

Ranches of Bodega Bay

Russian River Land and Lumber Company - Ocean Township

Milton Slocum Latham, US Congressman, California Governor, US Senator. A native of Columbus, Ohio, Latham graduated from Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania in 1845 and was admitted to the bar in 1848.

After briefly serving as a circuit court clerk for Russell County, Alabama, he moved to California in 1850 and a year later was appointed district attorney of Sacramento County. In 1853 he was elected to serve in the United States House of Representatives until 1855.

In 1859 he was elected to serve as the 6th Governor of California. Inaugurated on January 9, 1860, his term as governor lasted only five days before he resigned on January 14 to be appointed to the United States Senate, filling the vacancy caused by the death of David Broderick after a duel in September 1859, a post he held until 1863.

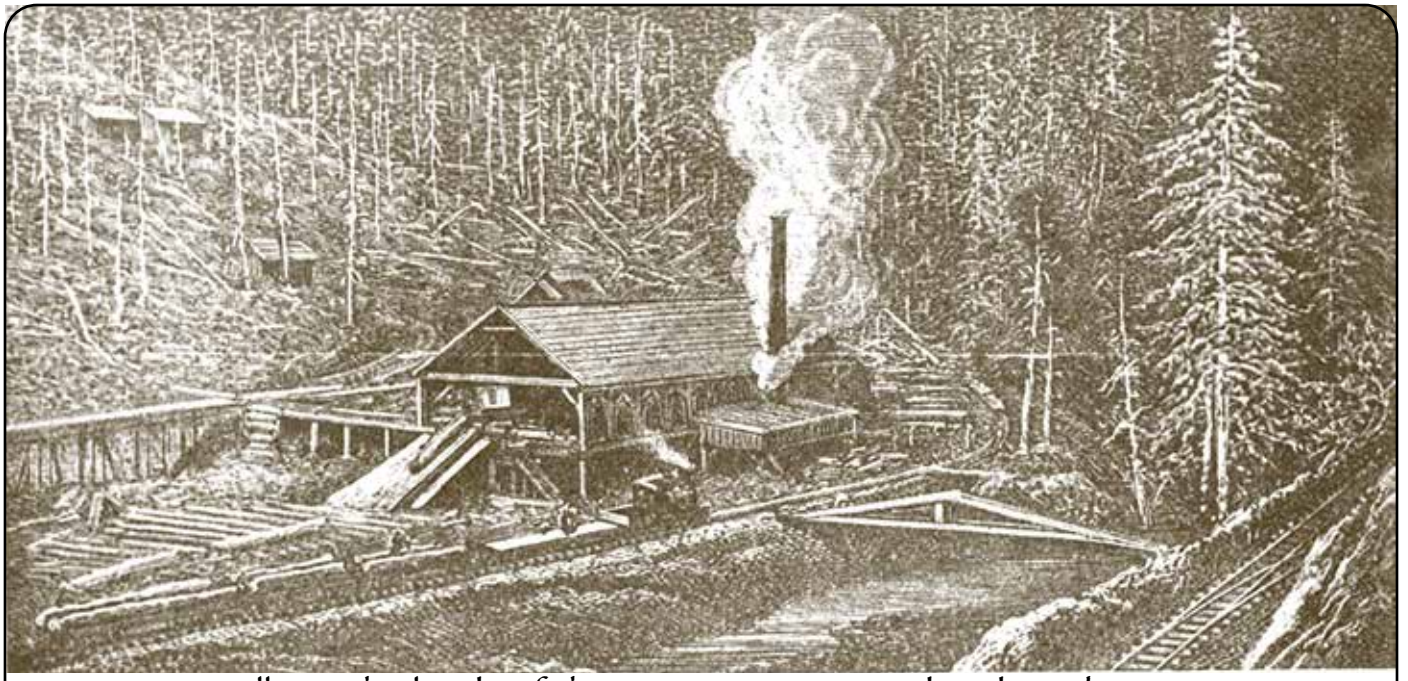


Milton Slocum Latham
1827 - 1882

After leaving office, he served as manager of the San Francisco branch of the London & San Francisco Bank from 1865 until 1878.

Russian River Land and Lumber Company. By the 1870s, the Russian River Land and Lumber Company (RRLLC) had purchased the property within the Willow Creek watershed to the east and the south of the old Carlton and Ross mill. It is presumed that this area was also used for logging. When the new narrow gauge NPC spur from present-day Duncans Mills reached Willow Creek in the late 1880s, a new rail route was forged up the valley, undoubtedly to access timber for the RRLLC.

