

DAVID A. WOLFF

**THE BLACK HILLS TIMBER
INDUSTRY COMES OF AGE**
**Rapid City's Warren-Lamb Lumber
Company**

.....

When workers fired up the boilers and turned on the steam for the first time at the recently completed Lanphere-Hinrichs sawmill in February 1908, the *Rapid City Journal* proclaimed that a “new epoch” in the “industrial life of Rapid City” had arrived. Located on Rapid City’s northwest edge, the Lanphere-Hinrichs Lumber Company started with two buildings and ninety employees, but the newspaper optimistically forecast the construction of more buildings and the addition of more workers.¹ The Lanphere-Hinrichs partners planned to cut timber from previously untouched parts of the forest and distrib-

1. “Mill in Operation,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 18 Feb. 1908. Despite the logging and lumber industry being critically important to the development of the Black Hills, authors have paid relatively little attention to it, especially compared to gold mining. A handful of publications provide forestry overviews and were important to this paper. These include: Martha Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills* (Custer, S.Dak.: Jessie Y. Sundstrom, 1984); Carl A. Newport, *Forest Service Policies in Timber Management and Silviculture as They Affect the Lumber Industry: A Case Study of the Black Hills* (Ph.D. thesis, State University College of Forestry of Syracuse, New York, 1954; Pierre: South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, 1956); John F. Freeman, *Black Hills Forestry: A History* (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2014); and U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, *Black Hills National Forest: 50th Anniversary* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948). For a time, the South Dakota State School of Mines regularly produced publications about the Black Hills, and its March 1928 issue of *The Black Hills Engineer* dealt with the forest. Local experts wrote eight essays for the “Forestry Number,” one of which was especially important to this project: “Logging Operations in the Black Hills,” by A. B. Hood, the logging superintendent for the Lanphere-Hinrichs Lumber Com-

ute Black Hills pine lumber to new markets. Problems, however, soon arose that interfered with their plans and even convinced them to sell. Reorganized as the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company in 1914, the new investors also encountered many challenges. Some of them occurred suddenly and without warning, such as fires and floods, but four were ongoing concerns of the logging and sawmill business: maintaining an adequate supply of timber, operating an efficient transportation system, dealing with government regulations, and surviving market and economic changes. Any one of these issues could have shut down the business, but the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company successfully dealt with each challenge as it developed the Black Hills' first large scale commercial logging and sawmill business and one of South Dakota's leading industries.²

Since the earliest days of the Black Hills Gold Rush, timber and lumber played a key role in the search for gold. The ubiquitous gold pan is often associated with prospecting, but it was primarily used to check samples and to clean up pay-dirt. Placer miners used the sluice box to process large volumes of material. Made of three wooden planks measuring one inch thick by twelve inches wide and twelve feet long, a sluice box looked like a trough, but when used properly it effectively separated gold from gravel. Miners generally connected six sluice boxes together to make a string that ran seventy-two feet. With nearly every claim holder needing a sluice box, as well as a place to live, the demand for lumber was acute, forcing the earliest prospectors to become the first lumbermen. To cut the planks, they used a two-person whipsaw, but these labor-intensive tools were soon replaced by steam-powered sawmills.³

pany. Hood's article details key aspects of the company's operations. Most other publications, however, only touch on the Warren-Lamb Company. South Dakota newspaper editors fortunately recognized the company's importance and often reported on it. These stories offer good information.

2. "Big Employers to be Present," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 7 Oct. 1920; "Lumbering in Black Hills," *Lead Daily Call*, 5 Aug. 1926.

3. Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, p. 8; Watson Parker, *Gold in the Black Hills* (1966; reprint ed., Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2003), pp. 57-58; George W. Stokes, *Deadwood Gold: A Story of the Black Hills* (New York and Chicago: World Book Company, 1926), p. 67.

The first steam sawmill appeared in Custer City, where the gold rush began. Black Hills chronicler Annie Tallent stated that John Murphy opened the mill in early 1876, but a Deadwood newspaper identified David Doucette as owning the earliest sawmill, giving 1 January 1876 as the day its whistle first blew.⁴ No matter who was first, other sawmill operators soon appeared. Comprised of a circular saw, a cutting rack, and a steam engine, these early mills could easily be moved. As prospectors looked for new locations, the sawmill operators followed. When Hill City sprang to life in early 1876, Mark V. Boughton and L. D. Beary of Cheyenne set up a mill. When miners headed to the rich diggings in Deadwood Gulch, Boughton & Beary also made the move, arriving in May 1876, just after Judge E. G. Dudley of Omaha had brought in a sawmill of his own. Despite a third mill joining them, the Deadwood boom quickly outpaced the supply of lumber, leading a Cheyenne paper to observe that they were weeks behind in filling orders.⁵

Along with looking for placer gold in the creek beds, prospectors also searched for gold outcroppings in the nearby mountains. Just west of Deadwood, Fred and Moses Manuel and their partners made the most important discovery of the gold rush when they staked the

4. Judge W. L. Kuykendall letter "To the Editor of the Leader," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, 18 Feb. 1876. Other sources provide different names for the person who established the first sawmill. When Annie Tallent wrote her book in 1899, she recalled J. F. Murphy as opening the first mill: Annie D. Tallent, *The Black Hills; or, The Lasting Hunting Ground of the Dakotahs*, 2d ed. (Sioux Falls, S.Dak.: Brevet Press, 1974), p. 198. Other authors have followed Tallent's lead and credited John F. Murphy, including Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills*, p. 2, and John F. Freeman, *Black Hills Forestry*, p. 22. An article titled "Hills History," in the *Black Hills Weekly Pioneer*, 7 Feb. 1880, credits David Doucette as opening Custer City's first sawmill. It is possible that the various accounts are referring to the same people under different names. Whereas Kuykendall identifies Tommy Monahan, Pat Murphy, and Dave Ducent, Tallent names a J. F. Murphy, and then the piece in the *Pioneer* credits David Doucette. The appearance of the Murphy and Ducent or Doucette names cannot be coincidence. Nevertheless, since Kuykendall's account is firsthand, it is probably the most accurate. Each article gives a different starting date, but again Kuykendall is writing closest to the event and is probably correct.

5. "Black Hills Budget," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, 10 Mar. 1876; Untitled, *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, 5 Apr. 1876; Untitled, *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, 20 Aug. 1876; Stokes, *Deadwood Gold*, p. 54; Parker, *Gold in the Black Hills*, p. 78; Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills*, p. 62; Tallent, *The Black Hills*, pp. 247-48.

Homestake claim in April 1876. The Manuels had uncovered a small portion of what would become, for a time, the largest and deepest gold mine in North America. As other miners identified the full extent of the Homestake vein, several gold camps came to life, including Lead and Central City. This activity naturally attracted sawmills, because hardrock mine owners needed lumber to build processing plants and timbers to support their mines. In addition, the demand for cordwood was immense, and sawmill operators sold cords generally cut into four-foot lengths. One report stated that over one thousand out-of-work miners cut cordwood in the summer of 1877.⁶ By that same summer, A. F. Wood had opened a sawmill near Lead, a Mr. Wyatt had placed a mill on Whitewood Creek just south of that town, and Boughton & Beary had again relocated their mill from outside Deadwood to False Bottom, north of the Homestake vein.⁷

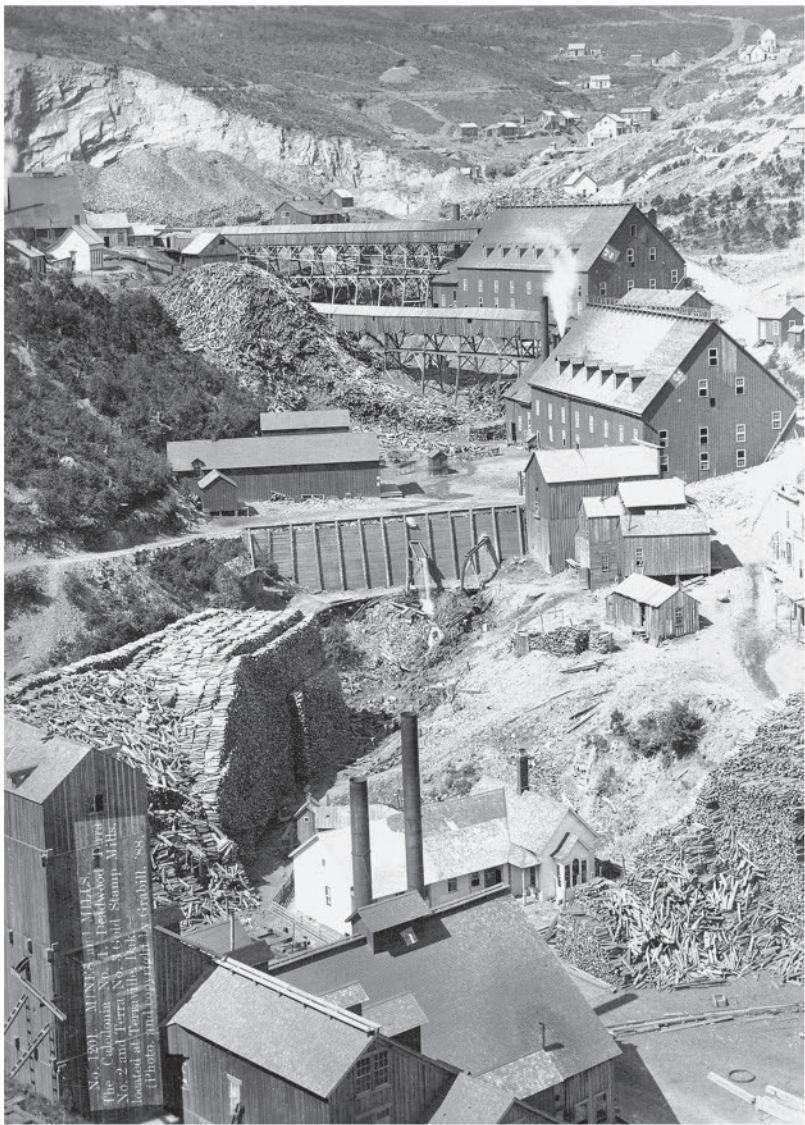
When George Hearst and his partners started buying claims along the Homestake vein and building large gold mills, they brought a new dimension to the region's logging and sawmill industry. In 1878 the 80-stamp Homestake Mill went up, followed the next year by the 120-stamp Golden Star. More would follow, all built with wood and powered by cordwood.⁸ These operations put an unprecedented demand on the forest and made the Homestake the single heaviest wood consumer in the Black Hills. In early 1881, the company estimated that it needed forty thousand cords of firewood, one million feet of mine timbers, and five million board feet of lumber. To meet this demand, the company contracted with area sawmills and opened its own sawmill just south of Lead. By the end of 1881, the Homestake used 25 percent of all the lumber milled in the Black Hills.⁹

6. "Our Deadwood Letter," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, 24 July 1877.

7. F. W. Von Bodungen, letter to "Editor of the Times," sent from Pennington City, D.T. on 3 June 1877, *Black Hills Daily Times*, 8 June 1877; "Mining," *Black Hills Weekly Times*, 8 July 1877; "Lead City," *Daily Press and Dakotian*, 11 July 1877; "Local News," *Black Hills Daily Pioneer*, 13 July 1877.

