

The South also offered Southern Pine trees, which were in demand for their soft, multi-use lumber—which was used in great quantities to restore homes damaged during the war. Lumber camps grew exponentially in the south after 1870, and tree cutting rose to new heights. If not for the warm climate and quick renewal of the Southern Pines, the mass destruction of these trees might have rendered the south an ecological wasteland. Fortunately, scientific forestry grew alongside the lumber camps, and the first forestry school opened in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1898.

Living in sawmill towns

by Bob Bowman



While some sentimentalists may disagree, living in [East Texas](#)' early sawmill towns was no bed of roses.

My parents lived in four such towns in [East Texas](#) and western Louisiana, and I still remember those days vividly, but not always pleasantly.

We didn't have refrigerators; our food was kept cool in what we called "the ice box." Even today, I still find myself calling refrigerators "ice boxes."

A delivery truck made its way across town each week, delivering ice, but only if a family had hung an "ice card" on the front door. Depending on which side of the card was up, an amount of ice was dropped off.

The kid who failed to put out the ice card was certain to receive a lecture from his father, especially if the father had to drive to the local ice house and pick up a block of ice.

Most sawmill houses didn't have bathrooms in the early years. Baths were taken in the same tubs used to wash the family clothes. And outhouses, were usually located far from our house because of the odor.

When Southern Pine Lumber Company installed bathrooms in its employee housing at [Diboll](#) in the 1940s, the four kids in our family were elated over having a real bathtub.

But my father commandeered the tub for the first week or so to mix up a batch of home-made beer. We considered pouring out his beer, and taking real baths, but couldn't work up the courage.

Air conditioning was another rarity and nights were miserable, even