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Spring 2013



LITTLE HOUSES IN THE PINEY WOODS

'Timbertown' sawmill house ready for visitors

Unlike lumberjacks in the Great Lakes states who lived in men-only camps, Texas loggers lived with their families in towns built around the sawmills. With a few notable exceptions, East Texas lumbermen who built company towns did not aim to build long-term, permanent communities. Most owners, guided by their accountants, calculated when the timber in a particular area would be exhausted, and planned the lifespan of the logging camps, sawmills and towns accordingly.¹

While the quality of company-built housing varied among owners, one thing appears to have been consistent: a man's job determined the size and amenities of the house he and his family lived in.² At the Pickering mill at Haslam in Shelby County, for example, six or eight large houses were reserved for company managers. White mill workers at Haslam occupied four-room houses, while the houses of African-American workers had two or three rooms and were



The Timbertown Sawmill Worker's House is a new exhibit that demonstrates what a typical company house might have looked like a century ago. The house is completely hands-on and furnished with clothes, dishes and other objects for children to play with and learn about daily life in a typical sawmill community.



Kids can try on period-style clothing in the new Timbertown exhibit.

“less well built” than those of the white workers. The company also provided a number of one-room “shacks.”³

Mill workers' houses were typically box-shaped and unpainted, with porches on the front and back, and

either shingle or galvanized iron roofs. Water was usually supplied by wells (if residents wanted it piped inside, they could install the system themselves), and, before electricity,

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Preserving the legacy of the people, places and products of the forests of east Texas.



VOLUNTEER FOCUS

Annual 'thank you' luncheon to honor volunteers in April

On April 25th, Forestry Museum Board Members and staff will welcome volunteers to our annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon at Ralph & Kacoo's in Lufkin.

Without our wonderful cast of volunteers, the future of the Texas Forestry Museum would be very much in peril. That's why, every year, the Museum takes the time to thank our volunteers with a terrific lunch and award ceremony.

The luncheon award

ceremony consists of three awards: Volunteer with the Most Hours, Volunteer of the Year and a special award to thank an individual or organization for their overwhelming contribution in the past year.

Invites go out soon, so if you're a Museum volunteer, remember to RSVP as soon as you can. You can RSVP by calling the Museum at (936) 632-9535 or by sending an RSVP email to dyoung@treetexas.com. ▲

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UPCOMING EVENTS

April 27

8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Historic Sites Tour

Travel to historic sawmills in the east Texas area

May 11

6 p.m. - 11 p.m.

Jump, Jive & Wail!

Join us for a 1940s-style Hanger dance at the Winston Hangar, Angelina County Airport

May 23

4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Wet 'n' Wild

Whistle Time

Kids' Club members are invited to wash the Museum's train

June 3, 4, 6, 7

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

EEK! Week

(Environmental Education Kamp)

Day camp for kids entering 5th, 6th or 7th grade in the fall

July 8, 9, 11, 12

10 a.m. - Noon

Timber Tots

Day camp for kids ages 3 - Kindergarten

July 22, 23, 25, 26

9 a.m. - Noon

Summer Sylvans

Day camp for kids entering 1st - 4th grades in the fall

COMPANY STORE

Folk toys, trains never out of style

With the opening of our newest children's exhibits, Timbertown and Timbertown Sawmill Worker's House, the museum gift shop is anticipating an increased interest in nostalgic toys and trains.

American-made folk toys similar to the ones children would have played with in the early days of the east Texas timber boom such as wooden tops, quoits, cup and ball and nine pins are all part of the selection in the gift shop. You can even purchase a kit to make your own corn shuck doll! In the early days, these types of toys would have been

.....
The gift shop now carries a variety of American-made folk toys similar to the ones children would have played with in the early days of the East Texas timber boom.
.....

handmade by family members.