8. Steven T. Mitchell, *Nuggets to Neutrinos: The Homestake Story* (Self-pub.: Xlibris Corp., 2009), p. 8.

9. "City and Vicinity," *Black Hills Daily Times*, 22 Jan. 1879; "Timber Fire," *Black Hills Daily Times*, 7 Oct. 1879; "Saw Mill Burned," *Black Hills Daily Times*, 14 Oct. 1879; "The Fuel Question," *Black Hills Daily Times*, 30 Dec. 1880; "The Homestake," *Black Hills Daily Pioneer*, 7 Mar. 1879; "The Lumbering Interests," *Black Hills Pioneer*, 1 Jan. 1882.



Black Hills mining operations consumed enormous amounts of timber, as evident in this 1888 photo of the Caledonia, Deadwood Terra, and Terra gold mills in Terraville. Note the stacks of cordwood.

The demand for wood in the Lead-Deadwood area quickly depleted the available trees and sawmill operators scrambled to find more. Just two years after the gold rush hit Deadwood Gulch, the *Black Hills Daily Times* reported that all the timber north and west of the gold camps had either been claimed or consumed.¹⁰ This forced sawmill owners to relocate their operations south of the mineral belt. The Homestake moved a sawmill to Elk Creek, fifteen miles south of Lead, into what was described as the “finest growth of sawing timber” in 1880.¹¹ Hauling the lumber, timbers, and cordwood from the sawmill to the mine, however, offered another challenge, and the Homestake initially contracted with freighters such as the Northwestern Transportation Company to do the work. To increase efficiency, in 1881 the company began building a narrow-gauge railroad known as the Black Hills & Ft. Pierre. After two years of construction, the little rail line ran from Lead to the heart of the timberland along Elk Creek. The company would further extend the railroad over the years, with the tracks eventually reaching Nemo, twenty-eight miles from Lead, where the Homestake would build a large sawmill in 1913.¹²

By the early twentieth century, the Black Hills logging and lumber industry had developed some unique characteristics. The most obvious was the dominance of the Homestake Mining Company. It essentially held dominion over a portion of the northern Black Hills’ timber resources, but its logging operations were a captive enterprise; the company used most of what it produced and sold little on the commercial market. The Homestake did not have to worry about the economic trends that affected the lumber industry or about competitors entering the market. This dynamic allowed several commercial sawmills to operate. A federal study counted forty-two sawmills in 1898. They were small, however, and generally ran only part-time. Their overall impact on the forest was minimal when compared to the Homestake. This left substantial stands of trees in the central

10. “Want a Connecting Link,” *Black Hills Daily Times*, 12 June 1878.

11. Quote in “For Sale,” *Black Hills Daily Times*, 27 Aug. 1880; Untitled, *Black Hills Weekly Times*, 20 Nov. 1880.

12. “The Rails Are Bought,” *Black Hills Daily Pioneer*, 2 Apr. 1881; “Lead,” *Black Hills Weekly Pioneer*, 3 Jan. 1880; “A Good Move,” *Black Hills Daily Times*, 1 July 1880; Mitchell, *Nuggets to Neutrinos*, p. 297; Mildred Fielder, “Railroads of the Black Hills,” *South Dakota Historical Collections* 30 (1960): 72–73.

and southern Black Hills by the time the Lanphere-Hinrichs sawmill opened in 1908.¹³

Another characteristic of the lumber industry was the availability of new markets that came with the expansion of the transportation system. The Homestake had built its own railroad, but the construction of the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad along the eastern edge of the Black Hills from 1885 to 1890 and of the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad through the central Black Hills in 1890 proved a great benefit to small sawmill operators. The railroads needed ties and bridge timbers, and the Elkhorn also created several new towns, including Buffalo Gap, Whitewood, and Belle Fourche, all of which needed lumber. To supply these markets, lumbermen placed their sawmills as close as possible to the railroads and towns they hoped to serve, but the owners also wanted to supply markets outside of South Dakota, such as in Nebraska. Mining men, however, worried that heavy out-of-state sales would cause a timber famine and persuaded the federal government to prohibit the export of Black Hills forest products across state lines. Although many sawmill operators violated the ban, it stayed in effect until 1912, limiting the potential market.¹⁴

13. Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, p. 35; Henry S. Graves, "The Black Hills Forest Reserve," *US Geological Survey, Nineteenth Annual Report, 1897-1898, Part V: Forest Reserves* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), pp. 88-89; C. J. Laughlin, "Black Hills Ponderosa Pine — A Valuable Source of Raw Material," *The Black Hills Engineer* 26 (Mar. 1940): 43.

14. Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills*, pp. 5, 11; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, pp. 9-11, 34; Graves, "The Black Hills Forest Reserve," p. 89; George A. Duthie, "Timber, An Economic Resource of the Black Hills," *Black Hills Engineer* 16, no. 2 (Mar. 1928): 105. As the Forest Service commented in *Black Hills National Forest*, low-grade material killed by fire or insects was not included in the export ban, and this exception opened the door for a sawmill to open in the central Black Hills. From 1898 to 1908, a pine bark beetle infestation killed many trees in the western half of the forest. To control the beetles, the Department of Agriculture contracted with W. J. McLaughlin to salvage the usable wood at a minimum price. The McLaughlin Tie & Timber Company built a sawmill near Nahant that sat along the Burlington rail line and built a logging railroad that extended from there into Wyoming, ending near O'Neil Pass, beginning in 1906. McLaughlin hoped to cut a swath six miles wide and produce ties and bridge supports. The company encountered so many problems that Linde called it "McLaughlin's Tie and Trouble." One issue was that the beetle killed wood quickly became too porous and brittle, causing sales to slump. Then the federal gov-

The ability of the government to block wood exports points to the final feature of the logging industry: the growing role of the federal government. At the time the first sawmills opened, timber men looked at the forest as theirs for the taking, except where claimed by miners and homesteaders. The federal government, however, saw the unclaimed lands as the public domain and closed to loggers. The situation became better defined when Congress passed the Free Timber Act of 1878. Under its provisions, trees were essentially placed off limits, except when located on mineral lands, meaning locations that had shown demonstrable mineral wealth. The law also specified that when trees were harvested, the wood could not be sold commercially, but instead had to be used by the wood cutter.¹⁵ Designed to help settlers and miners who were trying to get established, the law put logging and lumber companies at a disadvantage. In most instances, it made their standard practices illegal, unless they owned the land. Luckily for sawmill operators, the government only enforced the act under zealous secretaries of the interior, such as Carl Schurz (1877–1881) and Lucius Lamar (1885–1888).¹⁶ Schurz and Lamar dispatched agents to enforce the law, and a large violator, such as the Homestake, immediately caught their attention. On more than one occasion, the government brought charges against the company for taking timber off non-mineral lands, asking for a large cash settlement. Because of sympathetic local juries, the Homestake generally avoided severe punishments. Nevertheless, the law proved to be a great nuisance to logging companies.¹⁷

ernment sued McLaughlin for taking timber without authorization. Finally, a 1909 fire destroyed the mill. The company rebuilt but soon closed for good. Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills*, pp. 64–65; Forest Service, *Black Hills National Forest*, pp. 8, 29; “McLaughlin T. & T. Co. Planning to Resume,” *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times*, 9 July 1913; “Tearing Things Up on the McLaughlin Road,” *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times*, 4 July 1916.

15. John Ise, *The United States Forest Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), p. 63; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, pp. 9, 12; “Unjust Timber Laws,” *Black Hills Weekly Times*, 26 Nov. 1881.

16. Ise, *The United States Forest Policy*, pp. 62, 64.

17. Richmond L. Clow, “Timber Users, Timber Savers: The Homestake Mining Company and the First Regulated Timber Harvest,” *South Dakota History* 22, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 220–21; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, p. 13; “Black Hills Timber

Antagonism between the government and sawmill operators, especially the Homestake, only intensified when President Grover Cleveland, under the powers of the Federal Reserve Act of 1891, created the Black Hills Forest Reserve in 1897. Once an area became a reserve, its timber resources were essentially locked up. The original act had given Congress the power to establish rules to sell a reserve's timber, but it had failed to act. The creation of the Black Hills Forest Reserve created such an outcry that South Dakota's congressional delegation, led by Senator Richard Pettigrew, got the reserve status delayed for one year. In the meantime, they pushed the Forest Management Act through Congress in 1897; also known as the Organic Act, it gave the Department of the Interior the power to negotiate timber sales.¹⁸

As the largest violator of timber law in the Black Hills, the Homestake knew the situation needed to change, and its superintendent, Thomas Grier, worked with federal forester Gifford Pinchot to negotiate the first public timber sale in the nation, known as Timber Case No. 1, in 1899. This action set a precedent for all subsequent timber sales. The working relationship between logging companies and the federal government that started with the first timber sale continued when President Theodore Roosevelt transferred the forest reserves from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture and created the National Forests in 1905. This move also brought the Forest Service into existence, along with its management philosophy of sustained yield, or ensuring a continuous supply of timber. Not all sawmill owners willingly accepted the new regulations or costs, but Lanphere-Hinrichs and later Warren-Lamb recognized the importance of working with the Forest Service, especially since the agency controlled just over 70 percent of Black Hills timberland.¹⁹

Thieves," *Union County Courier*, 26 Sept. 1895; "The Homestake Mining Company Settles with the Government for Timber Cut in the Hills," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 30 Aug. 1898.

18. Ise, *The United States Forest Policy*, pp. 109, 117; Clow, "Timber Users, Timber Savers," pp. 222-23; David A. Wolff, *Seth Bullock: Black Hills Lawman* (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2009), p. 148; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, pp. 14-16, 18.

19. Clow, "Timber Users, Timber Savers," pp. 226-31, 234; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, pp. 1, 3, 27-32; Freeman, *Black Hills Forestry*, pp. 42-43; "Lumbering in Black Hills," *Lead Daily Call*, 5 Aug. 1926.

With a new federal agency controlling the forest, an export embargo in place, and several sawmill companies already operating, including the large Homestake mill, the idea of opening a major sawmill in Rapid City may have seemed far-fetched. Nevertheless, William H. Lanphere and his two sons, Harvy (H. W.) and Alfred (A. M.), formed a partnership with Henry W. Hinrichs to start the Lanphere-Hinrichs Lumber Company. The Lanphere family owned lumber companies and Hinrichs operated banking institutions in eastern South Dakota, with their headquarters in Chamberlain. From their location on the Missouri River, these men witnessed the construction of two railroads, the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific and the Chicago and North Western, across western South Dakota to Rapid City in 1907, creating new towns and markets along the way. With money and lumber in demand, they saw Rapid City as the perfect place to profit. Hinrichs would serve as president and the three Lanphere men would hold management positions in the new company.²⁰

Before building the mill, William Lanphere came to town and asked the Business Men's Club to help locate a suitable site. Since the newspapers had already announced that the Lanphere-Hinrichs partnership had purchased a large tract of both private and public timber along Victoria Creek, eleven miles west of Rapid City, most people recognized that the mill should be accessible to the recently completed Crouch Line. This thirty-two-mile-long railroad ran along

20. "A \$100,000 Plant Will Manufacture Lumber," *Black Hills Union*, 22 Mar. 1907; "Kimball Notes," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 18 Jan. 1904; "A Mile A Day: That Is What the Northwestern Promises from Rapid," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 31 May 1906; "New Corporations," *Pierre Weekly Free Press*, 25 July 1907; "New Bank President," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 15 Jan. 1909; "Our Growing Industries," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 18 Oct. 1907; "Lanphere Rites Are Pending," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 14 Jan. 1964; "Sawmill Burned," *Evening Call*, 21 Sept. 1895; "Log Chutes in the Black Hills," *Weekly Pioneer-Times*, 11 Mar. 1915; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States*, 1900, Canova, S.Dak., in ancestry.com. A. B. Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," *Black Hills Engineer* 16, no. 2 (Mar. 1928): 120-21. A nearly identical version of Hood's article also appeared in the national publication *The Timberman*, 29 (May 1928). Hood states that the Lanphere-Hinrichs founders came from Michigan and Wisconsin. More contemporaneous sources, however, show that while they had family connections in those states, the founders actually came from eastern South Dakota. Hinrichs also established the Security Savings Bank in Rapid City.

