

## Life In a Lumber Camp

BY FRANK HARTMAN

The contractor was the man who bargained with the owner of a tract of timber land to furnish and pay his own help and to land the logs at the landing place for a stated sum per 1,000 board feet. The usual prices at that time were \$2 for culls, \$2.50 for No. 2 logs, and \$3 for No. 1 logs. These prices varied according to the kind of timber and the hauling distance.

The following is a list of the La Crosse dealers from whom A. J. Sones purchased his camp supplies: Yeo and Clark, flour; Fred Kroner, hardware; Gile and Goodland, meats; Mons Anderson, clothing and bedding; James McCord, drugs; William Imhoff, harness; Davis, Platz, Medary Company, leather; Quinn and Batchelder, footwear; J. J. Hogan, groceries.

The foreman of the logging camp was the man with the greatest responsibility. He went up into the woods as early as October, taking a few men with him. They blazed the trees that located such roads in the tract to be logged as were best suited for the delivery of the logs to the landing place. Later, men were hired to cut the roads free from trees for a few feet wider than a logging sled. This was followed by the building of the skidways in the proper places by the sides of the roads.

The following are names of some foremen in the Sones camps: Ed Hardy, A. J. McLeod, Tewie Peterson, Walter Spurbeck, all of La Crosse, Robert and Will Garvin of Neillsville.

Soon after came the choppers, swampers, sawyers, and skidders. After the ground was frozen and covered with enough snow for hauling, the horse teamsters, loaders (or skidway men), the road monkey and landing man came to the camp.

The choppers felled the trees. This was not a simple matter. It required skill and judgment to so fell the tree that it would cause the least damage to surrounding timber. At this time, in some camps, they were beginning to fell trees by sawing instead of chopping.

Swampers trimmed the fallen trees, cleared the driveway to the skidway and placed the owners side mark on the logs. The sawyers sawed the tree into logs, using the two-men crosscut saws.

**NOTE:** Frank Hartman, writer of the paper on "Life in a Lumber Camp," was clerk in the camps of A. J. Sones, who was putting up logs for the N. B. Holway Lumber company during the winters of 1887-88, 1888-89 and 1889-90. During the first two of these winters, Sones was contractor and the camps were located on the east fork of the Black river about 5½ miles northeast of Scranton post office. The third year Sones was employed by this company as general manager, supervising the work in five camps. The one in which Mr. Hartman was clerk was on Pine creek, a branch of Black river, 14 miles southwest of Medford. Mr. Hartman uses the logging terms and describes the customs as he saw them. He is aware that in other camps other terms were used and other customs prevailed.

## LIFE IN A LUMBER CAMP

The head sawyer kept the saws in order, filing and setting the teeth. In doing this, the blade was fitted into a slot between two boards, which held it firm. He received \$20 per month more than his helper.

Ox teamsters or skidders, with the aid of a helper called a chain tender, skidded (i. e. dragged) the logs to and placed them on the skidways. The chain tender hooked the chain around the log with the hook on the under side so that the pull would have a lifting effect and the log would slide more easily over obstacles. If the log was very heavy, the front end was rolled onto a crotch—a triangular frame, the apex of which slanted upward. Or, a go-devil might be used—a rectangular frame, the side pieces of which acted as runners, turned up at the front ends.

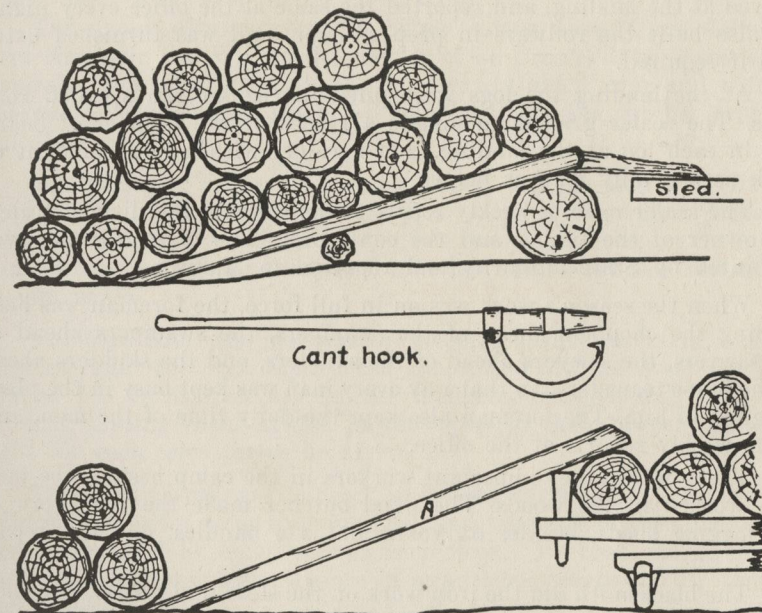


DIAGRAM OF SKIDWAY AND CANT HOOK

The peavey was similar to the cant hook, but the handle was longer and the end terminated in a spike some six inches long. It was used by drivers on the river and served the purpose of both cant hook and hand spike.

