

April 7, 1960  
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## \$500,000 Timber Mill Scheduled for Lapoint

A TOTAL investment of \$500,000 has been scheduled by Great Lake Timber Co. in Lapoint and the plant is expected to be in full operation by July.

This was disclosed by Bill Sweeney, vice president and manager of the timber firm, Tuesday at Vernal Chamber of Commerce board of directors meeting.

Mr. Sweeney forecast that Lapoint would be the timber capital of the Uintah Basin. He said that the firm's timber purchases on Mosby Mountain comprised the second largest timber sale in the history of Utah.

THE FIRM will specialize in "industrial timber," he pointed out. He said that the company was not here to squeeze anyone out but would be in competition.

Former location of the firm was in Keetley, Wasatch County. He said that the company had started establishing itself in Lapoint, March 28 and already was employing 15 men. Erection of the first prefabricated building was started Tuesday and the building program is scheduled for completion by June 1.

Mr. Sweeney said that \$125,000 will be invested in new equipment alone and other used machinery will be operated in addition to that, for a total investment of \$500,000. He paid tribute to Karl (Duff) Swain, local contractor, for the progress he was making.

IN ANSWER to questions from Chamber members Mr. Sweeney replied that an all-electric mill will produce 30,000 feet of timber per day on an eight-hour shift. A power line will be built from Nebekers Store in Ft. Duchene to the plant by Utah Power and Light Co. and the power is expected to be available by May 1.

About 75 to 100 men are expected to be employed when the plant is in full production during the summer months. About 35 men will have year-around employment, he said.

Mr. Sweeney pointed out that the activity was a "high-labor" operation which meant that it would employ a lot of manpower. Total payroll is expected to reach \$300,000 annually.

He also said that in addition to this the area would feel the benefit of the firm's purchases of spare parts for machinery and they would use about 100,000 gallons of fuel per year. Taxes paid to the county were expected to be about \$20,000 yearly.

THE EXECUTIVE said that Great Lake Timber Co. was the largest industrial timber producer in the U.S. He cited the need for the improvement of county roads in the Lapoint area. He said that the firm will be building roads into scenic areas which could be enjoyed by the public.

Mr. Sweeney disclosed that he is a representative of Utah timber industries on the State Chamber of Commerce.

He said that his firm was the primary source of ties for Denver and Rio Grande Railroad and it also manufactured yearly seven million feet of saw timber, poles and fence posts.

He warned that timber deteriorates at the rate of 4 1/4% per year. He expected that there would be 3,000 to 5,000 more visitors to Paradise Park this year than last, which is the area of the timber sale.

COMMISSIONER Orville Swain said that the county was working on the roads in the Lapoint area. He cited a Vernal Express editorial which had said that Lapoint needed an industry and this appeared to be the fulfillment of this need, he said.

Paul M. Armstrong, vice president of the Chamber, said that nearly \$10,000 had been collected in dues, the highest ever. He said that the Chamber presently had a balance of \$2,015.36 despite starting the year with a \$727 deficit.

may 6, 1983

# Great Lakes Timber Company

## is a custom saw mill... for now

Bill Sweeney has been in the lumber business since 1929. His family has been in the business since 1913. His father started the business which is now Great Lakes Timber Company owned and operated by Bill Sweeney.

Great Lakes Timber Company is located near Lapoint, at least for the time being. Sweeney is afraid the timber business will not exist for long in this area.

### Industry Problems

Besides the poor economy, several other factors enter into the problem of continued timber industry. The recent mud slide which created Thistle Lake has hurt more industries than might be imagined. Sweeney said his company supplies a great deal of lumber to the coal mines in Carbon and Emery Counties. Since the mud slide covered the railroads tracks which carries the coal to market, the coal mines have shut down. They no longer need the lumber being supplied by Great Lakes Timber.

That one factor would not do sufficient damage to the company, but when combined with two other factors, mountain pines beetles, and proposed primitive areas, the results could be devastating.

