



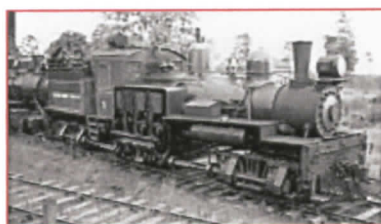
Moss Point, Mississippi, lumber boom on the East Pascagoula River circa 1900. Note the log rafts in the background. *Photo from the Jackson County Archives. Courtesy, Collection of Tony Howe-Gilbert Hoffman-David Price.*

[Larger view](#)



Mason Lumber Company's crew and Climax locomotive at Gandisi, Mississippi. Gandisi was a name coined from the initials of the Gulf & Ship Island (G&SI) Railroad. It was located north of present-day Seminary, Mississippi. The Climax was the least popular of the three major types of geared locomotives used by Mississippi loggers. Geared locomotives were slow but highly flexible on the rough track of temporary logging spurs. This extremely rare photo is from Mrs. John Redmon. *Courtesy, Collection of Tony Howe-Gilbert Hoffman-David Price.*

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The Tatum Lumber Company of Bonhomie, Mississippi, (near Hattiesburg) used Shay locomotives in its wood logging operations. The Shay was the most popular of the three major types of geared locomotives used in Mississippi

companies. As timber near the navigable streams was rapidly depleted, railroads provided mills a way to bring in logs that were far from rivers and streams.

Thus, many mills built their own rail lines into their timberlands. These rail lines, often called dummy lines, varied in length from mile-long railroads built with wooden rails to extensive railroads with steel rails that reached thirty or more miles into the virgin forests. By 1905, most sawmills cutting more than 25,000 board feet per day owned their own railroads.

Many towns and cities in Mississippi owe their existence to the railroads and sawmills built during the lumber boom. Typically, after a railroad was built, land buyers purchased timberland in the area and built sawmills. Towns quickly grew up around the sawmills. Many towns seemed to appear magically out of nowhere. Some of the towns became cities that still exist today — Hattiesburg, Laurel, Picayune, and Wiggins. Other towns — Inda, Howison, Hillsdale, Orvisburg, Deemer, and Electric Mills — quickly died after the mills closed.

Labor-saving equipment introduced soon after the turn of the century joined with railroads to spur growth. By 1905, the ancient caralog, a heavy ox-driven two-wheeled wagon, was replaced by the Lindsey Eight-Wheel Wagon invented by the Lindsey brothers of Laurel, Mississippi. In turn the skidder and steam log loader replaced the eight-wheel wagon. Skidders were huge winches with long cables. These cables were attached to logs, and the winches dragged them to the railhead. Such mechanizations cut logging costs and allowed for year-round operations.

### Virgin forests depleted

However, skidder logging, though efficient and economical, brought complete destruction to timber too young for market. The skidders dragged large trees over smaller trees, crushing them and destroying new growth. As a result, thousands of acres were flattened each year. In the Delta and other sections of the state with good soils, removal of timber promoted profitable farming. But the