Background History

The J. Neils Lumber Company was incorporated in Sauk Rapids, Minnesota on March 23, 1895 by Julius Neils and Thomas Shevlin. The company expanded in 1899 with the purchase of a second mill located at Cass Lake, Minnesota. In 1919, the company repurchased the Libby Lumber Company in Libby, Montana from the Shevlin Company. Once the timber supply was exhausted in Cass Lake area, the Cass Lake operation ended in 1925. With the close of this mill, the company desired a second mill. Walter Neils heard about the financial difficulties of the Western Pine Lumber Company in Klickitat, Washington and suggested the company look at this location. After touring the entire timbered area, J. Neils Lumber Company took possession on June 1, 1922.

The Western Pine Lumber Company acquisition included the railroad and its equipment, sawmill, planing mill, title to the mill property (including Klickitat townsite), logs in the woods and at the mill, and the storage yard, timberland, title to W.R. Hervey contract. A new company was incorporated and named the Klickitat Log and Lumber Company so that J. Neils Lumber Company’s new railroad would not be under the regulations of the Washington State Railroad Commission. The sawmill operated three shifts per day, six days a week. The first logging was done by donkey engines, then by horse logging and eventually by tractors. On September 2, 1927 the mill at Klickitat burnt down. The rebuilding of the plant cost $1,100,000 and business resumed in 1928.

After the Great Depression, long-term planning resumed at Klickitat. The large volume of timber available and the absence of other operators in Klickitat drainage area gave rise to the thought of permanency for the plant. After inspection, selective logging was concluded to the best method for achieving permanency for the plant. Arrangements were made with the U.S. Forest Service to conduct a logging and mill study to determine whether cutting only fifty percent of a stand would be economically sound. The advantages gained were two-fold, namely developing accessibility to the entire area at a doubled rate and salvaging many million feet of timber which otherwise would have been lost. Selective logging was begun in 1939.

Aside from the Libby and Klickitat operations, J. Neils Lumber Company owned the Montana Light and Power which was purchased in 1944. On January 1, 1957 the J. Neils Lumber Company merged with the St. Regis Paper Company.

Scope and Content


The J. Neils Lumber Company series is arranged alphabetically, 1919-1974. The series includes correspondence, forest inventories, reports, research and tax information.

The Libby series is arranged alphabetically, 1951-1971. This series contains information about J. Neils Lumber Company operations in Libby and Troy, Montana. The records include reports, machinery specifications, cost summaries, studies, correspondence, and information about the plywood plant in Libby.

The Klickitat series contains records from the Klickitat townsites operated by J. Neils Lumber Company. The series is arranged alphabetically, 1922-1974. Records include townsites studies, Klickitat Log and Lumber Company correspondence, tests, forest inventories, mill site studies, proposals and timber sales information.

The Selective Logging series is arranged alphabetically, 1931-1972. The records include correspondence, agreements, reports, and statements regarding J. Neils Lumber Company’s selective logging policy.
The Montana Light and Power Company series is arranged alphabetically, 1925-1976. Records include by-laws, correspondence, reports, agreements, rate schedules, and machinery specifications.


Financial Records series, 1895-1959, arranged chronologically. The records include yearly statements, financial statements, agreements, trial balances and bill of sales.

Miscellaneous series includes a book by Paul Neils entitled *Julius Neils and the J. Neils Lumber Company*, college transcripts, science center dedication program, 75th anniversary program for St. Paul/Tacoma division, and correspondence about the records of J. Neils at the University of Oregon and the University of Wyoming.

**Inclusive Dates:** 1895-1976 (bulk 1919-1929, 1944-1966)
**Restrictions:** None
**Volume:** 9 linear feet
**Accession Number:** 2000.176

**Record Series 1: J. Neils Lumber Company.**
**Box 1: J. Neils Lumber Company, 1919-1974.**
**Folder:**

   **Note:** The J. Neils correspondence is a collection of letters from J. Neils to his sons about the operations of the company.
   **Note:** This is correspondence between Paul Neils and his brother and father concerning the operations of the company.
   Note: This is correspondence between Walter Neils and the U.S. government about wartime timber usage.
   Note: This was the accounting firm used by the J. Neils Lumber Company.

