

## Early Logging in Duluth Township

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The first logging that took place at the head of the lakes was adjacent to the first sawmills that were established. Before long the timber close to the mills was depleted and longer hauls were required in order to keep the mills supplied with enough logs. The mills increased in size and capacity as the population grew. By the 1880's logging operations had moved up the north shore where logs could be dumped into the lake and rafted to the mills in Duluth or elsewhere.

Within Duluth Township during 1891 Duncan & Brewer Lumber Company logged along the Sucker River and Knife River as well as other locations all the way up the shore to Grand Marais. This timber was all rafted to their new big sawmill at 39th Avenue West in Duluth. This mill had a capacity in excess of 40,000,000 board feet per year.

The Lesure Lumber Company had a very interesting sleigh road that began at their landing near the mouth of the French River and proceeded inland to Normanna Township in section 52-13. The road had long downhill grades of which several were dangerously steep. Men were stationed here to throw hay onto the ice road to slow the sleighs down if they were going too fast. Hay created friction between the runners and the ice. The men that were posted here were recruited from those who were known to be teetotalers. The company wanted to be sure these men were sharp and not drunk or suffering from a hangover. On the surface this seems to be a noble gesture, but in reality they were probably more concerned about losing an expensive horse team and sleigh than a teamster.

During the latter part of the 1890's E. L. Bradley Lumber Company logged near the mouth of the Sucker River. These logs were all rafted to their sawmill in Duluth.

The huge Alger-Smith Lumber Company, a newcomer to the area, started a railroad named the Duluth & Northern Minnesota Railway at Knife River in May 1898 and quickly began logging operations in Duluth Township. By 1899 they were conducting extensive logging along the Sucker River watershed. Their "Mud Branch" crossed the central part of Duluth Township and continued on to the outskirts of Duluth. They were the first true logging railroad in the area. The Duluth & Iron Range Railway had been involved in hauling logs and had its own logging spurs since 1892, but their main interest was of course in mining.

During 1892, 1893, and 1894 forest fires swept through the remaining timber stands along the south shore and Nemadji River. This accelerated the logging operations there so the dead standing timber could be cut before it rotted. As a result of this, many new logging operations shifted from the south shore to the north shore by 1896.

By 1900 there were 13 huge sawmills in Duluth and Superior. Most of their timber was destined to come from northeastern Minnesota.

Around 1909 another logging railroad, the Minnesota & Northern Wisconsin Railway, penetrated the northern part of Duluth Township with its logging spurs. They logged there until 1912 and then abandoned their track. This was just about the last of the big companies and from then on smaller operators or individuals took over.

By 1917 and the start of World War I, most of the big timber was gone from northeastern Minnesota. Scott - Graff Lumber Company, the last of the big sawmills in Duluth, shut down for good in 1925. The emphasis shifted to pulpwood during the 1920's and it has remained the primary commodity ever since.

Looking back over the years it is evident that there was a great diversity in the forest products that came from Duluth Township. These included saw logs for lumber, railroad ties, poles, posts, and pulpwood just to name a few. Many times we feel a sense of sorrow over the loss of some of these important natural resources. On the other hand, these resources helped to build the great nation, in which we live. A nation built with the help of forest products from Duluth Township.