

The Stevenson photographs: a glimpse of forestry
in Belize during the 1920s

New Cloth

REPORT
UPON THE
FORESTS OF HONDURAS.

BY
E. D. M. HOOPER, ESQUIRE,
INDIAN FOREST DEPARTMENT.

Kurnool Collectorate Press.
1887.

“If the Mahogany trade is to flourish in Honduras.... The time honored system will have to be altered and the aid of machinery invoked, but, as yet of this there is no sign.”
Page 16, paragraph 44.

The Forest Department came into existence with the appointment of Cornelius Hummel as Conservator of Forests on 1st April 1922.

The following photographs depict the start of the industrialisation of forest operations in the 1920s, with investments in logging railways, tractor haulage, and aerial ropeway systems.



16.

On the summit of Peak P. Handkerchief marking position of bottle visible between Charles Westby and Ramon Tesecun.

Duncan Stevenson (far right) on top of Victoria Peak, Cockscomb Mountains, on the 18th of March 1928, prior to his departure from Belize.

The Geographical Journal, Vol. 73, No. 2 (Feb, 1929), pp. 123-137.

Mr. Charles Westby, J.P., M.B.E., later became a member of the Legislative Council of British Honduras

Duncan's brother Neil remained in Belize for 20 years, being the Chief Forest Officer from 1930 until 1944.

German Forestry - Principles of state forest management

“The State forests were and will continue to be handled as a trust belonging to the nation. They should yield to the current generation as high a return as possible in satisfying its needs for forest products and for the welfare effects of the forest, but they should also assure to the future generations at least an equally high return of the same kind of benefits.”

Franz Heske (1938). *German Forestry*. Yale University Press. p.84.



Mahogany tree on trail to
Flores, Peten. (DS)

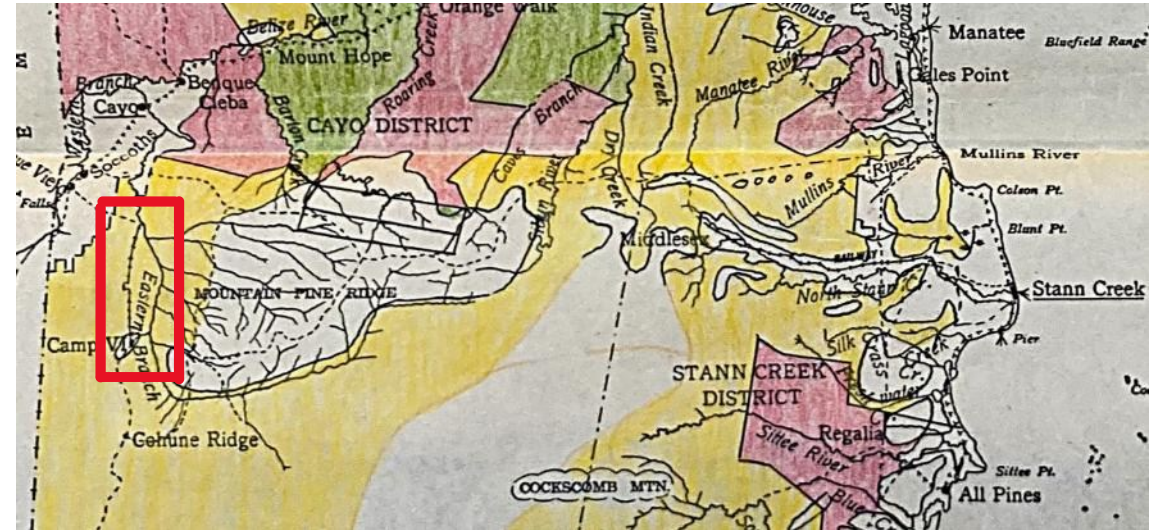


Cattle haulage, Vaca. (DS)

Several mahogany forest concessions were held by the Mengel Company of Louisville, Kentucky, USA in the Chiquibul forest.