Rapid Creek from Rapid City to Mystic, in the central Black Hills, passing Victoria Creek at a place known as McGee (or McGee's Landing), where a small sawmill had operated since 1894. With a rail connection nearby, Lanphere surely looked at McGee as a possible location, but nestled in Rapid Canyon, it had too little space for a major mill. Then he also needed to worry about distributing the finished products. Lanphere and his partners planned to sell much of their output between Rapid City and the Missouri River, but they also hoped to ship orders out-of-state, regardless of the export embargo. This meant connecting with the North Western and Milwaukee Railroads. The piece of land Lanphere ultimately selected was owned by the Crouch Line and was near all three railroads.²¹

Anticipating a robust business, the Lanphere-Hinrichs partners imported a large sawmill from Wisconsin, which the *Black Hills Weekly Journal* enthusiastically described as "one of the most complete in the United States."²² It occupied a two-story building that measured fifty by one hundred feet, with an adjoining one-story boiler room. It could cut an estimated thirteen million board feet of lumber per year. The company then diverted part of Rapid Creek to create a log pond five hundred feet long by eighty-five feet wide next to the mill. By floating logs in the pond, the operators could more easily feed them into the sawmill.²³ Along with the mill machinery, the Lanphere-Hinrichs partners also brought in material to build a logging railroad, including a steam engine, rolling stock, and rails. The railroad would branch off the Crouch Line at McGee and follow Victoria Creek into the timber for five miles. To haul the logs directly from the forest to the mill without having to transfer them between railroad cars, they

21. "A \$100,000 Plant Will Manufacture Lumber," *Black Hills Union*, 22 Mar. 1907; "An Immense Affair," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 11 Oct. 1907; "Means New Epoch in the Industrial Life of Rapid City," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 21 Feb. 1908; "Some Good Reasons," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 12 Feb. 1908; Untitled, *Dakota Farmer's Union*, 5 Apr. 1907; Rick W. Mills, *125 Years of Black Hills Railroad* (Hermosa, S.Dak.: Battle Creek Publishing Co., 2004), pp. 82–83.

22. Quote in "An Immense Affair," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 11 Oct. 1907; "Our Growing Industries," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 18 Oct. 1907.

23. "Mill in Operation," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 18 Feb. 1908; "Warren-Lamb Co. Builds Mill Larger Than Old Structure," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 June 1914; C. J. Warren, "The Manufacture of Black Hills Forest Products," *Black Hills Engineer* 16, no. 2 (Mar. 1928): 136.



In 1908, William H. Lanphere and his sons formed a partnership with Henry W. Hinrichs. The Lanphere-Hinrichs Lumber Company built its mill in Rapid City, pictured here in an undated photo.

chose to use the same standard-gauge equipment as the Crouch Line (56.5 inches between the rails). The company then established small logging camps along its railroad to house its wood cutters. Estimates placed the combined cost of the timber, the mill, and the railroad at between \$100,000 and \$150,000.²⁴

Once they opened the mill in early 1908, the business partners quickly ran into problems. One issue was the trees they had purchased. Many of them turned out to be “over-mature,” meaning they had ceased to grow and had deteriorated to where they provided little marketable lumber.²⁵ Then a problem developed with the logging railroad. The company’s plan to use standard-gauge equipment failed to

24. Untitled, *Dakota Farmers’ Leader*, 5 Apr. 1907; “An Immense Affair,” *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 11 Oct. 1907; “Mill in Operation,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 18 Feb. 1908; “Fifty Thousand Feet of Lumber Every Day is the Amount Cut by the Lanphere-Hinrichs Company,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 22 Apr. 1909; “Lanphere-Hinrichs Company is Growing Industry Among Rapid City’s Institutions,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 19 Feb. 1913; “Warren-Lamb Co. Builds Mill Larger Than Old Structure,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 June 1914.

25. Warren, “The Manufacture of Black Hills Forest Products,” p. 135; Duthie, “Timber, An Economic Resource of the Black Hills,” p. 104.

account for the rugged terrain along Victoria Creek. The mountain contours required the tracks to be set at steeper grades and sharper curves than the equipment could easily handle. To remedy this problem, the men narrowed the track gauge and brought in new equipment better suited to a mountain setting. But instead of going to a thirty-six-inch gauge, which most logging railroads used, including the Homestake, they chose a thirty-inch gauge, which proved too narrow for safe operations. Logging superintendent A. B. Hood later reported that "derailments were frequent and wrecks were common."²⁶ The new arrangement also required the company to transfer logs from its narrow-gauge equipment to the Crouch Line's standard-gauge cars at McGee, driving up costs. Despite the issues, the sawmill received four to five carloads of logs per day by 1913.²⁷

After four years of trial and error, the Lanphere-Hinrichs Company had seemingly become a success. The owners had expanded the sawmill to include a planing mill, a machine shop, a blacksmith shop, a store, and an office. The additions allowed the mill to produce a variety of grades and sizes of lumber, useable in everything from building construction to finishing work, and required a work force of 175. Nevertheless, the company struggled to be as productive or as profitable as the owners wanted.²⁸ To bring in capital and further expand operations, they sought new investors, and they soon caught the attention of three sawmill owners from the South: H. C. Crawford, W. H. Harbeson, and Cyrus Carleton Warren. All three men had profited by logging southern pine forests, and they saw a similar opportunity in the Black Hills, especially since the government, realizing the risk of a timber famine had been overstated, had lifted the export embargo in 1912. Once they had invested, the men quickly became involved in running the operation, with the *Rapid City Journal* claiming they brought "new life" to the firm. While Hinrichs initially retained the presidency, Crawford and Harbeson became vice-presidents and

26. Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," pp. 120-21; "Log Train Ditched, Engineer Badly Hurt," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 8 Dec. 1911.

27. "Lanphere-Hinrichs Company is Growing Industry Among Rapid City's Institutions," *Rapid City Journal*, 19 Feb. 1913.

28. Ibid.; Warren, "The Manufacture of Black Hills Forest Products," p. 135; Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," pp. 120-21; "Lanphere-Hinrichs Company," *Rapid City Journal*, 2 Feb. 1910.



Cyrus Carleton Warren (far right), seen here with his wife and children in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1908, had already made a fortune in the Mississippi lumber industry before he became involved with Lanphere-Hinrichs.

Warren sales manager. The Lanphere family no longer had leadership roles and had most likely sold out entirely. A short while later, Hinrichs would also disappear from the company's roster and Harbeson would take over the presidency. The business continued to use the Lanphere-Hinrichs name.²⁹

Of the three investors, Warren was the most important. The *Rapid City Journal* described him as "an old lumberman," who had already made a fortune in Jackson, Mississippi. He came to Rapid City to investigate the region and the Lanphere-Hinrichs operation in the fall of 1912. After several days, he came to believe that a sawmill in the Black Hills had more potential to generate profit than any other lo-

29. Quote in "Lanphere-Hinrichs Company is Growing Industry Among Rapid City's Institutions," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 19 Feb. 1913; "Lumber Company's Fire Loss Will Be Adjusted at Once," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 23 Jan. 1914; "Mill 30 Years Old Today," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 6 Mar. 1937; "City News," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 20 Dec. 1912; Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," pp. 120-21; "Cutting Ponderosa Pine In the Black Hills," *Wood Products* 44, no. 4 (Apr. 1939): 28. W. H. Lanphere's death in late May 1912 may have pushed his relatives to sell. "Died," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 1 June 1912; Harbeson's name is sometimes misspelled as Harbison.



In January 1914, a fire engulfed the Lanphere-Hinrichs sawmill, causing an estimated \$40,000 in damages. Though his partners wanted out, Warren announced he would rebuild.

cation in the northwest. He promptly invested \$50,000, between one-third and one-half of the amount that Lanphere and Hinrichs had originally spent. Despite Harbeson and Crawford taking on leadership roles, Warren became the driving force behind the company. Unlike his partners, Warren and his family moved to Rapid City, and from his sales manager position he worked to extend the company's reach. Warren's importance to the business became more apparent when disaster struck in January 1914.³⁰

Just as the new owners began expanding operations, a fire swept through the sawmill, causing an estimated \$40,000 in damages. Luckily, the Rapid City Fire Department managed to save the machine shop, planing mill, and stored lumber. Harbeson, Crawford, and Warren could also take some comfort in the insurance money. Still, the loss of the mill caused many people in Rapid City to wonder

30. Quote in "Mississippi Lumber Man Invests \$50,000 in Lanphere-Hinrichs," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 4 Oct. 1912; "Lanphere-Hinrichs Company is Growing Industry Among Rapid City's Institutions," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 19 Feb. 1913; "Spectacular Fire Burns Lanphere-Hinrichs Mill," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 16 Jan. 1914; "Lumber Company's Fire Loss Will Be Adjusted at Once," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 23 Jan. 1914; "Mill 30 Years Old Today," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 6 Mar. 1937; Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," pp. 120-21.

about the company's future. Just before the fire, it had purchased a tract of trees along Spring Creek, southwest of Rapid City, from the government and after the fire Harbeson told the *Rapid City Journal* that it probably made more sense to build a mill there. But he made it clear that nothing had been decided, leaving much uncertainty.³¹

Two months later, in March 1914, Warren announced that the sawmill would be rebuilt in Rapid City, but the company had changed. The fire had made Harbeson and Crawford wary of owning a major business so far from their homes, and they wanted out. Warren remained steadfast. To rebuild and buy out Harbeson and Crawford, he needed another investor, and he found one in his brother-in-law, Chauncey T. Lamb, an Illinois businessman. Lamb had prospered in the hardware and publishing businesses but had gained notoriety for reorganizing "large enterprises" on a "scientific basis." With Lamb's investment, Warren bought out Harbeson and Crawford and renamed the operation the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company.³²

As Warren and Lamb rebuilt, Lamb's ideas on scientific management could be seen throughout the operation. The new sawmill was designed to cut nearly 50 percent more lumber than the old one (an estimated total of twenty million feet of lumber per year). Several structures were remodeled to make the plant more efficient and fire-proof, including the addition of state-of-the-art sprinkler systems. Lamb's influence also extended to the logging railroad. The company brought in new equipment and reset the dangerous thirty-inch track gauge to a more reliable thirty-six inches. The two partners had hoped to restart timber operations in the original Victoria Creek area by August, but another disaster threatened those plans. In mid-June, a fire started in the planing mill and spread to the lumber yard, causing

31. "Spectacular Fire Burns Lanphere-Hinrichs Mill," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 16 Jan. 1914; "Lumber Company to Receive \$20,000 for Burned Mill," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 Jan. 1914; "Warren Will Rebuild Bigger Lumber Mills," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 Mar. 1914.