Record Series 2: Libby.
Folder:
3  Libby, Barker, 1959.
6  Libby, Earnings, November - December 1968.
8  Libby, F.W. Horstkotte Correspondence, 1961-1964.
11 Libby, Gluing, 1959.


Libby, Plywood Plant and Dedication, 1961-1962.


Box 3: Libby, 1951-1971
Folder:
8. Libby, Pollution Control Correspondence, 1952-1957.
21  Libby, Pulpwood and Chip Traffic Correspondence, 1951-1957.
22  Libby, Salt Treatment Lumber and Other Products, 1960-1962.
29  Libby, Water Pollution, 1958.

Record Series 3: Klickitat.
Box 3: Klickitat, 1922-1974.
Folder:

Box 4: Klickitat, 1922-1974.
Folder:
3  Klickitat, Forest Inventory Report, 1956.
5  Klickitat, Forest Service Reports, 1940-1943.
Klickitat, Klickitat Log and Lumber Company Correspondence, 1922-1959, Part 2.
Klickitat, Klickitat Log and Lumber Company Correspondence, 1922-1959, Part 3.
Klickitat, Local Freight Tariff, 1918-1951.
34  Klickitat, Revised Map, Klickitat Plansite, 1958.

Box 5: Klickitat, 1922-1974.
Folder:

Record Series 4: Selective Logging.
Box 5: Selective Logging, 1931-1972.
Folder:
4  Selective Logging, Cooperative Sustained Yield Agreements of Other Companies, 1946-1948.
7  Selective Logging, Cost Records, 1939-1941.
9  Selective Logging, Dr. Walter Meyer’s Reports, 1937-1945.
12  Selective Logging, Dr. Walter Meyer Transfer File, 1936-1960, Part 3.
17  Selective Logging, Selective Logging, 1931-1941.

Record Series 5: Montana Light and Power Company.
Box 5: Montana Light and Power Company, 1925-1976.
Folder:
21 Montana Light and Power Company, Aluminum Conductor, 1944.
24 Montana Light and Power Company, By-Laws, 1925.
27 Montana Light and Power Company, Diesel Power Plant, 1944.
32 Montana Light and Power Company, Electric Lamps, 1944.

Folder:
2 Montana Light and Power Company, Franchise of Town of Troy, 1947.
10 Montana Light and Power Company, Insulators, 1944.
12 Montana Light and Power Company, Lake Creek Dam Repairs Concrete Resurfacing, 1953-1958.
14 Montana Light and Power Company, Minutes, 1944.
26 Montana Light and Power Company, Permit for Building Dam at Outlet of Bull Lake, 1945-1948.
31 Montana Light and Power Company, Power Site New Hydro Unit, 1944-1948.
32 Montana Light and Power Company, Preliminary Correspondence, 1944-1945, (Troy).
33 Montana Light and Power Company, Print of Troy Dam, 1944-1949.
Montana Light and Power Company, Public Information Program, 1953.
Montana Light and Power Company, Rate Comparisons with other Suppliers, 1951-1952.

Montana Light and Power Company, Town of Troy Plat, 1944.

Record Series 6: St. Regis Paper Company.
Folder:

Folder:
10 St. Regis Paper Company, Physical Inventories Instructions and Correspondence, 1957-1963.
17  St. Regis Paper Company, Dr. R.W. Reed Studies Klickitat #2, 1958-1959.
25  St. Regis Paper Company, Wood Products Division.

Record Series 7: Financial Records.
Folder:


Folder:
13 Financial Records, Kootenai Valley Hospital, 1920.
29  Financial Records, Financial Statement, 12/31/34.

Record Series 8: Miscellaneous.
Box 9: Miscellaneous.
Folder:
39  Miscellaneous, Book.
40  Miscellaneous, Family.
41  Miscellaneous 75th Anniversary Program, St. Paul/Tacoma Division, 1963.

Folder:
46  Libby, Opinions and Data Pertaining to Proposed Larch Plywood Mill, 1959.


Oversized Items

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Photographs of the Klickitat operations have been transferred to the photograph collections and can be located under the following numbers: 2000.176.241.1—2000.176.241.32