The mountain pine beetle has been increasing in tremendous numbers over the past several years. In 1980 it was estimated 65,000 trees were killed by the beetles. In 1981 the estimate was 350,000. In 1982 it grew to 1,000,000.

is, for power poles. After cutting, it takes about one year for the pole to sufficiently dry. It must have not more than 19 percent moisture content before it is used. The pole is then run through a saw that strips the bark. It is then examined by hand and any spots missed by the stripper are taken off with hand tools. A treating process is then implemented to cure the pole and keep it from rotting once it is placed in the ground. The sawdust from this process is bagged and used in the oilfields.

Poles not suitable for use as power poles are loaded in what is called the bucking chute. This is the beginning of processing all poles. They are cut to length and sent to the appropriate finishing area.

The cut poles then make their way to the saws. The operator quickly makes a decision as to what each log will be used for. That determination is made by what the log will yield. Every possible piece of each log is used. One log may yield a railroad tie, 2 x 4's, and smaller pieces of building lumber. Another log may not be big enough for a railroad tie, so 2 x 6's are made, plus smaller items. The very little pieces of scrap that cannot be used for anything are burned in very hot stoves to eliminate nearly all pollution. Sweeney said almost everything that comes out of the chimney is steam.

Great Lakes Timber is a custom saw mill. With piles of poles on reserve at all times, they can make what anyone

### Future

Sweeney said this past year has been hard on the lumber industry, as it has been on so many industries. Great Lakes has had layoffs for one of the few times in their existence. They currently have about 25 employees who work full time. They usually increase their workforce in the summer, during timber cutting, to between 75 and 90. Sweeney said this year their workforce will only be about 50.

Great Lakes Timber currently has a good stock of raw timber, and with what they will be able to get this summer, there is no immediate danger to the business, but Sweeney said this may not last too many more years.

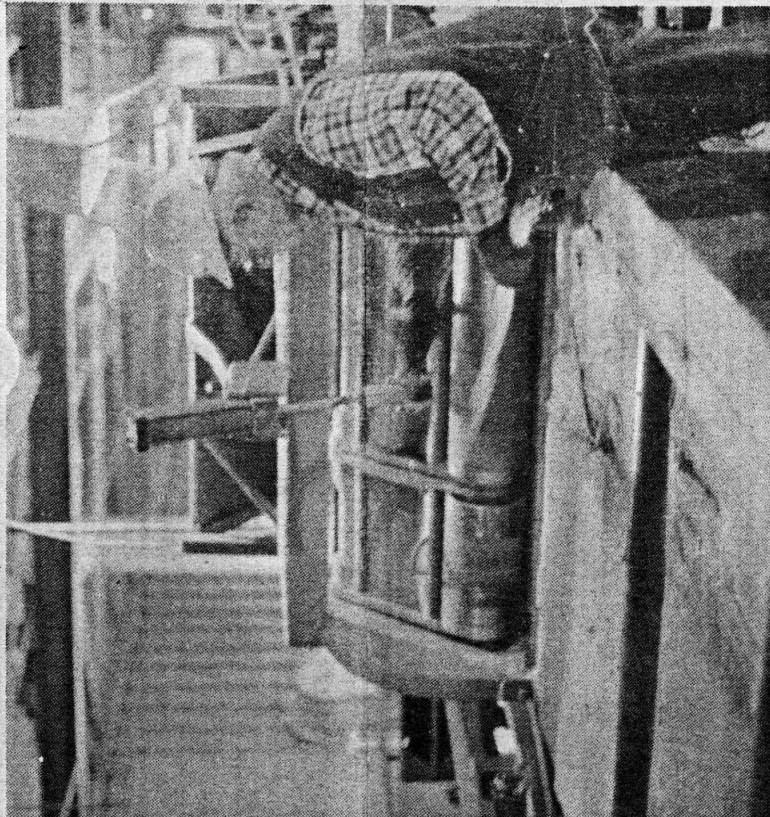
Sweeney said he is really not worried about himself, even if the lumber industry could not continue to exist in this area, but he is concerned for his employees. He said he currently has employees who have been with the company for 20 years. He is currently fighting for the lumber industry by trying to get Congress to make some decisions about final wilderness area designations, and to get the remainder of the area released for multiple-use.

