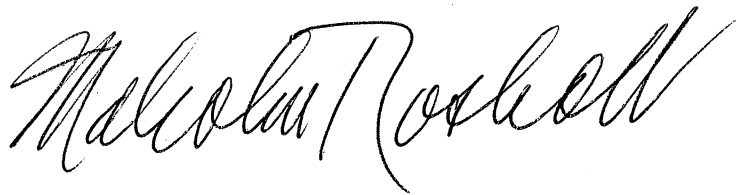


The Wisconsin Logging Book 1839-1939

by

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Foreword

In the heyday of the logging era, there was a persistent belief among log drivers that logs floating down a river outran the current. It seemed to the drivers that the trees of the forest were not only their formidable opponent, but that they had mystical powers which enabled them to even outdo another of Nature's own forces—the river. For me this myth embodies the essence of the battle in which the loggers were engaged in their struggle to subdue the overwhelming presence of the forest in this land.

My fascination with the logging era of the 19th and early 20th Century is home grown. I was born in a house less than a block from a sawmill, and I grew up with the smell of pine sawdust in my nose. When I was fourteen years old I worked in my grandfather's sawmill, wheeling sawdust in a big wooden wheelbarrow away from the mill and dumping it.

In 1976 I published *A Photo Album of the Past*, a collection of pictures on pioneer life in central Wisconsin, which includes two chapters on logging. Although the two chapters comprise only a quarter of the book, these pictures, most previously unpublished, made such a deep impression on readers that many began calling the *Photo Album* "that logging book." The popularity of the logging pictures has prompted me to do a combined picture and text book on logging covering all of northern and western Wisconsin.

The year 1839 is chosen as a point of beginning because in that year George Stevens of Almond, New York, began building a dam for an "up-and-down" sawmill at "Big Bull Falls" (Wausau). In a letter to one of his financial backers in St. Louis, Missouri, he draws a sketch to show where and how he is going to dam up the mighty falls at "Big Bull." This sketch appears to be the earliest visual evidence of sawmill activity in Wisconsin, although legal documents confirm earlier sites.

The year 1939 is a convenient time to close the book. By that time the chain saw was about ready to take over from the crosscut saw, and trucks were replacing horses. Thus, the book covers, roughly, the first century of logging in Wisconsin.

While the pictures are nearly all from Wisconsin libraries, museums, and private collections, several

wet plates, dating to 1864, were found in the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society at St. Paul, and because these pictures seem to predate anything found in Wisconsin on the subject, I crossed the Mississippi River to include this rare collection, confident that the pictures represent the same techniques, tools, and life style of the Wisconsin logger in the 1860s.

I was fortunate to meet and talk with William Hoyer of Cudahy, the last survivor of the Chippewa drive (he always pronounced it "Chippeway"), who died in 1979. Several others whom I borrowed pictures from are also deceased, including Mrs. John Wipperfurth of Tomahawk, William Kaiser of Eau Claire, Roy Martin of Winter, and T.J. Thompson of Bruce.

I am deeply grateful for the art work and diagrams done by Randall E. Rohe, UW-Green Bay, and for the several maps done by students of Ray Specht, UW-Stevens Point. Valuable catalogs and documentary materials were also provided by Gordon Sorenson, Drummond, Howard Peddle, Iron River, and Michael S. Slasinski, Saginaw, Michigan. Archivists who lent generous support were Elizabeth A. Knight, Minnesota Historical Society, Kathy Halsey, UW-Stevens Point, Dorothy Heinrich, UW-Green Bay, Edwin Hill, UW-La Crosse, Robert Walther, the Smithsonian Institution and Beulah Larson, Stevens Point.

On the cover of the book is a picture of a pine stump which stood for more than a century in Iola pond (Waupaca County) before the drawdown in 1965. The giant tree was felled, probably, in the early 1850s. The circle "L" has been superimposed on the stump; it is supposed to represent the stamp hammer mark of Paul Bunyan, water boss on the great Round River drive, in '64 or '65.

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