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BARBER MILL
(Advertiser Column By Nancy DeHamer)

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A frontier town's need for lumber was an invitation to enterprising business men to begin a logging and sawmill operation. This was certainly true in Boise. By December of 1864, barely one and one-half years after the founding of the city, there were two sawmills operating near Boise. Not only were they producing lumber for houses and businesses, but they were also equipped to manufacture sash, doors, blinds, molding, and "all manner of finishing stuff." These early companies hired lumberjacks to work in winter cutting logs and hauling them to streams. They then waited for the spring floods to carry the logs to the mills, located on the Boise River.

Sawmills were definitely considered an economic asset to the community, and the newspaper noted with satisfaction each new mill or improvements made on existing structures. One mill was located in the 1870's across from the Old Penitentiary on Warm Springs Avenue and operated under various owners until it was closed in 1924. It was then left to slowly disintegrate. A photograph in the Idaho State Historical Society file shows part of the ruin of this mill as it appeared in 1950. The concrete band-saw pit can be seen in the background. To the left of it is what remained of the water chute where the water ran to furnish the mill with power. In the foreground are the remains of the log-chute which brought logs from the mill pond.

Pictures of the ruins of this mill are the only ones that the Idaho State Historical Society has of nineteenth-century lumber mills in the Boise area. We do, however, have pictures of

a lumber mill and town which flourished near Boise in the first quarter of this century.

The town and lumber mill of Barber, located on the Boise River six miles north of Boise, had its beginning in July of 1902 with the incorporation of the Barber Lumber Company in Wisconsin.

The company purchased 25,000 acres of timber on Grime's and More's creeks and in October of 1904 began construction of a mill and dam on the Boise River. The construction was completed in July of 1905. By 1906 it had become apparent that a railroad was needed from the mill to the timber. The company had difficulty finding competent loggers; the snow had hurt winter logging; and it was almost impossible to drive logs down More's and Grime's creeks. Although a charter for the Intermountain Railroad was obtained in 1907, the company was not in a financial or legal position to build it. In July of 1908, operations at the Barber Mill were suspended.

During the next few years the Barber Lumber Company sought to improve its legal and financial position. It began in 1912 and 1913 to negotiate a merger with the Payette Lumber Company and at the same time was attempting to purchase 120,000 acres of state-owned timber. The sale of the land was contested in court, and this held up the merger. Finally, the Idaho Supreme Court ruled the land sale was valid, and on March 9, 1914, the Boise Payette Lumber Company officially began business.