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TREE FARM BULLETIN

The Jemez Mountains Logging Railroads

By Tom Bennion, Vice Chair, NM Tree Farm Committee

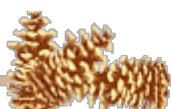
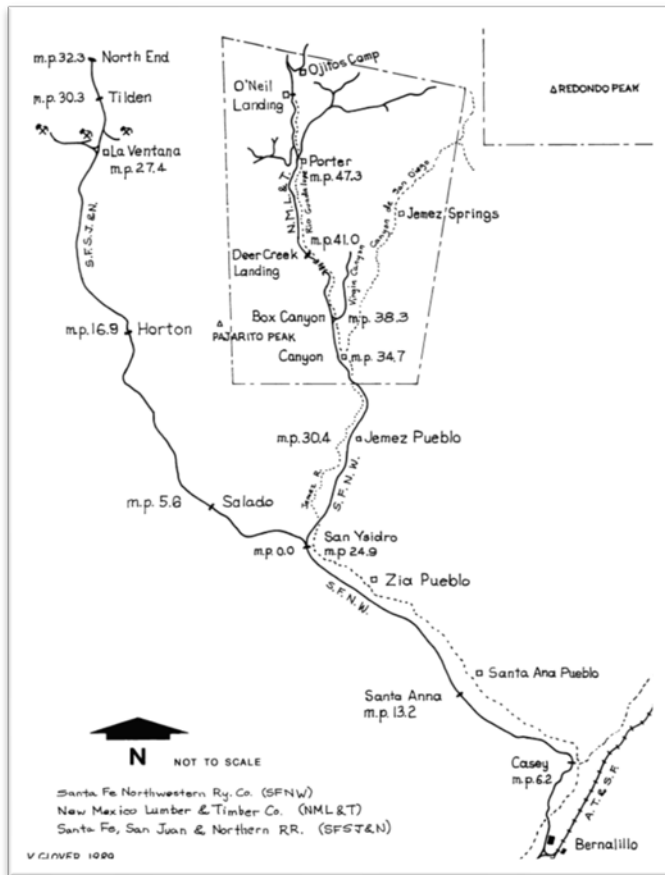
In early March of 1966, I drove to my new job in Los Alamos. A few days later, my wife, Sharon, and our infant daughter flew in from Seattle to Albuquerque to join me. I will never forget Sharon's initial reaction. Frontier's Convair 340 taxied to the simple gate in front of the old Albuquerque Airport. The plane's steps folded out and down. Passengers started to disembark. Sharon soon stepped down

holding our daughter. Sharon was crying. "It's so brown!" she exclaimed. I took hold of our daughter and tried to comfort my wife saying, "It's green, up in the mountains, around Los Alamos".

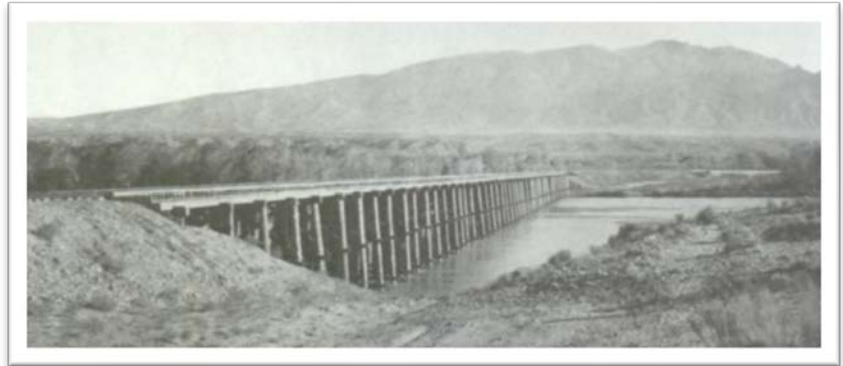
This is an all too common reaction to the "Land of Enchantment." From the desert, it can be hard to envision that New Mexico is also blessed with green, high mountain forests. It is also hard to imagine that these very same forests once supported a vibrant timber industry, complete with logging railroads.

Our July 2016 bulletin featured a brief overview of the history of the logging railroads of the Zuni Mountains. Here I wish to acquaint you with those of the Jemez – a far more extensive endeavor.