Three corporations sponsored by Milton Latham were formed early in 1877. The Madrona Land and Timber Company was formed in connection with James Streeter and Benjamin Riley to acquire land from Duncan's holdings around Monte Rio. Other partners joined Latham to form the Sonoma Lumber Company and the Russian River Lumber Company, both of which had large timber holdings in the area, also operated from Duncans Mills.



Tyrone Mills on the lands of the Russian River Land and Lumber Company

In his 1880 history of Sonoma County, Munro-Fraser stated that there was more mill capacity in the Ocean Township than in any other in the county at that time. Timber was the most important product of the Ocean Township, producing lumber, posts, pickets and shingles. In 1889 the Russian River Land and Lumber Company was the largest owner of timber land in the area, with 10,000 acres, which represented all the timber land on old Duncans Mills Rancho within Ocean Township. They owned the Tyrone and Moscow Mills, located south of Duncans Mills on the route of the North Pacific Coast Railroad.

In contrast, Alexander Duncan owned 4,000 acres at this time, primarily on Austin Creek. His mill had the capacity to process thirty-five thousand feet of timber per day and employed 75 men. Most of the town, as well as the mill, were owned by Alexander Duncan. By 1885 his son Samuel M. Duncan Jr. was superintendent of the mill, its accountant, and the postmaster. However, the Sonoma Land and Lumber Company and the Russian River Land & Lumber Company, both of which had large timber holdings in the area, also operated from Duncans Mills.

The Railroad was opened to Duncan Mills in May 1877, no longer was the Humboldt Bay the northern objective. Instead, in 1886, the Northwestern Railroad, built seven miles up Austin Creek to Cazadero which, 87 miles from San Francisco marked the most northerly point reached by the narrow gauge.

The entry of the railroad into the Russian River country spurred the establishment of more sawmills. The Riley Mill was built on what became Monte Rio. A mile and a half south along Dutch Bill Creek were the Tyrone Mill and nearby Sonoma Mill. In all there were five mills nearby to Tyrone along the Russian River.

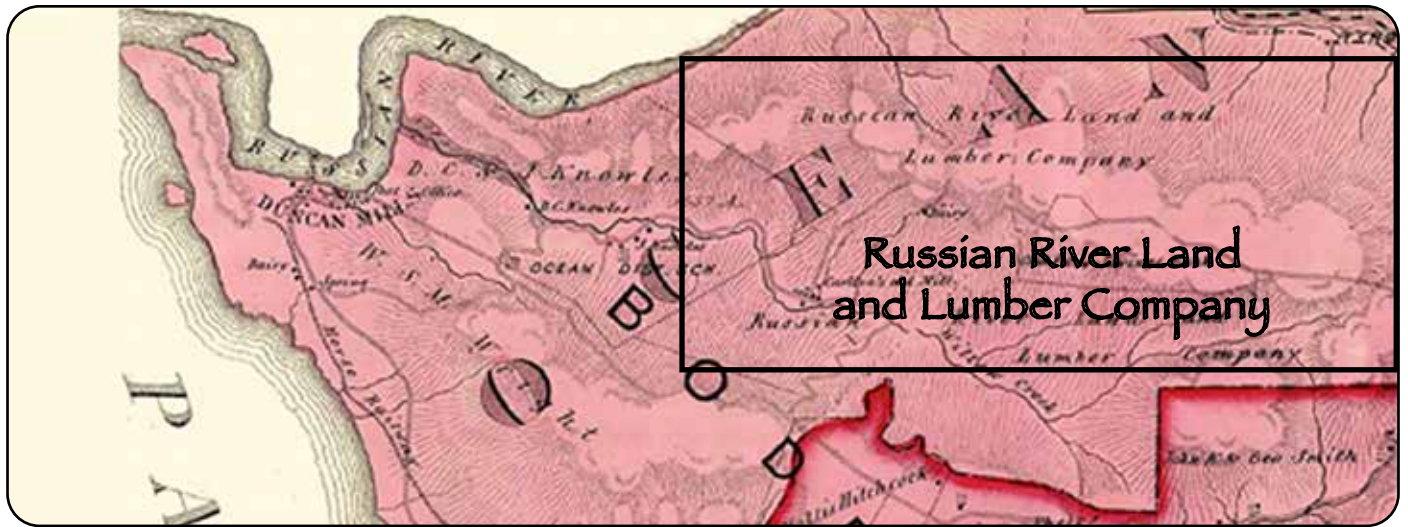
Historical and Descriptive Sketch of Sonoma County California by Robert Thompson, Editor of The Sonoma Democrat - 1877