He said, contrary to what environmentalists would have people believe, lumber people don't want to destroy the forests, but they do want to use the forests to supply people with the wood products they need and want.

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mill. With piles of poles on reserve at all times, they can make what anyone wants on very short notice. Sweeney said many times you don't know what you're going to be doing from day to day. He said they usually try to keep most products in stock in sufficient quantities, but if they run low, it doesn't take long to catch up with demand.

"After all, who owns the forests? The environmentalists don't own them. The lumber companies don't own them. The people own them, and they should derive the benefits from them," he said.



BILL SWEENEY inspects one of the smaller saws. Bill has been in the lumber business since 1929. He is, for the first time, now fearful for the lumber industry in Northeastern Utah.

ed by the beetles. In 1981 the estimate was 350,000. In 1982 it grew to 1,000,000 and lumber industry projections for 1983 are about 3,000,000, destroyed trees.

The pine beetle is destroying much of the available prime timber areas, according to Sweeney. He said you can't use infested trees for many necessary lumber products, therefore green timber is necessary. That green timber is becoming harder and harder to get to, making the business continually less profitable.

Another problem is the proposed wilderness area, now under study. During the study, none of the land involved can be used for timber cutting, or any other industry related purpose. Sweeney said this in effect makes the area a wilderness area, even though Congress has not yet designated it as such. The lack of any action basically does the same thing as a decree. Right now environmental groups are attempting to get the study area increased in size. Part of the new area includes the Thornburg Timber Sale area, which was expected to take place this spring. That decision has now been put off in case the area is included in the wilderness study area. Sweeney said the end result of all this is lack of suitable timber which allowed for commercial use.

