

## The Lost Logging Engine of Duluth Township

Todd Lindahl

May 2008

Over the many years that I've been involved in collecting the history of our region, I've heard many accounts of lost logging locomotives in the woods. In most cases the stories are simply that, just stories. In some ways they bear a certain familiar resemblance to tales of Bigfoot or some long-lost cache of treasure. Nonetheless, I have learned to never dismiss anything out of hand without at least some consideration of the account. Often a story that might be a bit askew as recounted may actually have some underlying basis in fact.

Duluth Township is no stranger to logging railroads. Both the Minnesota & Northern Wisconsin Railroad (Brooks-Scanlon Lumber Company) and the Duluth & Northern Minnesota Railway (Alger-Smith Lumber Company) had numerous branch lines and spurs within Duluth Township. Therefore, I was not too surprised to hear about a lost logging engine there too. After a second source mentioned the locomotive in the very same location, I became curious. It was an easy matter to locate the landowner and I promptly paid him a visit. The fellow had purchased the land just after he and his wife were married. Much to his surprise, he soon found a large steel wheeled steam tractor abandoned in the woods at the back of his property. Since his vocation was boilermaker, it became immediately evident to him that the machine was still in pristine condition. Incredibly, even the glass in the steam gauge was intact yet. An examination of the boiler tubes showed that they too were in excellent shape. In all likelihood, the tractor may have been in a condition where it could have been run again with little effort or expense.

Unfortunately, the newly weds needed cash more than a steam tractor and reluctantly they sold the old relic to a scrap dealer from Duluth. He told me it was a decision he regretted ever since, but had little choice at the time.

So, the legend of the lost logging engine was still safe along with Bigfoot and all of that hidden treasure. The steam locomotive in this case was in reality a steam tractor and thus did have some basis in fact. It was for me another lesson in always keeping an open mind.