The skidway consisted of two parallel logs (skids) reaching from the ground to the edge of the sled, up which the logs were rolled by two skidway men or loaders, using cant hooks. Small, square-pointed spikes driven into the upper sides of the skide helped to hold the logs as they were being rolled up. Loading the logs on the sleds had to be done with great care so that the load should be evenly balanced. The load, when completed, was bound with binding chains.

The loaders usually were strong men and experts with cant hooks. They also placed the end marks on the logs. Horse teamsters drove

the horses hauling the sleds to the landing. They also fed and gave proper care to the teams.

The tote teamster delivered all supplies from the railroad station to camp. The road monkey kept the roads in repair. Sometimes he took the place of a sick man for a short time.

The water tank was run by two men and a team of horses. Their work was to sprinkle the roads at night when needed so that they would be icy. The sprinkler was filled by the use of barrels at the water hole.

Most camps were located on low ground so water was near the surface.

The landing man kept tab of the number of logs loaded as they arrived at the landing, and reported the same at the office every night. He also built the rollways in proper shape, and was furnished extra help if required.

At the landing the logs were piled in regular ranks called rollways. The scaler graded and made a record of the number of board feet in each log at the landing. Some scalers with a large amount of work used a tally man as helper.

The scaler made a weekly report of his work to the district scaler, the owner of the timber and the contractor. The district scaler was appointed by State authority and reported to Madison.

When the season's work was on in full force, the foreman was busy keeping the choppers ahead of the swampers, the swampers ahead of the sawyers, the sawyers ahead of the skidders, and the skidders ahead of the horse teamsters. In that way every man was kept busy in the place assigned to him. The foreman also kept the daily time of the men, and made weekly reports at the office.

There were other important workers in the camp besides the men who worked in the woods. The wood butcher made the woodwork of the logging sheds, besides ox yokes and axe handles, and did repair work.

The blacksmith did the iron work on the sleds and yokes. He shod the horses and did all repair work in his line. In some of the camps one man did both the blacksmithing and wood work.

The cook was a very essential man of the camp crew. It was he who prepared the food in a good, wholesome manner so that the workmen would be strong and able to do a heavy day's work. I have often heard it said that the eatables in a lumber camp were few in number—only beans, flour, potatoes, and salt pork. But in my time in camp we had, besides these, rutabagas, sauerkraut, corned beef, fresh beef by the quarter, dried apples, prunes, currants, syrup, sugar, salt, rice, lard, all in large quantities; also a line of spices.

Tea was the only drink, being served in tin basins without milk. The table dishes were nearly all of tin, and the cutlery was of the cheapest type.

The amount of flour used was about one pound per man per day.

A fairly large crew would use two barrels of syrup per month, and other articles in proportion.

The wages of the cook were about the same as those of the foreman, from \$50 to \$60 per month, including board and bed. But the bed was not used many hours of the 24. He worked on the eight hour system—one in the forenoon and one in the afternoon. During the spring drive coffee and smoked ham were added to the menu.

A cook who could do his work with the least waste was a man in great demand, and was known by other companies besides those engaged in logging. As soon as the camps were closed, there were boat owners and railroad companies looking for such men.

The names of some cooks in Sones' camps were: Chris Johnson, Arnt Erickson, and William Lechleider of La Crosse, John Mahoney of Onalaska, the latter recently passing away, Duke Porter and wife of Gaesville. Mrs. Fannie Harper of Neillsville cooked for her brother, Will Garvin.

The taffler or cookee, the cook's helper, was the man who cut the wood for the cook stove, swept the floor, carried the water, prepared the potatoes for the kettle, washed dishes and placed them on the tables at meal time, served the food, and did what other work the cook called on him to do.