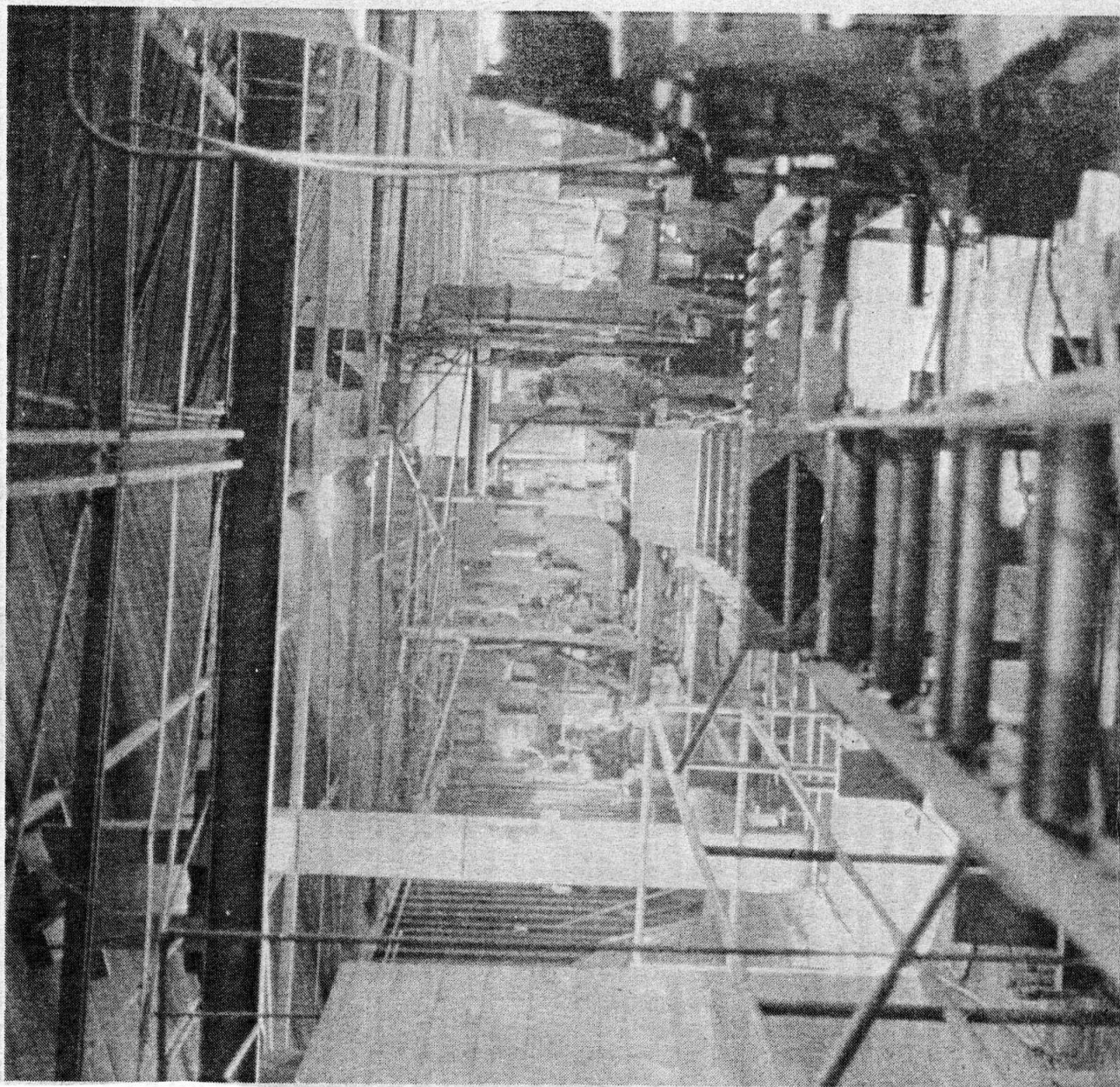
#### Products

Great Lake Timber Company produces about every conceivable lumber product which can come from a pine tree. Each tree is evaluated for what it will best be suited to produce. Some will be stripped and used, much as it



