



## ***SFHM RESEARCH PAPER-13***

### **THE END OF STEAM POWERED LOCOMOTIVE OPERATIONS AT LONG LEAF: PHOTOS BY ALBERT E. BROWN TAKEN MARCH 20, 1953**



*EVERETT W. LUECK*

An online publication of the  
Southern Forest Heritage Museum and Research Center  
P.O. Box 101  
Long Leaf, LA 71448  
Website: [forestheritagemuseum.org](http://forestheritagemuseum.org)

2021

**Author:**

Everett W. Lueck, Past President and Historian, Southern Forest Heritage Museum, Long Leaf, LA, 71448.

**Cover photo:**

Crowell Lumber Company's Red River and Gulf Railroad locomotive #106 pulling log cars enroute to the mill at Long Leaf, LA. The photo was taken by Albert E. Brown on March 20, 1953. It was colorized by Wimbley Vu in 2021.

**Photo credits:**

These photographs by A.E. Brown are from the collections of Judge Leon Ford, Louis Saillard and Tony Howe held at the Southern Forest Heritage Museum and Research Center.

**Abstract:**

Steam-powered logging and milling was the mainstay of the lumbering industry during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thousands of sawmill towns throughout the South harvested the virgin longleaf pine forests. Typically, these towns lasted about 20 years at the most—the time needed to harvest the pines bought by most of the lumbermen. It was unusual for a company to have a timber supply available to continue operation into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Crowell Lumber Company at Long Leaf, LA, was ending its steam-powered logging operation when Albert Brown came to view and photograph it in 1953. His photographs document the end of this era across the South.

**How to cite this publication:**

Lueck, Everett W. 2021. The end of steam powered locomotive operations at Long Leaf: photos by A.E. Brown taken on March 20, 1953. SFHM Research Paper-13. Long Leaf, LA: Southern Forest Heritage Museum and Research Center. 11 p.

# **THE END OF STEAM POWERED LOCOMOTIVE OPERATIONS AT LONG LEAF: PHOTOS BY ALBERT E. BROWN TAKEN MARCH 20, 1953**

Everett W. Lueck

It was a Friday, and in a few days the Red River and Gulf Railroad would cease operating steam-powered locomotives to supply logs to the Crowell Lumber Company mill at Long Leaf, LA.

Albert E. Brown journeyed over 120 miles from his home in Shreveport to have one last look at Red River and Gulf engine #106 in steam. It was a cloudy, overcast, and probably cold on that day in March. It was not ideal for photography because of the low contrast. On the other hand, because of the slow shutter speeds of the day, Brown took some extraordinary photographs that day.



Engine #106 comes around the wye after dropping of its empties on the passing track at Meridian, LA.

Brown got to Meridian, LA, in time to see #106 coming around the wye after dropping its train of empties on the siding after running around the train of loaded log cars sitting on the main track. The loaded cars had been brought by a wood's engine, the wood burning engine #202, the day before. Evidence of #202's appetite for cordwood is stacked everywhere along the tracks.

After coupling up to the train of loaded log cars, #106 was ready to go. There was no need for an air test, as the cars had no air brakes, or even any brakes at all! A load of 18-20 log cars trailed #106, who will wrestle with them over a several 2% hills between here and the mill at Long Leaf.

With its whistle screaming for both the US-167 road crossing and the crossing with the Rock Island Railroad, #106 stomps by photographer Brown, who is standing on the Rock Island rail track watching #106 coming and going.



Under a pillar of smoke that Lucius Beebe would have envied, #106 crosses US-167 west bound to Long Leaf.





Engine #106 passes across the Rock Island track and heads for Long Leaf.

A.E. had plenty of time to drive up US-167 to Lecompte and enjoy his plate lunch at Lea's Lunchroom before driving west to Forest Hill and on to Long Leaf.

Arriving at the Long Leaf mill, A.E. had time to take in the panorama of the sawmill and the mill pond and shoot photos of both the mill and recently retired Crowell engine 4-6-0 #400.



The Crowell Long Leaf Lumber mill at Long Leaf sits under a leaden and cloudy sky awaiting the arrival of #106 and the log train.



In an enlargement of the previous view, you can see the gondola perched on the end of the leaning log unloading track and the switches leading to the unloading track, as well as the connecting track leading down the hill to the Missouri Pacific line.

In a blow up of the mill panorama, the upper end of the log dump track and the main line which passed around it are well documented.



Crowell Long Leaf #400 waits for a call that will never come. Never moved from this spot, it sits there today at Long Leaf.

