

News and Public Relations

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Chester, California – On March 31, 1943 the first log was cut at the then new Collins Pine Company mill in Chester, California. Fifty-nine years and \$20 million dollars later, Collins has unveiled their new state-of-the-art mill in Chester. Annual capacity in 1943 was 50 mmbf and then later increased to 75 mmbf. The new mill, at full production in 2003, will more than double the original capacity to 120 mmbf.

Collins, known throughout the industry for their high quality wood products, has virtually rebuilt and re-equipped the mill from the ground up. The reason? As Mike Zojonc, plant manager commented, "Good is never good enough. We wanted an even higher quality product, on a more consistent basis with an eye on competing far into the future."

To accomplish those goals, Collins has added a computerized head-rig to break down large logs, a C-frame to break down small logs, two new edgers ... a curve saw gang, a board edger, and a slant-bed twin resaw. They also kept a 60-inch ring debarker that removes the bark of logs up to five feet in diameter and a 35-inch Nicholson A.5 debarker that removes the bark of logs under three feet in diameter. "With the new mill and equipment, Collins will realize a significant increase in efficiency and productivity through a higher utilization of each log and higher grade recovery," said Zojonc. "We are also committed to providing a stable economy for this community for decades to come." Supporting the new mill is a major renovation of the powerhouse with a production of 12 megawatts per hour. This volume is enough to power almost all of Lassen and Plumas counties in northern California. Collins sells excess power to PG&E.

During the start-up, about 50 employees are back on the job operating the first shift in the sawmill. Additional employees will return as the second shift and planer mill begin in November. The majority of the original workforce will be back with the exception of those who retired and those who found work elsewhere while the new mill was under construction. "Actually, we kept a number of our employees to help rebuild the mill which not only helped us but kept the community intact," remarked Zojonc.

Forty-five percent of the logs for the new mill will come directly from the 94,000 mixed conifer stands of the Collins Almanor Forest (CAF). "It's important to note that in 1941 when harvesting began, the CAF held 1.5 bbf of timber. On September 25, 2000, we harvested our 2 billionth board-foot of lumber from CAF. It came from a 126 year-old, 130-foot tall ponderosa pine from the same mixed conifer stand near Humbug Valley where logging began in 1941," observed Eric Schooler, president & CEO of The Collins Companies. Since 1941, Collins has removed enough timber to build over 200,000 average-sized homes, yet the CAF still holds 1.5 bbf of timber with trees in all age classes. As Jay Francis, chief forester for the CAF stated, "When you harvest, as we have, on a sustained yield basis from the beginning, the result is a healthy, biodiverse, multi-layered forest that has never seen a clear cut."

Tom Kenworthy, in the Washington Post, writes, "For more than 50 years, this family-owned timber company has practiced a kind of sustained yield, selective harvest management that is a relative oddity in the industry but wins plaudits from the environmental community ... even after decades of cutting, most stands in the Collins Almanor Forest contain some magnificent 200- and 300-year-old trees."

The Collins Almanor Forest was the first privately-owned forest in the United States to be independently certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The FSC is the only worldwide certification system endorsed by the major environmental organizations. Today, all three of Collins' hardwood and softwood forests are FSC-certified, including the Collins Pennsylvania Forest, the Collins Lakeview Forest, and the Collins Almanor Forest. And all three have mills manufacturing certified hardwood and softwood lumber products, hardwood veneer logs and flooring. In addition, Collins Products LLC manufactures certified pine particleboard and exterior TruWood® Siding & Trim. About 80% of the logs used in the new Chester mill are certified.

Collins' commitment to protecting the forest ecosystem is enhanced by their adopting the principles of The Natural Step, an international environmental organization dedicated to moving people and businesses toward cyclical resource-preserving methods. As a result, Collins is the first North American forest products company to grow, manufacture, and market a full line of FSC-certified wood products while implementing sustainable practices into all of their facilities.

The company is family-owned and traces its roots back to 1855 when T.D. Collins began timber operations in Pennsylvania. By the turn of the century, the family expanded west and by 1940, third generation Truman W. Collins was articulating a vision of sustainable forestry half a century ahead of his time. Currently they manage timberland and milling operations in Lakeview, Oregon (Fremont Sawmill), Kane, Pennsylvania, (Kane Hardwood), Klamath Falls, Oregon (Collins Products LLC), three retail yards in northern California (Builders Supply), in addition to their new mill in Chester, California (Collins Pine Company).