

Pioneer lumberman's dream brought A.A. Dwight to Otsego County

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waters of that stream, and affording cheap and reliable means for utilizing the hundreds of millions of feet of pine timber from the head waters of the AuSable to the navigable waters of Lake Huron.

The value of this one enterprise to the owners of timber (which now assumed a market value) on this stream, to say nothing of its value to timber owners on scores of other streams, which were thus shown to be available for like improvement, can be estimated only by millions of dollars. The firm of Smith, Kelley & Dwight also erected a large saw mill at Otsego Lake, with the advent of the northern extension of the Michigan, Central Railroad, affording an outlet for their product of 15,000,000 feet of lumber and 5,000,000 shingles yearly. This firm was succeeded by that of Smith, Granwick & Frvor.

Mr. Dwight was in the earlier days the active agent in behalf of New England proprietors in the removing of vast quantities of timber from large tracts of land in St. Clair and Lapeer counties, and in aiding in the laying out and building of roads, the construction of school-houses and churches and the organizing of townships and of inducing settlement upon lands under his control, (one settlement comprising more than sixty German families, being gathered by his efforts).

IT IS TO SUCH sturdy and enterprising business men as Mr. Dwight, no less than to statesmen, politicians and soldiers, that the great State of Michigan owes its present advancement and high standing in the sisterhood of States.

Mr. Dwight has long been recognized as wielding a most beneficial influence over the morals of the various sections in which his energies have been exerted. He is a member of the Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church of Detroit, of which he was one of the organizers and in which he has held the office of ruling elder from May, 1867, to the present time, and he has faithfully endeavored to mould the character of the localities in which his interests have given him influence, in accordance with the highest principle of morality and religion.

Of his early connection with the lumber business of Detroit and the St. Clair River, his reminiscences are of value.

"After settling up the affairs of my father who died at Detroit, 1833, I obtained employment in a drygoods

and clothing store of the village. This was in 1834 at a time when Detroit was suffering from its second visitation of cholera, which proved to be of a most fatal character, and the people were panic stricken. The disease had been heralded from Quebec and the east, and its breaking out caused the greatest alarm. The city was quarantined, all business was suspended, and as the disease was thought to be contagious, many fled with such of their belongings as could be hastily gathered together, to the country for refuge from the fell destroyer.

"The epidemic lasted about three months, and the death rate reached a total of about 700 in a population of 3,500. I spent the major part of this year in a clerkship with J. & M. Palmer, and later undertook a venture on my own account in a country store at Kensington in Oakland County. In 1837-8 I formed a partnership with Rolin C. Smith and Henry Glover, under the firm name of Smith, Glover & Dwight, and conducted a wholesale and retail drygood, clothing and grocery business for a period of seven or eight years, handling farm products quite extensively, including wheat, flour, wool, pot and pearl ashes, (which were extensively made by the farmers from the ashes made in the clearing up of their lands) together with lumber, lath and shingles.

"In this way the firm became interested in lumbering, and in 1852 erected a saw mill at the foot of Riopelle Street, where we manufactured pine and hardwood lumber.

"Our first experience in this line was in the purchase of a half million feet of rich black walnut logs from the banks of the Sni Carte in the townships of Sombra, Walpole and Chatham, Canada West at a cost of five dollars per thousand feet, rafting them to our mills at Detroit, where they were manufactured into broad and beautiful counter tops, newell posts and other dimensions; this was later shipped to Troy, N. Y., where it was sold on commission. Our pine log stock came from the Mill Creek and Black River pineries, in rafts from Port Huron.

ABOUT 1853, Smith & Dwight became proprietors of a tract of choice pine lands in Huron County, and erected a large gang saw mill, (steam power) at Point Au Barques. This was the second or third gang mill as yet erected in the State of Michigan, the first being that of Curtis Emerson of Saginaw, and Samuel Pitts of

Detroit. The company were also proprietors of a steam saw mill at Cherry Creek on the Lake Huron shore about twenty miles above Lexington, in Sanilac County, the product of which, like that of the mill at Point Au Barques, and a majority of that manufactured at the Detroit mill, found market by Lake to Toledo and Sandusky, Ohio, through which points a large trade was built up in Dayton, Cincinnati and other interior points.

"At this period also, the firm purchased and were lumbering considerable tracts of pine timber lands on Mill Creek and Black River in St. Clair and Lapeer counties, driving the logs from twenty-five to thirty miles to Port Huron and there forming them into rafts for Detroit. Little was known at this time of the vast tracts of Cork pine timber which graced the hillsides and valleys of the more northerly sections of the State; while anything like lumbering was unheard of in the Upper Peninsula, communication with the northern part of the State in winter being wholly by train, while few or no settlements of any note had been established in that far distant region. In 1857 I retired from the firm of Smith, Dwight & Co., selling my interest in the lands, mills, etc., which formed its assets.

"During the period 1857 to 1865, mills for the manufacture of lumber were erected in Detroit and operated for more than a quarter of a century, with a yearly production of from 75,000,000 to 100,000,000 feet of lumber by Samuel Pitts, Buckminster Wight (succeeded by H. A. & S. G. Wight), Smith, Dwight & Co., Bugbee, Benson & Co., S. C. Reeves & Co., Frank & Stephen Moore, William Moffat (later Moffat & Eatherly) and Hubbard & King.

"During these years, and, say, from 1870 to 1880 the pine lumber business had acquired an immense volume, exceeding 2,000,000,000 feet in the aggregate in the State, and had become the leading industry in fact of the Northwest, which produced an aggregate of no less than 3,000,000,000 feet in 1880, while the production in 1884 reached 8,000,000,000 in the Northwest, of which Michigan contributed nearly one-half, the zenith being reached in 1892, with a total of 9,000,000,000 feet in the northwest, the Michigan contribution being 4,000,000,000 feet.

"How great the contrast with the days less than a half century ago when the virgin forest reverberated only to the footfall of the hardy explorer or that of the half civilized Indian, whose savage progenitor had held undisputed sway through illimitable periods of time, where now are populous cities owing their prosperity to the valuable pine timber which once covered the face of the country, but now, alas, gone, never to be replaced.

THE WILLIAM H. IMLAY & CO. tract of 10,000 acres of pine and hardwood lands was located about twenty-five miles west of Port Huron on the present line of the Grand Trunk railroad, and it contained a large amount of the choicest white oak, with fully 100,000,000 feet of equally choice white pine, on which taxes had been paid for many years. This Company belonged in Connecticut and acquired the lands as an investment which did not give promise of yielding the expected returns. During 1857, I was invited to meet the proprietors in Hartford, and an arrangement was made by which I undertook an agency for the property in an endeavor to convert it into money.

"Taking possession under this agency, I made a careful examination of the tract, with an estimate of its timber and of the conditions of Belle River and the South Branch of Mill Creek as driving streams, and decided to improve them by the building of flooding dams and the removal of drift wood and other obstructions, which was done at a cost of about \$2,500 which was shared to the extent of \$250 by Stephen Moore, who owned some pine lands near the present



LUMBERJACKS atop a load of winter's logs in a photo taken by A. W. Brown 1884-1896.

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