

MISCELLANEOUS LOGGING HISTORY FROM FAITHORN, MICHIGAN, CENTENNIAL BOOK

[Compiled and Transcribed by William John Cummings]

LOG DRIVES ON THE MENOMINEE RIVER

By G.O. Shields – Reprinted in the
Menominee Democrat, May 1, 1888
Faithorn Centennial 1887-1987

[Transcribed by William John Cummings]

When the spring rains come and the streams rise to the tops of their border, the drivers – men of a lusty, muscular, active class – armed with spikes and peavies, cast the logs into the wild, surging, foaming waters, and start them on their journey to the sawmill.

The skill and courage with which these men brave the dangers of the flood and handle the logs is a marvel to all who see them. With projecting, sharp-pointed “driving spikes” attached to their heavy boot soles, they will leap into the stream regardless of the depth or rapidity of the current and spring from log to log, up and down or across stream at will, as may be required to handle best their unwieldy cargo. If it becomes necessary for one of them to go through a stretch of open water, where the logs are not close enough together to walk on, he forthwith drafts one into service as a canoe. Standing erect, he plants himself midway upon the log; and if it rolls, he moves in the opposite direction till it stops, and then, steadying it with one foot on either side the center line, his knees sprung slightly out, “holds her level”, and with the aid of his pike, strikes out for whatever [*sic – wherever*] he desires to go.

Standing on a log, in the middle of a river that is running thirty miles an hour, and is ten or twenty feet deep, where the temperature of the water is 40 or 50 degrees, and where other logs are floating all around the imperiled cruiser, ready to crush him in their pitiless embrace if he falls, is a precarious matter.

These men are often in the water [*up*] to their waists or to their necks. Their clothing and feet are wet nearly all the time, and how they escape death by exposure is a mystery. Their immunity can be attributed only to their iron constitutions and to the fact that they wear thick, heavy woolen clothing exclusively. No man could endure their way of life for a week if wearing cotton, even for underclothing.

Many a luckless driver has lost his life by a misstep and fell into the angry waters, but the others go on undaunted, and will as long as the supply of pine lasts.

A Log Jam

As the last drive came over the river, there was a good stage of water, and the stream was full of logs for miles. It was a grand sight to see them go over the rapids. Buried in the foaming torrent, they were driven against each other and against submerged rocks. Some were hurled end over end in the wildest confusion. One large hollow log lodged with its end upstream. Another half its size, headed squarely for the cavity and made a center bull’s-eye, thus obstructing the oncoming logs.

For hours, the logs continued to come over the falls and pile up between the high banks. The men struggled vainly to release the key pieces. Logs came by scores and by hundreds and there was no means of checking them. The logs below, acting as a dam, raised the stage of water all around so that each new arrival was carried on to but not over those already in the jam. And so the drive was hung up. The work of clearing out this jam was continued night and day, with two crews, but it took nearly a whole week, at a cost of several hundred dollars, to undo the harm done in a few hours. When the key log was finally freed, the jam gave way, the men sprang to safety, and the logs parted helter-skelter, once more rushing downstream.

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All of the Brandt boys, Wallie, Art, Chester and Malvin [*sic*], worked on the log jams at Pemenee Falls and stayed at the camp there. Frank Brandt often told of the above story and how one of the men was fatally pierced by a pike pole and sank beneath the raging water.

LOGGING –THE SCALING GAP

From an article in the *Chicago Herald*,
reprinted in the *Menominee Democrat*
October 31, 1891

Faithorn Centennial 1887-1987

[Transcribed by William John Cummings]

About 100,000 feet of pine logs float down the Menominee River every year and run through the scaling gap of the Menominee Boom Company. Menominee mills were the only ones in Wisconsin that were not obliged to shut down for lack of logs.

The fifty men employed here are mostly expert loggers, divided into squads of catchmarkers, polers, scalers, and tallymen, although the latter have only clerical work to perform. There is a mixture of French, half-breeds, Norwegians, Irish and Americans in the crew, all of whom have followed logging for years. Bill Stephenson, a six-foot step-brother to Isaac, who by the way is president of the Boom Company, is in charge of the gap and did the honors when we arrived. Every log that comes down the river bears a double mark or brand, one on the bark and one at the end, both of which have been placed there by the loggers in the respective camps above. These brands denote to which sawmill the log belongs and every catchmarker must be so thoroughly familiar with them that he can instantly detect the ownership. Armed with a light, keen axe, he catches the log as it floats through the first gap, and with a quick glance at the brand

satisfies himself as to its identify. Then if there be no mark uppermost, he deftly slashes the log in such a way that the scalers and sorters below him may immediately place the ownership.

