

Anthony J. Dwyer, Sr.

1862-1939

Anthony J. Dwyer, Sr., was an Oregon lumberman in the best traditions of the West. His career (1862-1939) spanned forest operations in Northern Minnesota, Southwestern Washington and Northwestern Oregon.

He staked muscle, know-how and perseverance against natural obstacles and economic hazards to build a lumber operation of substantial importance. Of 11 large sawmills in the Portland area, the Dwyer Lumber & Plywood Company remained in 1973, the long survivor.

In these operations Mr. Dwyer believed that he was not only harvesting a natural resource but that he was helping to build a region by supplying needed basic material. An outstanding feature of his career was his desire for full utilization of the tree and the protection of the forest.

He long advocated improved methods of logging, many of them now widely accepted sustained yield practices. A dramatic example of his concern for the public interest was his voluntary action in the 1930s to preserve a tree-lined parkway alongside the Mt. Hood Loop Highway, three miles above Brightwood. Mr. Dwyer had purchased timber on both sides of the right-of-way from the Oregon and California holdings. In the course of logging the timber, however, he decided that a buffer zone of trees should remain along the roadway to preserve the pleasant public vista. He left standing some 3,000,000 board feet of timber, representing a considerable contribution in a period of depression.

Subsequently, the Bureau of Land Management recognized this gift by designating the zone as the "A.J. Dwyer Memorial Roadside Preservation Area."

Complete utilization of all lumber scraps, wood chips and sawdust has been carried on at the Dwyer Mill since it began in 1924. No burner was ever operated. The company is the original manufacturer of Barkdust for use as garden mulch.

Anthony J. Dwyer, Sr., was born January 27, 1862, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the son of John Dwyer and Bridget Ryan Dwyer who came to America from Ireland in a sailing vessel in 1846, then to Minnesota in an ox-drawn covered wagon. Young Dwyer attended Immaculate Conception School in Minneapolis and at the age of 17 began working in the Camp & Walker sawmill in Minneapolis, straightening out lumber on the rolls. He left Minneapolis three years later to take a job running a trimsaw at Knox's mill in Aitkin.

In 1884, at the age of 22, he bought three 40-acre tracts of timber from the State and began logging on his own, driving a team of six oxen. From 1884 to 1906 he logged with oxen, horses and sleighs along the Mississippi and in the vicinity of Hibbing, Prairie River and Red Lake, driving the logs down the Mississippi to Minneapolis. The Indians would river drive for him when he was logging on the Red Lake Indian Reservation.

In 1906 he decided to try his fortunes in the Douglas fir forests of the West. He began logging on the Coweeman River

near Kelso in the State of Washington. In 1910 he opened his first logging operation in Oregon, on the Portland Electric Power Co. railroad at Siefer Station near Boring in Clackamas County. He later contracted the logging of the backwater area of the P.E.P. dam at River Mill near Estacada when that dam was under construction. In 1915 he acquired the Rupp timber at Deep Creek and continued logging in this vicinity until he sold out to the Bear Creek Logging Co. in the fall of 1923.

It was the same year that Dwyer built the Southeast Portland Lumber Company mill, 10 miles southeast of Portland city center on the site of the old Rice-Kinder mill (burned in 1918). This mill was to be modernized by his children and renamed the Dwyer Lumber & Plywood Company.

The Southeast Portland Lumber Co. opened its own logging operations in 1931, cutting government and private

timber near Brightwood and Zigzag. In 1934 the company bought back the remaining timber of the Bear Creek Logging Company and continued there and on the Foss tract near Cochran in Washington County. In 1942 it moved into tracts purchased in the Mt. Hood National Forest.

First married in 1886, Mr. Dwyer had four daughters, Mary, Nellie, Margaret and Alice. Widowed in July of 1899, he later married Katherine McCarthy, a schoolteacher from Newmarket, Cork County, Ireland. They had five children, Anthony Jr., Edwin, Robert, Rosemary Dwyer Frey and Ann Dwyer McDougall, all of whom were active in the business.

Mr. Dwyer passed away on June 23, 1939. The mill employees sent flowers to his grave on Memorial Day for ten years after his death.