

# Lake Country Legends

Newsletter of the Lake Country Scenic Byway

www.lakecountryscenicbyway.com



EXPLORE THE ROAD TO  
ITASCA...AND BEYOND

## The Aristocrats of the Logging Industry

This month we explore more on the men that were involved in the area's great logging industry. So what was done with the logs after they were cut? First they were skidded out of the wood to a logging road. This was usually done with a two-horse



By Frank Mitchell,  
Byway Ambassador

team. Here they were piled on a "skidway". Many different types of skidways were used, depending on the size of the logs, the distance from the mill or rail cars and the mechanical devices used for loading. One method especially for loading by hand was to build a skidway on a hillside close to the logging road. This was done by laying one or two logs

parallel to the road, then using one or smaller logs or skids with the large end on top of the first logs so as to make them nearly level. Then when the logs were skidded in they would be rolled with a canthook onto the skids. When the skidway was full they could be rolled onto the sleigh. This was

done by laying two skids from the pile to the sleigh. Another method was to lay two skids on the ground next to the sleigh. The logs were then rolled onto the skids. A chain was placed around the middle of a log and across the sleigh where a team of horses would pull the logs up the skids and onto the sleigh. This was known as the "cross

haul method". This was the most common method used until the gin pole with a swinging boom, or a jammer, became popular.

The sleigh was a huge sled with four runners and bunks with a pivot pin in the center. The runners were seven feet long, placed seven feet four inches between them, made of 4x12 inch oak planks. They had either steel or cast iron shoes under the runners. Most bunks were 14 feet long and made of 8x8 inch Norway Pine. The front and back runners were separated and connected with chains crossed in the middle. This allowed the back runners to follow the path of the front runners. The chains could be lengthened or shortened according to

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### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **JUNE 10, 2006**  
120 Years on the Byway — Height of Land Township celebration
- **SEPTEMBER 27, 2006**  
Fall Color Tour by coach bus along the Byway

- **JUNE 24, 2006**  
**One River Mississippi**  
At 6:00 pm on Saturday, June 24, the Mississippi Headwaters at Itasca State Park will join six other sites along the river for a simultaneous celebration. The local performance will celebrate the area's rich and diverse history through dance and art performances that begin at the Visitor's Center and proceed to the Headwaters. The performance is free to the public and will be simulcast by radio in real-time up and down the river.

The One River Mississippi project brings together art, ecology and community through a seven-city performance. The project aims to heighten awareness of the river as an interdependent environmental, economic and historic ecosystem. For more information, go to <http://onerivermississippi.org>.

## Byway Briefs

### Featured in Explorer

The Spring/Summer edition of the Minnesota Explorer includes an article on the Lake Country Scenic Byway. The publication is from Explore Minnesota Tourism and is free at the counter of your

local Chamber office.

### Green light for Entrance Signage to Communities

Among the 207 scenic byway projects in 42 states that have been approved for federal grants is the Lake Country Scenic Byway's community entrance signage.

The project application requested common entrance signage in communities along the Byway. Representatives of the Lake Country Scenic Byway are working with Mn/DOT staff to complete the required permits and applications in order to proceed with the project.

## Logging Aristocrats (continued)

the length of logs being hauled. The roads were iced with ruts cut into the ice for the runners to follow.

Loading these sleighs with no stakes in the end of the bunks was a real challenge. This was an art for the most experienced men to tackle. These men were called "top loaders". They were the best paid men in the logging camps. They were the "aristocrats" of the logging industry! The logs were placed directly on the top of the first layer of logs. This way the logs went straight up the sides of the load. Chains were put across each layer to bind them in place. This was done with the entire load. The largest load was pulled by a two horse team and loaded in this manner. These were hand-picked logs which were cut in Michigan and taken to the Chicago World Fair in 1893. The sleigh had 16 foot bunks

and the logs were 18 feet long White Pine. The load was 33 feet 3 inches high. It scaled 36,055 board feet, weighing 144 tons. It required 9 flat bed cars to haul them to Chicago.

Horses were the main means of power in the early logging camps, before the steam engines came into use. Some camps also used oxen. One picture in J.C. Ryan's book shows over 50 horses posing for a picture on a Sunday afternoon.

The average stand of pine would run around 20 million board feet to a section of land. The best stand ever recorded was 33 million feet on a section of land. The tree that yielded the most board feet was a White Pine tree that grew in a creek bottom five miles north of Mizpah, MN. The tree measured 6 feet at the stump and 32 feet up from the stump. It forked

into 4 tops that contained 14 logs 16 feet long. The log scale showed the tree contained 4,400 board feet of lumber.

The previous large load mentioned was the largest load ever pulled by a two horse team. There was always much competition in logging camps to beat the other camp's record. They would pick the best logs to try to outdo the other record loads. The largest load which was pulled 4 miles by a four horse team was hauled by the Rutledge Lumber camp 15 miles from Rutledge, MN, on February 22, 1895. This load contained 56 logs which scaled 37,120 feet. The height of the load was 26 feet; the width was 22 1/2 feet at the top and only 20 feet at the bottom. It contained both 16 and 22 foot long logs. So this was really a challenge for the "aristocrats," the top loaders.

This logging was always done in the winter and depended on cold

weather. A warm winter was really detrimental to the logging business.

### The Festive Lumber-jack

*Sung by Mr. Ed Springstad,  
Bemidji, MN*

I've been a-round the world a bit, an' seen beasts great an' small. The one I mean to tell a-bout for dar-in' beats 'em all. He leaves the woods with his brist-les raised the full length of his back. He's known by men of sci-ence as the fes-tive lum-ber-jack. He's a wild, rip-snortin' dev-il ever' time he comes to town. He's a pork-y, he's a moose cat, too bus-y to set down. But when his sil-ver's reg-is-ter'd, an' his drinks is com-in' few, He's then as tame as oth-er jacks that's met their Wat-er-loo.

### Ye Noble Big Pine Tree

*By Shan T. Boy  
Sung by Mr. W. N. Allen  
("Shan T. Boy"), Wausau, WI*

'twas on a cold and frost-y mom-ing when the sun-shine was a-dom-ing the boughs of ev-'ry loft-y pine, mak-ing them in rad-iance shine.

### Why become a member of the Byway?

"I'm a member of the Lake Country Scenic Byway board of directors because from its inception in 1999, I believed working cooperatively and collaboratively from Walker to Detroit Lakes, with a spur from Park Rapids to Maseca State Park to market this 88-mile corridor would enhance travel along the Byway. It would also increase the opportunity for this pristine area to become a major tourism as well as local citizen scenic travel destination."

Sharon Rezac Andersen

### Membership Levels

- 88 Mile Benefactor ..... \$88/year
- Scenic Sponsor ..... \$25/year
- Friend ..... \$10/year
- Ambassador ..... \$5/year

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Lake Country Scenic Byway Association  
PO Box 249, Park Rapids, MN 56470

### Benefits of Membership

- Newsletter subscription
- E-mail announcements
- Opportunity to attend monthly meetings
- Input in key Byway Association issues
- Stakeholder in sustainability of the Byway
- Opportunity to attend Annual banquet and State Byway meeting
- Stay abreast of latest Byway developments