Once upon a time, there was no indoor plumbing on Fidalgo Island. There weren’t any shops and when the first ones arrived, they did not stock tissues on the shelves. Today we take for granted the toilet’s flush and sewage’s treatment. In cold season people stock up on “Kleenex.” But in Anacortes, that word was taboo for those who pledged allegiance to “Scotties,” the end product of the Scott Paper Company’s local workers.

... to clean up, concerts at Seafarers Park and Trail Tales
shingle weavers & box shooks

Early timber products were simple and supplemented the meager cash flow of settlers. Cedar shakes were made in the winter and cedwood sawn for steamboat fuel. Later, more milled timber for fishing boats and building lumber; planks and pilings for docks and fish traps. And in the early 20th century box shooks by the millions were made to carry the cases of salmon.

Morrison Family History

William Thomas Morrison was one of the founders of the Fidalgo Lumber and Box Company. His father, Archibald, was the oldest of the six brothers who started the Morrison Mill Company that now operates several plans and has been in existence since 1890.

- *A History of the State of Washington, 1937*

During the teens, Bellingham’s Morrison timber family expanded to Anacortes, acquiring two of its original mill sites, the Fidalgo Mill at 35th Street and the Old Oregon Mill at 15th Street, increasing the byproducts on mill row. The roar of the ’20s added many new industries in Anacortes: a glass factory, a flat blocking company and a copper mine. Of these, the pulp mill was the only to survive and expand.

“Every log came in by water. There were rafts and I worked on the boom. My work was on a boom. That was very hard work, especially on low tides when there wasn’t water to float the logs in. We would dog (drive spikes into) two logs and they always had to be driven in with sledgehammers, so you spent the day out of water driving these dogs until the tide was in enough, sometimes four, five, six hours just swinging a sledgehammer, driving these dogs. It was hard work.

A lot of people who worked at Morrison Mill lived on March’s Point. They used to walk to work and back home across the railroad trestle. They couldn’t afford a car and that was kind of a shortcut. Although the work was hard, they still tucked their dinner buckets under their arms and walked home at night, which was quite a thing after working as hard as they did. Most of it was bull work in sawmills; there was nothing easy there.”

JOHN TURSI came to Anacortes with the Civilian Conservation Corp and worked in the lumber, salmon canning and oil refining industries. He was a decorated WWII veteran and a generous philanthropist.

“Set apart from the modest mill and cannery workers houses, mansions—by comparison—were built to house the mill and cannery owners. At 3402 Commercial Avenue, known today as the Nantucket Inn, Morrison family and mill managers resided for decades. When Scott Paper Company acquired the Morrison Mill, the house became home to pulp mill managers.”

“Mills at 15th and 16th streets on Fidalgo Bay

1890—1903  Skagit Mill Co.
1891—1892  English McCann Mill
1894—1907  W.M. Rodgers Sawmill & Box Factory
1907—1916  Old Oregon Lumber Co.
1918—1947  Morrison Mill (lumber and box)

Natural resource production created waste that could be processed for another use. Salmon guts made into glue and wood chips made not only into pulp, but the power to run the machinery. Before Fidalgo Pulp Manufacturing Co. came to Anacortes in 1925, turpentine and other products were rendered at Puget Sound Wood Products from 1907 through 1914.

“Well, I came on the scene about 1936. Morrison Mill was operating a single shift—primarily construction material, construction lumber—and operating a large box factory. They made a lot of apple boxes and a lot of egg crates. They also made the steam for the pulp mill.”

- John Tursi
Puget Sound Pulp & Timber Co. Anacortes Plant a Novelty of Progress and Enlarged Thrice in Four Years

Anacortes American December 19, 1929

The original plant was built and placed in operation four years ago by Ossian Anderson and his associates. Incorporated as the Fidalgo Pulp Manufacturing Company, the initial output of the Anacortes factory was 20 tons of dry paper per day. In 1927 the capacity was increased to 40 tons per day and last year to 60 tons daily, it's present capacity.

Due largely to the inventive genius of its president and guiding spirit of Ossian Anderson, the Fidalgo Pulp Manufacturing Company’s local plant was one of the first in the history of the paper industry successfully to convert Hemlock and Spruce box factory waste into high-grade paper pulp, acceptable to the paper mills of the middle west and eastern United States.

