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Fields Landing
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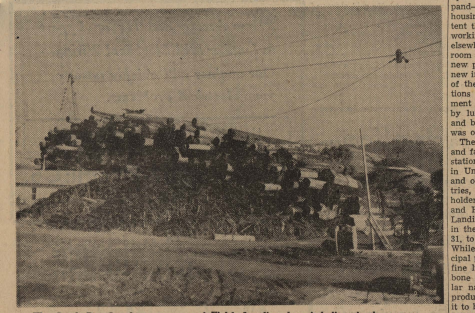
Fields Landing--Town With A Payroll

Ships from the seven seas load lumber from the Pacific Lumber company's docks at Fields Landing.

Fields Landing hotel—where the main four corners of town intersect the highway; whose tavern is a sociable gathering place.



The South Bay Lumber company of Fields Landing doesn't believe in the conventional pond for their logs . . . they pile 'em to terrifying heights.

Airplane view of Fields Landing gives you an idea of the scope of the town's busy and vari-industrial waterfront.

Old-Time Seaport Entering New Era

By CHET SCHWARZKOPF

Located a scant six miles south of Eureka on Highway 101, the town of Fields Landing at times is regarded as a "suburb" of its larger neighbor. But Fields Landing, with a population of some three hundred, makes up in spirit what it lacks in size.

"In fact," says Charles Peterson, one of its prominent citizens, "only an acute housing shortage in Fields Landing keeps its population down. A great many of our people work and earn their daily bread here, but are forced to live elsewhere." In which statement, old-timer Charlie Peterson undoubtedly hits close to the truth, for Fields Landing is a pay-roll town, and always has been one.

Fields Landings got its start back in the 1870s, when Waterman Field purchased much of what is the present town area, and erected a dock. The place became a loading pier for lumber, and later it bore Field's name. Meanwhile, John Vance started his Eureka and Eel River railroad, whose terminus was at the now growing Fields Landing. The railroad pushed through to Hydesville, via Alton, at which latter point the Pacific Lumber company's railroad from Scotia joined it. Then, with the big lumber company hitting into production, the docks at Fields Landing became an active seaport, for all the lumber from Scotia was hauled there by rail, and transferred into ships. And to this day, Fields Landing remains the Pacific Lumber company's seaport.

PAYROLL GROWS

As the railroad grew and consolidated itself with the years, its headquarters and shops in Fields Landing, together with the Pacific Lumber company, gave the little town most of its payroll. Consequently, it came as a sad blow when, after the Eureka and Eel River line had been absorbed by the Northwestern Pacific and the lines were building through from San Francisco, the railroad moved its shops and headquarters to Eureka, which remains its official terminus today.

For many years, outside of the Pacific Lumber company docks and a few small boat building and repair enterprises, Fields Landing remained static—a small unincorporated area on the outskirts of Eureka.

THE CHANGE BEGINS

Then came World War II, and the subsequent Great Boom that is now sweeping the west. Whereupon Fields Landing began to expand—only to get caught in the housing shortage to such an extent that a high percentage of its working population have to live elsewhere. But if there wasn't room enough for all the town's new population, there was for its new industries. At final last, much of the excellent waterfront locations that had awaited development for so long, were occupied by lumber mills, fishing docks, and boat builders. Fields Landing was on its way.

The town's most spectacular and famed industry is its whaling station—the only one of its kind in United States' waters. Owned and operated by Maritime Industries, Inc., whose principal stockholders are G. A. "Gib" Hunter, and Herman Foland, the Fields Landing station handled 65 whales in the season that ended October 31, to set a new record for itself. While the whaling station's principal products are oil for soap and fine lubrication, and a residue of bone and fertilizer, the spectacular nature of its obtaining these products in the "raw" has caused it to be photographed and written up for national magazines, as well as its being the motif of several movie films. Thus, with its unique industry, Fields Landing has found itself nationally famous . . . a thing quite unusual for a place of its size, and a thing coveted by many bigger cities.

Oldest of Fields Landing industries is its Pacific Lumber company port facilities. Here is a really fine layout, done in the usual first-class manner this company is noted for in all its operations. Just now a pall of idleness hangs over the big lumber docks, with their millions of feet of stacked material. For the maritime strike has tied up the ships that come to get cargoes from all over the world. Genial Cecil Nichols, who manages the lumber company's port, feels irked at the quiet that hangs over the once busy scene. But, in common with many others, he feels that it will all be in good cause if smoldering maritime issues can be settled once and for all.

IMPRESSIVE PORT

Nichols furnishes us with some figures on his company's docks which, to say the least, are impressive. To begin with, the port is always available to other companies, or individuals, who wish to ship lumber by water. And the docks are the largest of their kind between San Francisco and Portland, having 1620 feet water frontage, which can work two large ships at the same time. During the war years, a total of 55 ships loaded 121,762,275 board feet of lumber from Fields Landing. In the three years between 1937 and 1939, a total of 184 vessels took 58,539,502 board feet of lumber from the port. The Pacific Lumber company has made it a policy always to use the most modern machinery at their port, Nichols says. At present the port is using Willamette carriers and a Hyster lift truck. A crew of eight men is employed there constantly, and some 4,000,000 board feet of lumber are now drying there, as versus a usual stock of 10,000,000.

Nichols also points out that a lunch room capable of holding 80 men, complete with oil heat, air conditioner, and benches and tables, is available to longshoremen during their rest periods.

A little farther along the waterfront, and you come to the South Bay Marine Ways Company. This is a complete drydock and repairs outfit for fishing boats, and is run by three partners—Jack Glenn, L. C. Johnson, and Leo Kline. The boys have a modern shop equipped for all types of work, and are obviously doing all right since their start, last May.

