling the sugar pine for the use of settlers in adjoining townships to the east.

T. 33 S., R. 3 E. (see: Old-Growth)

T. 34 S., R. 2 W. (pp. 372-373)

(p. 372) The region is fire marked throughout. The mill timber is scattered and of poor quality, having largely been culled *["Logged area (culled): 5,000 acres"]* during many years for domestic purposes.

T. 34 S., R. 2 E. (p. 276, 375)

T. 34 S., R. 3 E. (see: Reforestation)
T. 35 S., R. 2 E. (pp. 253, 276, 391)
T. 35 S., R. 3 E. (pp. 276, 391-392)
T. 36 S., R. 2 E. (pp. 276, 405-406)
T. 36 S., R. 3 E. (see Old-Growth)
T. 36 S., R. 6 E. (pp. 279, 411-413)
T. 36 S., R. 7 E. (pp. 279, 413-414)
T. 37 S., R. 1 W. (see: Indian Burning)
T. 37 S., R. 2 E. (pp. 276, 420-421)
T. 37 S., R. 3 E. (see: Forest Fires)

T. 37 S., R. 4 E. (p. 422 "Logged area, none." See: **Forest Fires.*)***

T. 37 S., R. 6 E. (see: Forest Fires)
T. 37 S., R. 7 E. (see: Forest Fires)

"Forested area, 20, 040 acres. Nonforested area (naturally nonforested), 3,000 acres. Badly burned area, 2, 600 acres.Logged area, 800 acres."

T. 37 S., R. 3 E. (pp. 276, 421-422)

"Forested area 19, 540 acres. Nonforested area (rocky glades and agricultural), 3, 500 acres. Badly burned area, 800 acres. Logged area (culled 25 per cent) 1,500 acres."

T. 37 S., R. 4 E. (p. 422 "Logged area, none." See: Historic Fires.)

T. 38 S., R. 3 E. (see: Reforestation)
T. 39 S., R. 2 W. (p. 442)
T. 39 S., R. 1 W. (p. 443)
T. 40 S., R. 2 W. (see: Reforestation)
T. 40 S., R. 1 E. (see: Forest Fires)
T. 40 S., R. 2 E. (see: Forest Fires)
T. 40 S., R. 4 E. (see: Reforestation)

T. 40 S., R. 5 E. (pp. 457-458)

(p. 457) It bears a forest of noble proportions, ideally situated for lumbering operations. The most valuable components of the forest here are yellow and sugar pine. The growth of these two species is symmetrical and large, the sugar pine reaching basal diameters of 9 feet, and the yellow pine of 5 to 6 feet, with clear trunks 30 to 65 feet in length.

(p. 457) Fires have run through this stand of timber very many times, and there are not many trees not fire seared. The greatest damage has been done to the firs, both red and white, which therefore are largely defective and are not much cut for lumber. The young growth has also been destroyed, and reproduction is therefore defective.

(p. 457) The Pokegama Lumber Company operates here, sending the logs to their mills at Klamathon, on the southern Pacific Railroad, by way of the Klamath River. They cut pine exclusively, and cut all pine clean a they go, leaving great accumulations of debris behind them for future fires. They take all trees far into the crown, trimming off the limbs and making the last cut on a basis of 7 to 8 inches in diameter at the small end. In consequence they realize about 40 per cent higher yield than the customary cruisers' estimates provide for.

T. 40 S., R. 6 E. (p. 458)

(p. 458) The canyon of the Klamath River cuts the eastern portion of the township in two. It is a rocky and precipitous gorge, the slopes and bottom timbered with scattered trees and the forest along the north bluff badly burned.

(p. 458) East of the river we have heavy stands of yellow pine *["165 million feet"]*, logged in places *["1,800 acres"]* by small concerns.

T. 40 S., R. 7 E. (see: Old-Growth)

T. 41 S., R. 1 E. (see: Old-Growth)

T. 41 S., R. 5 E. (pp. 284, 467-468)

(p. 467) The region is well timbered with a massive, though open, forest. The pine is of excellent quality, long bodied, and composed mostly of large standards. Undergrowth is scanty and young growth deficient, owing to frequently repeated fires. The Pokegama Lumber Company has here extensive logging camps *["Logged area (culled 80 per cent): 2,000 acres"]*.

T. 41 S., R. 6 E. (see: Forest Fires)