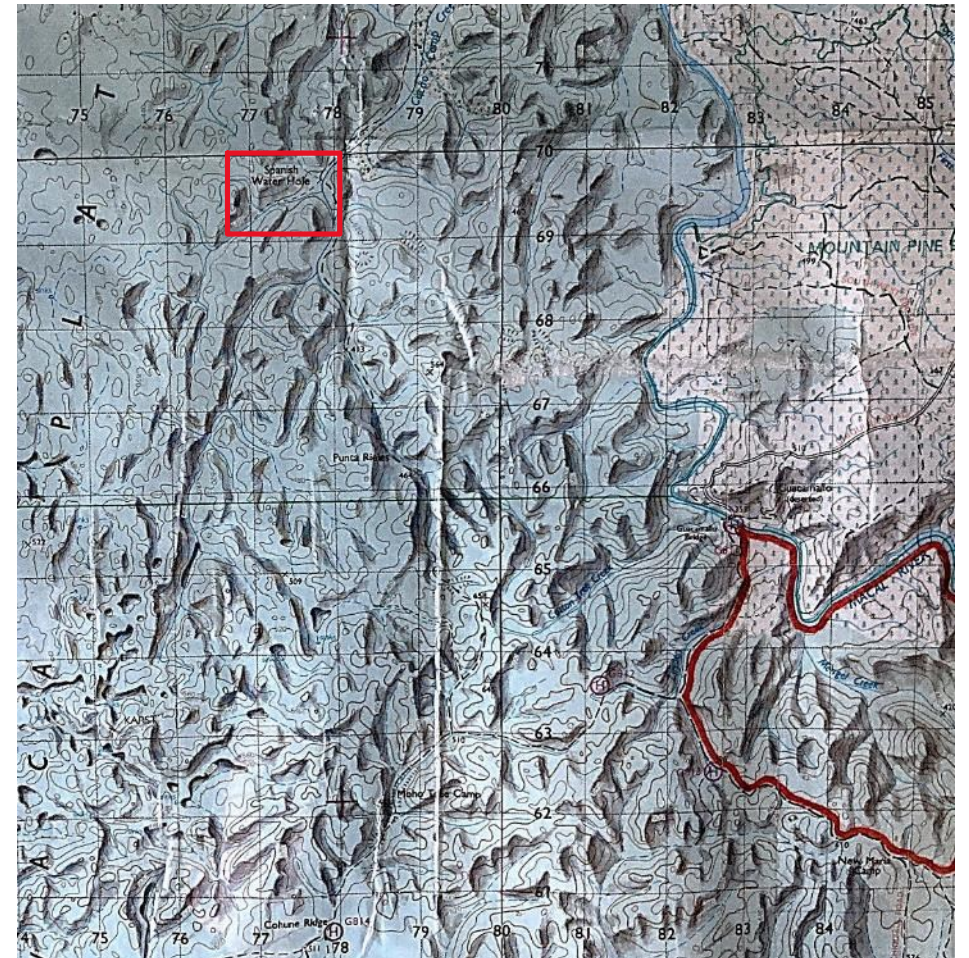
“from 1928 to 1930 the Belize Estate and Produce Company was negotiating to sell its estates to Mengel, one of the US companies; the deal fell through only because of the BEC’s inability to show good title for a large area of land on the western frontier”. Assad Shoman (1994). *A history of Belize*, p. 102.

Counter balanced incline of
logging railroad, Vaca. (DS)





Trestle bridge on logging
railroad, Vaca, Waterhole.
(NSS)





22-ton Holt caterpillar tractor, near Mountain Cow, Vaca. (DS)



Tractor haul (5-ton Holt)
Columbia 5 miles, 1925. (DS)



Tractor haul (Caterpillar D4)
Chiquibul, 1997.

