

## WHEN LOGS AND LUMBER RULED STILLWATER<sup>1</sup>

The story of Minnesota white pine began as early as 1837 in the delta of the St. Croix. It was by chance that this region became a part of Minnesota. The St. Croix Valley was the most remote part of the old Northwest Territory. To the east of the delta lay the St. Croix River. Coursing its way in the midst of millions of mighty trees, majestic in its stride, this stream was to carry logs by the hundreds abreast its bosom, for the major portion of the delta was covered with white and Norway pine. To the west of this land lay the lordly Mississippi, rising in a northern watershed, cutting its path through immense forests of pine, and giving to the products of the region through which it passed a two-thousand mile highway without obstruction from the Falls of St. Anthony to the Gulf of Mexico. The St. Croix delta embraced the area lying between the Mississippi and the St. Croix.

Once this region had belonged to France. In 1763 the paternalistic French government unwillingly gave it to England. In 1774 a letter directed to the region would have had as a part of its address the province of Quebec, though it was claimed by Virginia through its sea-to-sea charter.

Then it became a part of the original national domain, the Northwest Territory. In 1819 it was part of Crawford County, Michigan. It was included in the area purchased by the United States government in 1837 from the Chippewa and the Sioux. In 1838 it became a part of Wisconsin Territory. In 1848, when Wisconsin became a state, its delegates in Congress pleaded long and hard that "an

<sup>1</sup> A paper read on June 27, 1936, at the Stillwater session of the fourteenth state historical convention held under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society. *Ed.*

immense pine region, the best probably in the world," should belong to Wisconsin.<sup>2</sup> When the final boundaries of the state were drawn, however, the triangle become Minnesota East.

The delta itself was crisscrossed by many rivers that once enticed the voyageur as he guided his light canoe with graceful ease from one stream into another. In time these waterways were to become useful to the river driver as he directed unruly logs toward the larger waters of the St. Croix or the Mississippi. Of the many streams of the delta, the Snake with its tributaries was to take more logs to the St. Croix than any other. The Kettle was also to rank high in carrying rich tributes of white pine logs to the more masterful waters of the St. Croix. The Mississippi was to receive large drives of logs from the Rum River, which had its source in Mille Lacs. The Rum was famous for white pine, and it was so attractive that many an old-time logger from Maine selected this stream for his operations when he forsook Maine for a newer place.

Men who came early into the St. Croix delta thought that its white pine was inexhaustible. "A vast region has been acquired abounding in timber," stated the Indian treaty of 1837, in referring to this district. "Seventy mills in seventy years couldn't exhaust the white pine I have seen on the Rum River" said Daniel Stanchfield, a timber cruiser of 1847.<sup>3</sup> James M. Goodhue, editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, in 1852 asserted that "centuries will hardly exhaust our pines." It was not strange that this region, far on the outskirts of the Old Northwest, offering splendid white pine and waterways to market, should draw like a magnet the red-shirted Garibaldians of the pineries whose

<sup>2</sup> William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1:493 (St. Paul, 1921).

<sup>3</sup> 25 Congress, 2 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 1, p. 526 (serial 314); Daniel Stanchfield, "History of Pioneer Lumbering on the Upper Mississippi and Its Tributaries," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 9:325-327.

mission it was to hew down the forests. It was not strange that in the delta of the St. Croix Minnesota's industry of making logs into lumber for market downstream was to have its beginning.

The market for St. Croix logs and lumber was not far away. At a convention of delegates of the then West and Southwest meeting to consider internal improvements at Memphis, Tennessee, in 1845, there was much agitation for the improvement of the Mississippi for lumber shipments from the St. Croix and the other streams near the headwaters.<sup>4</sup> The states of the lower and middle Mississippi had entered statehood considerably earlier than Minnesota and were well populated at an early date. Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa were admitted to the Union before Minnesota was organized as a territory. In these new states timber was scarce, and all were demanding lumber from the immense pineries of the upper Mississippi. Man must have shelter. It figures next to food in importance for him. The early settlers in the middle and the lower Mississippi country sought lumber from the most convenient source, the forests of the St. Croix.

