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Long Distance Logging

PFI Camp 44 Shipped Logs Via the Milwaukee Mainline

Among the most remote

of all the Potlatch logging camps was Camp 44, established fittingly in 1944. As it turned out, 44 was the last resident camp Potlatch built and maintained on the "Bovill Side" of its logging operations.

The arrival of the Milwaukee Road in North Idaho had been a true boon to the Potlatch Lumber Co. By extending a branch south from its mainline at St. Maries in 1910, the Milwaukee had ab-

solved Potlatch of any need to extend its own railroad, the WI&M, deeper into its timberlands. Instead, all Potlatch had to do was build and operate short spurs from its camps in the hills down to a connection with the Milwaukee's Elk River branch.

But, there were lands Potlatch planned to harvest that were nowhere close to the Elk River Branch. A particularly large stand of timber, estimated at over a billion board feet, lay just south of the St. Joe River, the same course followed by the Milwaukee's trans-



A PFI crew works to transload logs from truck to flatcar with a "slide-ass" diesel loader at this siding alongside the Milwaukee Road mainline a mile west of Avery. The St. Joe River flows between the tracks and the hillside in the background.

Wade Stevenson photo, from Ted Schnepf collection

continental mainline. Not only did the Milwaukee's presence make this timber accessible, but the railroad happened to own the tract of land in question and was more than willing to make a deal for the logging rights!

By this time, Potlatch Lumber had joined forces with the Rutledge and Clearwater companies to form Potlatch Forest Industries. Traditionally, Rutledge would have logged the St. Joe drainage for shipment to its mill in Coeur d'Alene, but for some reason, PFI

The non-profit WI&M Ry. History Preservation Group, Inc has been organized for railroad historians, enthusiasts, and modelers interested in gathering and sharing information on the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway, from its origins in 1905 through its operations of today.