We also have a variety of train items to remember your visit to the Timbertown train exhibit. You will find everything from engineer caps to wooden train kits. ▲

TOWN,
from page 1

kerosene lamps provided light. Wood scraps from the mill fueled stoves for cooking and heating. Sanitary facilities were primitive.⁴ Pearl Havard described Southern Pine Lumber Company workers' houses in Diboll, around 1920. The homes of people "who ran the office" were painted, but other homes were not. The homes had electric lights, powered by the sawmill, but no running water. "You could see all the outdoor toilets," she said, but Diboll was clean and "just like anywhere else."⁵ Fostoria, in Liberty County, with its painted houses neatly laid out in squares, was perhaps the "cleanest and nicest mill town in Texas."⁶ Other company towns were not so well regarded. A lifelong resident of Pollok in Angelina County described houses at the Bodan Lumber Company as "little more than shacks." The "good houses" were occupied by the mill superintendent and foreman.⁷ Muckraking journalist George Creel noted the "gray, dingy boxes ranged row by row" in Kirbyville.⁸

Sawmill town residents shopped at the company store, but many also raised vegetable gardens, kept cows and chickens, and hunted and fished to supplement the family's diet. Women cooked and kept the house. Children helped

with all these activities, and many East Texans who grew up in sawmill towns recall hauling water on laundry day and bringing wood to keep the fire going under the washtubs.⁹

A new exhibit at the Museum, "Timbertown Sawmill Worker's House," is now open, and it illustrates what a typical company house might have looked like 100 years ago. The house is completely "hands-on," and is furnished with clothing, dishes, toys, and other objects that children can try on and play with.

Near the house is "Timbertown Trains," another interactive children's exhibit featuring toy trains that carry logs from woods to sawmill to town. Thanks to Lufkin Kiwanis Club, Lufkin Junior League, and Angelina Rotary Club for their generous grants that made these exhibits possible.

Bring your children to the Museum, and while they play with the Timbertown trains and pretend to scrub clothes in the washtub on the porch of the Timbertown house, encourage them to close their eyes and listen for the chug of a steam locomotive and the wail of its whistle, as the evening train brings the tired loggers home from the woods. ▲



ABOVE and BELOW: Kids of all ages will enjoy the Timbertown train exhibit, featuring toy trains that carry logs from woods to sawmill to town.



SOURCES

1. Steven Reich, "The Making of a Sawmill World: Race, Class, and Rural Transformation in the Piney Woods of East Texas, 1830-930" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1998), 212.
2. Thad Sitton and James S. Conrad, *Nameless Towns: Texas Sawmill Communities, 1880-1942* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 73.
3. Dr. George F. Middlebrook, interviewed by Robert S. Maxwell, October 15, 1959, interview OH-26, transcript, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches. Maxwell and Baker note that East Texas mill towns were as segregated as the rest of the South in that era.
4. Robert S. Maxwell and Robert D. Baker, *Sawdust Empire: The Texas Lumber Industry, 1830-1940* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983), 138
5. Megan Beisele, "The Cornbread Whistle: Oral History of a Texas Timber Company Town (Diboll Historical Society, 1986), 30.
6. Maxwell and Baker, *Sawdust Empire*, 139
7. Harry Weaver, "Labor Practices in the East Texas Lumber Industry to 1930" (Master's Thesis, Stephen F. Austin State College, 1961), 68.
8. Maxwell and Baker, *Sawdust Empire*, 139
9. Biesele, *The Cornbread Whistle*, 32



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DONOR FOCUS

Businesses give vital support through Society memberships

The Society membership drive conducted recently was a big success! The museum has received many new and renewing Society memberships. Corporate memberships were a big part of the contributions received. The following businesses made donations to the museum's Society:

A&NRR
BancorpSouth
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Corporate donors receive their name on a plaque displayed in the museum's lobby. The museum is very appreciative of all donations, corporate and individuals. Please help us spread the word about the only forestry museum in Texas by asking friends, neighbors and relatives to join the museum Society. Don't forget to tell them that all new members receive a \$10 gift certificate toward a purchase in our gift shop. Donations can be made online at www.treetexas.com by selecting the "Giving Opportunities" link on our home page. All contributions are tax deductible. ▲



Joseph Adams and Charles Berryhill of Union Pacific Railroad present a check to museum Director Mary Alice Cook. The funds will be used to restore the Urban Wildscape Trail.



Improvements have begun on the outdoor train exhibit area. The locomotive and other train cars have been moved out of the way for the installation of new rail line and a new shed cover. This project is made possible by a donation from Black Stone Minerals Company.