



# The Mitten

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## MICHIGAN'S WHITE ERA

According to one lumberman who lived through Michigan's lumbering era, "there is no other tree in all the world which has so much romance . . . as the white pine." He was correct.

It was the white pine that made Michigan the nation's leading lumber-producing state from 1860 until 1910. The state's biggest white pines were called cork pine. These trees were 300 years old and grew to stand 200 feet tall. Today, a few remaining cork pine trees are at Hartwick Pines State Park near Grayling and at Estivant Pines Nature Sanctuary near Copper Harbor.

During Michigan's lumbering era, thousands of men, better known as **shanty boys**, cut down the dense forests that covered the state. Other men, called lumber barons, made great fortunes by operating companies that cut the trees. The logs were transported to sawmills, cut into lumber

"boards," and shipped all across the Midwest.

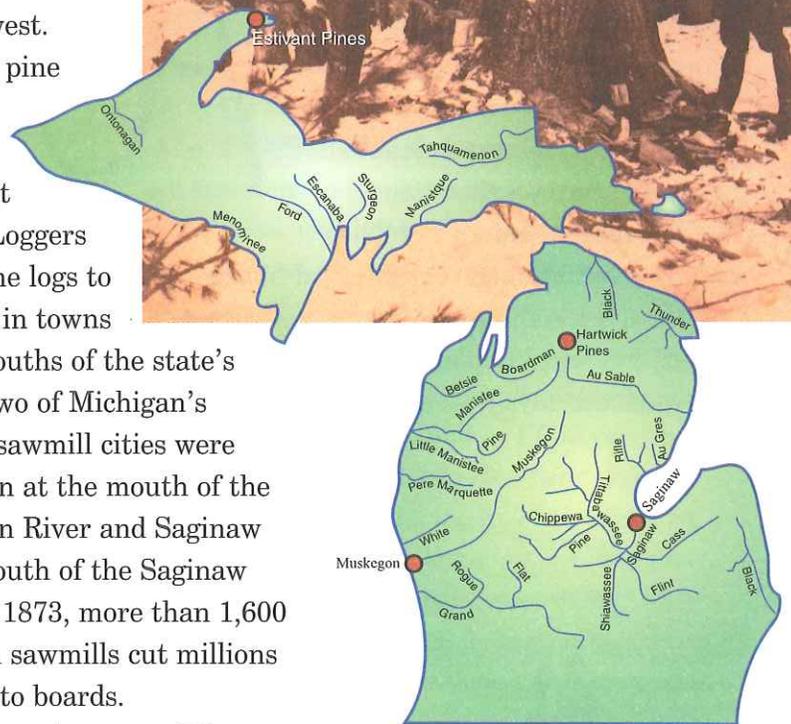
White pine was easy to move because it floated. Loggers floated the logs to sawmills in towns at the mouths of the state's rivers. Two of Michigan's greatest sawmill cities were Muskegon at the mouth of the Muskegon River and Saginaw at the mouth of the Saginaw River. In 1873, more than 1,600 Michigan sawmills cut millions of logs into boards.

By the early years of the twentieth century most of Michigan's great pine forests had been cut. The areas where the forest once stood were called cutover lands. Cutover lands were desolate and created problems like fires and erosion. During the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) planted tens of millions

Photos State Archives of Michigan



## PINE



of trees on the cutover lands. These newly planted forests became Michigan's state and federal forests.

Today, the Michigan State University Extension Service claims that about half the state is forested. Logging also continues in Michigan, especially in the state's northern counties.

# How to Log a

It is 1873 and you are the owner of the Ajax Logging Company. Your **shanty boys** have just logged over a stretch of forest in Isabella County. What's next?

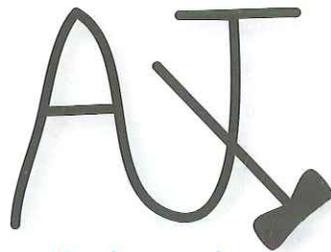
First, you call in your **timber cruisers**.

These men are sent to nearby Osceola County to look for a new stand of pine. They eagerly return after discovering 40 acres near the Muskegon River that contains much cork pine. Your company purchases the land from the federal government.