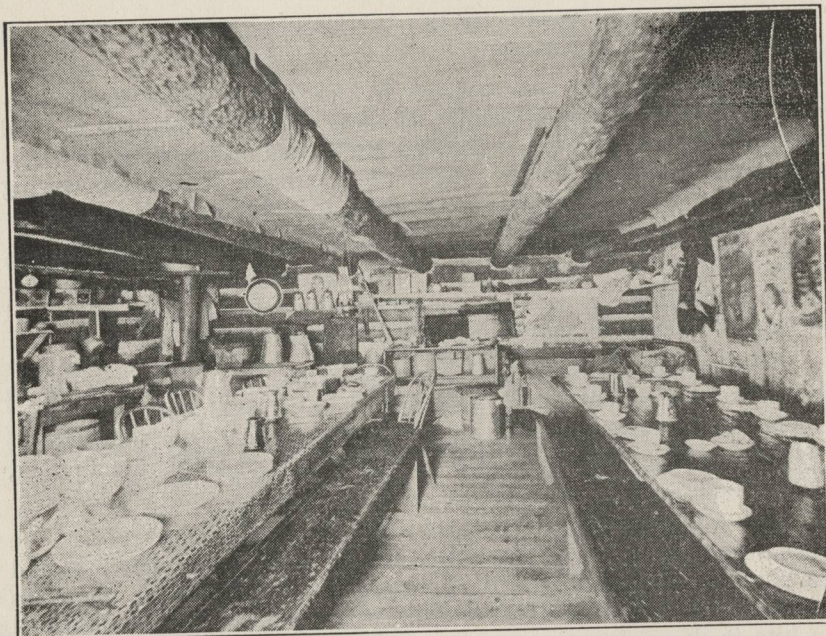
The barn boss, who also was the sleeping shanty caretaker, cut the firewood, built the fires, lighted the lamps, and did the sweeping. He cleaned the barns, put hay in the mangers, cleaned and filled the lanterns, placing them lighted in the barns in their proper places at night for each teamster as he arrived.

The clerk's work was to check in freight (or supplies), charge the different camps for what they received, and take care of the time of the men as reported by each foreman each week. He took charge of the wanagan, which was a small store in a large box where apparel for the men was kept.

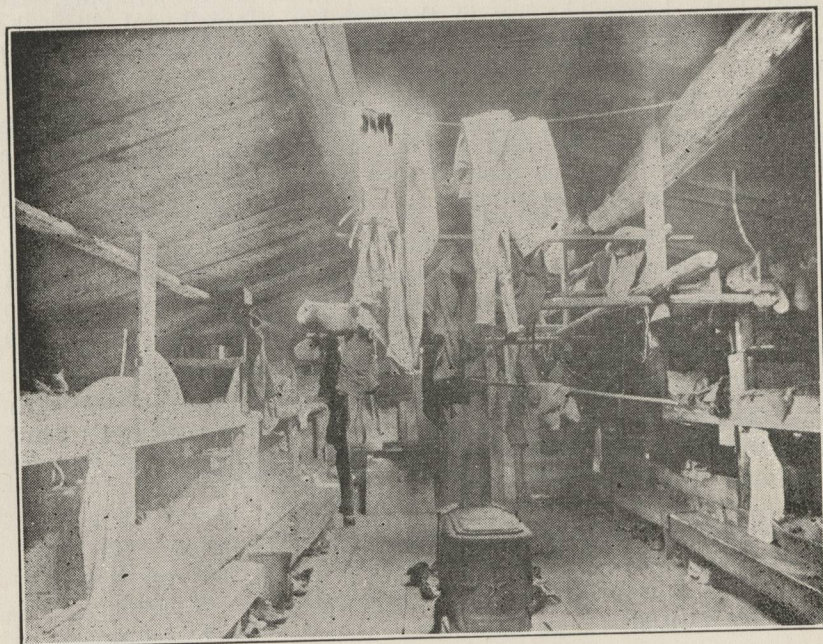
Whatever the men bought was charged to them, and deducted from their wages when settlement was made about April 1. The clerk also delivered axes, saws and files to the men by order of the foreman. He took stock of articles left at each camp after closing in the spring.

The wages paid the men (not including the foreman and cook) were from \$16 to \$26 a month, according to the work they were doing. They were hired by the month and paid by the day, figuring 26 days for a month. The division follows:

Monthly Wage	Equivalent to	Daily Wage
\$16.00		61 cents
17.00		65 cents
18.00		69 cents



INTERIOR OF A COOK SHANTY



INTERIOR OF A BUNK HOUSE

19.00	73 cents
20.00	77 cents
21.00	81 cents
22.00	85 cents
23.00	89 cents
24.00	93 cents
25.00	97 cents
26.00	\$1.00

Therefore, if a man worked 72 days at \$22 per month he would receive 72 times 85 cents per day or \$61.20. From this was deducted the wanagan account of possibly \$12, the man receiving a check for \$49.20.

