



Mining the Forest

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Role of Timber in Silver Mines

- Bracing using the Deidesheimer systems of timber frames
- Informal bracing



Role of Timber in Silver Mines

- Shapes: road-wood or milled
 - Shaped and sized in the mill, but general size was established by the time it was in the mine
 - Round wood was used for upright prop if not part of a Deidesheimer frame
- Sizes of Timbers
 - Large diameter for bracing ceiling, smaller for lateral (easier to move and position), called lagging
 - Studding as large prop
- Type of timber
 - Ponderosa pine for large props, preferred trees 50- 120 years old, 10-20 inch diameter, cut into 16-18 ft in length.

Geometry of the Mines

Unbelievably
big, deep and
long

The Comstock
vein went for
7 miles



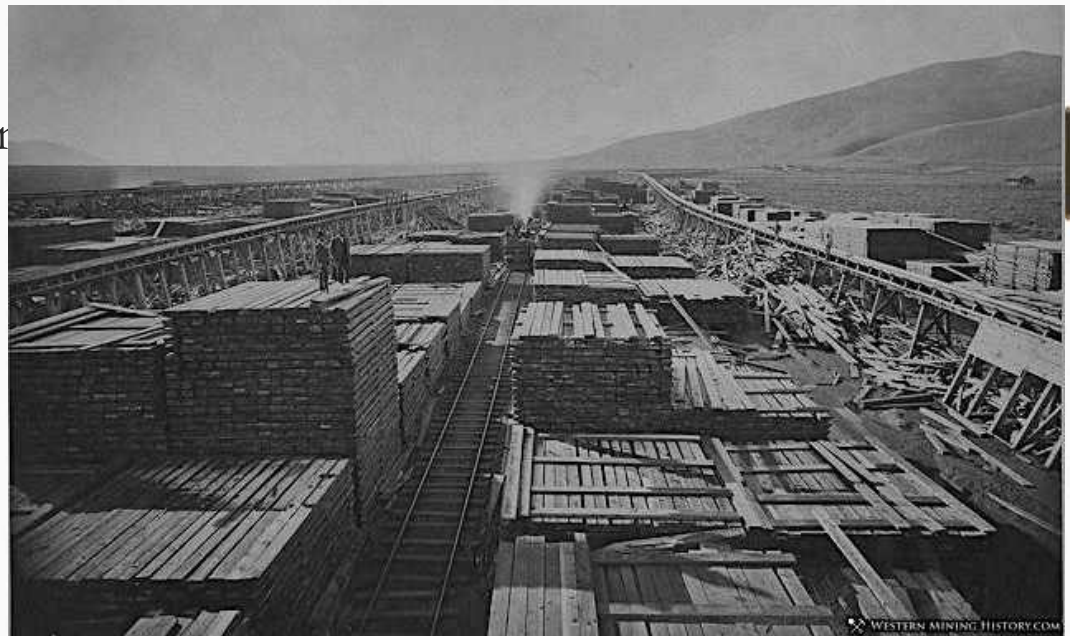
Need for Wood Outside the Mine

- Steam power
 - Rail engines
 - Steam donkeys - to move logs
 - Steam engines to crush ore
 - Steam engines to run sawmills
- Heating
- Housing



Volume of Wood Produced

- In 1876 alone:
 - 71.6 million board feet of lumber
 - 212,000 cords of firewood





Who's Forest?



All this happened before there was a US Forest Service, or other acknowledged federal landownership.



Like mining, you 'laid claim' to a section of land and would own its timber.



No regulations of any sort



Example: Mark Twain's story in 'Roughing it'.