Max 6/1983

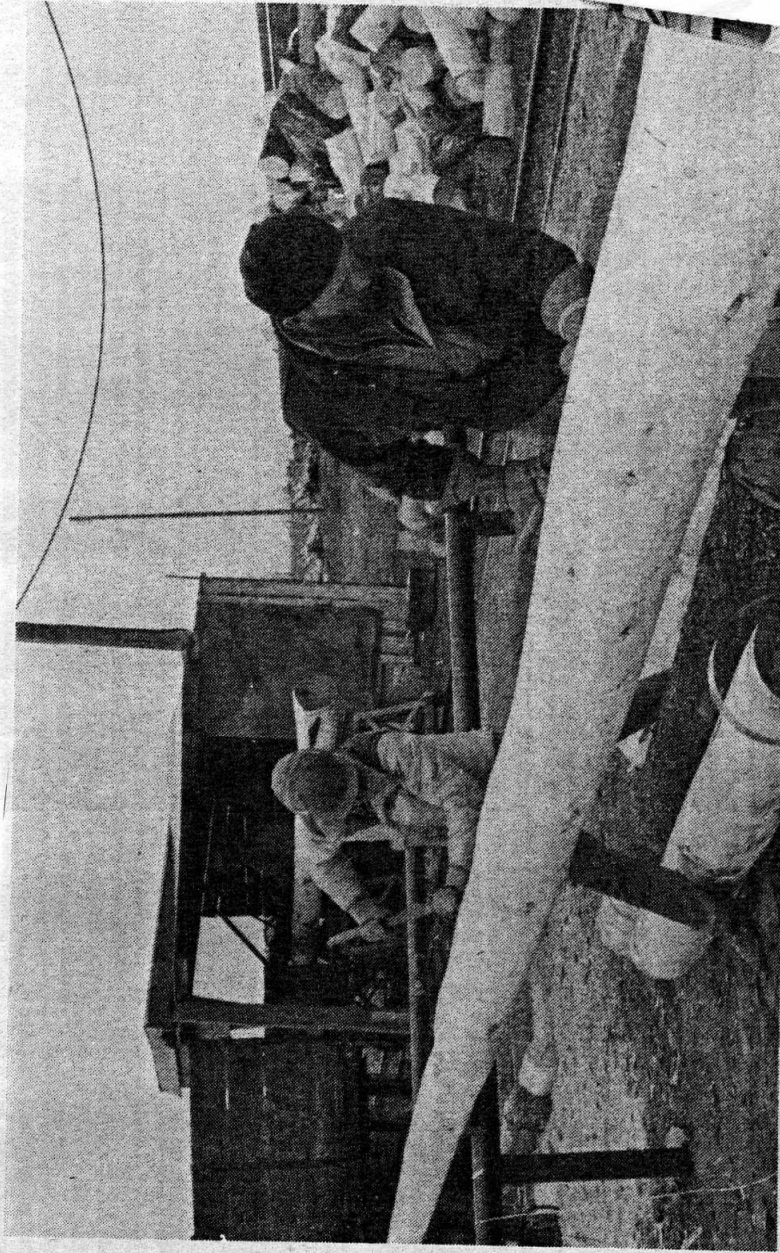
# Fred Business





ONE TREE, which is cut on the mountain, will eventually become many wood products. A series of saws allows a continuous process. No pole must be

backtracked along the production line. Each pole is quickly evaluated to determine what it can best be used for, and moments later has been cut and stacked.



GREAT LAKES TIMBER employees put the final touches on what will become power poles. Most of the bark is removed by an intricate saw as the pole rotates.

Poles must be cut and stored for a year before they are dry enough to be treated and sold. Power poles are among many wood products produced at Great Lakes.



Jan 11, 1968

VE

# Lapoint Sawmill Damaged In Friday Evening Blaze

Two days after a ravaging fire struck the Great Lake Timber Company one mile west of Lapoint, it was very nearly "business as usual" for the firm, a major west-side industry.

Fire of undetermined beginnings destroyed equipment and buildings valued by owner W. E. "Bill" Sweeney of Vernal at \$100,000 to \$150,000.

Lost were the repair shop and office building, two Michigan loaders and a crawler tractor. Office equipment and most of the current books and records were also destroyed, along with the mill's supply of checks.

## SAWMILL ESCAPES

The sawmill portion of the complex was undamaged. Office equipment loaned by Vernal businessmen and makeshift offices set up in Mr. Sweeney's mill-site apartment allowed the firm to be back in business

Monday. Vernal volunteer firemen rushed to the mill Friday evening with Vernal City's largest fire-fighting unit. They struggled to pull equipment from the burning shop and prevented flames from spreading until shortly after 1 a.m. when the fire was put under control. A unit from the Roosevelt fire department was also on the scene where bitter below-zero cold made fire-fighting difficult, freezing one of the Roosevelt engine's hoses and breaking a valve on the Vernal pumper.

## CREWS REBUILDING

The next day crews began putting the mill back into working order.

A temporary shop is being erected of lumber, and new shops and an office building will be built when weather permits, Mr. Sweeney reported.

The damaged timber loaders and crawler tractor were taken to Salt Lake City Sunday to determine if any were salvageable. A used loader was brought back to continue mill operations.

Three safes containing past records were found intact among the rubble of the destroyed office, and when they had cooled enough to be opened the records were found intact.