A number of men from the lower Mississippi took advantage of the demand for lumber in their own settlements and went to the St. Croix, where they built the first commercial sawmill in Minnesota. Early in 1839 they established a settlement on the west bank of the river and gave it the name of Marine.<sup>5</sup> L. S. Judd and David Hove selected the site in 1838. They were followed by Orange Walker, who became the clerk and chieftain, and George B. Judd, both from Marine, Illinois, Hiram Berkey, and Asa Parker. With a few others, these men organized the Marine Lum-

<sup>4</sup>Orin G. Libby, "Significance of the Lead and Shot Trade in Early Wisconsin History," in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 13: 297 (Madison, 1895).

<sup>5</sup>Albert E. Jenks, "The People of Minnesota," in *Minnesota Academy of Social Sciences, Papers and Proceedings*, 2: 201 (Northfield, 1909).

ber Company. Supplies and sawmill machinery for the firm were taken up the river on the "Fayette," one of the first boats to ply the St. Croix. The machinery was all in place on August 24, 1839, when the first commercial sawmill in Minnesota produced its first lumber.<sup>6</sup>

Hardly had the "sharp ring of well plied axes and the crash of falling trees" been heard for the first time in the region of St. Croix Falls and Marine when men began to ply their axes farther down on the St. Croix. The fame of the white pine of the St. Croix was spreading far. The first comers on the St. Croix were soon followed by men from Maine who had formed the first battle line of white pine. The woodsman from Maine, reputed "to know logging," shouldered his ax and began his trek toward the setting sun when the white pine of his own state was giving out. As people sought haven in America, it was necessary to seek new forests to supply homes for the ever-growing population. Many of the men from Maine, marching in the vanguard of civilization, sought regions of untouched monarchs in the St. Croix country.

In 1840 John McKusick from Stillwater, Maine, visited the pine lands of the St. Croix country. He had gone to Illinois in 1839 and then to Iowa. But he had not yet found the "golden fleece," so he went on to even a newer country. In the fall of 1840 he began work for the St. Croix Lumber Company at St. Croix Falls. The pine lands of the St. Croix must have pleased him, for there he selected the spot which was to bear the name of his old town in Maine. Later generations of Stillwater dwellers evidently thought well of John McKusick, for once a visitor in the schools of that city asked the children who discovered America.

<sup>6</sup> Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:227; Edward W. Durant, "Lumbering and Steamboating on the St. Croix River," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 10:667; Edward G. Cheney, "Development of the Lumber Industry in Minnesota," in *Journal of Geography*, 14:190 (February 16, 1916).

“‘John McKusick,’ cried a curly-headed little girl whose countenance lit up with rapture at the sudden inspiration.”<sup>7</sup>

The spot that McKusick selected lay on the west bank of the St. Croix. It was to become the city of the logger’s dream. Stillwater had all the possibilities of a second Bangor. In the lumber world Bangor was a name to conjure with. Stillwater, like Bangor in Maine, stood at the edge of a black forest. Thoreau said of Bangor that it was like a star on the edge of the night. The same could be said of Stillwater. Bangor sent its lumber to Spain, England, and the West Indies. Stillwater was to furnish the lumber to build farmsteads, farm implements, towns, and cities—all things, in fact, necessary in the conquest of the prairie.

In 1844 began the vigorous years that were to tell the story of the white pine in the St. Croix Valley. In that year the Stillwater Lumber Company, under the direction of McKusick, was established, and the first sawmill began its steady hum in Stillwater. Other members of the company were Elam Greeley of New Hampshire, Elias McKean of Pennsylvania, and Calvin F. Leach. At St. Louis on October 26, 1843, they agreed to build a sawmill at Stillwater; its construction began in November, 1843; and in April, 1844, it started to make logs into lumber. The mill was in a frame building measuring forty by sixty-five feet, and it was run by a water wheel thirty-six feet in diameter. The pioneer firm, with St. Louis as its chief lumber market, prospered, for in 1855 it was said that fifty thousand dollars could not buy its properties.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> William H. C. Folsom, “History of Lumbering in the St. Croix Valley,” in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 9: 302; Charles M. Foote and George F. Warner, eds., *History of Washington County and the St. Croix Valley*, 512 (Minneapolis, 1881); Return I. Holcombe, *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, 2: 108 (New York, 1909); *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater), April 3, 1885; *Stillwater Messenger*, December 15, 1871.

<sup>8</sup> Cheney, in *Journal of Geography*, 14: 190; E. D. Neill, “The Beginning of Organized Society in the St. Croix Valley,” in Macalester College, *Contributions*, series 1, no. 3, p. 55 (St. Paul, 1890); *Messenger*, June 30, 1871; *St. Croix Union*, June 9, 1855.

