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Foresters delve into lumbering history

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FORESTERS DELVE INTO
LUMBERING HISTORY

Two retired foresters in Missoula are looking for help in their efforts to fill some gaps in Montana's historical archives.

Clarence Strong and C. S. Webb will soon begin research on the development of commercial lumbering in the Treasure State and are seeking people with information on the industry in early Montana.

For the past several years Strong and Webb have been studying the development of mills in the Idaho Panhandle. Neither the planned Montana project nor the nearly-completed Idaho research is receiving financial support.

Dr. K. Ross Toole, University of Montana Hammond professor of western history, said the logging history researchers will donate their document discoveries to the UM historical collection. He explained during the research period he will accept documents for Strong and Webb or will have the material microfilmed if the donor wishes to retain possession of the documents.

Information or pictures may be sent to Dr. Toole at the University of Montana, Missoula.

According to Strong, the rich timber lands of Western Montana have been, for more than a century, not only a prime source of revenue but also the scene of a colorful and exciting industry.

The first mechanically-powered sawmill in the area was established in 1844 at St. Mary's Mission near what is now Stevensville.

Jesuit missionaries under Father Ravalli supervised the construction of the water-powered circular mill. The saw was hammered from a large wagon wheel tire and hardened and toothed by one of the skilled blacksmiths of that pioneer period.

(MORE)
Commercial lumbering in the northwest came into its own as an industry in the 1860's and since then many saw and shingle mills have flourished and decayed in Western Montana.

The material making up the Idaho study has come from a laborious search of records and many interviews. The researchers hope the material for the Montana history will be easier to find.

They are seeking persons who have information concerning mills in Western Montana, particularly those which flourished between 1860 and 1925.

In particular, they seek information concerning locations, periods of operation, equipment, material and volume, identity of owners and operators, unusual methods, mill fires and capacity and type power used in the mills.

Clear pictures of old plants and early methods of moving logs or information as to where pictures may be obtained are also being sought.