Upstairs, in the Marine Ways Co. loft, which is the former Eureka Shipbuilding Co. building, you'll find a fishermen's net shop which is owned and operated by C. A. Eastland. Here are made nets for any and all types of deep-sea fishing needs, and Mr. Eastman, who is an old-time craftsman at the net business, obviously is proud of his fine shop.

Then there's the big Paladini fishing plant, managed by Charlie Timmons of baseball fame, which turns out hundreds of tons of filleted fish annually. Here you see a busy headquarters for fishing vessels that come and go by the dozen, while the plant itself will employ as many as 50 people on a peak day.

Nearby is the Norcal plant, which operates on a seasonal basis in both fish and crabs, and which is shut down temporarily.

And across a boat basin is the Al La Rocca property, where a modern crab canning plant is planned for the coming year.

MANY LUMBER MILLS

Turning to the lumber mill game, you will see that Fields Landing is busier than ever before in its history. Largest establishment is the South Bay Lumber company, owned by Arthur S. McCurdy. Fifty men are employed steadily in the mill, which is "all redwood" and produces an average of 45,000 feet daily. In addition, the company employs thirty men in the woods, and has been operating since August, 1945.

Then there's the Humboldt Shingle company's mill, owned and operated by A. R. Bradley, R. B. Lougheed, and O. O. Stanton. Started in September, 1947, the clean-cut appearing mill turns out an average of thirty "squares" of redwood shingles daily—or 120 bundles. Four men are employed, and the company enjoys a steady and remunerative business.

Now Fields Landing has a world-famous industry as well as a great lumber dock — which ought to be enough for any place. But it has a third industry which also deserves special mention. And that is the Bay View Manufacturing company, owned by Frank Alfonso and William and Chris Pozun, and which employs upwards of eleven men. This company's forte is the salvaging of otherwise useless wood. They get logs from all the operators—logs that have been cast aside for one defect or another. And they proceed to convert them into water cooling tower strippings, crossarms for grape vineyards, car strips for loading, and many another miscellaneous item that their ingenious minds may devise a market for. "It was hard going at first," says Frank Alfonso. "But we've built up a market, and what was once considered a 'nuthouse' idea is paying off. And a lot of otherwise waste timber is saved and put to good use."

There's the Don Oder tie mill, specializing in redwood ties, which employs ten men, and adds a good steady chunk to Fields Landing's fine payroll. There's a market the world over for redwood ties, due to their unusual resistant qualities, and the Oder company is growing fast.

The Crawford Lumber company also operates in Fields Landing, but is shut down for overhauling. They expect to start up soon with a crew of 18 men, and will cut both fir and redwood up to 35,000 feet daily.

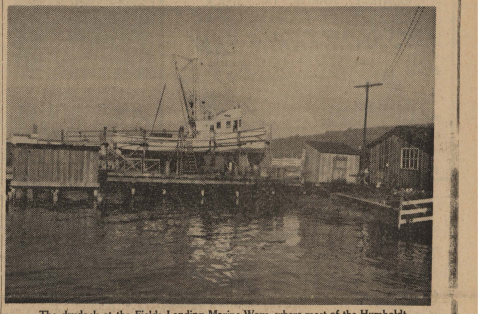
HOMES AND SCHOOL

But enough for the industries . . . by now you have seen that the town has a substantial output in several lines, and is on the industrial map to stay.

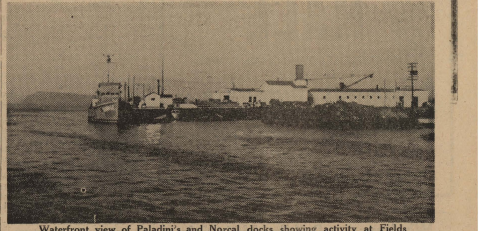
Fields Landing has a number of fine residences, particularly on

See FIELDS LANDING, P. 27, Cl. 2

Looking toward the Norcal fish processing plant from the Paladini docks, at Fields Landing—where deep-sea vessels discharge their valuable cargoes.



The drydock at the Fields Landing Marine Ways, where most of the Humboldt Bay fishing fleet put in for maintenance work.



Waterfront view of Paladini's and Norcal docks showing activity at Fields Landing when fishing vessels are in port.

A typical Fields Landing home, complete with a background of sea and hills that few places on earth can equal.

Fields Landing

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the north side of the highway, and more are being planned, according to local enthusiasts. It also has a modern school to accommodate some eighty pupils at full capacity.

Along highway 101, which is the town's "main street," a number of businesses flourish. The Fields Landing Grocery, owned by Sally C. Chapman, occupies a fine new building with a Mobile Gas service station alongside. And on the opposite corner is the Fields Landing hotel, long a landmark, which is now run by Nan "Bubby" Painter, with restaurant and tavern in connection. Botchie and Hazel's crab stand is alongside, and this popular and widely known couple ran the hotel for twenty years, before retiring to the comparatively quiet occupation they now enjoy. They still own the hotel building, as well as the adjacent stand and Chevron Service station, and their own well-kept home.

Charlie Peterson and Botchie occupy the distinction of being their town's citizens of long-standing, with Peterson, who came to Humboldt in 1885, rating senior of the two. "I lived in Fields Landing for many years when friends said the place had no future," says Peterson. "But I wasn't figuring on future. I just happened to like the place. And still do."

LA Brush Fires Under Control

LOS ANGELES—Southern California's two worst brush fires in recent years were declared under control today after having destroyed approximately 30 homes and burning 33,000 acres.

Topanga Canyon, where about 27 homes were lost last Thursday, was being patroled today by 100 men and equipment in the event a strong wind returns to fan an ember-laden 3,000 acres into flames again.

Cecil Gehr, Los Angeles county fire battalion chief, estimated the Topanga area loss at $250,000—including the homes and some power lines.