Lidgerwood 1913 Cableway Skidder

By Timberman Magazine, 1913

Overhead yarding systems greatly accelerated the pace of work in the woods during the first decades of the twentieth century. This important technological innovation allowed timber workers to move logs from the stump to a central loading area without having to drag them across the ground. This was achieved by suspending the logs on cables strung overhead, then pulling them through the air with a steam-powered engine to a landing, where they could then be loaded onto railroad cars or pushed into streams for water transport to the mill.

The Lidgerwood company was one of the first to offer overhead yarding systems to the timbermen of the West Coast. Early Lidgerwood systems were prone to breakdowns due to the size of West Coast trees as compared to those in the Midwest where the technology was first developed, but the company came out with a system designed for West Coast conditions in 1912, a year before the advertisement reproduced here was published in the Timberman magazine.

Overhead systems were more versatile than ground yarding, which was limited to relatively flat terrain. They were also much faster, more than doubling the speed of yarding operations. Equally important for timbermen was the fact that a large number of skilled positions could be eliminated. Notice that the ad boasts “small crew, large capacity.”

In addition, overhead systems diminished the authority of the hooktender, who previously had set the pace of work in the woods. With the adoption of steam donkeys and overhead yarding systems, machines increasingly began setting the pace.


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