

Red Cedar

EARLY DAYS ON THE RICHMOND.

(Written by "W.M." for the "R.R. Herald.")

Looking at a photo the other day of a fine red cedar log recently secured at Lillian Rock, it occurred to me that very little is known to-day of the vast amount of this wonderful timber which was marketed from the Richmond River in years gone by—to the value of many thousands of pounds—or the hardships endured by those who brought it to market.

About the early 50's of last century, the trees were found in scrubs along the river bank, and the logs, after being "squared," were rolled into the water, then collected in rafts, and taken by tides to meet the sailing vessels, which carried them to Sydney. "Squaring" was done by axe work, making four straight sides, which were not joined, leaving the log in the form of an octagon.

"Working the tides" meant allowing the raft to go on while the tide flowed in the right direction, and tying up to the bank when it turned, to await the next turn.

Later, the workers were forced to leave the river banks in search of further supplies, and bullock teams were used in hauling from the scrubs.

At one period the cedar-getters sawed the logs into large slitches by digging a pit at each tree and using a pit-saw. The outside slabs were left to waste.

Many early settlers built their houses entirely from these slabs; and the tracks used for hauling and the depressions which had formed saw-pits, were to be found long afterwards by selectors, at intervals all through the Big Scrub.

When supplies near deep water became scarce, the men went "inland," and rolled the logs into the creeks which feed the river, there to await floods, to float them to deep water. This work was done chiefly by all owners in a given area working together, each marking his logs with a distinguishing brand.

In one instance, the writer's father was placed in charge of three teams of bullocks, hauling cedar logs to the creeks above Wyangarie. Their harvest

was one thousand logs; and these, with those of other owners, were floated by floods to Casino, where a strong cable was fixed across the river to impound all logs. The owners here took charge of their timber.

This process was also carried out on the North Arm, and the impounding cables were above Lismore.

The writer has helped to collect logs at Bontharbor when a boy.

After reaching tide water, the logs were hauled from the water, at suitable places, to be cleaned up for market. This consisted of "squaring" and sawing the ends which had been bruised by bumping trees or rocks in the rush of the flood water.

But it must be pointed out that many logs would be blocked and left behind and, after a big flood, owners would organise working parties to patrol the creeks, and place these logs in the beds of the creeks to await the next flood.

Pets are much better company than visitors.—Eva LeGallienne.