As there are some 600 marks in use, it may be gathered that some time must elapse before a new hand becomes sufficiently expert to read these signs at a glance. The elementary marks are a hack and a spot. A hack is a thin slash, a spot is a square broad mark. The brand of one mill may be three hacks in the form of a rabbit track, or a hack, spot and hack or a spot and two hacks, or, in fact any one of 600 combinations, and they must be at the instant command of the catchmarker, who slashes the log as it floats by at a five-mile an hour gait. On the back of his axe handle is a steel brand with which he taps the log after marking. As every marker has a different brand, it is very easy to trace any errors made in marking logs, and to that one with fewest errors at the close of the season, a prize is awarded. But aside from the prize, the markers are very proud of their expertness, and experience deep chagrin whenever an unusual number of mistakes occur.

At the second gap, scalers stand with their hook measures ready to scale the logs and call off the result to the tallymen, who sit inside little box offices with a lot of printed forms outspread on a table, each one of which bears the name of sawmills receiving logs on the river. An expert scaler has no need to measure the length of a log – that he can tell at a glance; but he must measure the small end of each log for its diameter, and the result is then called off to the tallyman. With three or four logs passing through at the same time, the scaler must be quick as a flash. In addition to taking the log's diameter and guessing its length, he must also read the slashes placed by the catchmarkers and be able to instantly announce the ownership.

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All the mills are known by pet names. Thus the Spalding mill at Menekaune is called "New York," because it was originally owned by New York parties; the N. Ludington Company mill is "Ike" for the reason that Isaac Stephenson owns a controlling interest; a third is called "Bob" and a fourth "Sam". The scaler then announces, in his sing-song voice "Sam, twelve – sixteen", by which the tallyman knows that the log is to be charged to the Kirby-Carpenter mill, that it is twelve inches in diameter and sixteen feet in length. Away goes the log over the dam, and later it is caught by the polers, who, reading the marks, steer it into the proper boom.

The scaling gap is very similar to a western "round-up", where the cowboys do their annual branding, only in place of cattle there are logs. They even have mavericks here. These "yearling strays" that have no marks of any description go into the boom company's private yard. At the close of the year they are sold, and the proceeds received divided among the mill owners. In the neighborhood of 500,000 feet of stray logs are picked up every season. Both English and French scalers are employed at the gap and the "reuf-quatorze" or "douse-sieze" of the Frenchman floats across the [*sic – water and*] mingles with the sharper but less melodious cry of the American scaler. Catchmarkers and scalers are naturally the best paid hands at the gap. Working full time they get \$58 a month, while the polers and tallymen earn only \$45. All the men go to logging in winter.

Stray Logs

By William "Stray Log" Phillips
Menominee, Michigan

"Regarding the stray log business...the system was as follows. A Stray Log Committee was appointed by the Boom

Company, comprising three lumbermen, a secretary, and superintendent, and two detectives.

"The detectives' work consisted of looking over the logs in various mill booms daily, noting any and all strays found, scaling the same, and noting on cards furnished them for that purpose with the marks on the same, and the name of the company in whose boom the same were found. Scalers in the mill were furnished cards and required to scale and take marks of all strays, record same on cards daily.

"The Superintendent visited each mill, collected these cards and also the cards of the detectives, compared same, and turned cards collected from the mills over to the Secretary where they were tabulated and at the end of the month balance sheets were made out. If one company sawed more logs of anyone than the other sawed of theirs, they had to pay the difference. The Stray Log Committee was a clearing house for the stray logs.

"In addition to this, many logs were rafted here and towed to other places located on Green Bay and sometimes lost logs out of booms during rough weather, which logs usually drifted to shore. Crews of two or three men each gathered these logs together and stored them in pockets on the Menominee side of the river. Later in the season, these logs so take care of with other logs picked up floating down the river from the Rafting Gap, were advertised and sold to the highest bidder, the bidder sawing up the same.

"The Superintendent of Stray Logs put a scaler in the mill, scaled all logs and recorded the marks on same. This scale went to the Secretary of the Stray Logs Committee. Each log owner was credited with his logs if any appeared and paid out of funds from the scale of same in accordance to the amount so appearing.

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“The amount retrieved by the committee varied from year to year from 1,200,000 feet to a little over 2,000,000 feet.

“I do not remember the year of the peak operation...logs passing through the scaling gap totaled a little over 600,000,000. A year or two previous and a year or two following, the peak the amount scaled reached better than, 500,000,000 feet. Menominee and Marinette at that time was the largest lumber center in the country, manufacturing 100,000,000 feet of lumber annually.