32. "Lamb, Business Organizer Lumber Company, Goes Home," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 24 Sept. 1915; "Warren Will Rebuild Bigger Lumber Mills," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 Mar. 1914; "Richard Warren Lamb," *Rapid City Journal*, 23 June 1993; Warren, "The Manufacture of Black Hills Forest Products," p. 135. Lamb was married to Warren's sister. Some accounts call Lamb "Lyman Lamb," perhaps a nickname, but it does not appear in contemporary newspapers.



After buying out his partners, Warren brought in his brother-in-law, Illinois businessman Chauncey T. Lamb, seen here. Lamb's scientific management practices drastically improved the company's efficiency. Together they renamed it the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company.

an estimated \$100,000 in damages. With nearly back-to-back disasters, Rapid City residents again wondered if the business could endure. The new sawmill, however, had survived and insurance money covered about half the loss, leading Warren to say that the company would resume business as planned.³³

Despite the setback, the new mill opened in September 1914 and would serve as the centerpiece of a large lumber business for the next forty years. Over that time, Warren and Lamb modified the mill and added more buildings, including a new planing mill, a box factory, and other wood manufacturing facilities. They also added a structure for wood storage that they expanded to become one of the largest

33. "Warren-Lamb Co. Builds Mill Larger Than Old Structure," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 June 1914; "Warren-Lamb Company Sustains Second Loss By Fire, Amounts \$100,000," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 26 June 1914; Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," p. 37; E. Steve Cassells, David B. Miller, and Paul V. Miller, *Paha Sapa: Notes on the Cultural Resources of the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming* (Black Hills National Forest, 1984), p. 291.

buildings in the state. With the increased capacity, the sawmill could handle from seven to ten carloads of logs per day. As Warren and Lamb modified the plant, they also developed a variety of products. For instance, degraded and inferior lumber went into specialty grain doors, used in large numbers by railroads to modify box car openings for hauling grain. Standard grade lumber was generally sold for construction, but some was turned into boxes for meat and vegetable packing. The finer material was used for trim and cabinet work. Further innovation came when the company began gluing shorter and previously unusable pieces of wood together to manufacture tables, bread boards, and other consumer goods. The company even sold its sawdust. Warren-Lamb's product diversification offered two advantages. First, it allowed the managers to respond to market changes. When demand for one product fell, they could compensate by producing more of another that continued to sell. Second, the company could use every part of a tree, leading forest officials to describe the operation as an "outstanding" example of "modern forest utilization," an important goal for the Forest Service, especially when compared to the considerable waste of early logging operations.³⁴ In 1928, forest supervisor George Duthie stated that the Warren-Lamb Company used everything except the "squeal of the saw."³⁵

Easily accessible timber remained hard to find. The company had depleted all the cuttable trees in the McGee area in 1915 and needed to locate other timber stands. Wishing to continue working in the Rapid Creek drainage and to use the Crouch Line to haul logs, the managers gained control of a tract of timber along Deer Creek, a few miles west of McGee, near Johnson Siding in Rapid Canyon. During the fall of 1915, Warren and Lamb located new logging camps and a route for their railroad through the Deer Creek drainage. They con-

34. Quote in Warren, "The Manufacture of Black Hills Forest Products," pp. 135, 141-45; "Warren-Lamb Operating on Larger Scale Than Before the Fire," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 26 Feb. 1915; "First Pine Reduced to Lumber and Wood at Warren-Lamb Mill," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 30 Sept. 1914; "Warren-Lamb Co. Forging Ahead While Others Slump; Sponsors Have 'Know How,'" *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 19 Sept. 1915; "Mill 30 Years Old Today," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 6 Mar. 1937; "Lumbering in Black Hills," *Lead Daily Call*, 5 Aug. 1926; "Cutting Ponderosa Pine In the Black Hills," pp. 28-29.

35. Duthie, "Timber, An Economic Resource of the Black Hills," p. 106.

trolled a relatively small amount of timber, however, forcing them to maintain logging operations elsewhere in Rapid Canyon, such as at Pactola and Hisega, and sign contracts with small sawmill owners to provide rough cut timber for their mill. Their ongoing search for a large area of cuttable trees turned up two possibilities. One location sat a few miles south of Rapid Creek, along Spring Creek. The company had previously acquired timber in this area but had done little with it. The other tract was several miles south of Rapid City, on a large block of forested land in the southern Black Hills which the state of South Dakota had acquired through a land swap with the federal government in 1912. While it would eventually become Custer State Park, the state initially designated the area as a state forest, and the state forester wanted it logged for the revenue.³⁶

Warren and Lamb decided to pursue the state land. They believed the Spring Creek terrain was too rugged for a logging railroad, while the state land offered gentler grades and better accessibility. When the state land commissioner took bids in 1916, the Warren-Lamb Company won the right to harvest timber from about 50,000 acres, enough to supply the mill for many years. The company made Fairburn, a town thirty-five miles south of Rapid City on the Chicago and North Western Railway, its logging headquarters. From there Warren and Lamb would initially build their narrow-gauge rail line about fifteen miles west into Galena Gulch, the first area to be harvested. Once done there, the railroad and loggers would move into the French Creek drainage, with operations eventually extending nearly to Sheep Mountain (now known as Mt. Coolidge). At Fairburn, the company constructed a store, a hotel, a warehouse, a locomotive shop, and other support structures. Much like when it used the Crouch Line, the company again needed to transfer the logs from its narrow-gauge

36. "Lumber Company to Receive \$20,000 for Burned Mill," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 Jan. 1914; "Warren-Lamb Co. Forging Ahead While Others Slump; Sponsors Have 'Know How'," "Butler's Big Contract," *Lead Daily Call*, 8 Dec. 1916; "City in Brief," *Lead Daily Call*, 7 Feb. 1919; "State Sold Something it Did Not Own," *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times*, 14 Jan. 1917; Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," pp. 37, 162; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, p. 37; "Timber sales, Deer Creek Unit, 1915-1918, and Spring Creek, 1916-1917, 1920," Warren-Lamb Lumber Company, box 3, folders FF6, FF7, box 4, folders FF35, FF36, FF 37, Black Hills National Forest, U.S. Forest Service Collection, Denver Public Library.



Having to transfer logs from standard-gauge cars to narrow-gauge cars, as captured in this 1915 photo taken near McGee, impeded the Warren-Lamb mill from running at full capacity.

cars to the North Western's standard-gauge cars for the trip from Fairburn to Rapid City.³⁷

Little went as planned. Soon after news of the sale went public, federal foresters claimed that the land exchange had never been finalized, making the timber sale invalid. Although President William Howard Taft had approved the transfer in 1912, the secretary of the interior asserted that Congress needed to approve it, which had not happened. Warren, Lamb, and their legal counsel, Judge Levi McGee, quickly went to Washington to rectify the situation. Despite congressional inaction until 1918, Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane gave Warren and Lamb the go-ahead soon after they arrived. In the meantime, all work in the state forest had stopped.³⁸ When logging

37. Untitled, *Custer Weekly Chronicle*, 22 Dec. 1917; "Butler's Big Contract," *Lead Daily Call*, 8 Dec. 1916; Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," pp. 121-22; "State Sold Something it Did Not Own,"; "Deadwood Locals," *Deadwood Weekly Pioneer-Times*, 13 Sept. 1917; Cassells et al., *Paha Sapa*, p. 291.

38. "President Taft Authorizes Exchange of School Lands," *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times*, 5 Mar. 1912; "State Sold Something it Did Not Own"; "Secretary Lane



One headache for the company in the early years was its log loader, a cumbersome machine. As this photo is undated, it is unclear if this is the original loader or the company's improved design.

finally began in fall 1917, the supply of logs failed to meet expectations. Part of the problem was the cumbersome machine the company used for loading. Train crews struggled to get the device around the railroad's sharp curves, and once they did, they found the harvestable timber widely scattered, requiring them to relocate the machine frequently. Because of the loading problems, the men were forced to use the traditional horse jammer method of loading. This technique employed ropes, pulleys, and horsepower to hoist logs up a skid way and onto a waiting rail car, a slow process that prevented shipping enough timber to Rapid City to keep the mill operating at capacity.³⁹

While the company's mechanics worked on a new loading machine, Warren and Lamb needed to find more trees to make up for the shortfall, and they again looked west of Rapid City. The company had hoped to abandon this area when it moved to Fairburn, but the problems in the state forest confined logging crews along Rapid Creek. The managers now needed to find a larger stand of harvestable trees, and they found it in the Slate Creek drainage, south of Rapid Canyon. They

Makes Decision Benefitting Black Hills Forest Section," *Pierre Weekly Free Press*, 25 Jan. 1917; "Peter Norbeck's Dream Takes Shape," *Rapid City Journal*, 11 May 1969.

39. Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," pp. 121-26.



Warren-Lamb built a six-mile-long flume to move logs through the rugged terrain of the Slate Creek area, a section of which was photographed by Theo R. Cochran in 1923. By the time the flume was completed, the company's new log loader had already made it redundant.

had previously rejected the Spring Creek area because of its rugged terrain, and the Slate Creek country presented similar challenges. Warren and Lamb, however, came up with a solution. They decided to build a log flume, a chute that uses water and gravity to move logs down a decline. Black Hills mining companies had used flumes to relocate water since the start of the gold rush and logging companies in other parts of the country had often utilized flumes, but a log flume had never been tried in the Black Hills. While the idea sounds simple, a flume must be engineered with a steady grade, easy curves, and adequate water to successfully move logs. With limited local expertise, Warren and Lamb hired experienced men from outside the region to supervise construction. Besides building a massive wooden flume, the project required the construction of small dams on Slate Creek, a sawmill, and two construction camps.⁴⁰

40. "Butler's Big Contract"; "City in Brief," *Lead Daily Call*, 7 Feb. 1919; "Build Dam and Flume to Float Hills Logs," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 23 Sept. 1920; Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," pp. 121-26; Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills*, 58-59.

It took over a year to complete the six-mile-long flume, and when it began transporting logs in the fall of 1920, the Sioux Falls *Daily Argus-Leader* called it a “stupendous undertaking.”⁴¹ With its anticipated efficiency, the company planned to log out the Slate Creek area in two years. Instead, several problems developed that hurt the flume’s performance. Soon after it opened, a cloud burst dumped enough water to wash out entire sections. Conversely, dry periods prevented it from operating. Then the company struggled with the integrity of the dams. The fractured nature of the country rock allowed the water to drain away, causing much frustration. But according to A. B. Hood the “greatest misfortune” was that the Slate Creek area had fewer harvestable trees than anticipated.⁴² These issues meant that the company only used the flume periodically, and when it closed it in 1924, it was viewed as a failure. Ironically, by the time the flume had opened in 1920, the company had already developed a log loader suitable for use in the state forest. This achievement alleviated some of the frustrations.⁴³

With the new loader, the company hoped to log the state forest lands without any further issues. But yet another contingency arose, again forcing the Warren-Lamb Company to develop an innovative solution. In 1919, led by Governor Peter Norbeck, the state government incorporated the state forest lands into Custer State Park. With this change the state administrators decided to limit logging in the park, relegating the Warren-Lamb operation to the remote Bear Gulch area, north of where the loggers had previously cut. The Warren-Lamb managers quickly realized that a mountain ridge prevented the rail line from easily accessing Bear Gulch. With a considerable investment in the Fairburn operations, they wanted to continue working in the state park. After exploring various options, the company’s railroad men decided to build an incline rail system, wherein crews would haul empty and full logging cars up and down the steep slopes of the divide with the aid of a large hoist. Despite the oper-

41. Quote in “Build Dam and Flume to Float Hills Logs,” *Daily Argus-Leader*, 23 Sept. 1920; the Sioux Falls article stated that the flume was eleven miles long. Hood reported it was six miles in “Logging Operations in the Black Hills,” p. 123, and in “City Topics,” the *Rapid City Daily Journal* said it was seven miles long, 25 July 1927.

