

THE LOG BOOM BOOMSTICKS AND BOOMCHAINS FROM THE PORT GAMBLE LUMBER MILL

Log boom boomsticks are the long logs (usually 50-75 feet in length) that are used to contain and surround log tows in the waters of Puget Sound, the Columbia River, and British Columbia. Log rafts, which consist of 60-90 bundles of logs (a bundle is a full log truck load with 3 wire bands holding them together), are surrounded by strings of boomsticks joined together end to end and attached by boomchains which run through a hole drilled in each end of the boomstick. The boomchains have a characteristic ring on one end and a toggle on the other. Often a number of log rafts are joined together to form a very large log tow, which may contain 300-600 bundles and must be towed by large, powerful tugboats. Log tows are still the cheapest way to move large quantities of logs on the relatively protected waters of the Puget Sound. Occasionally during stormy weather log-towing tugs must hide out for days or even weeks in protected bays and coves until safe, calm log towing conditions return.

Until its closure in December 1995, the Pope and Talbot Mill in Port Gamble, Washington was the oldest continuously operating lumber mill in the United States. Since 1853 some of the finest lumber in the world, mostly Douglas Fir and Hemlock, was produced in Port Gamble. For nearly all of its 143-year history, logs arrived in Port Gamble by water, towed by Pope and Talbot's own tugboats. The last boats operated by the mill were the beautiful wooden P&T Pioneer and the smaller steel Teekalet II. Most of the logs were delivered and made up in nearby Port Ludlow, then towed to Port Gamble.

Decommissioned boomsticks have been recycled into a number of different products:

1. Cut-off ends between 2-6 ft lengths are used in garden and landscaping arrangements, often with the rusty chains draped around the arrangement.
2. Milled teredo lumber for use in furniture and interior decorative walls.
3. Old growth lumber for flooring, wooden boat lumber, and other uses.
4. Large woody debris for beach and stream habitat enhancement projects.
5. Redrilled for continued use as boomsticks or breakwater log booms.
6. Culls are ground into wood chips or hog fuel for paper and pulp productions or donated to elderly, poor, or non-profits for campfires, beach fires, or home firewood.
7. Nothing is wasted.