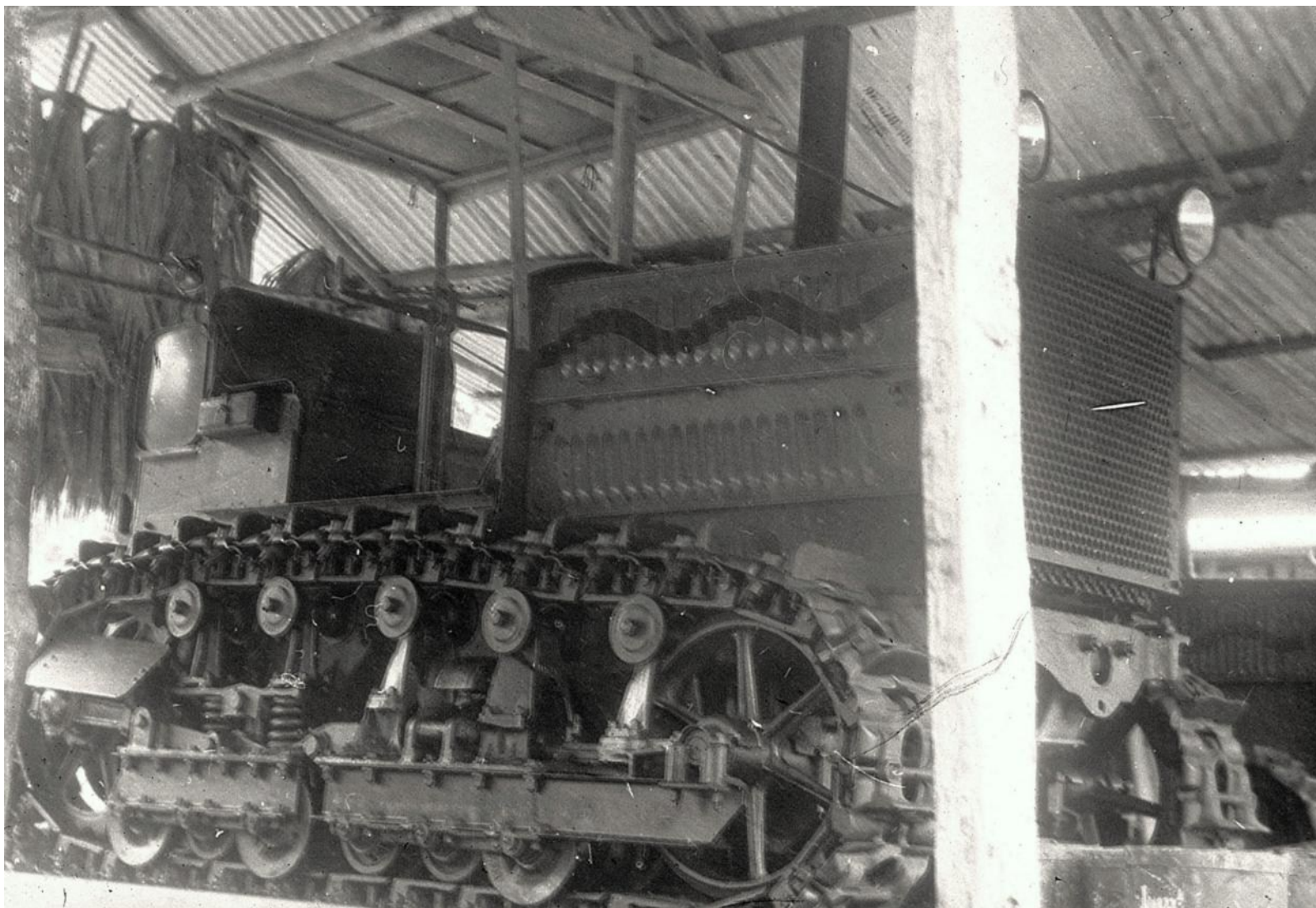


5-ton Holts
hauling one
mahogany truck
on grade after
20-minute
shower, Rio
Grande, Watrous
work. (NSS)

T.T. Watrous was born in 1879
in Punta Gorda, whose family
was part of the Toledo
Settlement of North
American immigrants that
arrived in the late 1860s.



Watrous work.
Columbia, Toledo
(NSS)