42. Hood, “Logging Operations in the Black Hills,” p. 123.

43. Ibid.

ating challenges, the incline rail system worked so well that for the first time in company history, one location provided all the logs the mill needed, allowing it to produce seventeen million board feet of lumber in 1925. The Homestake produced nine million board feet of lumber during that year, and together the two operations accounted for about 63 percent of all lumber produced in the Black Hills.⁴⁴

By 1926, the Warren-Lamb Company had nearly run out of harvestable trees in Custer State Park, and it once again investigated the Spring Creek drainage. The managers had discounted the area ten years before, but they knew it well, especially since they had worked with E. F. Carter, who ran a small sawmill on Spring Creek.⁴⁵ After reviewing their options, the company signed a contract with the Forest Service for 62 million feet of timber, which local newspapers described as the "largest sale of timber ever made in the Black Hills." The area extended from just west of Rapid City toward the old gold camp of Sheridan in the central Black Hills. Much of the region had never been logged. The Forest Service saw it as overgrown with mature trees that would need to be removed to make room for young trees and to introduce sustained yield, and they felt the Warren-Lamb Company could make it happen.⁴⁶ The agency, however, knew that the company had previously bypassed the area. Consequently, forest officials granted the Warren-Lamb Company a low-cost contract valid for fifteen years.⁴⁷

To reach Spring Creek by rail, the company needed to locate the easiest possible route. After exploring several gulches that entered

44. Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills*, pp. 39–41; "Warren-Lamb Running Mill at Full Blast," *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times*, 15 Sept. 1923; "Lumbering in Black Hills," *Lead Daily Call*, 5 Aug. 1926; Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," p. 127; Jessie Y. Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park* (Custer, S.Dak.: Jessie Y. Sundstrom, 1994), p. 106.

45. "Loses a Finger in Sawmill Sprocket Wheel," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 June 1920; "Warren-Lamb Sawmill Opens Next Wednesday," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 16 Oct. 1925; "Fairburn," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 28 Dec. 1926; "Warren-Lamb Running Mill at Full Blast," *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times*, 15 Sept. 1923.

46. "Company Starts Building 50 Miles of Railway to Tap Region," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 9 Sept. 1926; Duthie, "Timber, An Economic Resource of the Black Hills," p. 104.

47. Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, pp. 53, 56–57; Freeman, *Black Hills Forestry*, pp. 84–85.

Rapid Canyon, engineers determined that a route up Scott's Canyon, about six miles west of Rapid City, had the best features. The small drainage area made it less prone to flooding and a small branch canyon offered access to a higher plateau leading to Spring Creek. Despite these advantages, the route still required several 4 percent grades, a section of 6 percent grade, and many sharp curves within the first four miles. One observer stated that the rail line's twists and turns covered in six miles what a straight line could cover in one. It proved workable, however. The logging railroad would eventually extend over twenty miles along Spring Creek, not counting several temporary branch lines that were built into the cutting areas.⁴⁸

Since their logging railroad entered Rapid Canyon six miles from Rapid City, the Warren-Lamb managers decided to eliminate the inefficiency of transferring logs from narrow-gauge to standard-gauge rail cars. Along with constructing the Spring Creek line, they contracted with the Crouch Line to build a third rail along its tracks from Tittle Springs (where Scott's Canyon joins Rapid Creek) to Rapid City. This arrangement created a continuous narrow-gauge system from the timber loading platforms in the forest to the sawmill.⁴⁹ This direct connection could have undermined the Crouch Line's profitability, but the Warren-Lamb owners had previously taken steps to ensure that this critical link through Rapid Canyon stayed in business. In 1920, the Crouch Line's owners had announced plans to abandon the little railroad, stating that business had been declining and dividends were unsatisfactory. In response, Rapid City's Commercial Club, with Lamb playing an integral role, decided to purchase the line. To determine a fair selling price, the Commercial Club sent Lamb to meet with the owners on the East Coast. Once they came to an agreement and closed the deal, Lamb—who already served as president of Warren-Lamb—became president of the railroad. While he and other Warren-Lamb executives no doubt appreciated the short line's im-

48. Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," pp. 127-28; Glen Rounds, *The Whistle Punk of Camp 15* (New York: Holiday House, 1937, 1959), p. 23. Rounds worked for the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company as a young man and wrote this book about his adventures, for young adults, later in life. While he changed the names of locations, the story clearly takes place in the Black Hills.

49. Hood, "Logging Operations in the Black Hills," p. 128.



The Warren-Lamb company built several logging camps throughout the Black Hills. This one is Camp 2 in the Slate Creek drainage.

portance to Rapid City, they were clearly more interested in preserving it for their own benefit.⁵⁰

Besides working more closely with the Crouch Line, the Warren-Lamb Company also made other changes as its loggers advanced into the Spring Creek drainage. To better handle the loaded logging cars, it purchased a forty-two-ton narrow-gauge locomotive known as a Heisler. With a geared drive shaft, it was designed to handle sharp curves and steep inclines. The company already operated similar engines known as Shays, but they were smaller and less powerful and were relegated to the shorter branch lines. The Heisler could haul up to twenty-four loaded cars directly from the forest to the Rapid City mill. A. B. Hood stated that it “operated near to perfection.”⁵¹ The company also acquired gasoline-powered skidders to drag trees up steep slopes and ten-ton trucks to haul them to loading docks next to the rail line. Along with refining its haulage system, Warren-Lamb

50. “R. C., B. H. & W. Will Not Be Junked; Will Be Purchased by the Citizens of Rapid City,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 19 Aug. 1920; “Meeting of Stockholders R. C., B. H. & W. R. R.,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 21 Jan. 1921; “Rapid Canyon Line May be ‘Junked,’” *Custer Weekly Chronicle*, 19 June 1920.

51. Hood, “Logging Operations in the Black Hills,” pp. 129–31.

had also standardized its operating practices. Since logs could be handled more easily when the ground was frozen or had a snow cover, the company decided to log in the winter, with the men stockpiling trees so the mill could run year-round. The seasonal nature of the work meant recruiting loggers every fall, but that generally caused little problem. As Hood reported, a company representative would go to Minneapolis, Duluth, and other northern locations to recruit experienced woodsmen, often with good success. As Hood explained, the “best men” liked the Black Hills because the “snows are not deep; there is little underbrush and we have warmer weather.” Also, the winter work “fits in nicely” with farming, construction, and Great Lakes shipping.⁵²

As the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company developed the Spring Creek operations in the winter of 1927, it set up three logging camps of seventy men each and two smaller railroad camps. As the loggers advanced through the forest, the company moved the camps. To distinguish one from another, they were numbered consecutively. Camp 1 was near the junction of Scott’s and Rapid Canyons, and by the time the Spring Creek operations ended in 1939, Camp 16 had just been established. Each of the camps looked basically the same, with a wash house, a cook shack, a mess hall, a commissary, an office, bunk houses, and a blacksmith shop, all straddling a dirt road. Because they were temporary, living conditions were primitive. For instance, the eight-man bunk houses had fifty-gallon drum stoves to heat water and to supplement the steam heat.⁵³ The company also provided important amenities such as electric lights and good food. According to Hood, a “cooperative spirit” developed that resulted in a “steady stream of logs going to the mill.”⁵⁴

While the company strived to have a continuous supply of logs, problems would still interrupt operations. Fires were a constant menace. The destruction of the Rapid City plant in 1914 demonstrated the sawmill’s vulnerability, and periodic sawdust fires kept everyone vig-

52. Quote in “Woodsmen Come; Local Mill Looks for Big Winter,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 29 Sept. 1923; Hood, “Logging Operations in the Black Hills,” pp. 131–32.

53. Rounds, *The Whistle Punk of Camp 15*, pp. 17, 19, 27, 31; Hood, “Logging Operations in the Black Hills,” pp. 131–32; “Timbering Demonstration,” *Rapid City Journal*, 15 June 1939.

54. Hood, “Logging Operations in the Black Hills,” p. 131.



A group of Warren-Lamb workers posed for this undated photo at Camp 2 in the Slate Creek drainage, ca. 1919–1921.

ilant. Forest fires were perhaps an even bigger threat. In 1919, a spark from a steam engine ignited discarded tree branches west of Fairburn, resulting in a fire that burned over five hundred acres of timber and \$50,000 of logs that the company had readied for shipment. A 1926 fire of unknown origin started on Spring Creek, near Warren-Lamb's contract area. It burned a timber camp, a small sawmill, and over 1,200 acres of marketable timber valued at an estimated \$100,000. A forest ranger described it as the "largest and most destructive forest fire" in over a decade, with Warren-Lamb the "heaviest financial loser."⁵⁵ At 22,000 acres, the 1939 McVey Burn between Hill City and Silver City was the Black Hills' largest fire until the 2000 Jasper Fire burned over 83,500 acres. Although the Warren-Lamb holdings were

55. Quote in M. J. Webber, Forest Ranger, "The Spring Creek Forest Fire," *Black Hills Engineer* 16, no. 2 (Mar. 1928): 116, 118; "Lose \$50,000 in Fairburn Fire," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 July 1919; "Damage of Forest Fire Was \$100,000," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 8 May 1926; "Peter Norbeck's Dream Takes Shape," *Rapid City Journal*, 11 May 1969; "Disastrous Fire in State Preserve," *Custer Weekly Chronicle*, 26 July 1919. Sawdust fires seem to have become much more prevalent after the sawmill shut down in the 1950s. The *Rapid City Journal* reported seven sawdust fires from 11 Aug. 1959 through 30 June 1970.

outside of the McVey Burn, the company still closed its sawmill and camps so the men could fight the fire.⁵⁶