Stillwater grew notably. A visitor in 1849 spoke of it as a robust town, "which after seeing, no traveler would think of leaving Minnesota." In 1853, Stillwater was said to have "more substantial, reliable business, for the extent of it, and more capital . . . than any other town in Minnesota." In 1855 it had twelve hundred inhabitants, many of whom were connected with the chief industry. The population was largely from Maine, and it was an interesting fact that when the so-called Maine law, a prohibition law, was submitted to the people of the territory, Stillwater gave it approval by the largest majority of any town in Minnesota. Stillwater spoke glowingly of its own qualities. Its papers boasted freely of "our immense pine forests, our water power, our rich agricultural lands, and our position on the longest navigable stream in the world, together with our geographical relation to that great railroad enterprise, which will eventually connect the waters of the Mississippi and Lake Superior."<sup>9</sup>

In the ten years that followed the establishment of the first sawmill in Stillwater, five more mills added their busy hum to the one already there. The first of these was the famous Hersey and Staples mill. In 1853 Isaac Staples, another Maineite, went to Stillwater. Like McKusick, he was seeking virgin pine. He saw the possibilities of Stillwater, with pines to the back of it, with water power at its feet, with a navigable river connecting it with a port two thousand miles away. After careful investigation of the new pine country, he returned to Maine. There his salesman's talk was evidently given with conviction, for, on his return to Stillwater, the Herseys, old lumbermen in Maine, began to invest in this Eldorado of the West. Staples became the resident partner in Stillwater of Hersey, Staples and Company, and Samuel Freeman Hersey, who had gathered a fortune in pine lands in his own state, headed the new

<sup>9</sup> *Minnesota Pioneer*, March 5, 1849; *St. Croix Union*, April 3, 1855; *Messenger*, February 1, 1859.

firm, which began operations on the St. Croix on the first day of June, 1854.<sup>10</sup>

The sawmill erected by this company at Stillwater was described as the finest in the West. "It is, in all its departments, as near perfection as machinery can be brought by human skill," was a statement made about it. But what characterized a first-class sawmill in 1854? asks the connoisseur of today, accustomed to the terrific speed and efficiency of a twentieth-century sawmill. A careful analysis of the machinery of this early mill will lay bare the fact that no longer was lumbering the industry where men "loaded on a big log, turned on the water to its primitive water wheel, greased the journals of the shafting, and then went off to hunt squirrels . . . having ample time for the diversion of the hunt before the saw completed its cut."<sup>11</sup>

Steam was coming into its own. Steam as power was superseding the limited power of the water-driven flutter wheel. Steam could be used economically because slabs and sawdust, castoffs in the lumber industry of the fifties, supplied the fuel. Steam power furnished energy for the saws in the Hersey and Staples mill. Hitherto, water power had been the only power used in Minnesota. The progressive owners of the new mill equipped their establishment with a gang saw. Such a saw, consisting of parallel sash saws, many in a frame, was the "new thing" in the lumber mills of the fifties. Any up-to-date mill had a gang, and the particular gang of this firm had twenty saws in the frame, speeding production greatly. Furthermore, the mill boasted a circular saw, another device found only in the best mills. It could cut sixteen thousand feet of lumber in eleven hours. Altogether the saws in the Hersey and Staples mill could produce a hundred and twenty-five thousand feet of lum-

<sup>10</sup> Cheney, in *Journal of Geography*, 14: 190; Augustus B. Easton, ed., *History of the St. Croix Valley*, 1: 62 (Chicago, 1909); *Kanabec County Times* (Mora), June 28, 1934.

<sup>11</sup> George W. Hotchkiss, *History of the Lumber and Forest Industry of the Northwest*, 525, 539 (Chicago, 1898).

ber in twenty-four hours. According to a report of 1855, "Everything about the mill is done by machinery, even to the filing of the saws, the handling and shifting of the lumber, and the removal of slabs." It was described as the "mammoth" steam sawmill of Hersey, Staples and Company, and was said to have cost eighty thousand dollars.<sup>12</sup>