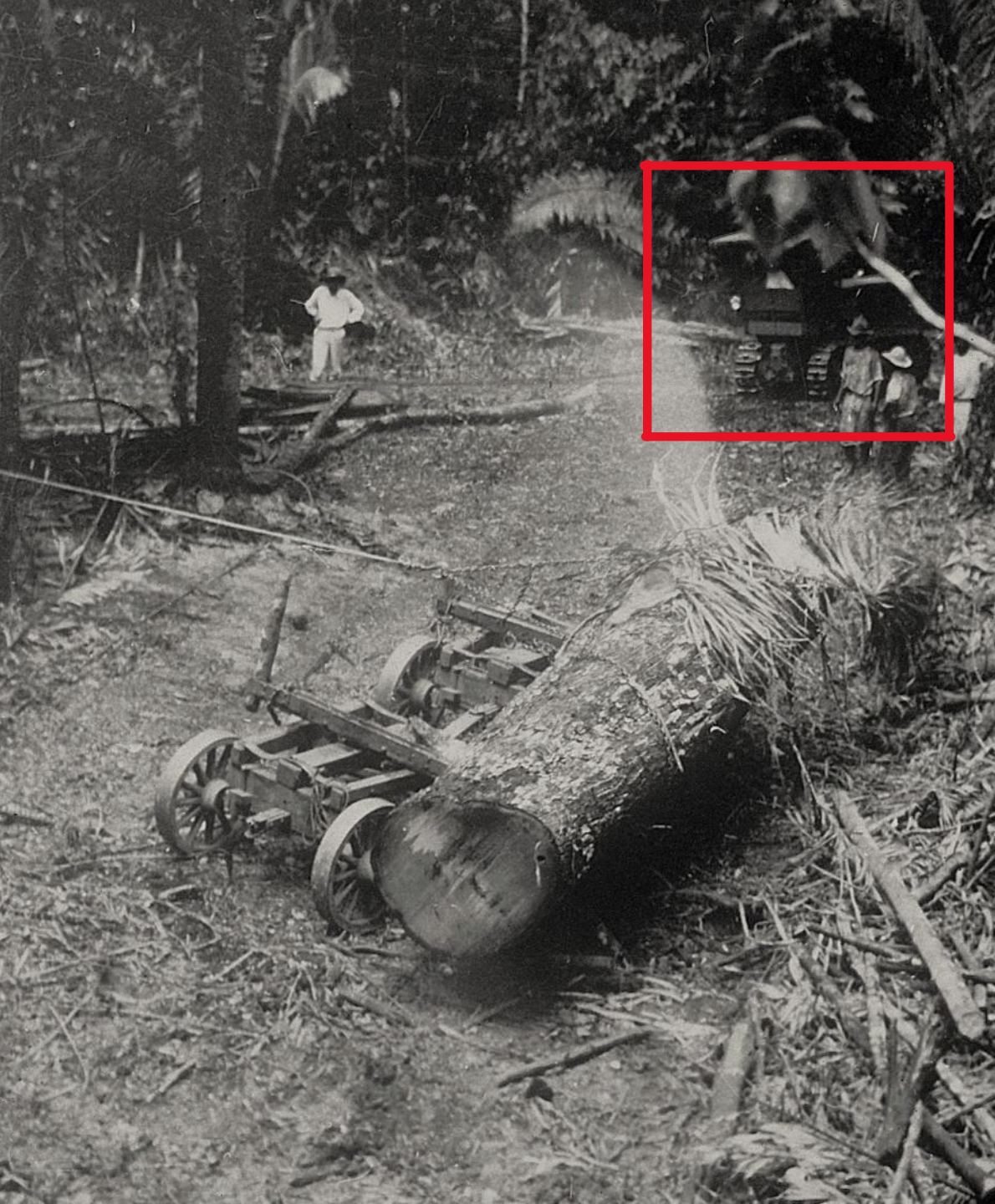
10-ton Holt caterpillar tractor after one year service, Watrous, Columbia (NSS)



Best tractors
30's, Vaca.
(NSS)



Loading
Mahogany logs
on top of Garland
waggon,
Columbia. (NSS)



Reloading same logs
(1,800 ft BM) by 5-ton
Holt. (NSS)



Double trestle
bridge behind
19 miles.
Tidewater
truck pass.
(NSS)