The waste wood is first conveyed to the trimming and cleaning department from the supply pile... on December 1, 1929... about 3,400 cords of box factory waste wood and slabs from three local box factories. Waste wood then goes through the “hogs” or chipping machines, after which it is elevated and dumped into the top of the digester tank to cook in the sulfur and lime solution for 12 hours.

Superintendent Carl B. Everitt of the Anacortes plant said that the factory requires an average of 135 cords of slab and waste box wood daily. All the chemical process in the digester consumes an average of 220 tons of sulfur and 300 tons of lime rock per month. The sulphur comes from Galveston, Texas. The lime rock is from Roche Harbor, San Juan Island, delivered by scow at the factory.

The arrival of pulp manufacturing in Anacortes was based on resourcefulness, making profit from the waste of the dominant box factories. Yet as the wooden box business got shook up - replaced by the cardboard industry - the pulp and sawmill interdependence began to shift. Striking Morrison Mill workers would halt pulp production by shutting down chip supply and steam power. As pulp became the driving force, the eventual acquisition of Morrison Mill by Scott Paper was inevitable to assure operation.

PUGET PULP PIONEERS
1925 - 1929 Fidalgo Pulp Manufacturing Co.
1929 - 1940 Puget Sound Pulp & Timber Co.
YOU HAD TO BE THERE or ... except from the pulp mill newsletters: Progress Through Quality and Top Relief

It is planned to build up the hog fuel pile now that the sawmills and shingle mills are running. Dirty pulp will not make clean paper... Sunday four hours of production time was lost when the mill ran out of oil. The hemlock hog fuel available could not be burned without using the oil burners, so the steam pressure dropped in a point where a digester had to be shut in. Production last week was 402,966 tons, and average of 80.59 tons/day. We really slipped here. Low steam was the major factor as it slowed cooking and gave us some shivery cooks. 80 tons were graded No. 3 and will not be shipped to Chester. - January 1952

Howard Stewart reported that with favorable tides, the sawmill has been able to mix the logs successfully. This is a big help in producing of chips and cooking. Last Friday we got 1,248 bales down to the dock in 4 hours. This is a new record, accomplished by using two lift trucks in the warehouse. - February 1952

The jaws of the air hoist will be refaced as soon as possible to prevent them from tearing the wrappers. The sawmill ran quite a lot of farmer wood with Olympic Peninsula logs last week. Though the cut was only 67% hemlock, the digester yield remained high. We do not have another boat scheduled after the present order is filled. Our best selling point in getting more bookings is to continue with the present program of concentrating on putting out neat and uniform bales.

The high school is having a scrap drive in March. Our mill, along with other industries, is donating steel scrap to this project. Funds raised will be used in re-turfing the football field. - March 1952

The changeover to ammonia base was discussed. The transition from calcium to ammonia base acid will be a mixture of both calcium and ammonia base. - April 1, 1952

The sawmill had an accident that curtailed production today. A big spruce log bent the shaft for the top of the feed saw. A “spider” for the reclaim tank is on order. - April 8, 1952

Last week, with additional chips available, we set out to break the production record. We did just that - AND HOW! 719 tons were pushed through the bale ... this makes 730 tons having been produced by the digesters... well above any previous figures.

- J.R. Lewis, November 4, 1952

“We’re going to take it stride of the challenge of the budget figure for 1953 of 100 tons per day.”

- J.R. Lewis, November 25, 1952

One of the griplock wire machines came loose and stuck Gary Harrs on the head cutting a small gash. Watch those machines fellows, that they are not to pass notify your foreman. Clarence Landhef had the misfortune to get his foot caught in the area between the straight roll and barker frame, breaking several small bones in his foot. Safety shoes probably saved him from a more serious injury.

The weekly production of 771.6 tons was all #1 quality. Our best week. Wood consumption, Sulphur, ammonia, caustic, chlorine, water and steam were below budget.

The plant really needed neat and clean for the school teacher tour and they were really astounded by the complexity of our operation and I guess from an outsiders view point it does look pretty complicated.