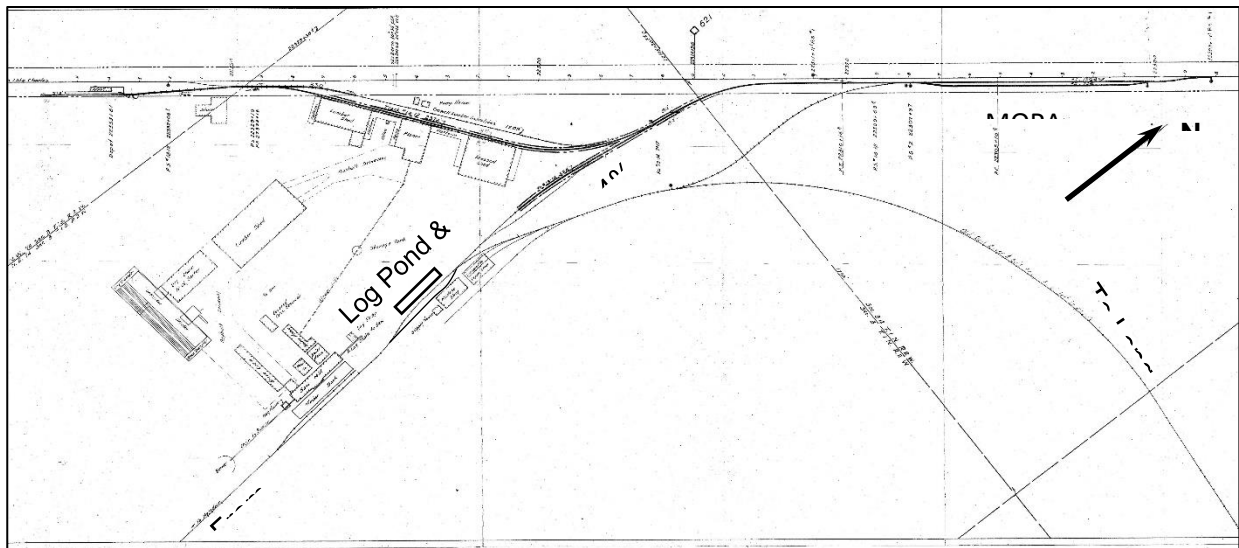
Engine #400 shows the borrowing of the smokebox front from long retired Crowell #300 as well as the evidence of recent use. However, it would still be sitting in the same position in 2021 as it was on that day in 1953.

Soon enough, #106 would arrive with its log loads and in a complicated maneuver requiring it to get around its loads, to push them up the unloading track #106 would pull its entire train north, up the main line, past the mill and down the hill to the Missouri Pacific interchange yard.

There it could run around its train, and after cutting the train in two, it would now, in reverse, make the toughest pull of the day, pulling up the 4% grade from the Missouri Pacific yard, back over the hill, down below the mill, across LA highway 497, and finally push them up the unloading track to unload them into the mill pond.

Then with the log cars unloaded, #106 will pull them south away from the unloading track, push them around on the main and ease them down the hill into a different track in the interchange yard. Finally, it will repeat the entire process with the second half of the train.

Then it would couple both halves of the train together, shove the empties back up the hill and finally pull it out to the yard at Long Leaf Junction to leave it in the yard to pick up on Monday, to take back into the woods.



Hopefully, this map will explain the problem and the solution. Engine #106 pulls its log train facing north, into the mill yard, but must somehow get on the other end of its train to PUSH the log loads into the timber unloading dock. To do so, the train is PULLED past the mill, on the main line (dark line) and into the Missouri Pacific yard. Leaving its train on one track, it pulls around it on the other track, splits the train in two because of the heavy 4% grade up into the mill, and now backing up, pulls its train down to the south, past the timber unloading dock, before pushing it on to the unloading dock track. After the unloading is completed, #106 then pulls (in reverse) the empty cars off the unloading dock track, and then pushes them down into the other Missouri Pacific yard track. Switching over to the second yard track, #106 picks up the second half of its train and repeats the process., finally shoving the second half of its train into the same track as the first half. Now for the last time, #106 uses the empty yard track to run



around its train one more time, so that it can back the empty train UP the 4% grade, down alongside the mill, and then pull it out to Long Leaf Junction to store the train for the weekend.



After pulling its loads by this spot and on down the hill, #106 now in reverse, pulls its loads up the 4% grade from the Missouri Pacific connection and into the sawmill. The RR&G main line to Lecompte bears off to the right.



Still pulling hard, #106 passes A.E. as he stands beside the engine house.





Finally, after having pulled its train across the highway on the south side of the mill, #106 gets to push it up the unloading track.



This enlargement of the previous view shows us that #106 has only come up the hill with half of its log loads. The 4% uphill grade from the Missouri Pacific yard being just too much to manage, #106 will repeat the same process again with the rest of its train, and finally combine the cars in the interchange yard, run around them again, and shove the empties up the hill, so that it can take them out to Long Leaf Junction to store them for the weekend.





After completing its duties at the log pond, #106 then switches the loading docks and brings the loads that go to the Rock Island line at Lecompte out to the yard at Long Leaf Junction and makes up its train for the next day, Saturday March 21, 1953



After finishing putting the empty log train away for the weekend and making up a Saturday train of lumber for Lecompte connections, the crew brought #106 back to the Long Leaf engine house for the night. Brown took this photo on May 30, 1952, but the setting would have looked no different in March 1953.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

The Crowell Lumber Company ceased operations in 1969 but the company facilities had been converted to electrical power in the mid-1950s. Shortly, before this conversion steam-powered locomotive logging operations ended, and truck logging began. The Long Leaf mill complex was not liquidated when the mill closed and in 1994 was donated to the Southern Forest Heritage Museum and Research Center (Smith 2007). Present on the Museum site is the largest collection of steam-powered logging equipment known to exist in the South. Everett has documented some of the history of this railroad logging equipment (Lueck 2015). Much of this equipment is available for viewing at the Museum site at Long Leaf.

## **REFERENCES**

Lueck, Everett. 2015. Red River and Gulf Railroad: a short history. Long Leaf, LA: Southern Forest Heritage Museum. [no pagination]

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