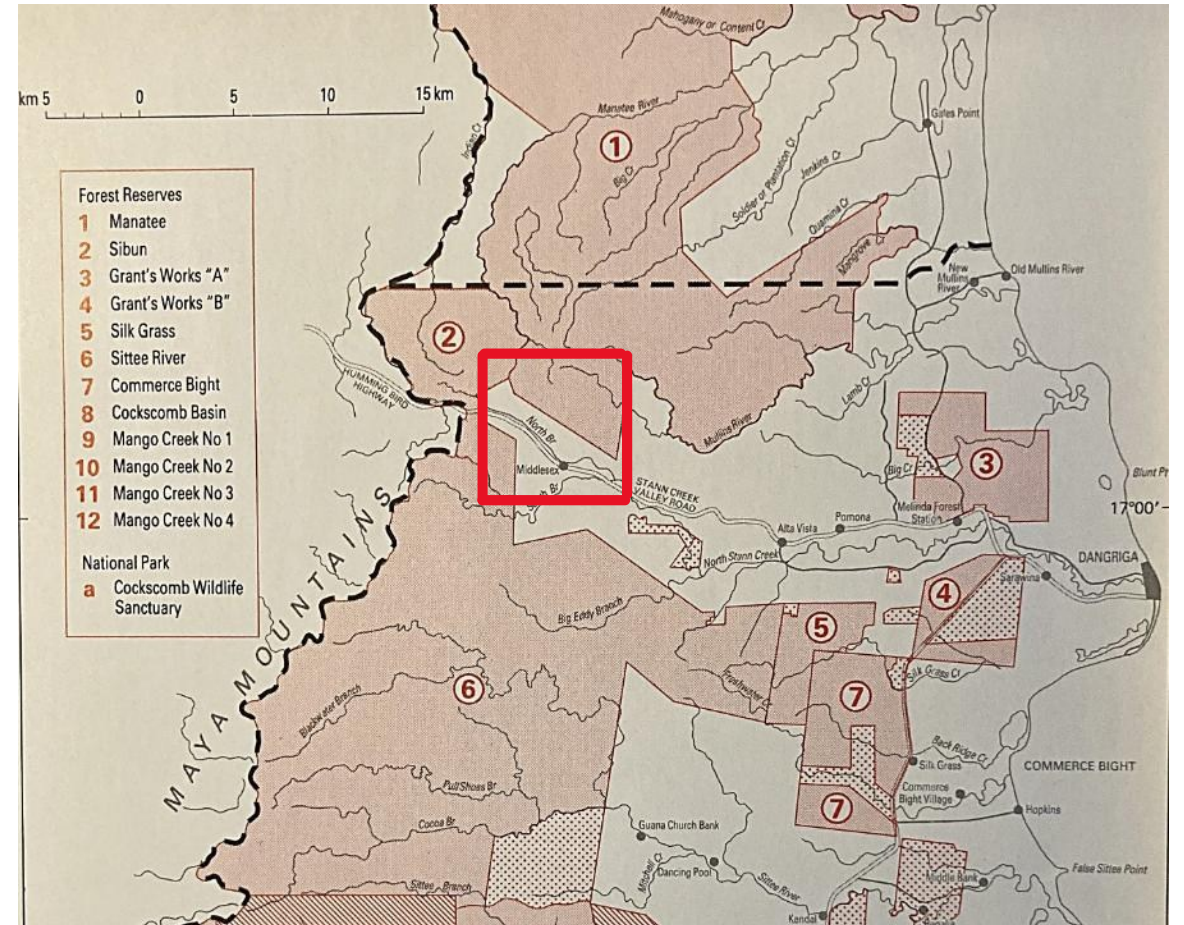
The Tidewater
Lumber Company
of Washington, D.C.
held a 10-year
timber licence in
the Stann Creek
Valley



Construction
of switch from
main line to
foot of aerial
ropeway
(Stann Creek
railway). NSS



Cleared line for aerial ropeway,
23 mile gap, Stann Creek. (NSS)





Aerial ropeway in action, 23
miles, Stann Creek railway.
(NSS)



Intermediate
station, aerial
ropeway, 23
miles, Stann
Creek. (NSS)



End of aerial
ropeway, 23 miles,
Stann Creek railway.
Clyde Log Skidder.
(NSS)



5 ton Holt
Caterpillar
after 6
months of
service,
Tidewater,
Stann Creek.
(NSS)



River boat
passing St James
Boom, Belize
river. (NSS)

Boat going through gate in boom
St James', Belize River. (NSS)