Here are a few rules of the Sones camps: No man was to wear a hat or cap while at the table eating. There was to be no smoking by any man while working. Should a man quit work during the winter, he was to wait until April for his pay.

In our camps most of the men who were not Americans were Norwegians and Germans. Many men who were mill hands or farmers in the summer worked in the woods winters.

Most logging camps were known by numbers; some by the names of their foremen.

In the construction of logging sleds, four runners were cut from three-inch oak planks. Each pair of runners was held together by a heavy beam, about seven feet long, so the runners were that distance apart. The beam was held in place by a heavy flat iron brace bolted to the upper edge of each runner. The logs when piled lengthwise on the sled rested on bunks at the front and back ends. There were heavy cross beams eight by ten inches and 11 feet long, projecting two feet beyond the runners on each side.

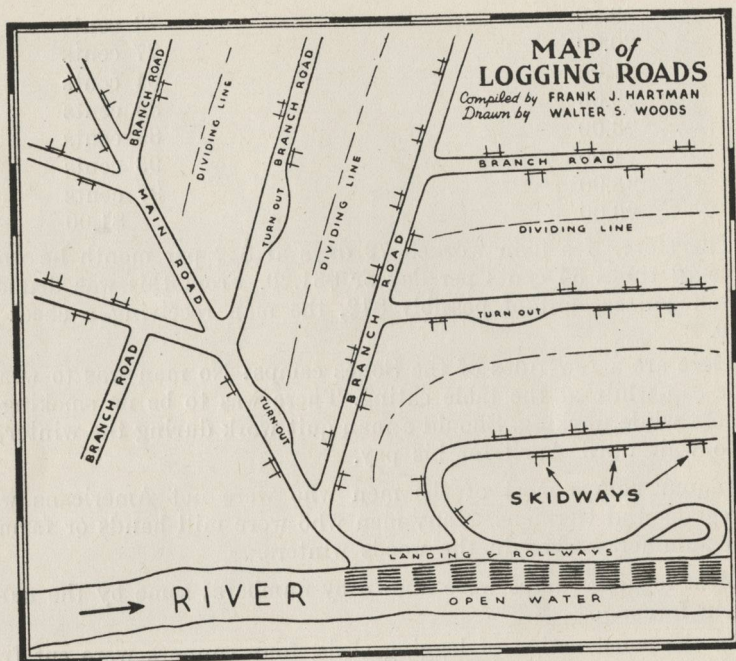
The front and rear bunks were held in position by poles, which were set into the bunks near their ends and extended from front to back.

The runners were supported on a quarter oval iron shoe. This shape shoe did not cut off from the road so easily as would a square shoe.

In winters when there was not enough snow, ice roads were made by cutting small gutters in the ground seven feet apart (the distance between the sled runners) and filling them with broken ice. These were seldom required.

The logs in the rollways were usually so solidly frozen into the ice and snow that in the spring when it was time for the drive to begin they had to be loosened by dynamite. Six sticks or three pounds of dynamite made up the usual charge. Fastened to the end of a pole, the charge was inserted under one end of the rollway, the fuse was lighted and the men ran for safety.

Streams in which logs were floated had log dams at intervals of a



The logs at the landing were rolled from the sleds onto the ice in a number of rollways. But a narrow strip was left between the rollways and the opposite bank where water could flow into the stream below the landing. This was to insure sufficient water below to float the logs as the rollways were broken in the spring. The dividing line blazed on the trees showed the direction in which logs were to be taken to a branch road.

few miles, which were used after the high water of the spring freshet had gone by. Each dam had a slush plank or gate that was closed at night or long enough to hold back the water so that a small pond was formed, large enough to float the logs. When the gate was opened, the drive went through.

Men followed the drive with peavies and pike poles to keep the logs from forming a jam. At night they "gigged back" on foot. Riding a log was accomplished by sticking a peavy firmly into a second log and drawing it close against the one on which the lumber jack stood. In that way both logs were kept from rolling. All the men had calks in their boots. The wooden sidewalks in lumbering towns showed the marks of these calks.

A stunt that was a favorite sport was called burling—standing on a log and making it spin around in the water.

The buildings of a lumber camp were the bunk house, the cook shanty, the blacksmith shop, and sometimes an office. Often the bunk house and cook shanty stood near each other with a space between their ends covered by a roof. In our camps there were separate barns for oxen and horses, with a roof covering the space between. In this space baled hay and feed were stored.