The Forest at the Time of Henry Rice

- Species and distribution
 - Juniper
 - Pine
 - Hardwoods
- Size classes, age slash distribution
- Formed because of past disturbances
parenthesis use of indigenous burning
parenthesis
- Examination of fire history via fire-scarred tree rings



The Process of Getting the Timber

- Sawyers cut, horses and steam donkey skid logs to mill
- Mills are up to 10 miles away, but closer
- Let logs lie for a bit to dry, and reduce the weight
- Burned afterward to dispose of debris

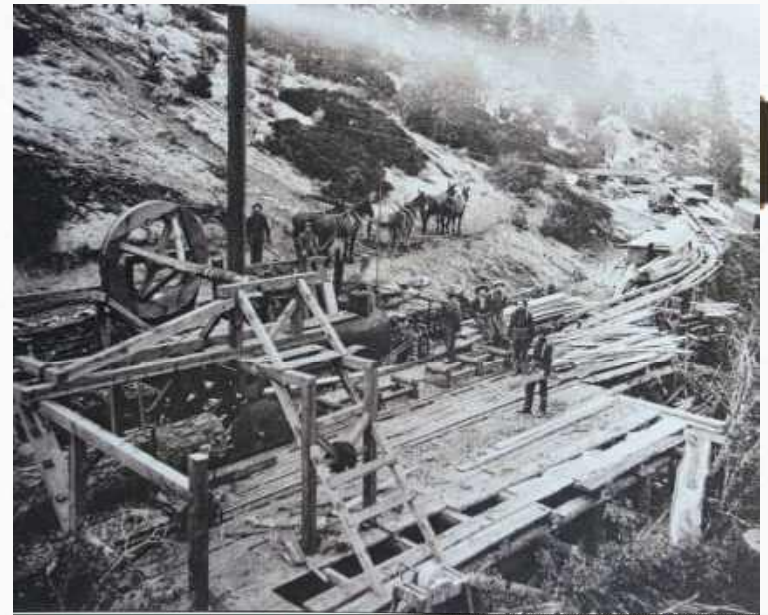
Getting Logs to the Mill

- Donkeys of one sort or another



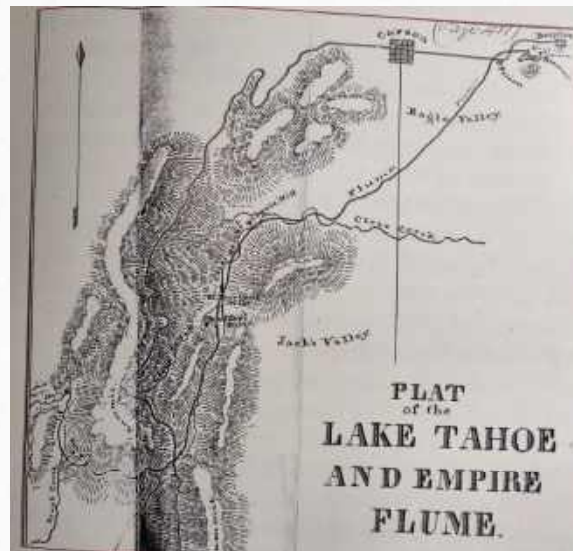
Milling the Wood

- 29 mills in Washoe Valley
- Mills were small
- Ceased operations when nearby forest was cut