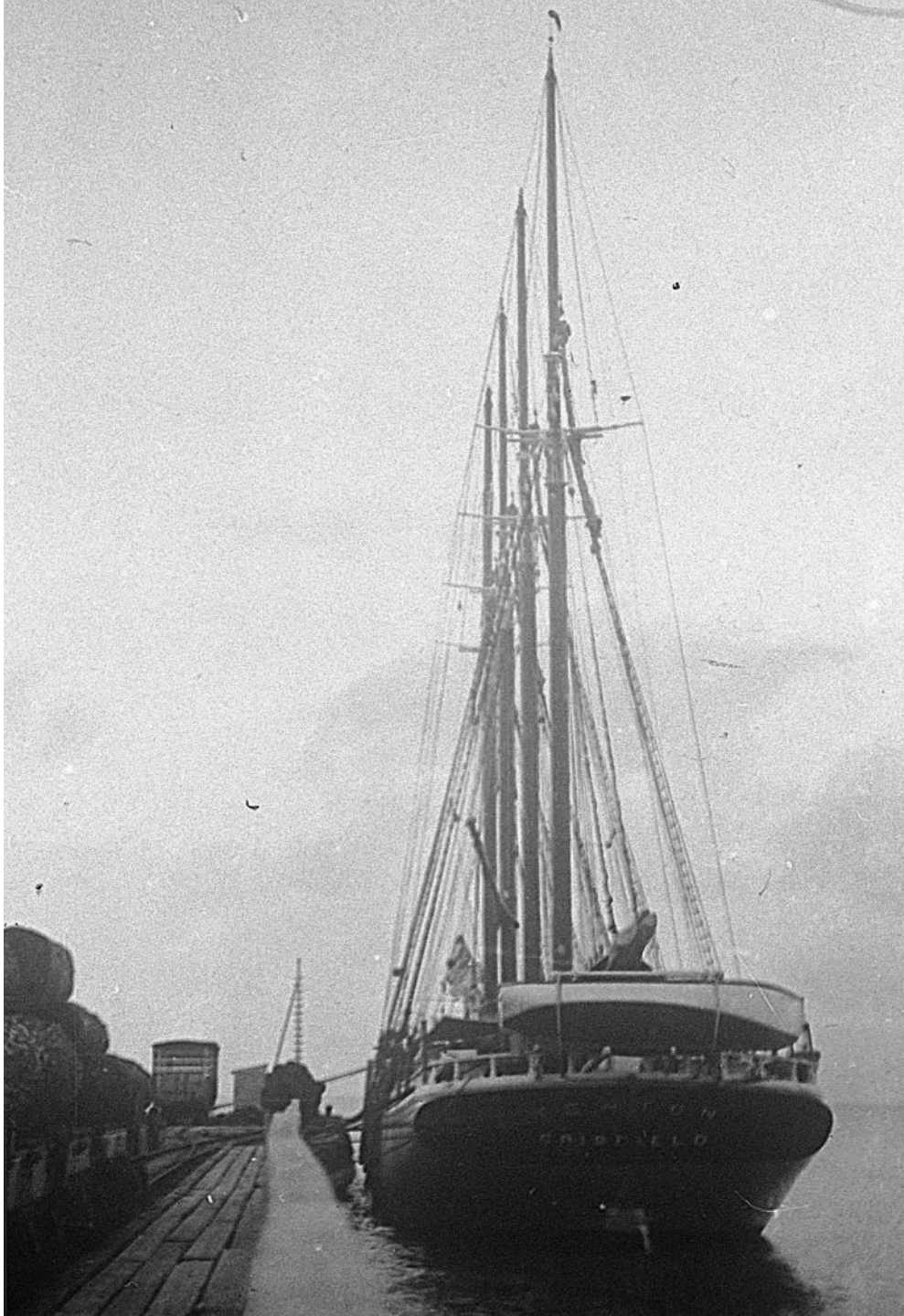
Anchor and chain, the original 'Boom' of Burrell
Boom. Wikipedia



Squaring logs.
Belize Estate &
Produce Co.
barquedier,
Belize. (NSS)

