# Making Graphic Images of Old Logging Machinery

by John Butterworth

The remains of old logging machinery are to be found all over our Province. Steam-powered equipment was introduced in the late nineteenth century and continued to be used well into the twentieth century, replacing oxen and horses. This machinery, often consisting of rusty relics, can make interesting subject material for photography.

Logs were moved from the falling area to the nearest body of water, where they were rafted up and towed to the sawmill. To move them, a system of wire ropes and pulleys was suspended from spar trees. This system was powered by wood-fired steam donkeys which were used as skidders, yarders and road engines.
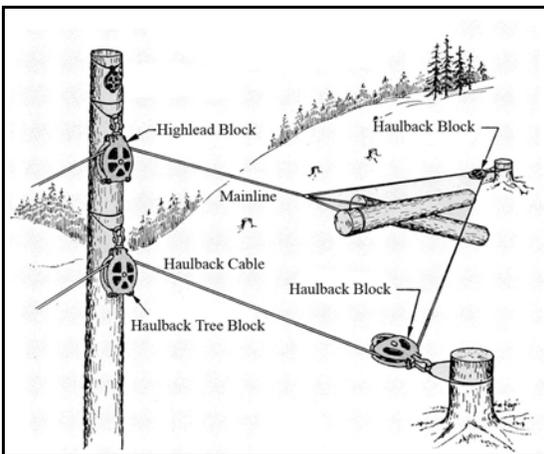
A simple rigging setup (adapted from Ken Drushka, *Working in the Woods*, 1992, Harbour Publishing.)
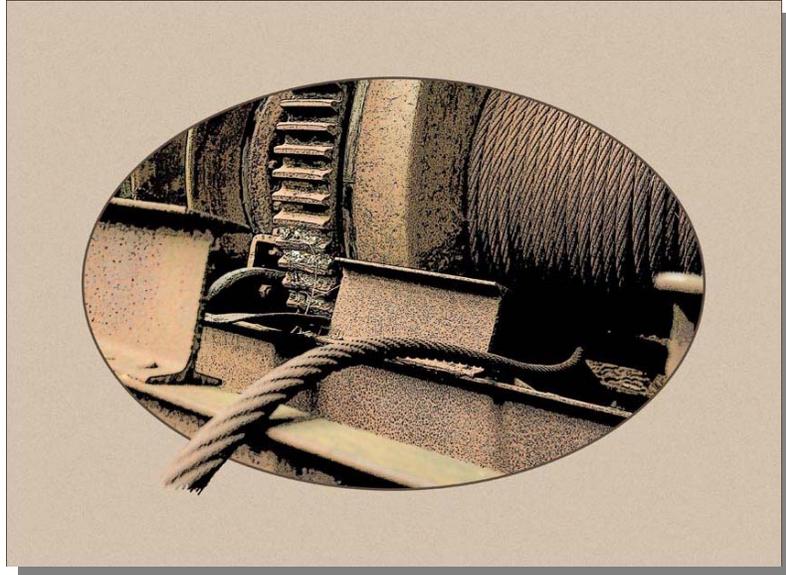
Used in the rain and mud, running through small pulleys, the early wire rope didn't last long. Walk through our forests almost anywhere and you will stumble across abandoned pieces of it.

To photograph old machinery, a good place to start is the BC Forest Discovery Centre, just north of Duncan, open from March to the Thanksgiving weekend. Another interesting site is Willingdon Park in Powell River, where my photos were taken.

Because I wanted to take an artistic rather than a documentary approach, I framed my images as "open form" compositions, showing only a part of the machine. The viewer's imagination is then engaged in filling in the part outside the frame, resulting in a more interesting image.

I manipulated the images in Photoshop to enhance the rusty texture of the machines and to add graphic impact.

Finally, I added an elliptical mask to complement the elliptical shapes of the cable drums and gears in the images.
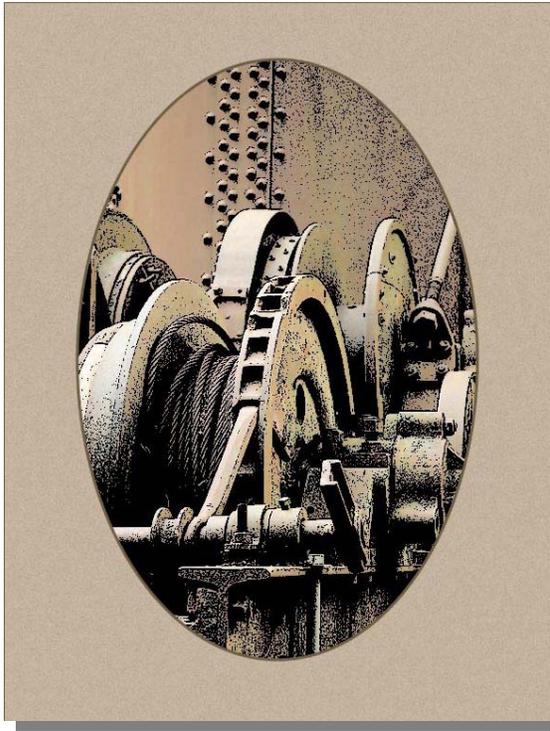
A two-cable-drum steam donkey. The main drum was for the mainline cable, used for hauling the logs. The secondary drum was for the lighter haulback cable, used to return the mainline to the falling location.

While this treatment does not suit every subject, it seems to work well with images that have a lot of texture, such as rust.

If you would like to try this manipulation, here is how to proceed.

1. Open the image in Photoshop and duplicate the Background layer, naming this new layer "Edges." Convert the Edges Layer to a line drawing using Filter>Artistic>Poster Edges.

2. In the "Layers" palette, click the "Create new fill or adjustment layer" icon and select "Threshold." Adjust the Threshold slider to obtain a suitable effect.

3. Now duplicate the Background layer again and drag this new layer to the top of the layer stack.

4. Switch the blending mode of this new layer to multiply and reduce its opacity to about 80%.

5. Set the background colour swatch to a suitable colour for the matt, add a new (blank) layer to the top of the layer stack and fill it using Edit>Fill>Use Background Colour. Apply a texture by using Filter>Texture>Grain. Draw an elliptical marquee on this layer and hit the delete key. You will then see your image in an elliptical hole.

6. To add a border around the ellipse, go to the bottom of the Layer Palette to the "Add a Layer Style" button. Select "Stroke." Choose an appropriate colour and width.

Your finished work should have good graphic impact and will be a contribution to preserving some of our Province's logging heritage.