

FROM PENNSYLVANIA TO PANACA

Prior to the completion of the railroad from Salt Lake City, Utah, to Los Angeles, California in 1905, this part of Nevada was still an isolated frontier. The necessities of life were hard to come by and had to be produced locally or bought ready-made at premium prices. Timber was cut in the nearby mountain ranges and finished into lumber at small sawmills. The power for the sawmills was provided by portable steam engines, often called "donkeys" after the prospector's hardworking sidekick.

The Clover Valley Mountains steam engine, named after the timbered area where it was used, was cast at the Pottstown, Pennsylvania, Iron Works in the 1860s and shipped to the west. In 1870, William and O.P. Sherwood of Pioche, Nevada, bought the steam engine and set up a sawmill in the Clover Valley Mountains, about 25 miles south of Panaca.

The Sherwood brothers were soon operating five sawmills, creating a successful lumber business by supplying pine and juniper to the mining districts near Pioche. Lyman L. Woods, a pioneer settler of Clover Valley, worked as a teamster for the sawmills, hauling lumber throughout the region.

In 1874, the lumber empire built by the Sherwood brothers collapsed, and they were forced to sell their equipment to pay creditors. During the next 15 years, the Clover Valley steam engine changed ownership many times, as other local entrepreneurs attempted to earn a living in the lumber business.