Such a sawmill needed a timber source. Staples, therefore, began immediately to purchase pine lands, and in 1854 his firm began logging operations on the Ground House River, a tributary of the Snake. Within seven years after he arrived at Stillwater, his company had purchased two hundred thousand acres of pine forest on the St. Croix and its tributaries. In Kanabec County the syndicate of Hersey and Staples became the largest landholders, with the exception of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad, a land grant railroad completed about 1870. Staples bought much of the land for a dollar and a quarter an acre, or with soldiers' or half-breed scrip. Soldiers who had served in the Mexican War had been given scrip which entitled them to a hundred and sixty acres of land anywhere. Such scrip was transferable, and it was often sold. It was commonly called whisky scrip, since soldiers sold it freely in order to obtain whisky. Lumbermen from Maine became owners of some of Minnesota's finest timber lands through such transfers. It is evident that the price paid for standing white pine was a mere bagatelle compared with the value of the lumber. It netted its owners vast returns. In 1887 Staples was recognized as one of the wealthiest lumbermen in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

Hersey and Staples were owners of standing timber, loggers, manufacturers of lumber, wholesale distributors, and retailers. They carried on all the branches of the lumber industry, a highly integrated business. In so new a coun-

<sup>12</sup> *St. Croix Union*, June 23, 1855; Hotchkiss, *Forest Industry*, 524; *Messenger*, May 1, 1860.

<sup>13</sup> *Kanabec County Times*, March 12, 1887.

try, however, there were other fields of business in which lumbermen had to establish themselves in order to carry on; for example, they had to supply food, provide transportation, and finance allied industries. Thus they became active promoters in many fields. In 1859 "Hersey, Staples and Company on the Levee, Stillwater, Minnesota," advertised dry goods, clothing, provisions, hardware, boots, shoes, and other articles. In 1859 the firm advertised that it had a million feet of fencing and common lumber which it could exchange for grain and flour. Money was scarce in the new country after the panic of 1857, and barter was not an uncommon thing. Grain and flour were, moreover, important in the life of this concern, the largest loggers out of Stillwater, particularly in a day when flour was at a premium in Minnesota. Staples soon built a flour mill at Stillwater, a mill which was considered mammoth at the time.<sup>14</sup>

Staples and Hersey reached into other lines of business in Stillwater and its neighborhood. In 1871 they were active in the Lumberman's National Bank of Stillwater, which had a capital of half a million. Staples also helped to organize the Second National Bank of St. Paul. When the day of railroads drew near, Hersey and his sons became actively interested in the new enterprise. A member of the family was on the board of directors of the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad, known today as the Omaha, during the trying years of its beginning. Stillwater people thought of the St. Paul and Sioux City as their very own. Hersey and his sons also took an active interest in the short line that connected Stillwater with a greater railroad center. That line, the St. Paul, Stillwater, and Taylor's Falls, came to serve as a life line in transporting lumber from Stillwater to St. Paul, a distributing center.<sup>15</sup> Though the elder Hersey never moved west, his interests seemed none the less to be in the new country where he chose to make his investments. Still-

<sup>14</sup> Hotchkiss, *Lumber and Forest Industry of the Northwest*, 531.

<sup>15</sup> *Messenger*, February 5, 1875.

water thought well of him, for once when he visited there in 1868 the following statement appeared in the *Stillwater Messenger*: "Samuel Freeman Hersey smiled upon us yesterday. Neither Maine nor Minnesota could prosper without him." Staples and Hersey devoted their unusual ability to the development of the resources of the St. Croix Valley, and for this they deserve recognition. In the lives of such men are found vivid illustrations of the leadership which changed the frontier into a civilized area.

In 1855 F. Schulenberg and A. Boeckeler and Company built a mill at Stillwater. The owners of this firm were from St. Louis, where they operated a mill and had a large lumber yard. Stillwater had a strategic position for them, since it was at the gateway to millions of feet of white pine, on a navigable river that could carry logs to their St. Louis establishment. Their mill in Stillwater sawed exclusively for the St. Louis market. Every board they cut was sent to their lumber yard there. Boeckeler went to manage operations in Stillwater; Schulenberg controlled further movements of lumber in the market from St. Louis. For many years they were the largest cutters in Stillwater, and even as early as 1866 they cut fifteen million feet in a hundred and ninety-seven working days. A Stillwater newspaper ventured: "Can any mill in this state beat this? If so, we'd like to hear from its proprietors."<sup>16</sup>

In 1871 this firm produced over twenty-six million feet of lumber, and in 1874 it was putting out thirty million feet. All the work was done by five hundred men, who operated seven gangs—nine circulars and one old muley. One wonders why so progressive a firm kept the old muley, which was said to go down one day and up the next. Perhaps it was only to remind itself of "once upon a time." Schulenberg and Boeckeler were makers of lumber, loggers, and, in Stillwater, merchants. They housed and fed their own workmen there. They had their own towboats to take their

<sup>16</sup> *Messenger*, December 12, 1866.

rafts to St. Louis. One of these, the "Helene Schulenberg," took many a white pine monarch to St. Louis. From the market there, the firm sent St. Croix Valley lumber into the Southwest.