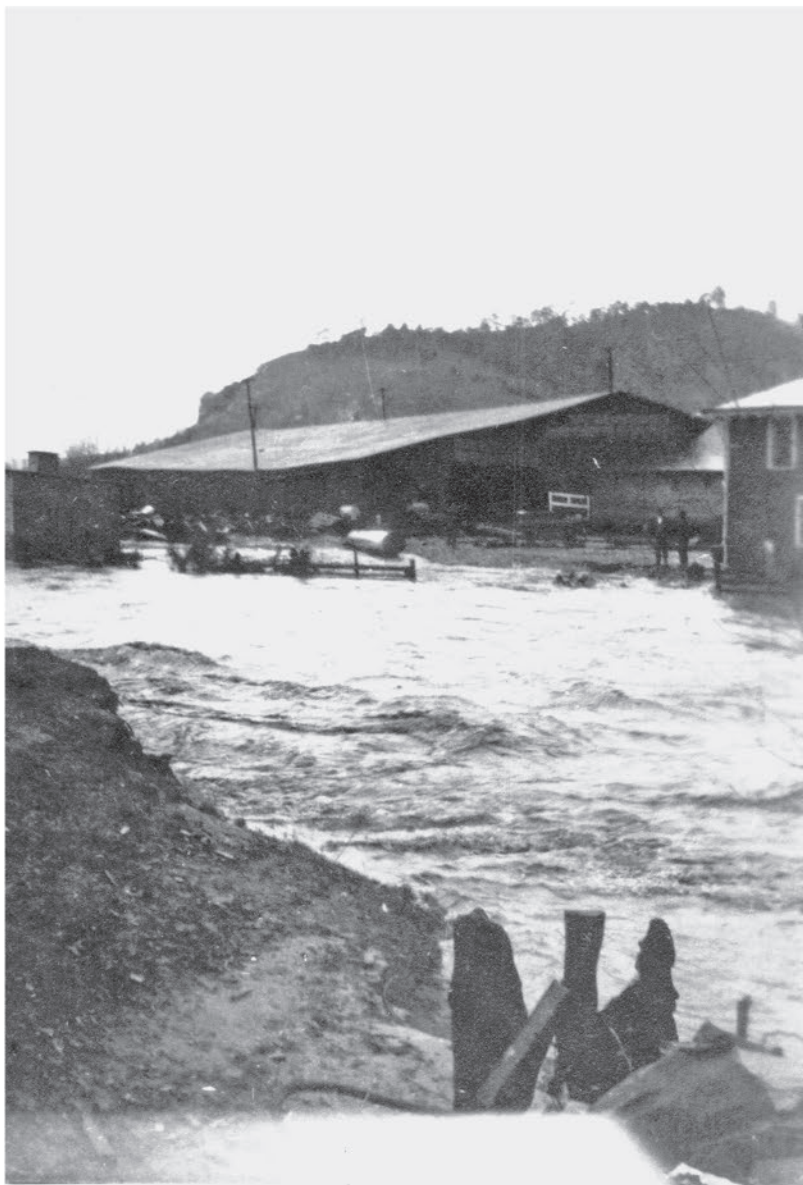
Flooding also caused problems. As previously mentioned, excess water washed out the flume soon after it opened. With the company's railroad running through canyons and crossing streams, cloudbursts also occasionally removed tracks and took out bridges. In August 1915, not long after Warren and Lamb acquired the business, a heavy rain ripped up parts of the railroad in the Victoria Creek drainage. One report stated that rails were "bent around trees in all kinds of shapes."⁵⁷ High water in Rapid Creek could be especially destructive. Not only did the Crouch Line parallel the creek, but the Rapid City sawmill sat next to it. A flood in the spring of 1920 partially submerged the sawmill and the storage yard, washing away thousands of feet of logs and lumber. The heavy loss motivated the company to issue a public notice requesting the return of any recovered material and stating that if a person kept or sold any of it, Warren-Lamb would consider it "stealing" and take legal action. Concerns over high water would haunt the company until the day it closed.⁵⁸

National economic changes also affected the company. Soon after Warren and Lamb opened their new mill in 1914, World War I stimulated the nation's economy and increased the demand for lumber. The partners naturally expanded production and hired more workers. South Dakota's industrial commissioner estimated that the workforce at the mill and in the forest grew to five hundred. To attract employees in the war heated economy, the company had to pay upwards of \$4.50 per day, a 10 percent advance over pre-war wages. In 1918 the mill workers, however, saw an opportunity for further gains and staged a walkout, demanding a reduction in the workday from ten hours to eight. Warren responded that since the company had recently insti-

56. "Hills Fire Races Out of Control," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 11 July 1939; "Huge Blaze Now Under Control," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 12 July 1939; "Replanting the Jasper Fire Area," *Black Hills Pioneer*, 28 Apr. 2018; Forest Service, *Black Hills National Forest*, pp. 16-17.

57. "McGee's Siding," *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, 27 Aug. 1915.

58. "Notice to Finders of Lath and Lumber Along Rapid Creek," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 19 May 1920; "All Communication in Deadwood Cut," *Deadwood Weekly Pioneer-Times*, 13 May 1920; "Northern Black Hills Are Completely Isolated Today," *Lead Daily Call*, 12 May 1920.



Along with fires, floods were a constant menace, such as this one that hit Rapid City in 1918. Two years later, another flood washed away thousands of feet of logs from the Warren-Lamb lumber yard.

tuted a wage increase, it could not grant any more concessions. If it did, it would not be able to compete with the Minnesota lumber mills that were working ten-hour days, and would soon close. The workers backed down. When the war ended, the boom quickly disappeared. Prices for farm commodities collapsed. South Dakota and the nation at large fell on hard times. Warren-Lamb felt the effects almost immediately. Lumber sales fell and prices dropped, forcing the company to cut employees and wages while stopping some operations, such as box manufacturing. It kept the sawmill running, however, until the storage yard filled with lumber. The managers then closed the mill near the end of 1920, keeping about fifty workers to handle day-to-day operations. The mill would remain closed for nearly a year.⁵⁹

As Warren anticipated, the economic difficulties did not last. When he announced the initial cutbacks at the plant, he had also observed that a national construction boom would soon follow, especially since lumber prices had dropped. He was correct. The nation quickly returned to prosperity, and sawmills across the country experienced more demand. Lumber production in the Black Hills increased throughout the 1920s, but most of it was shipped out of state. Prices for farm commodities remained low, causing South Dakota to miss out on the national prosperity. Nevertheless, the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company grew in the 1920s, adding employees until nearly 300 people worked at the sawmill and over 100 in the forest by 1928. Wages also increased, but they did not return to wartime levels. Perhaps tak-

59. "General Business Conditions Good," *Lead Daily Call*, 2 Aug. 1917; "Men at Warren-Lamb Mill Want 8-Hour Day," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 2 Apr. 1918; "Lumber Co. To Close Few Depts.," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 31 Dec. 1920; "Big Saw Mill to Operate Again," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 1 Dec. 1921; "Will Curtail Output," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 22 Nov. 1920; "Large Lumber Company Resumes After Shutdown," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 7 Dec. 1921; Charles McCaffree, *Third Annual Report of the South Dakota Industrial Commissioner* (Pierre: State of South Dakota, 1920), p. 12; Irwin D. Aldrich, *Fourth Annual Report of the South Dakota Industrial Commissioner* (Pierre: State of South Dakota, 1921), p. 13; Arthur Cecil Bining and Thomas C. Cochran, *The Rise of American Economic Life*, 4th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), pp. 52-121; George Donelson Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson, Prentice Hall, 2004), pp. 116-17.

ing advantage of South Dakota's economic plight, Warren-Lamb paid an average wage of \$3.35 per day in 1928.⁶⁰

The Great Depression ended the national boom. Soon after the downturn began in late 1929, demand for lumber began to slip, forcing Warren-Lamb's managers to drop prices, slash production, and reduce the total workforce to about 150, a significant change from the recent high of four hundred. The managers then cut wages by over 30 percent, dropping the average wage to \$2.88 per day, with some laborers reportedly making as little as \$1.25. The men saw the cuts as draconian, especially since the Homestake was paying \$3.50 per day at its Nemo sawmill. In May 1931 they responded by organizing a "Sawmill Workers Union," an affiliate of Rapid City's Central Labor Union and the American Federation of Labor. Soon after organizing, they issued a statement of grievances with six demands, focusing primarily on restoring the previous wage scale. Warren, serving as president and general manager at the time, refused to budge. Instead, he attempted again to explain the situation. He stated that the Depression had hit the lumber industry the "hardest" and that the plant was already operating at a loss. In fact, he warned that it may have to shut down permanently. He also tried to rationalize the pay cut: the company store had decreased its prices, making up for much of the workers' lost income.⁶¹ One day later, the company suddenly closed the plant. When

60. "Lumber Co. To Close Few Depts.," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 31 Dec. 1920; "Warren-Lamb Ships Two Cars Lumber to Buffalo," *Lead Daily Call*, 8 Apr. 1925; "Hills, Timber Cut Larger but Is Still Below Annual Wood Growth," *Lead Daily Call*, 13 Mar. 1926; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, pp. 42-43; S. A. Travis, *Ninth Annual Report of the South Dakota Industrial Commissioner* (Pierre: State of South Dakota, 1926), p. 16; F. L. Perry, *Eleventh Annual Report of the South Dakota Industrial Commissioner* (Pierre: State of South Dakota, 1928), p. 15; Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 4th ed., rev. John E. Miller (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2004), p. 277. The increase in annual lumber production in the 1920s can be traced in the newspapers. For instance, on 15 Aug. 1923 in "Timber Production in Rocky Mountain District," the *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times* reported a 20 percent increase in lumber production for 1922 over 1921, and then in "Timber Production in Rocky Mountain District," the *Deadwood Telegram*, 27 Dec. 1924, reported a 12 percent increase for 1923 over 1922. Later in the decade, just before the Depression hit, "5,000,000 Acres Unsuitable for Farming Should Be Planted to Trees, Kriebs Says," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 6 Nov. 1929, reported a 15 percent increase over 1928 for South Dakota.

61. "See No Prospect Trouble at Mill," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 26 May 1931;

company manager James Warren, C. C. Warren's son, tried to justify the move, he pointed to the necessity of reducing the company's inventory, avoiding any mention of the union. The workers, however, took the closure as a lockout, and responded by announcing a strike in late May 1931. If the plant reopened, the men would only return at the old wage scale.⁶²

The labor struggle started out quietly, but tensions grew as the weeks passed, resulting in more excitement and drama than Rapid City had seen in years. As the strike began, union pickets guarded the plant's main entrance at 12th and Omaha Streets, warning away job seekers. They paid little attention to the ten men the company brought back to work in the lumber stacks. But as the days passed and more men entered the plant, suspicions grew that the company was reopening with strikebreakers and trouble soon followed. One mid-June evening, as a work shift ended, pickets and protestors greeted the exiting employees by throwing "several cases of eggs." A Rapid City newspaper described the first encounter as a "skirmish." The next morning over one hundred strikers and their families congregated near the plant's main entrance, while smaller groups collected at other access points, stopping workers from entering. As more protestors gathered, James Warren attempted to drive away from the mill. The throng pelted his car with a shower of rotten eggs. Company officials responded by filing a complaint, and Judge Harold R. Henley issued a restraining order stating the strikers could not block the gates, threaten violence, or damage property.⁶³

"Peaceful Debate Over Mill Wages Indicated Today," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 28 May 1931; "Lumber Business On Increase Here," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 Aug. 1937; D. R. Perkins, *Fourteenth Annual Report of the South Dakota Industrial Commissioner* (Pierre: State of South Dakota, 1931), p. 21; The 26 May 1931 *Rapid City Daily Journal* article refers to 150 employees, while the State Industrial Commissioner found only 61 in 1931. From the circumstances surrounding the event, the *Journal* is probably more accurate. Long-time Warren-Lamb president, C. T. Lamb, died in July 1930. "Chauncey Lamb Dies in West," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 26 July 1930.

62. "Warren Lamb Mill Down for Season," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 27 May 1931; "Lumber Company Employes [sic] Strike," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 28 May 1931.

63. "Court Restrains Mill Workers," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 13 June 1931; "Pickets Posted Today at Warren-Lamb Mill," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 1 June 1931; "Armistice Today in Mill Dispute," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 15 June 1931.