Railroad planning into this area started around 1878 for a railroad originating from the vicinity of Bernalillo. After decades of planning, actual construction started in November of 1922. Two

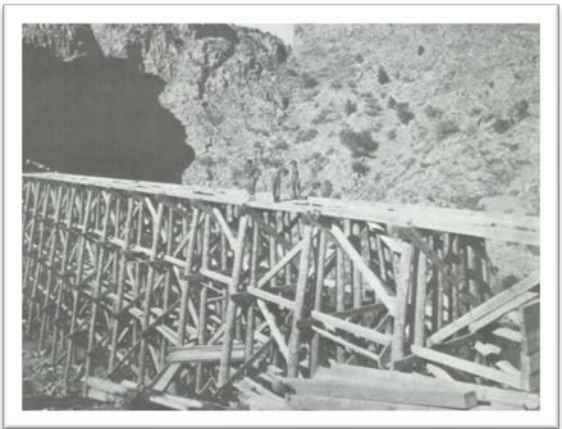


railroads were built into the Jemez Mountains. Each transported both lumber and coal. The whole route, included the northwest branch named the Santa Fe, San Juan & Northern (SFSJ&N) up to the coal mines near Cuba, NM, and the main SFNW railroad north into the Cañon de San Diego Land Grant.

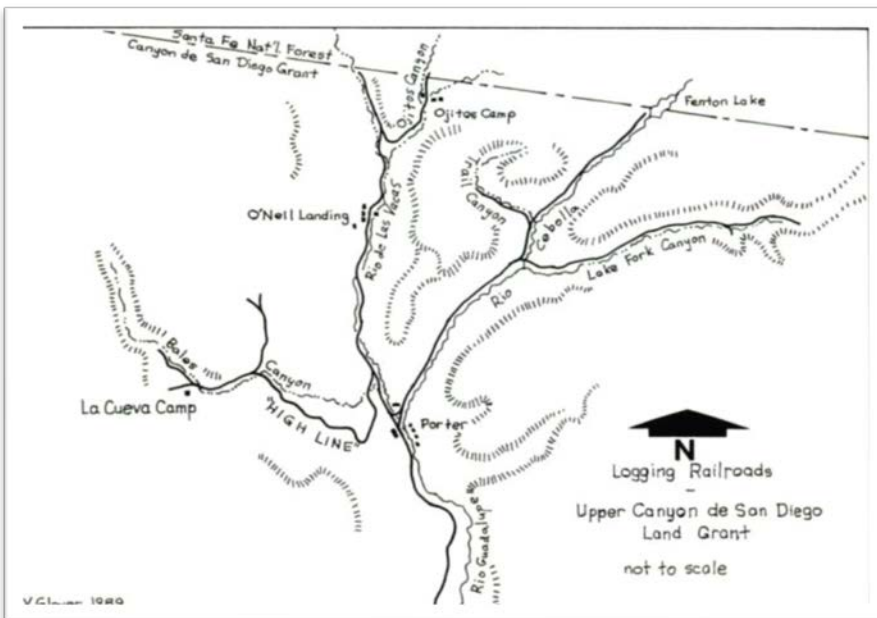


The trestle across the Rio Grande was built in 1923.

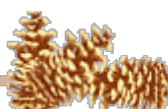
The mill was built at Bernalillo in 1924.



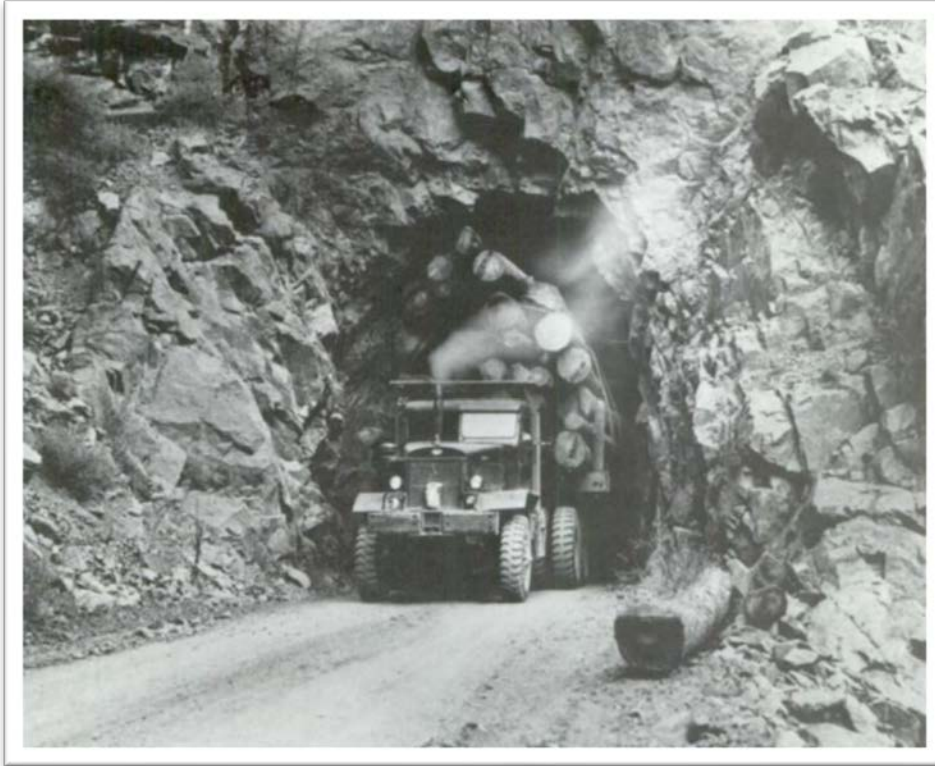
A major problem for the rail construction was its alignment through the Guadalupe Box, a very narrow canyon of steep rock sides requiring a trestle leading into two short tunnels shown during construction (right).