Stillwater had a favorable position on America's greatest water route. But with the coming of railroads much of Stillwater's lumber made its way westward by the new mode of transportation. On January 12, 1872, Stillwater sent its first shipment of lumber into Iowa by rail. It was directed to Marshalltown. By December of that year Stillwater had shipped seven million feet of lumber into the interior of Iowa and Minnesota. In the week of June 25, 1875, a hundred and forty-one carloads of lumber were shipped from Stillwater to points in Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and Dakota. This was the largest shipment by rail within one week yet recorded in Stillwater. In 1875 lumber was billed to Omaha and Council Bluffs, and Columbus in the fourth tier of counties west of the Missouri River in Nebraska was ordering lumber from Stillwater. When, on April 23, 1875, the *Stillwater Lumberman* reported that one Stillwater firm was sending lumber as far west as Colorado, it announced news as important to that saw town as though its lumber were reaching to Mars. In the month of May in 1875 the firm of Hersey, Bean, and Brown shipped lumber to Sioux City, Iowa, Vermillion, Dakota Territory, and St. Joseph, Missouri, all growing towns, as well as to many smaller places in the West. Seymour, Sabin, and Company, which manufactured doors, window sashes, plows, and other articles necessary even in the crude life of the frontier, established its own yards at Cedar Rapids, almost in the heart of the agricultural section of Iowa. It had a steady market at Sioux City. The new markets increased the commercial stature of Stillwater, which in 1876 established its own lumberman's board of trade, with Edward W. Durant as president.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Stillwater Lumberman*, September 1, 1876.

Stillwater also became the Mecca for logs supplying mills farther down the river; and logs in the language of the St. Croix lumbermen meant white pine. Logging was great business in Stillwater, for many men found employment in the woods in winter and returned to work in the sawmills and on the river in summer. In 1871 two thousand men went into the woods with five hundred horses and oxen and brought out a harvest of 146,536,000 feet of logs.<sup>18</sup> Stillwater stood guard, as it were, over the logs from the hinterland that came out of the giant's mouth—the boom at St. Croix. A boom was an institution in logging. It was an important part of the machinery, for it marked the end of the log drive. It was the terminal point. There were sorted, according to log and stamp marks, scaled, and rafted all the logs that rode the St. Croix on the way to mills farther down the stream. The boom was a busy mart which was to the lumberman what the exchange was to the merchant of a big city. Every man who sent logs down the St. Croix or its tributaries was obliged to send them through the St. Croix Boom.

The boom was chartered in 1851 with a capital of ten thousand dollars. The original incorporators were Orange Walker and George B. Judd of Marine, John McKusick, Socrates Nelson, and Levi Churchill of Stillwater, Daniel Mears and William Kent of Osceola, and William H. C. Folsom of Taylor's Falls. The first boom was located opposite Osceola. Later it was removed to a site three miles above Stillwater. There it took on immense proportions. At one time the boom extended over a distance of nine miles. In 1857 it was reorganized with a capital stock of twenty-five thousand dollars. So well known did this institution come to be in the St. Croix Valley that men referred to it as "The Boom." No less than two thousand log marks were recorded there during the course of its history.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Messenger*, November 24, 1871; *Lumberman*, January 21, 1876.

<sup>19</sup> Folsom, in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 9: 312.

Out of that boom came logs, logs without end! Some were made into lumber at Stillwater; others were rafted to mills farther down the Mississippi, there to be changed into lumber. In 1850, ninety million feet of logs went through the boom at St. Croix; in 1860, a hundred and fifty million feet; in 1870, a hundred and sixty-five million feet; in 1880, more than two hundred million feet. The St. Croix Boom gave to the log world its greatest effort in 1890, when it sent 452,360,890 feet of logs to sawmills from Stillwater to St. Louis.<sup>20</sup>