Disturbances continued despite the restraining order. Nearly one hundred union members and sympathizers returned to the plant's main gate the next morning and blocked company officials from entering. Sheriff H. A. Nielsen, with the assistance of deputies and local police, arrested all the protestors and marched them to the municipal auditorium, the only public building large enough to hold the crowd. In the afternoon, the men were taken to the county courthouse to stand trial for violating the injunction. Since the proceedings would run for several days and the county could not house all the prisoners, the judge released any defendant who promised to refrain from picketing and to return to court the next day. All but eight men agreed. With the promises in hand, the sheriff expected few problems. Instead, twenty-nine women, including wives, daughters, and sympathizers, appeared at the gate and unsuccessfully tried to stop cars carrying President Warren and plant manager A. B. Hood. Much like the previous day, Nielsen appeared and arrested them. In this instance, he headed them to the American Legion Hall, and as they journeyed through Rapid City more women joined the march.⁶⁴

After several days of protests, quiet finally returned to the Warren-Lamb plant. The *Rapid City Journal* speculated that the arrests had discouraged the strikers, but other factors probably played a part. For one, Albert Maag, the president of South Dakota's Federation of Labor, arrived in town and met with the local union leadership. While he failed to deliver any tangible results, he may have calmed the situation. For another, Judge Hanley, instead of punishing the protestors, released them from custody and modified the restraining order to strike a balance between keeping the peace and upholding the right to picket. He ordered the company to close all gates except the main entrance. This action would allow the union to watch who was coming and going and discourage people from entering. The judge, however, limited the union to just three pickets.⁶⁵

64. "State Federation of Labor Leader Confers on Strike," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 18 June 1931; "Underpaid Workers Get Taste of Injunction Racket," *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, 17 June 1931, "Arrest Women in Rapid City Labor Trouble," *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, 18 June 1931; "40 Laborers Held in Jail Last Night," *Lead Daily Call*, 18 June 1931.

65. "State Federation of Labor Leader Confers on Strike," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 18 June 1931; "Court Explains, Modifies, Order in Mill Strike," *Rapid City Daily*

An uneasy peace settled over the scene for the next several weeks. The two sides entered negotiations, but as they met, the company managers hired more men and even restarted the sawmill in mid-July. The union protested and after muted threats the company closed the mill and promised to keep it closed. The situation deteriorated to violence when the strikers noticed renewed activity at the plant just days later. In late July, forty strikers crashed the plant's gate with the goal of removing any workers. With both sides swinging clubs, sticks, and iron bars, several men suffered injuries, including the union secretary and company managers James Warren and A. B. Hood. When the police finally broke up the melee, they arrested twenty-two union men. As the officers marched them to jail, the men yelled that they had to take matters into their own hands, "or it never would be settled."⁶⁶ The violence was not quite done. The day after the riot, three striking employees, including "Hammering" Huntley, who moonlighted as a prize fighter, pulled a mill worker from his car and reportedly beat him.⁶⁷

As tempers cooled, union officials announced that its members had signed a "resolution of regret." It included a promise to refrain from further violence, but local law enforcement remained unconvinced. The strike had dragged on for six weeks. Tensions remained high. Concerned about what might come next, the sheriff's department began working with Robert Blaine, a supposed undercover agent with a dubious past. He soon reported that the union had hired a man to blow up the plant and even pinpointed the day and time. On the night of 5 August 1931, a sheriff's posse of seven men hid behind a cache of gasoline mysteriously stashed just to the west of company grounds, near an old hydroelectric plant. As Blaine and the supposed bomber, John ("Blackie") Borland, approached, the officers yelled

Journal, 19 June 1931; "40 Laborers Held in Jail Last Night," *Lead Daily Call*, 18 June 1931.

66. Quote in "Riot Staged at Sawmill Today," *Lead Daily Call*, 25 July 1931; "Parley Is Held on Mill Strike," *Lead Daily Call*, 17 July 1931; "Sawmill Strike in Court Again," *Lead Daily Call*, 29 July 1931; "Riot is Staged in Mill Strike at Rapid City," *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, 26 July 1931; "Continue Confab on Strike Issue," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 8 July 1931; "All Quiet Now at Lumber Mill," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 13 July 1931.

67. "Hammering Huntley is Jailed in Strike Row," *Lead Daily Call*, 27 July 1931, "Sawmill Strike in Court Again," *Lead Daily Call*, 29 July 1931.

"hands up." Blaine quickly complied, but Borland reportedly turned to flee. Without hesitation, a deputy shot and killed Borland. As he fell, he allegedly dropped a bottle of nitroglycerin, proof to the sheriff that he had intended to destroy the plant.⁶⁸

As the circumstances of the supposed bombing attempt came out, what actually happened became lost. Blaine initially claimed that Claude Barton, state organizer for the American Federation of Labor, had hired Borland to carry out the deed. But his story quickly unraveled. Several people swore that they had been with Barton at the time Blaine claimed that he had paid the supposed bomber. Once Barton had been cleared, the investigation quickly came to a dead end. If "undercover agent" Blaine actually knew anything about Borland's intentions, he did not share them, and the incident remained unsolved. One newspaper expressed frustration over the entire affair, speculating that Borland may have been set up by anti-union forces hoping to foment anger against the strikers. In the end, Blaine pled guilty to perjury and a circuit court judge sentenced him to the state penitentiary for "ten years at hard labor." After an unsuccessful search for relatives, the state's attorney had John Borland buried in a Rapid City cemetery.⁶⁹

With the failed investigation, some people still suspected that disgruntled workers wanted to destroy the Warren-Lamb facility. Those suspicions seemed to be confirmed when a fire swept through the mill's storage area on 13 September, about a month after the alleged bombing attempt. Extremely dry conditions allowed the flames to

68. Quote in "Strike Situation Quiet Here Now," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 5 Aug. 1931; "Investigator Says Barton Was Man Hiring Borland," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 10 Aug. 1931; "Man Killed In Plot to Blow Up Lumber Mill," *Lead Daily Call*, 6 Aug. 1931; "Seek Identity of Man Slain in Mill Strike," *Lead Daily Call*, 7 Aug. 1931; "Denver Man Killed by Sheriff's Posse in Rapid City Plot," *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, 7 Aug. 1931.

69. "The Mystery Remains," *Rapid City Guide* reference in *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, 16 Aug. 1931; "Blaine Draws Ten Years in State Prison," *Weekly Pioneer-Times*, 19 Nov. 1931; "Investigator Says Barton Was Man Hiring Borland," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 10 Aug. 1931; "File Information Against Blaine," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 12 Aug. 1931; "Bury Borland; Efforts to Find Family Fail," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 18 Aug. 1931; "Hard labor" quote from *State of South Dakota v. Robert Blaine*, "Register of Actions," 17 Nov. 1931, Pennington County Circuit Court, Rapid City, S.Dak.



On 13 September 1931, a fire swept through the Warren-Lamb facility and destroyed \$130,000 of lumber. Some suspected arson by disgruntled workers, but with the extremely dry conditions, any spark could have started it.

spread through the entire yard, destroying upwards of twelve million board feet of lumber valued at \$130,000. Rumors about the fire's origin became rampant, with some people believing it had been arson. C. C. Warren, however, refused to speculate on how it began. He just stated that the plant was "dry as timber," and any spark could have started it. In fact, since insurance covered the loss, he seemed unconcerned.⁷⁰

The South Dakota insurance department, however, took the charge of arson much more seriously. A plant watchman, Albert Stevens, claimed that a fellow guard, Leonard Jernigan, had admitted to setting the fire. Jernigan had left town soon after the blaze. Although the evidence was slim, it still convinced the insurance department to send an investigator, Norris Hendrikson, after Jernigan. For nearly two years, the insurance man tracked the suspect from one labor camp to the next, traveling thousands of miles. He finally caught up

70. "Millions of Feet of Sawmill Stock Burned," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 14 Sept. 1931; "Suspect in Fire at Lumber Mill Held in Alabama," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 28 Apr. 1933.

with Jernigan in Florence, Alabama, and charged him with “feloniously setting of the fire.” The agent then brought the suspect back to South Dakota for trial. It ended rather quickly, however.⁷¹ The judge agreed with the defense that the evidence was insufficient to warrant charges. Jernigan went free. Two years of searching came to naught, and the origin of the fire remains a mystery.⁷²

Warren-Lamb’s operations had been essentially shut down since the strike began in May 1931. As the Depression deepened, it remained shuttered into 1932. The lack of activity caused the strikers to lose interest, with some wishing to put the labor dispute behind them. In January 1932, sixteen former union men who had pled guilty to rioting during the July skirmish issued a public apology for assaulting the non-union workers. With the apology, the judge suspended their sentences of jail time and fines, but any hope of immediately returning to work did not exist.⁷³ It was not until November 1932, after an eighteen-month hiatus, that the company opened a few camps in the Hills and the plant again produced lumber, but only on a small scale. According to C. C. Warren, demand had not improved. He only wished to replenish the stockpile of wood that had burned over a year before. The sawmill operated for about two months before it closed again, but it would reportedly reopen in May 1933.⁷⁴

As hoped, about 150 people went back to work when the sawmill and logging camps reopened in the summer of 1933. The ongoing Depression still offered challenges. In the first place, demand for wood products returned only slowly, and the company would have to close

71. Quote in “Directed Verdict Frees Jernigan,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 13 Oct. 1933; “Suspect in Fire at Lumber Mill Held in Alabama,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 28 Apr. 1933.

72. “Free Jernigan of Charges of Burning Mill,” *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, 14 Oct. 1933; “Directed Verdict Frees Jernigan,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 13 Oct. 1933; *State of South Dakota v. Leonard Jernigan*, “Register of Actions,” 23 May 1933, Pennington County Circuit Court, Rapid City, S.Dak.

73. “Hills Rioters Make Apology,” *Daily Argus-Leader*, 20 Jan. 1932; *State of South Dakota v. Archie Cosgrove, et al.*, “Register of Actions,” 14 Aug. 1931, 14 Jan. 1932, 21 Jan. 1932, Pennington County Circuit Court, Rapid City, S.Dak.

74. “Rapid City Company’s Camps Also Resume Cutting of Black Hills Timber,” *Daily Argus-Leader*, 15 Nov. 1932; “Lumber Mill to Resume Sawing at Plant Monday,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 11 Nov. 1932; “Cold Brings Decision for Mill Shut Down,” *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 8 Feb. 1933.