Sonoma county possesses one marked advantage over most of the agricultural counties of this State. It has an immense source of wealth in its timber. The great redwood timber-belt commences in Humboldt and reaches down the coast for one hundred and fifty miles, terminating in Sonoma county. From the Valhalla—the north boundary-line of Sonoma—to the mouth of Russian river, the county along the coast is timbered. The timber grows inland from the sea-shore for about eight miles. The reader will see by reference to the map that Russian river turns around the town of Healdsburg, and flows west; just after leaving the valley it enters the timber-region, through which it flows to the sea. A branch of the San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad leaves the main road at Fulton and runs into this timber, terminating at Guerneville, a lumber-manufacturing center.

The timber in the Russian River bottom is not surpassed on this coast. Fed by the rich alluvial soil, and watered by the annual overflow of the river, the trees grew to an enormous size. Some of them will measure fifteen feet in diameter, and are over three hundred and fifty feet high. They grow to the height of one hundred and fifty feet without lateral branches, the bole of the tree preserving a remarkable uniformity of size. In some cases a single tree has been worked-up into sixty-five thousand feet of lumber, worth at least one thousand dollars. The wood in the tree standing is valued at two dollars per thousand feet. One hundred and fifty thousand feet to the acre, six million feet on a forty-acre tract, is an average of good land. The very finest timber on the margin of the streams would produce at least eight hundred thousand feet to the acre, and the yield runs downward from that figure to twenty-five thousand feet to the acre.

The redwood belongs exclusively to the foggy coast-regions; south of San Francisco the supply has been cut out, and as it grows nowhere else, either north or south, Sonoma, Humboldt, and Mendocino counties may be said to have a monopoly of this wood, the first in commercial importance on the Pacific coast. Oregon, with her magnificent forests, has none; Puget sound, with a lumber supply incalculable, has no redwood; nor does it grow anywhere on either slope of the Sierra Nevada.

The redwood is a close-grained timber, splits true, and is very light in color, like the Eastern cedar. It works beautifully under the plane, and has the merit of retaining its place and shape without warp or shrinkage. Its durability is unquestioned. Hundreds of miles of redwood fences, built twenty years ago, are yet sound, and attest this fact. For fence-posts and railroad ties it is the best wood known, resisting the action of both air and water with matchless durability. Sonoma and Mendocino counties furnished the ties for the Central Pacific Railroad. Every Eastern train that



crosses the Sierra rolls over the product of the forests of Sonoma. The redwood is also used for ties on the Southern Pacific, and ties from this county are now laid on the desert of the Colorado. They have gone further, having been shipped to South America for that wonderful road which leads from Lima, in Peru, to the summit of the Andes, seventeen thousand feet above the level of the Pacific. Harry Meiggs, who built the road, was once a mill-owner in this county. He remembered the redwood and its valuable properties, and ordered from our forests ties for his railroad up the Andes. The redwood is a creature of the fog. During the summer months the trade-winds blow along the north coast with great regularity. A dense fog banks up some miles from the shore; later in the day the wind increases, and the fog is driven inland. Detached masses first come in like flying squadrons, creeping through the foliage of the tallest trees, crawling over the hilltops, and down the opposite slopes, filling up the canons, and soon hill and valley are enveloped in dripping mist.

The foliage of the redwood possesses the peculiar power of condensing this mist and converting it into rain, thus supplying the roots which sustain the mighty bole of the tree with moisture during the long and rainless months of summer. The fog continues through the night, and disappears with the sunrise. This irrigating process is repeated every day during the prevalence of the trades. Few persons can appreciate the grandeur of these redwood forests. Last summer the writer stood upon the summit of the coast range; to the northward lay a sweep of majestic forests unsurpassed on the continent — tier upon tier, range after range of redwoods, until, fifty miles away in the distance, their green crests faded or merged with the colors of the horizon; and could we have compassed the outer bound of vision, beyond, to an equal distance, the eye would have been greeted by unbroken forests.