In the season when "fitting up" crews plied busily day in and day out, Stillwater's environment was in decided contrast to that of today. Towboats pushing rafts crowded the river. There were the "Isaac Staples," the "Jennie Hayes," the "Juanita," the "Ben Hersey," the "Robert Dodds," the "Penn Wright," the "Helen Mac," the "James Means," the "Minnie Will," the "Mark Bradley," the "Wild Boy," and many others with equally significant names. Famous river pilots and captains knew Stillwater as an important place for their work. Such was Stephen B. Hanks, a cousin of Abraham Lincoln. In 1844 he took his first raft to St. Louis. In spite of the fact that he could not run it at night, he was second at St. Louis in the flotilla of rafts in which he traveled. He and his colleagues were back in the St. Croix country exactly thirty days after their departure, a good record. Hanks was born in 1821; he died in 1917. He saw both the coming and the going of a great industry in the valley of the St. Croix during his lifetime.

A man well known in the lumber world that centered at Stillwater was Edward W. Durant. With Hanks he went north into the pine country, and in 1852 he was rafting logs and lumber from Stillwater. He had been trained as a raft

<sup>20</sup>*Mississippi Valley Lumberman*, October 17, 1890. These figures are taken from the reports of scalers recorded in the office of the Minnesota surveyor general of logs and lumber in St. Paul.

pilot, and his skill at keeping the towboat with its raft away from the shore was unequalled. He was known to wait less for a wind than anyone who ever "coiled a line in a skiff." His pride in his boats was such that they were said to look like June brides. Men in all walks of life were at ease with him; he could yell "two beer" as naturally as a Dutch bar-keeper; on the other hand, he played his game beautifully in the most delicate drawing-room atmosphere. He was a member of the firm of Durant, Wheeler, and Company, of Stillwater, the chief towing concern of the city. He was interested in the Stillwater Lumber Company and in the Lumberman's National Bank. In 1883 he was president of the Lumber Manufacturers National Bank. Much of the log and lumber life of Stillwater centered about him.

In the group of men who rafted lumber and logs from Stillwater, Samuel R. Van Sant was prominent. His was the leading rafting concern on the river. His headquarters were at Winona, but he saw many a work day at Stillwater. Shipbuilding was in the Van Sant blood. His ancestors probably had been seamen, for they came originally from Holland. Van Sant's great-grandfather had fitted boats for the American Revolution. His own father went west to St. Louis and the son went to Winona to be near the source of rafting. He became the wealthiest man of the group that rafted logs on the upper Mississippi, though he modestly earned his first money working for Frederick Weyerhaeuser at fifty cents a day. That was before the Civil War. Many a white pine log from the St. Croix was taken down river to its destination by this man, later distinguished as Minnesota's grand old man.<sup>21</sup>

These men all saw great changes in the manner of rafting during their days of labor. And, strangely, all three lived more than the allotted years of three score and ten.

<sup>21</sup> Governor Van Sant was present as a member of the audience when this paper was read at Stillwater. He died on October 3, 1936, at the age of ninety-two. *Ed.*

In the forties, fifties, and sixties, rafts were run by oarsmen. Man power ruled each raft, which had twelve oarsmen, a cook, a helper, and a pilot. St. Louis was almost eight hundred miles away—a long way for oarsmen to go. In quiet water one man could handle an oar alone, but often the job took the strength of two men, for the stem of an oar was about thirty feet long and eight inches thick at the butt. Man power was replaced by steam power in rafting for the first time in 1863, when George Winans attempted to run a raft with a steamboat in the Mississippi proper. The raft moved—it seemed to feel the thrill of life. History was made. The small steamer pushed the raft, taking the place of the stern oar, and rafting on the river became a speedier business. The first successful builders of steamboats used in rafting were Samuel R. Van Sant and his father.<sup>22</sup> That was in 1870. Twenty years later a hundred such boats hurried up the river to garner their loads and return with them. Rafting was one of the largest and most profitable industries in the United States.

After 1840 logging and lumber making and rafting grew to large proportions in the valley of the St. Croix. In the period of the nineties the valley reached its golden age in the great industry of lumber. No one dreamed even then that, before another generation was to pass, the last log from the St. Croix would have made its way downstream. But it was to be so, for on August 12, 1914, the old boom master, Frank McGray, hitched the last log that went through the St. Croix Boom. It was the last of millions, even billions. The great empire of white pine on the St. Croix, of which Stillwater had been the capital city, had been removed to build a greater empire on the prairies of midland America.

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<sup>22</sup> Walter A. Blair, *A Raft Pilot's Log*, 200 (Cleveland, 1930).



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