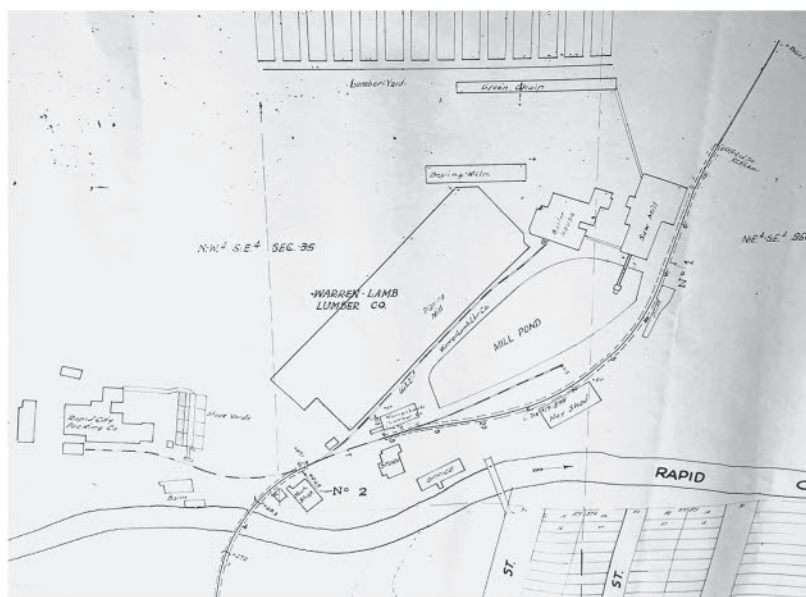
again near the end of the year. Another problem was that the Forest Service opted to maintain pre-Depression pricing policies, more appropriate for periods of high demand. With prices out of line with the market, logging companies struggled to make a profit. In response, Warren-Lamb bought as little timber as possible from the National Forest, as did most Black Hills operations. The company got a temporary respite in 1933 when a windstorm damaged a wide swath of trees through the southern and central Hills. The Forest Service wanted the trees removed and awarded Warren-Lamb the contract at a bargain price. Even with the favorable deal, the company still struggled to make a profit, forcing the managers to eventually cancel the contract.⁷⁵

Market conditions began to improve during the latter half of the 1930s. As lumber sales picked up, timber auctions again attracted buyers. At the end of 1935, the *Rapid City Journal* reported that more timber had been sold recently than had been the case for several years. Warren-Lamb took full advantage of the improving conditions. It once again sent loggers into the Spring Creek area near Sheridan and hired more employees at the Rapid City mill. The company's workforce increased from 150 people in 1933 to 350 by 1937. After maintaining pre-Depression pricing for years, the Forest Service finally began reducing timber prices in 1938. The lower costs and increased demand helped greatly. In 1939, the *Rapid City Journal* headlined that the sawmill had set a record for lumber shipments, but manager A. B. Hood downplayed the news when he explained that Midwest farmers had a record corn harvest and much of the lumber was going into corn cribs.⁷⁶

While the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company had returned to productivity by the end of the decade, its business had changed dramat-

75. "More Groups Here Join in National Recovery Move," "Sawmill Started It," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 27 July 1933; "Sawmill Reduces Number Operating Hours a Week," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 18 Dec. 1933; "Custer News, From the Chronicle," *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, 5 Aug. 1933; "Deadwood," *Lead Daily Call*, 19 Sept. 1933; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, p. 50.

76. "Warren-Lamb Hits All-Time Lumber Shipments Record," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 7 Oct. 1939; Untitled, *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 21 Dec. 1935; "Lumber Business On Increase Here," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 25 Aug. 1937; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, p. 51.



This 1940 map of the Warren-Lamb facility was hand-traced from a printed map put out by the Rapid Canyon Line railroad. Note the mill pond, planning mill, sawmill, drying kiln, and lumber yard.

ically. The Spring Creek contract was running out by 1939, and the company started cutting timber in Nugget Gulch, south of Rapid Canyon near Silver City. The company had earlier acquired this timbered area from the National Forest. Coincident with this move, company managers also decided to get out of the railroad business. Besides running low on timber along the rail line's main route, the damming of Spring Creek added an extra incentive to shut down rail operations. When the Civilian Conservation Corps began working on Sheridan Lake Dam in 1938, it became apparent that the Warren-Lamb rail line and adjacent loading docks needed to be relocated. According to the *Rapid City Journal*, the company had anticipated scrapping the little rail line for some time, but with the construction of the dam and with trucks hauling more and more of its logs, the timing was right. As the tracks came out in 1939, the paper reminded its readers of the railroad's past, including Lanphere-Hinrichs' early struggles and Warren-Lamb's successes. It also explained how the company had laid and relocated more than three hundred miles of track as the op-



The company's log pond, created by diverting Rapid Creek, allowed it to float logs for easy feeding into the mill via the jack ladder, seen here in 1937.

eration moved from place to place, with forty miles in service at any one time. The company, however, still relied on the Crouch Line to ship its Nugget Gulch logs to Rapid City.⁷⁷

World War II brought even more changes to Warren-Lamb. The prosperity of the late 1930s continued, with war plants and military installations placing new demands on the lumber industry. A variety of challenges, however, threatened the improving financial conditions. First was the rising cost of labor. Just months before the United States entered the war, the mill workers organized into the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America and promptly went on strike, asking for a wage increase of five cents per hour. The company countered by proposing a smaller raise and by pointing out that it had

77. "Timber Sold," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 12 Nov. 1937; "Warren-Lamb Opens New Lumber Camp," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 11 Feb. 1939; "Mark 10,000 Trees," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 18 Mar. 1939; "Black Hills Narrow Gauge Railroad Operation Is Being Discontinued," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 20 Mar. 1939; "Sheridan Lake Dam One Tenth Completed," *Lead Daily Call*, 31 Oct. 1938; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, p. 56.

recently introduced higher wages, bringing the average pay to \$3.92 per day. The union felt that rising commodity prices required another advance. A four-week work stoppage followed, but unlike the events of ten years before, both sides worked to avoid conflict. The paper reported that the picket line's conduct was "exemplary." In the end, the company granted a four cent per hour increase, bringing the average pay to \$4.24 per day.⁷⁸

Despite the adjustments, once the war began men left for either military service or for higher paying jobs in war industries, creating a labor shortage. Another problem arose with shortages of supplies, especially gasoline, rubber, and steel. When these necessities became unavailable, logging and sawmill operations had to stop. Finally, competition increased. The strong demand for lumber encouraged several new sawmills to open. While most of these were small, two big operators began directly competing with the Warren-Lamb Company for timber and markets: the Dickson Sawmill in Sturgis and the Buckingham Trucking Company in Rapid City. The new entrants aggressively pursued Forest Service contracts, driving up timber prices.⁷⁹

The prosperity of World War II continued into the postwar years, but ironically the problems Warren-Lamb had experienced during the war only intensified. The Dickson and Buckingham companies continued to expand and in combination with other operators, became even more aggressive in bidding for trees, pushing up prices by nearly 90 percent between 1945 and 1953. As one observer commented, there were "too many operators competing for too little timber."⁸⁰ Meanwhile, Warren-Lamb had to work in more distant locations. For years, its loggers had harvested the country around Rapid Creek. From 1939 to 1943, that area supplied 75 percent of its needs. But with increased competition and fewer trees, the company

78. Quote from "Let's Hope It's a Short One," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 19 Sept. 1941; "Warren-Lamb Plant Closed By Strike," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 15 Sept. 1941; "Warren-Lamb Strike Ends," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 11 Oct. 1941. The wages were calculated from information in the newspapers.

79. "Dickson Sawmill Sold to Mosinee," *Rapid City Journal*, 5 July 1974; "B. H. Forest Plays Top Role in Life Here," *Queen City Mail*, 2 Sept. 1948; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, pp. 69, 72, 74-76, 81-82, 85.

80. Quote from Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, pp. 86, 75; Forest Service, *Black Hills National Forest*, p. 10.



Warren-Lamb struggled with increased costs, greater competition, and fewer trees in the years during and after World War II. In this 1942 photo, Warren-Lamb workers load logs into a truck using a log jammer.

bid on tracts farther from the mill, often in the northern Black Hills, country that the Homestake Mining Company had once dominated. This change meant that the Warren-Lamb Company ended its association with the Crouch Line, contributing to the railroad's demise. When the rail line was abandoned in 1947, one reason was the loss of logging revenue. Nevertheless, Warren-Lamb struggled to adjust to the new environment of increased competition, escalating costs, and fewer trees. It began downsizing and by 1954 the company had only sixty-five employees, down from earlier highs of more than four hundred.⁸¹

As the company fought to hang on, a sawmill fire forced it to change its business model. Believed to be started by lightning, the blaze swept through the forty-year-old, two-story mill in July 1954. With a stiff wind fanning the blaze, the fire department had little chance of saving the structure, valued at an estimated \$50,000. The firefight-

81. "Crouch Line, Long Dead, Still Haunts Canyon," *Rapid City Journal*, 28 Feb. 1971; "Fire Razes Sawmill in Rapid City," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 10 July 1954; "Black Hills Timber Sales to Two Firms," *Lead Daily Call*, 10 Jan. 1947; "Homestake High Bidder For BH Forest Timber," *Lead Daily Call*, 25 Oct. 1951; Newport, *Forest Service Policies*, p. 81.

ers did save the huge storage shed and thousands of feet of finished lumber. While company president Richard Lamb said he had no definite plans, it soon became apparent that he was done competing for timber sales and running a sawmill. Warren-Lamb instead became a traditional lumber yard, buying and selling forest products. Since the machine shop survived, the company also promoted custom lathe and machine work. Eight years later, in 1962, the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company closed for good, leaving a massive lumber storage shed, several smaller buildings, and an office as reminders. Two more natural calamities destroyed these remaining structures. The storage shed went up in smoke in 1965, taking a small quantity of lumber and three planing machines with it. The 1972 Black Hills Flood dealt the coup de grâce. Surging water washed away the office building and a small shed.⁸²

The Warren-Lamb Lumber Company's sprawling complex, including a sawmill, a planing mill, a storage yard, and a 150-foot-tall smokestack, which stood as a Rapid City landmark for years, were all gone. Today, the Founders Park Office Complex and part of the Executive Golf Course occupy the site. The golf course's small lake was once the sawmill's log pond. When the mill opened in 1908, it introduced a new era of large-scale commercial sawmill operations to the Black Hills, initiating the transition away from the many small sawmills that had arrived with the gold rush. Over more than fifty years of doing business, the operators had to follow government regulations, maintain an adequate supply of logs, run an efficient transportation system, respond to national economic trends, and stay vigilant for fires and floods. The challenges were immense, but the Warren-Lamb Lumber Company persevered and adapted to become the Black Hills' largest

82. "Custom Shop," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 2 May 1955; "3-Acre Lumber Shed Burns," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 11 May 1965; "Fire Levels Lumber Firm At Rapid City," *Lead Daily Call*, 11 May 1965; "Fire Razes Sawmill in Rapid City"; "Town One-Third Under Water; Thousands Homeless in Flood," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 June 1972; Randy Rogers, "Warren-Lamb Lumber Co.," *The Logger* (June 1988). A copy of *The Logger* is in the Watson Parker "Ghost Town Notebooks" under the Warren-Lamb entry. Leland D. Case Library for Western Historical Studies, Black Hills State University, Spearfish, S.Dak.; David S. Lamb and Andrea Lamb, interview with author, Rapid City, S.Dak., 14 July 2022; Jean Lamb, telephone interview with author, 19 July 2022.

commercial sawmill and one of South Dakota's leading industries, providing a variety of wood products to Rapid City, western South Dakota, and the nation at large.⁸³

83. "Big Employers to be Present," *Daily Argus-Leader*, 7 Oct. 1920; Forest Service, *Black Hills National Forest*, pp. 10-11.

Image credits: All illustrations in this issue are property of the South Dakota State Historical Society except for those on the following pages: 110, 112, 116, 118, 131, 133, 149, 154, 160, 163, back cover, Black Hills National Forest; 104, 107, public domain; cover, 102, 111, 127, Black Hills Historical Society; 130, David A. Wolff Black Hills Collection, Leland D. Case Library for Western Historical Studies, Black Hills State University; 141, 145, 167, 171, 175 (top), Library of Congress; 173, 175 (bottom), New York Public Library; inside back cover, Johnny Sundby Photography.

On the cover: On 13 September 1931, a fire swept through the Warren-Lamb lumber yard and destroyed \$130,000 of lumber. Some suspected arson by disgruntled workers.

Copyright of South Dakota History is the property of South Dakota State Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.