

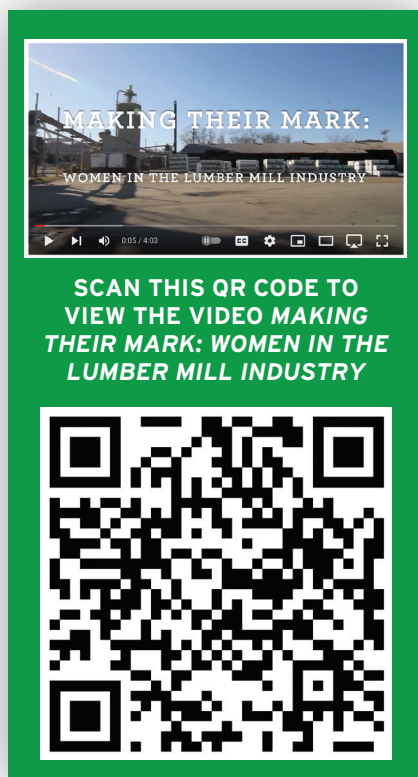
MAKING THEIR MARK: WOMEN IN THE LUMBER

A SPECIAL SERIES
FROM **NELMA**.

BY KIM DREW


WOMEN'S HISTORY Month (celebrated in March) is all about recognizing and celebrating the contribution of women to society, across the board. Originally conceived in 1978 in California, the effort caught on so much that in 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first proclamation for Women's History Week. Congress followed soon after, creating a national recognition. Within six years, the outreach was expanded to cover the entire month of March.

In what is quite accurately seen as an industry that is predominantly male, how do women fit into the lumber industry?



MAKING THEIR MARK:
WOMEN IN THE LUMBER MILL INDUSTRY

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THEIR MARK: WOMEN IN THE
LUMBER MILL INDUSTRY



When it comes to the lumber industry as a whole, the Northeast has always been a leader, and our celebration of women in the industry is no exception. A Fall 2022 *Audubon Magazine* article ("Who Runs the Forest? Increasingly, in the Southeast, It's Women") shares multiple examples of new communities of women who manage their trees with economic and ecosystem sustainability in mind.

Back in 2014, the Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association (NELMA), together with Irving Forest Products, created an educational video entitled *Making Their Mark: Women in the Lumber Mill Industry*. The video spotlights interview excerpts with several women in leadership positions within Irving, their challenges, and their growth opportunities.

Among the highlights:

- At Irving, women hold all levels of jobs, from team leader on the manufacturing line to general manager of the mill.
- The roles that women take on within the site are quite diverse: there are women in the log yard who are scaling, there are women graders, women packagers and shippers.
- Word of mouth is key to growth: Irving touts multiple sisters, mother/daughter pairs, and friend combinations among their female employees. Given that both Irving mills are in small communities, once word gets out that the mills are a good place to work, interest grows.
- As one employee states perfectly:

"Don't be intimidated... don't let it stop you from doing something that you're going to probably enjoy and be good at. Don't doubt yourself."

Support for and celebration of women in the lumber industry is growing, as companies develop female-specific programs and encourage and elevate women to greater roles. A few examples:

Recently, 84 Lumber used social media to spotlight current and future roles for women in the lumber industry as part of the National Association of Women in Construction's Women in Construction Week. Sharing content across multiple channels, the goal of the content was to provide the information needed to recruit women for new roles and celebrate women currently in lumber leadership roles.

The Maine Cabin Masters, a super-popular cabin improvement show on the Magnolia Network now in its ninth season, recently celebrated the only female carpenter on their crew by spotlighting her on an episode of their "From the Woodshed" podcast. Sara Dostie, who is also a holistic massage therapist and educator, is celebrating her third year on the MCM crew; prior to that, she was a subcontractor for her builder father for six years.

If the past several years is any indication, the number of women employed in the lumber industry will continue to grow. And as long as employers ensure that women are supported and encouraged, there's no limit to what can be accomplished. **BP**