We now propose to give the number and capacity of the saw-mills of Sonoma county, with an estimate of the amount of standing timber owned by each, commencing with the most northerly mill, coming southward, and thence to the mills on the eastern side of the timber-belt which supplies our local demand.

The lumber manufactured on the sea-coast is shipped altogether to San Francisco.

First, we have the Gualala Mill Company, Haywood E. Harmon, superintendent, with a capacity for cutting 30,000 feet of lumber a day. This company owns about two square miles of timber land on the Sonoma side of the river, averaging about 50,000 feet to the acre, say 75,000,000 feet.

Next we have the Clipper Mill Company with a capacity of 30,000 feet a day; about 3,000 acres of land belong to this company, which will average 40,000 feet to the acre, say 125,000,000 feet.

The Platt Mill Company has a cutting capacity of 30,000 feet a day, and 1,500 acres of land which will average 75,000 feet to the acre, say 112,000,000 feet.

Between the last named mill, which is located at Stewart's point, a shipping place on the coast and Russian river, a distance of twenty miles, there are different bodies of timber, the most valuable of which belongs to G. W. Call, of Fort Ross; it lies north of Black mountain, contains 400 acres, and will yield at least 30,000,000 feet; other lots will aggregate say 100,000,000 feet, a total from Stewart's point to Russian river, of 125,000,000 feet. Total of all timber between the Valhalla and Russian river, 437,000,000 feet.

Duncan's mill, formerly A. Duncan & Co., now Duncan's Mill, Land, and Lumber Company, is building a new mill on the north side of the Russian river at a point where the North Pacific Railroad bridge crosses the river; they own on that side of the river 3,600 acres of land, which will yield a total of say 216,000,000 feet.

The tract of land known as the Moore Brother's tract, now the property of the Russian River Land and Lumber Association, has two mills upon it, the largest with a capacity of 30,000 feet per day; the other, known as Stewart's mill, with a capacity for cutting 20,000 feet per day. **This company owns 9,000 acres of land lying south of Russian river,** and west of Howard's canon, upon which there is, say 450,000,000 feet of lumber.

We now propose to give an estimate of the timber in the Bodega district, south of Russian river, and north of Howard's canon. Meeker Bros. & Co. have 2,800 acres, upon which there is 170,000,000 feet. Duncan, Bixby & Co. have 1,100 acres, on which there is 45,000,000 feet.

On the Jonive ranch there is left about 30,000,000 feet; on the Bodega ranch about 20,000,000; J. K. Smith's tract 10,000,000; Latham & Streeten's tract, 10,000,000; scattering outside lands held by various owners, say 60,000,000. Total in the Bodega country and north of Howard's canon, 345,000,000 feet.



In the timber section opposite Guerneville, on Russian river, R. E. Lewis owns 220 acres of land, which will cut 60,000 feet to the acre; a total of 10,800,000 feet.

The Madrona Company have a tract of land of about 1,000 acres, with an estimated amount of standing lumber equal to 55,000,000 feet; their mill has a capacity of 35,000 feet per day.

S. H. Torrence has about 60 acres, which will cut, say 60,000 feet to the acre; total, 3,600,000 feet. Henry Beaver has 120 acres which will average 60,000 feet, say 7,200,000 feet; other parties on Pocket canon, say 15,000,000 feet. Total timber opposite Guerneville, and in Pocket canon, 33,000,000 feet.

On the north side of Russian river, from Dutch Bill creek to Hurlbut canon, 700 acres averaged 60,000 feet, equal to a total of 42 000,000 feet. In Hurlbut canon 2,000 acres at 60,000 feet to the acre, 120,000,000 feet. In the Big Bottom, near Guerneville, W. H. Willets has 160 acres of bottom land which will cut 15,000,000 feet. H. T. Hewitt has 160 acres which will cut 10,000,000 feet. K. B. Lunsford has 200 acres, say 12,000,000 feet. Heald & Guerne, beside their Hurlbut-canon timber, have 360 acres which will average 60,000 feet, a total of 21,600,000 feet; Murphy Bros. 15,000,000 feet; Ike and Tom Smith 120 acres, 60,000 feet to the acre, 7,200,000 feet; J. B. Armstrong 420 acres, 20,000,000 feet; James Peugh 40 acres bottom land, 60,000,000; H. Speckerman 40 acres, say 4,000,000 feet; J. K. Wood, 160 acres, 6,400,000 feet; Henry Miller 200 acres, 60,000 feet to the acre, 12,000,000; S. B. Torrence 20 acres, 150,000 feet to the acre, 3,000,000 feet.