Of most interest to me and my nearby property are the landings and camps at Porter, O'Neil and Ojitos and the spur lines up the various canyons, particularly the Rio Cebolla into the lower end of Fenton Lake itself shown by the map (left). The railroad grading can still be seen today in many places within this area, now all within the Santa Fe National Forest with some small private inholdings such as the community of Seven Springs immediately north of Fenton Lake State Park.



Unusually heavy rains during the first week of May in 1941 caused major damage all along the canyons and fields including the railroad itself in innumerable places. The estimated repair costs were prohibitive, and all log haulage was converted to heavy trucks within the woods. The railway was abandoned. Several portions of the rail beds were converted to private logging roads including the main line through the tunnels as shown (below).



There is much more to the story of railroads and logging in New Mexico. Next time a guest to New Mexico suffers “desert brown shock,” send them to the links below -- for the rest of the colorful story.

Selected Links to this and other New Mexico Logging Railroads and places near nearby in the Jemez
Jemez, Zuni & Sacramento Mountain Railroad reports commissioned by the US Forest Service:

<https://foresthistor.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Jemez-Mountain-Railroads.pdf>

<https://foresthistor.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Zuni-Mountains-Railroads.pdf>

<https://foresthistor.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Logging-Railroads-of-the-Lincoln-National-Forest.pdf>

An alphabetical listing and nice short overview of the major logging railroads in New Mexico (skip ads on sides & occasionally in the middle text): <https://www.american-rails.com/nm-lrrs.html>

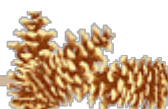
A condensed table of New Mexico logging railroads: <http://www.loggingrailroads.com/nm.htm>

New Mexico State Road 485 and the Gilman Tunnels:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Mexico_State_Road_485

Fenton Lake State Park: <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/spd/fentonlakestatepark.html>

Valles Caldera National Preserve: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valles_Caldera and <https://www.nps.gov/vall/planyourvisit/index.htm>



1) BUY, SELL OR TRADE

Are you looking for forestry related equipment to buy (i.e. chipper, splitter, chainsaw, etc.)? Or, do you own forestry related equipment you would like to sell or trade? Forestry related equipment only, please, no homes or land. We would like to help you make the connection with other New Mexico Tree Farmers. Provide us with a description of the equipment, price, photo and contact information and we will post it in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. If you would like us to help you make the connection, please provide information to Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

2) COMMUNITY CORNER

If your community is having a forestry related public event let us know the details and we would be delighted to promote your event in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. Give us the event details, Who, What, Where and When with contact information and we will include in our monthly bulletin.

If you would like us to help you promote your event, please provide information to Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

3) E-MAIL INSTEAD OF SNAIL MAIL

Would you prefer to receive your Tree Farm Bulletin by e-mail instead of snail mail? If so, contact Doug Boykin at doug.boykin@state.nm.us and provide him with your contact information. By receiving your Tree Farm Bulletin by e-mail our operating costs are reduced. Thank you for considering this option.

4) FROM THE CHAIR – THANK YOU

My term as Chair is coming to an end. The list of people I want to thank is quite long and distinguished. I will always be grateful to my colleagues on the committee, the New Mexico Tree Farm membership, the fine folks from State Forestry and the American Forest Foundation, and everyone affiliated with promoting the family tree farm experience. I wish to thank the tree farmers from around the country that I have met at the annual National Leadership Conference. They have generously shared their walks of life. I will always treasure the unique and priceless experience of being able to serve as chair. I especially wish to thank my wife, Debi and my parents, Fred and Rose Silva for their encouragement throughout the decades.

In closing, the committee elections will be held at our next meeting. I can guarantee from personal experience, this is one opportunity in life you do not want to miss!

Matthew Silva

5) COMMITTEE MEETING AND COMMITTEE ELECTION! Out-of-towners! It is on a Friday!!!

All Tree Farmers are invited and encouraged to attend our 2nd New Mexico Tree Farm Committee Meeting of the year (three held annually). ***In addition to our usual agenda, we will be electing members for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.*** Please join us at 1:30 pm on Friday, August 10th, 2018 at the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish office located at 3841 Midway Place NE, Albuquerque, NM. Come out and hear what other tree farmers have been up to and share your tree farm accomplishments with the group. We look forward to visiting with you. If you have any questions, please contact Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