The blackjack seemed to have hit the “jack pot” with their idea of putting about 40 gallons of water in with the bleach liquor as it contacts the pulp. Not only has this reduced the amperage load on the retention chambers, but I believe it has reduced plugging also. Look at the savings in chemicals per ton. 101 lbs. of chlorine against a budgeted figure of 120 lbs. Caustic was 123 lbs. against a budgeted figure of 150 lbs. This shows what can happen when men on this job are free to experiment and try their own ideas.

- Leonard Moore, Top Relief, 1956

“The steam cloud when the digesters were released (top relief) was eye watering, nose offending and full of sulfur dioxide gas.” - Gib Moore
As the old Fidalgo Mill was becoming the worker-owned Anacortes Veneer Incorporated in 1940, the local pulp mill was acquired by corporate powerhouse Scott Paper Company. It initially operated as the Anacortes Pulp Company, and later under the name of its subsidiary, Coos Bay Pulp through 1960. From 1961 until the plant closed in 1978 it was known as the Scott Paper Mill. Post-closure, many Anacortes workers transferred to Scott’s Everett and Hamilton operations.
The Anacortes plant is a two-digester, ammonia-base, short-fiber sulphite pulp mill with a capacity of approximately 140 tons/day of pulp. Pulp is shipped by truck to the Everett Paper Mill (our only customer) in loose flake form. - Scott Paper 1971 Report

The Sulphite Mill proper consists of an Acid Plant, two 19.5 ton digesters, 2 stage bleachery, necessary de-knotters and screens, both brown and bleached stock cleaning, two ancient wet machines and a wet flake trailer loading facility. The alder species is the main source of wood furnish.

In the last decade of Anacortes' pulp mill, Larry Lunsford created this project on pulp processing for Anacortes Junior High School credit.
This area now contains Seafarers’ Park, Thrive, the Marine Technology Center - and extends to the old log yard proposed for development by MJB. Looking back at a more blue collar Anacortes, Gib Moore recalls of the pulp mill:

“It was a place where a high school grad could make a family wage income right out of school.”

“We have some awfully good people working here. We have a company-wide reputation as a ‘make do, can do’ outfit.” - Dick Hoover, Scott Paper plant manager

The Anacortes pulp mill converted to the use of alder in 1955

The wood is brought into the wood yard. It is then moved into the Barker. The logs are then fed into the chipper, and the chips stored in the chip storage house. From the storage house the chips get up the conveyor to the top of the digesters. - School report by Larry Lansford

Water + Wood + Labor + Chemicals = PULP + Payroll + Pollution

“The sociological environment of the Anacortes community has changed in recent years, with some ascendency in influence of large senior citizen groups which now populate the town, and environmentalists of varying stripe. However, in sum, the basic attitude toward large industry is favorable and will probably improve considerably when we are able to eliminate the smell from our SO2 emissions.” - Scott Paper report, 1971

“Gladdening Sight Along Waterfront”

“Lifting nearly 1,000 tons of pulp from the Port of Anacortes warehouse... the huge freighter "Titan" of Liverpool was a gladdening sight on the waterfront, being the first "pulp boat" to make this port in nineteen months.”

Anacortes pulp was an unbleached product in the early years, baled and delivered to eastern paper mills by ship and rail, and primarily to Chester, PA at the start of the Scott Paper era. In later years, unbale pulp was trucked to Scott’s Everett mill.

“It came as a shock, but not a surprise”

“Scott Paper mill shuts down” March 24, 1978
“I liked my job and all the people down there, office people, too. They treated me like one of the family, every one of them.”

- DeWayne Whitney

History is alive in this community, remembered in stories about these workers, and their sometimes dangerous labor. The mill bound families and friends together on the job and off, in bowling leagues, baseball teams, Christmas carnivals and giant summer barbeques in the park. Many of the parks we enjoy today - Storvik Park, Daniels fields and Tursi Park - are a tribute to their hardworking philanthropy.

“Loss of the pulp mill will be a major blow to the local economy. A $1 million annual payroll, much of which went to local businesses, will be gone. Tax revenue to the city and school district will be lost. Some 79 employees are affected by the closure.”

- Anacortes American, March 29, 1978