“I passed my 85th birthday the 11th of October (1937). I find there are but few men around here that were alive and active at that time (the days of heavy logging); in fact most of them were not born.”

LOGGING COMPANY FARMS IN FAITHORN AREA

By Jean Worth from the Menominee
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[Transcribed by William John Cummings]

The following is a brief history of the companies which established four farms here as early as 1866:

Hamilton & Merryman Company Farm

The Hamilton & Merryman Company farm, now owned by Clifford Renier, was operated in conjunction with a big lumber mill on an island in the Menominee River, on the Marinette side. This firm, incorporated in 1872, was a big operator on the river, sawing 12,700,000 feet of lumber in 1875 and owning 50,000 acres of timberland in Menominee and Oconto Counties. The company constructed a shingle mill near its sawmill after the main unit had been in operation for some years.

Kirby-Carpenter Company Farm

The Kirby-Carpenter Company, now owned by LaVirn King, came about when Abner Kirby, a grain trader from Milwaukee, constructed a sawmill in 1856, on a sandbar in the Menominee River. In 1859, Samuel M. Stephenson became a partner of Kirby in the mill. He took full charge of the operations as Mr. Kirby continued his residence in Milwaukee. Mr. Stephenson later was elected a United States Congressman from Michigan.

In 1861, Augustus A. Carpenter and William O. Carpenter, of Chicago, came into the partnership with Kirby and Stephenson. In 1867, the company built a new mill near its original mill. The cut of the two Kirby-Carpenter mills was 35 million feet or more, annually, and the mills did not operate during the winter months. The Kirby-Carpenter Company also operated a barge line to carry its lumber to market at Chicago, and a company store near its mill. The company held 107,000 acres of land in 1876.

When the original farm was established, Albert Brandt, an employee, became manager and eventually owner. Mr. Brandt then supplied produce and meat for his own lumber camps in the Cavour-Dunbar area. What was later known as Brandt Road was originally named Pengilly Street, Mr. Pengilly being an employee of the Kirby-Carpenter Company.

In addition to supplies, the Brandt farm was also a relay farm. The big barn which still stands and was constructed with wooden pegs housed many teams of horses. Tired lumberjacks would stay overnight and change teams on their way to other camps or Menominee.

H. Witbeck Company Farm

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The H. Witbeck Company farm, once owned by Alex LeGrave and now August Kollman, came about when a big sawmill was constructed by Daniel Wells, Jr., of Milwaukee, and Andrew Stephenson and Louis Gram, of Marinette, on Hamilton & Merryman Island in Marinette. Stephenson and Gram afterwards sold their interest to Fred Carney and Henry Witbeck and in 1870, the company incorporated as the J. Witbeck Company. In 1875, the company sawed 15,500,000 feet of lumber and owned 53,000 acres of timberland. The mill was commonly called the Fred Carney Mill.

Ludington, Wells & Van Schaick Company Farm

The Ludington, Wells & Van Schaick Company owned the farm which was later purchased by James Kelly, now owned by Gerold [sic] Kelly. The company was the biggest name in lumber, after the Kirby-Carpenter Company, in the early boom days. Their first mill, built in 1863, was destroyed by fire in 1884. In 54 working days the company erected a new mill and had it ready to run. This construction was the work of William E. Bagley, accredited as one of the most skilled millwrights in the north. The village of Bagley was named for him. In 1871, the company bought the Gilmore mill which was destroyed in the disastrous Peshtigo fire the same year. The company also ran a company store, one of the largest on the Menominee River. They owned 75,000 acres of timberland in Menominee and Oconto Counties in 1876. A new mill was constructed in 1873, a year of money panic [economic depression] that curtailed the company's operations.

The Passing of the Lumberjack

Adapted from the *Menominee Herald- Leader*, 1906 Faithorn Centennial 1887-1987

With the disappearance of the immense primeval forests of northern Michigan, the picturesque lumberjack, long the typical figure of this region, is fast ceasing to be a type and in the course of a few years will be only a tradition of a past era. The lumberjack today begins to show more the impress of advancing civilization and the ranks are being recruited from the class of farmers whose newly settled holdings are not sufficient to maintain their families so that the men are forced to go into the woods to work in winter.

The old lumberjack was a marked character. As a rule, he was a hard drinker, a loud swearer, improvident, careless of dress, happy-go-lucky, yet, withal, kindhearted, fair-minded and patriotic, a good friend and a good enemy. He could be as kind as any to a friend, and he could hit his enemies a harder blow than perhaps any other class of men, and he was never bashful about using his fists.