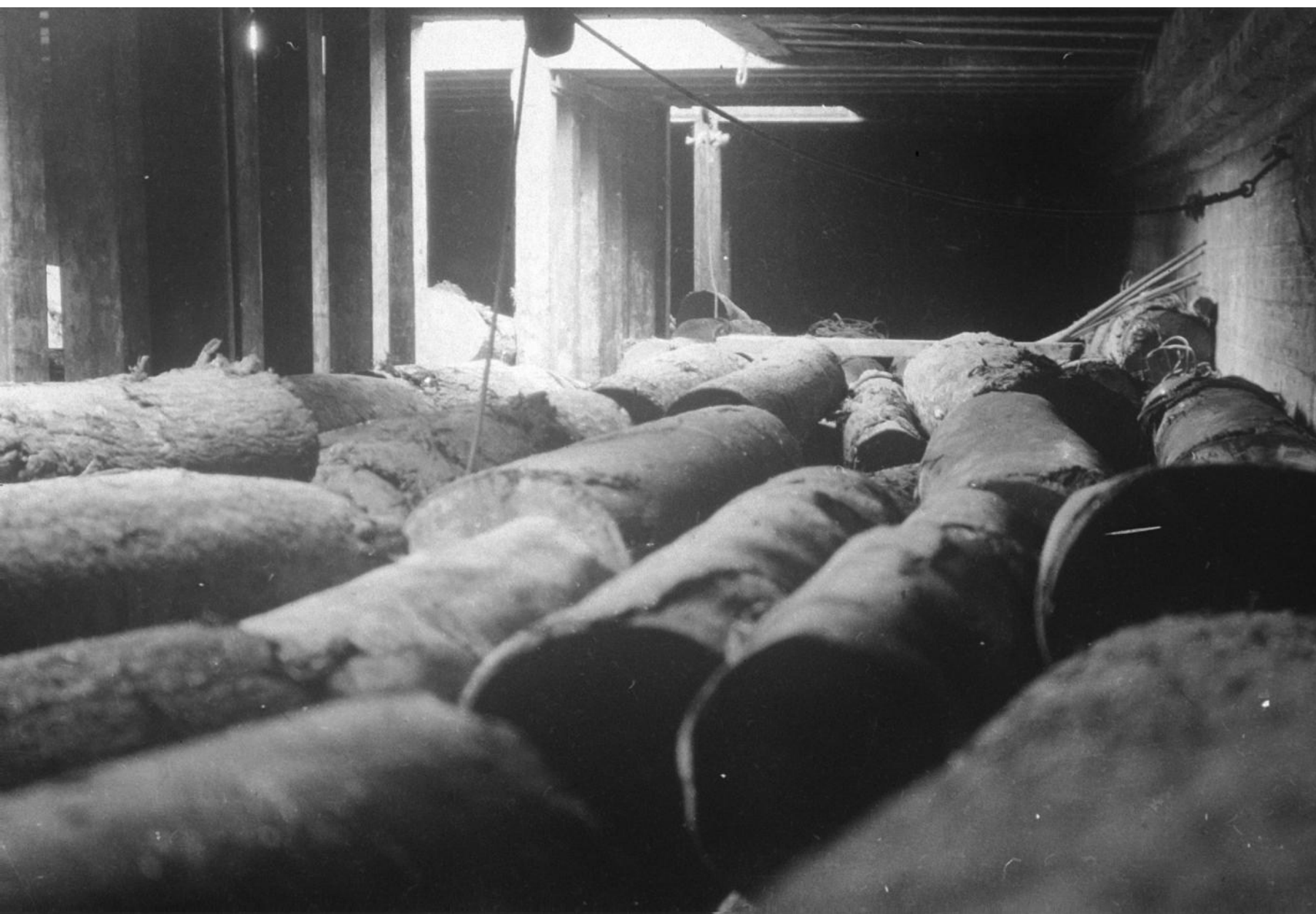


Squared logs
awaiting
shipment,
Haulover Creek.
(NSS)



Schooner loading
secondary wood,
Stan Creek Railway
pier. 1925. (NSS)

Note: steam ships had not
yet replaced sailing ships
as late as the 1920s.



Banak logs
(secondary
timber from the
Tideway Lumber
Company
concession) in
schooner hold.
(NSS)

“It was different in those countries where the colonial period coincided with the culmination of the machine age and of *laissez faire* capitalism. There, land exploitation was carried out on a massive scale and was particularly ruinous because of the devastating capacity of modern machinery.” Franz Heske (1938).

German Forestry. Yale University Press. p.16.

“There has been continuous dissipation of the stocks of mahogany and chicle without adequate replacement to safeguard the future production of the forests, which have been ‘mined’ and not developed. The increasing use of machinery in mahogany extraction has made possible the exploitation of larger amounts of wood with the employment of workers for shorter periods.” Neil Stevenson (1944). *A forest regeneration scheme for British Honduras*. Page 52, Paragraph 76.



What has been
lost – is there a
similar
Mahogany tree
standing in
Belize today?