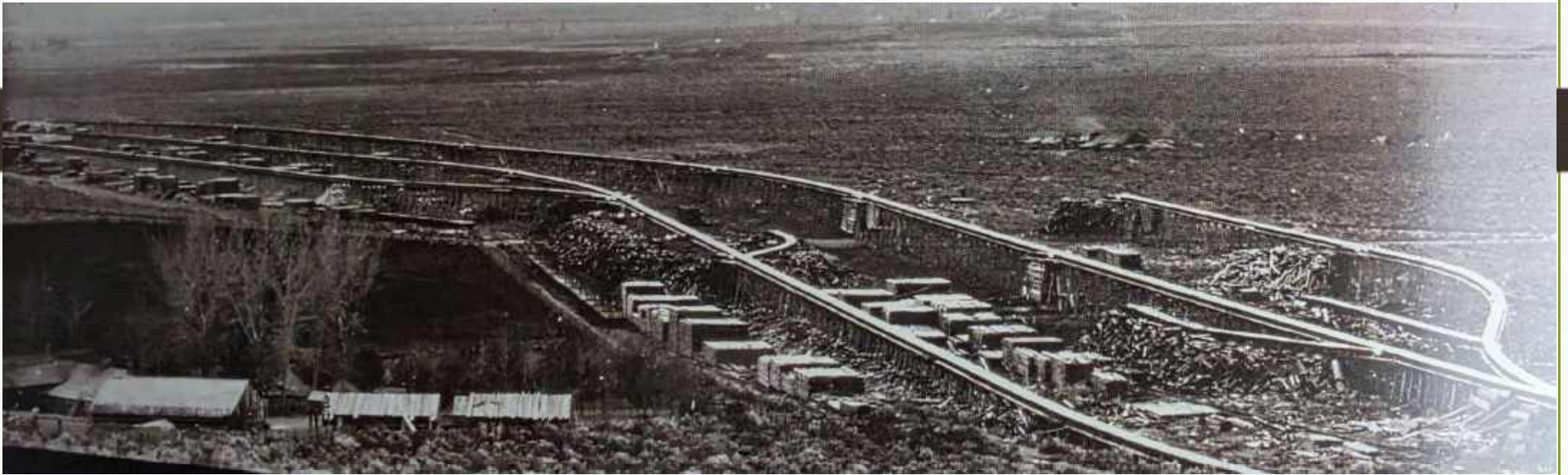


From Mill to Market

- Vast network of flumes
- Two types of flumes
 - V flume
 - Box flume



Mills to Market





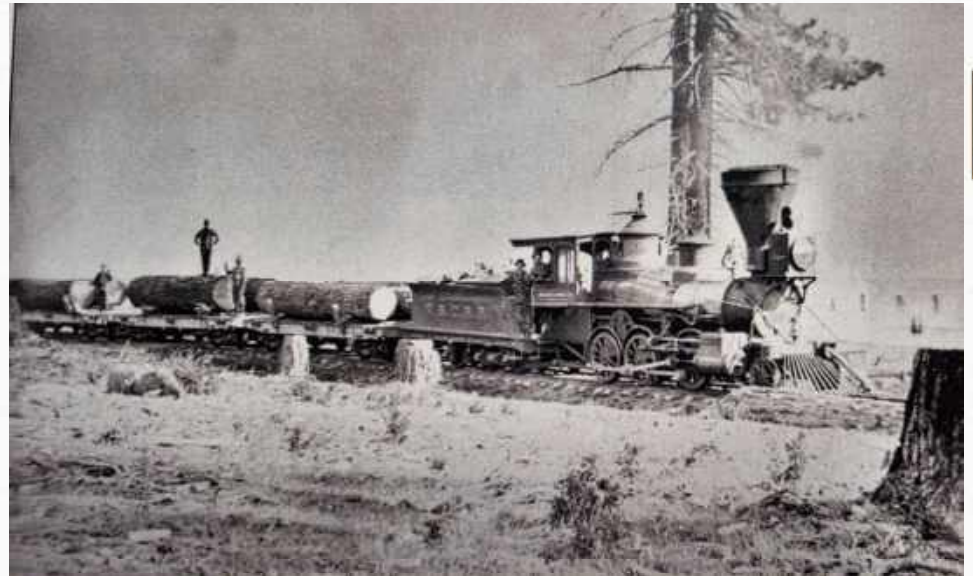
From Mill to Market

- Railcar (most common)
- Floating across lakes
- Using rivers as flumes



Consequences of Mining the Forest

- Even aged, younger
- Changed in species composition
- Uniformity across the landscape
- Pretty thorough disturbance
- Removal of tribal influence
- Artifacts, remnant forests



Unintended consequences

- Fires were rampant, burning debris
- Removal of seed source for next generation of trees
- Soil erosion from 'skidding' log to flumes or mill

Managing the Forests Now

- Recreating the diversity of the forest
 - Size class distribution
 - Reducing density
 - Spatial heterogeneity (clumpy gappy through variable density thinning)
 - Prescribed burning
- Tribal co-management
- Done via funding, and infrastructure development (an echo of Yerington)

Thanks!

