

## INDUSTRY WAS NEEDED TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT FOR SETTLERS

America, the melting pot of the world, was drawing immigrants like a magnet draws steel. Rumors spread abroad that the streets of the new land were paved with gold and prosperity was waiting for those who were ambitious enough to seek it.

Landing on the East and West coasts, the immigrants struck out to ~~stake claims~~ further inland. Settlements sprung up and soon became cities on the map.

Word spread that there was work available in Minnesota. Logging was a major industry and lumberjacks were needed to clear the forests. The railroads needed laborers to help lay track to the new frontier. Merchants opened stores to sell supplies to the settlers. Hotels and rooming houses were in demand and new businesses flourished and folded as the need for specialized services came and went.

Logging and the lumber business were the first major industries of importance to the economy of Pine City.

History books tend to dwell on the large, commercial lumber camps but very little is recorded about the lone logger who cleared much of the woods himself.

He didn't choose his job because of the reputation of the camp cook. He didn't sleep in a bunkhouse acrid with steam created by smelly, wet clothing hung to dry over the woodstove at night. He didn't have a large crew to help him skid his logs to the river where they would float downstream to the mills during spring thaws.

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The very first loggers in the Pine City area purchased their supplies in Illinois or Missouri. The supplies came by steamboat to Stillwater or the logger hauled them cross country over winding, primitive trails. Their horses forded streams and rivers, often sinking in soft bottomed muck barely able to pull their own weight let alone their heavy loads.

When the logger reached Stillwater he had to load his supplies into canoes or flat boats and pole his way to Taylor Falls where he portaged over the rocks to the head of the rapids, a distance of six miles.

His main concern was to reach his destination before the rivers froze over.

Upon arrival at the site where he would make camp for the winter he had to cut and store hay for the animals, build a shelter for them and for himself and brush out a road to the river so he could drag the logs he would cut during the winter to the riverbank where they would be stockpiled until spring.

The early logger led a lonely life. After working hard in the woods all day he would huddle up before the fire in his humble shack at night trying to dry out the clothing he would wear over and over throughout the cold, long winter.

He cooked his meals over a campfire in a blackened iron kettle and slept on the ground wrapped in buffalo robes for warmth. Months would pass before he saw another human being.

He had no guarantee that spring thaws would raise the water level high enough to float the logs he had cut ~~with~~ to the mills. He didn't have a large crew to keep the logs moving so he was

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dependent upon the swiftness of the current in the river.

When the logs were finally marketed they didn't net the logger a fortune as one might believe he deserved for his winters work.

Surely he must have considered communicating with nature during those solitary months as part of his reward for money alone could never compensate him for the hardships he endured.

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