In Elliott canon, Korbel Bros. own land which will yield 22,000,000; John Beaver 60 acres, which will cut about 5,000,000 feet. On Mill creek the Marshall timber will cut about 15,000,000 feet. There are three large saw-mills near Guerneville. Korbel Bros'. mill with a capacity of 30,000 feet a day; Murphy Bros, with a capacity of 30,000 feet; Heald & Guerne's mill with a capacity of about 30,000 feet a day.

In Bodega township there are four mills, Meeker Bros., Ben Joy, and J. K. Smith's, with a capacity each for sawing 15,000 feet of lumber a day, and another mill, owned by Frank Gilford, with a capacity of about 4,000 feet a day. It is estimated by lumbermen that when the timber is cut, cord-wood left standing on the land will make more freight than the lumber did.

The cutting capacity of all the mills in the county, with an estimate of their annual production of lumber is herewith given. The mills are not run more than nine months in the year, and not up to their full capacity.

At this rate of consumption, our timber in reach of the railroads would last for nearly fifty years, and more transportation in cord-wood and tan-bark would be left upon the land than had been hauled off in lumber. An extension of the railroad will of course open up new fields. It is now quite certain that the narrow-gauge road will follow Austin creek from Russian river, cross the divide, and go down the Valhalla. This would open up an immense field not now in reach of market.

The reader will bear in mind that there are several million cords of tan-bark and cord-wood, of which no estimate has been made. In estimating the redwood, we have figured on from fifty to sixty thousand feet to the acre; on best bottom lands there are acres that will yield eight hundred thousand feet; on thin land the yield will run as low as twenty-five thousand feet to the acre.

THE HARD-WOODS. We herewith give a brief description of the other valuable commercial woods which grow in the forests of Sonoma, commencing with the California laurel, a beautiful evergreen which grows in the redwood belt. The wood bears a high polish, and is extensively used as veneer; leaves and wood have a strong aromatic odor. It is a valuable product of the Sonoma forests.

The madrona, one of the most striking of the trees of California, grows abundantly in this section. The bark is a bright red color, and peels off at regular intervals; the new bark is a pea-green color. The wood is hard, and is employed for making shoe-lasts, wooden stirrups, and other articles. It is the handsomest of the forest's trees, but will not bear transplanting.

THE OAKS. The chestnut-oak, *quercus densiflora*, is abundant in the redwood forests of Sonoma. The bark is rich in tannin; the trees are stripped, and large quantities of the bark are shipped for tanning hides. The price of the bark in San Francisco is from fifteen to seventeen dollars per cord; consumption about one hundred and fifty cords a month. The wood of this tree is used in the manufacture of chairs at the Forrestville and other factories.

The live-oak grows abundantly in this county; it has little commercial value, except for fuel. The black-oak is found on all the hill-lands in the county, and is the best wood we have for fuel. The burr-oak is the largest and most common of the oaks. It is this tree, with its long pendant branches, that gives to California scenery its peculiar charm. They grow in clusters, and long may they stand to adorn the landscape. A clump of this variety of oaks may be seen in the Plaza of Santa Rosa.

“Streeten’s mill is owned by Latham & Streeten; has a capacity of fifteen thousand feet per day; has about one thousand acres of land; employs forty men. **The Russian River Land and Lumber Company** is owned by Governor M. S. Latham, the largest owner of timber-land in this section, having ten thousand acres in one body. From Streeten’s mill to Duncan’s, with the exception of two miles, the road passes through its land. It owns all the timber-land on the old Bodega Rancho that lies in Ocean township. Its two mills—the Tyrone mill and the Moscow mill (at Moscow)—have each a capacity of forty thousand feet per day. Each mill employs from eighty to ninety men, and in the logging for both mills about sixty cattle are employed. The logs are hauled to mill on small locomotives, or tramways laid with railroad iron. The lumber, as at all the six saw-mills, is loaded directly on the cars, and not rehandled until delivered at the wharf in San Francisco. The saving of labor, expense, and breakage, from this fact alone, will at once be appreciated by any one familiar with the lumber business.