Auditors from Salt Lake City arrived at the mill Monday to begin piecing together and straightening out the firm's accounts. Mr. Sweeney had earlier announced that everyone to whom the firm was indebted would be promptly paid upon contacting the company with new statements.

## GUESSES ELECTRIC FAILURE

An electrical failure might

have been responsible for the fire, Mr. Sweeney said, discounting a possibility of it starting in the furnace area.

Firemen pulled a crawler tractor, one loader and an electric motor from the burning shed but not before all were damaged by the flames. A water hydrant some 700 feet from the mill was used to alternately re-fill the Vernal and Roosevelt pumping trucks as the men streamed thousands of gallons into the burning buildings. No injuries were reported during the evening, other than discomfort to the men from the sub-zero cold and freezing water.

Vernal firemen answering the call included Coke Jeffries, Mel Burke, Floyd Workman, Gene Wise, Duane Paulson, Wes Robbins, June Hacking, Bob Bath, Clyde Watkins and Darrell Wardle.

See Oct 27, 1982 YE

# Timber—The Great Lakes operation

Great Lake Timber Company was formed in 1929, basically to provide Utah Power and Light with power poles. Today the company not only provides power and telephone poles to various companies, they provide rough industrial lumber to mines, steel factories and oil fields, throughout Utah and neighboring states.

Owner Bill Sweeney described his company as changing very rapidly in the past few years. Not only has the economy pinched off many of his customers he has watched the government tighten up their controls on the timber and have raised maintenance costs to the point they are hurting timber companies.

Because of the quality of wood found on the Uinta's, Great Lake Timber has to deal with rough industrial wood products. They are able to cut lengths and thicknesses of boards to most any size desired by their customers.

On an average year five to six million board feet of lumber is brought into their stock yard. This is gathered in the summer months when the mountains are accessible. This year about three million board feet was hauled in. From the stock yard the timber is placed on the bucking chute where the shorter or undesirable

wood is separated from the timber used for cutting.

There is a second stockyard, where this wood is stored, that is sold to wood cutting companies in Salt Lake. Great Lake does not sell this lumber locally.

From the bucking chutes the wood is taken to the mill where it will be cut into the best lengths and thicknesses possible. The head sawman decides on how to trim and cut the logs to have maximum board feet produced.

"It costs the company about \$50,000 to train a head sawer," explained Sweeney. He said it takes a real art to cut the logs to retain the most amount of wood. Danny Iorg, Ft. Duchesne, is working as the head sawer now.

The logs are then transferred to gang edgers by conveyor where the edges are trimmed and smoothed. From there it is to the double blade trimmer that sets up automatically any

lengths from 6 to 20 feet. The lumber is stacked outside the saw mill building on pallets, banded and then hopefully sold to customers.

Saw blades are being sharpened continually. They are changed twice a day at 10 a.m. and at 3 p.m.

Sweeney explained that in years past he always tried to have the finished products sold before they were cut but, "right now we have 10,000 coal mine props on order but our customers are shutting down so fast we don't know what's going on."

Also planks as big as 12' by 12' are also made for mines or oil producing companies. Poles are stripped and treated across the street from the mill. The poles are dried and creosote replaces the moisture one inch deep. Mill work needs to be considered, especially if school day and year are length-

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A problem that now faces Great Lake Timber is that of bug infestation in the timber on the local mountains. "The majority of our timber will be gone in five to ten years," he stated. He also addressed another problem of harvesting timber and being able to do so economically.

He explained three ways of harvesting the forests: 1) Timber operators such as himself, 2) disease and 3) fire. "If the Forest Service wants Timber operators as a tool, they are going to have to make it economically feasible to harvest the wood," he said.

"They are adding on costs which with these economic conditions is putting the timber businesses out of business," he continued.



A SAW MILL—This is where the cutting takes place as the logs first enter the mill. This is the critical spot for cutting the maximum use out of the logs. It costs about \$50,000 to train a good head sawer.