

Floating Longleaf Pine to the Sawmill

(bolded words in text indicate key words and concepts)

Student Information:

A little over 100 years ago, there were no trucks and few railroads. Those roadways that did exist were often, overused, dirt roads with many potholes. In those days, horses, carriages, and gopher tortoises were often the only traffic. When logging, heavy items like logs had to be floated or carried on boats if they were to be moved very far. Rivers were the highways of the time.

Teacher Information:

Because roads and transportation were very primitive in the South until at least the middle of the 19th century, most **bulk goods** were moved by water. Oxen and mules pulled wooden wheeled wagons (2-wheeled "**caralog**" carts or eight wheeled "**Lindsey wagons**") to move logs short distances to rivers and streams. Oxen were preferred over mules because they were lower maintenance and (with their cloven hoofs) could travel through wet areas easily. The oxen nearest the log cart were called the "tongue steers". The second yoke was called the "grab steers", the third yoke was called the "swing steers", the fourth yoke was called the "lead swing steers" and the fifth yoke was called the "lead steers". Efforts were made to always have the "lead steers" white or to have some visible white places on them. This was so that the driver and the other oxen in the team could see where the "lead steers" were before daylight and after dark. The "tongue steers" were rigged to the tongue of the cart and the other yokes were rigged to the **yoke** of the steers behind with chains. The drivers of the teams were called ox drivers and a good ox driver was fond of his oxen, was kind to them and saw that they were well fed and cared for. The **driver** carried a long whip made of plaited rawhide with a popper on the end and attached to a long handle. The whip was used principally for guiding and directing the oxen and seldom for punishment to the oxen for failure to obey the commands of the driver.

Once to the streamside, specialized tools like **cant hooks**, **peaveys**, or **pikes** were used to roll, push or pull logs into the water. Sometimes, small, water-powered mills, were used to "square up" logs (sawn on at least two and sometimes four sides to form a square timber called a "**cant**") before they were floated. Because the same waterways were used by various persons and companies it was necessary that those persons and companies have a log brand or mark to identify their logs and timbers. Log brands or marks were put on the logs and timbers by a **roller** before they were put in the waterways to be floated to market. The timber and log brands could be recorded in the office of the Judge of Probate in each county through which the logs or timbers were floated.

Often times, the milling of logs into lumber was done at distant locations. Depending on the size and shape of the water-body either individual logs, **log rafts**, or raft of sawn **timbers** were formed and floated down to these mills (the later being called a **deal**).

One or two raft riders, equipped with a long sweep oar and a long, spiked pole (pike) would ride each raft to keep it in the channel and free from sand bars and **snags** in the river. Some riders had shoes with special cleats affixed to sole. Most, however, preferred to go barefoot (claiming they could "understand" the log better barefoot). The rafts were sometimes held together by lengths of "bullis" or wild grape vine or chain shackles wound around spikes or with chains looped through rings (called **log dogs**).

Rafting was a specialized trade. Skilled log-riders were highly desired and hired on contract by logging companies. Once these raft riders reached their destination, they would spend days walking back (or later taking the train) back to the logging site or to their next job. Various metal pieces (like dogs and shackles) were put into large wooden barrels and taken back up to the logging site via wagons.

Many of these dense logs heavy with resin sank during their transport to mills. These sunken logs (often called **sinkers** or **deadheads**) can still be found today littering streambeds throughout the Southeast.

The forests near larger streams were the first to be heavily logged to take advantage of the easy access to this transportation. It wasn't until the advent of steam technology that it was economically feasible to log many areas of the forest interior. Much of the (structural) **lumber** and timbers were **exported** from southeastern seaports like Savannah, Charleston, Port St. Joe and New Orleans to distant countries who relished the wood of longleaf **heartpine**.

Key Words and Concepts: bulk goods, cant, cant hook, caralog, deadhead, driver, export, heartpine, Lindsey wagon, log dog, log raft, lumber, peavey, pike, rafting, roller, sinker, snag, timber, yoke.