

major city in yellow pine production. Laurel sawmills had the highest daily output of any location in Mississippi during the era of the big mills. *Photo from the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, Laurel, Mississippi.*  
[Larger view](#)



J. J. Newman's Clyde four-line skidder at work in Jefferson Davis County. J. J. Newman had huge sawmills at Hattiesburg and Sumrall. Sumrall was founded as a sawmill town for J. J. Newman. The Clyde skidder could gather fallen timber from as far as 1,000 feet from either side of the rail logging spur. Logs were stacked next to the spur and later loaded on log trains. *Photo from S. E. Moreton, Jr. Courtesy, Collection of Tony Howe-Gilbert Hoffman-David Price.*  
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Kingston Lumber Company was the predecessor of Gilchrist-Fordney Company, which took over the operation in 1906 about the time this rare photo was made. The log camp consisted of portable buildings, or shacks, which could be moved from place to place. *Photo from the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, Laurel, Mississippi.*  
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East, experienced loggers moved to Mississippi to build sawmills. Many local people became operators of large sawmills, some producing as much as 300,000 board feet of lumber per day. All of these factors led to the building of larger sawmills that produced lumber at phenomenal rates.

### Timber industry thrives

But it was the building of railroads in Mississippi in the last quarter of the 19th-century that had the greatest impact on the timber industry. Railroads made it possible to build the large sawmills that dominated the industry by the early 1900s. The significance of railroads to loggers can be seen in the following statistics: In 1880, 295 sawmills had a total investment of less than one million dollars. Nearly twenty years later, in 1899, a capital investment of \$10 million in 608 mills produced more than one billion board feet of lumber (a board foot is the equivalent of a board one foot by one foot by one inch).

The thriving timber industry during the 1904 to 1915 period ranked Mississippi in third place of lumber-producing states in the United States, behind Washington and Louisiana. In 1910, capital investment reached more than \$39 million and the value of production climbed to nearly \$43 million. Much of the total production was long-leaf yellow pine from the southern half of the state. In addition, many hardwood mills operated in the Delta region, and the east-central area of the state produced short-leaf pine.

### Railroads expand industry

Sawmills depended on the railroads to ship finished lumber to growing markets in the north. Also, ports like Gulfport sprang up expanding the export lumber trade with foreign countries. Several railroads, such as the New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad, the Mobile, Jackson and Kansas City Railroad, and the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, were built across South Mississippi.

Not only did railroads provide an outlet for finished products, they also opened up great areas of previously inaccessible timberland to lumber