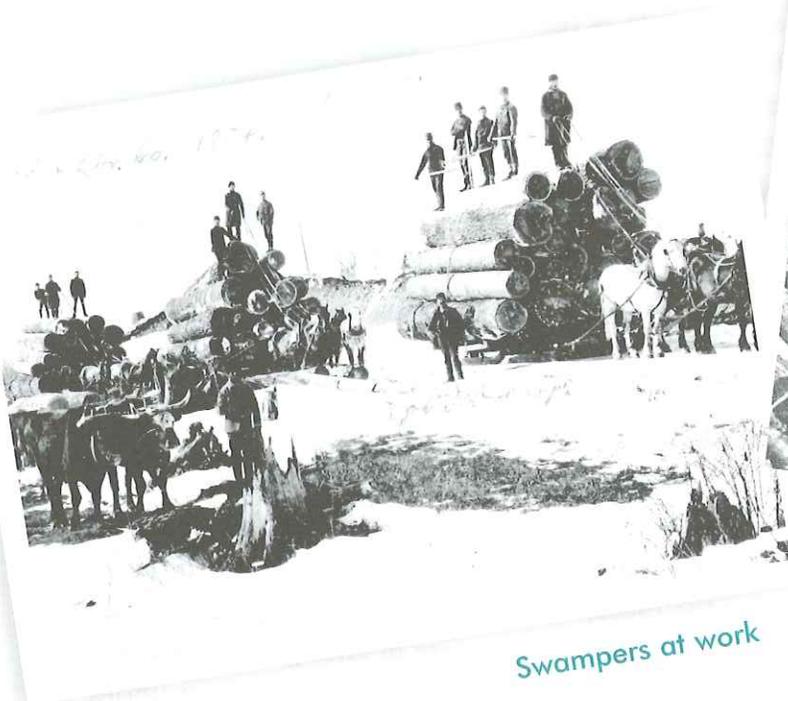
The next task is to establish a logging camp on the site. The camps are temporary. They include a bunkhouse, a stable and blacksmith shop, and a cookhouse where the meals are served. The bunkhouse is home to shanty boys who work six days a week. They are paid about

\$25 a month. Pay is received at the end of the logging season that begins in the fall and ends in the spring.

A shanty boy's typical day begins before dawn. After a hearty breakfast, the men head into the forest. Using double-edged axes and crosscut saws, the shanty boys fell the biggest trees. Next, they hack off the branches and cut the trees into shorter logs. **Swampers** use horse-drawn sleighs to place the logs on the banks of the frozen Muskegon River. If there is not enough snow for the sleighs, the roads are iced. This makes the job more dangerous for the horses and the drivers called **teamsters**.



Ajax log mark



Swampers at work



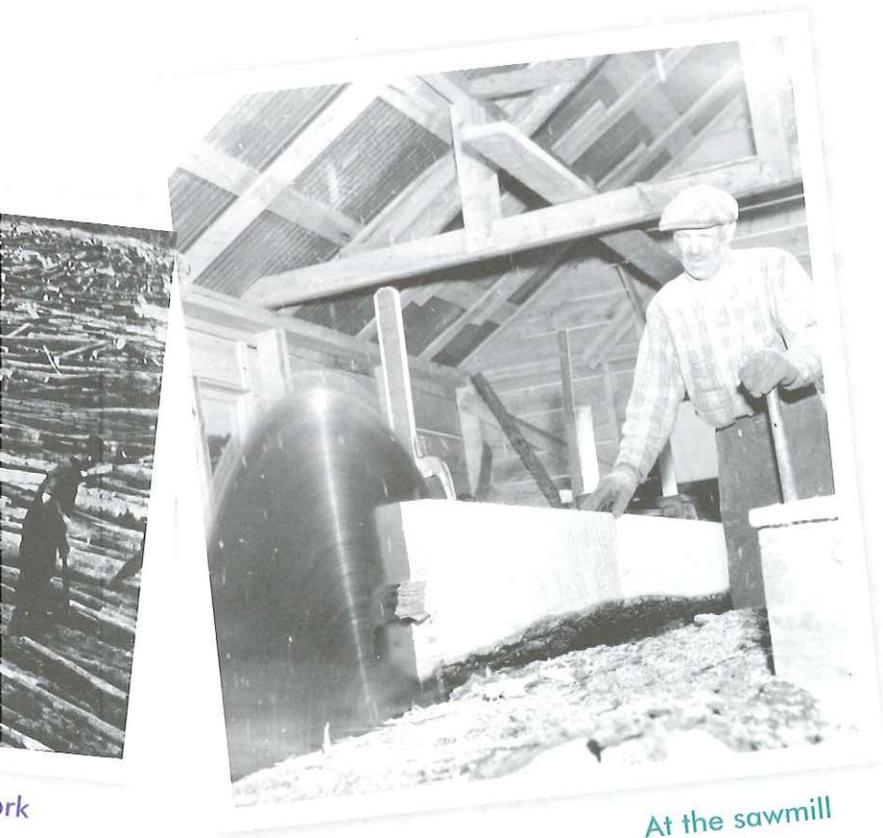
Riverhogs at work

# a Forest

As the logs are stacked along the riverbank the **stampers** hammer the company's **log mark** into the ends of each log.

In the spring the logs are dumped into the melting Muskegon River. **Riverhogs** ride the mass of logs to Muskegon. As the logs arrive at the mouth of the river, **boomers** sort out the Ajax Logging Company logs. These logs are floated to the company sawmill where a circular saw cuts them into boards. The boards are stacked to dry before being shipped by boat to Chicago.

After the Osceola timber is cut, Ajax will move on to another parcel of land that the timber cruisers have already discovered.



At the sawmill

## Where to Take Your Family

At **Hartwick Pines State Park** near Grayling, visitors can walk through acres of never-cut white pine and see

how northern Michigan looked before the shanty boys came.

The Michigan Forest Visitor Center presents information about modern forest management. The Hartwick Pines

Logging Museum, part of the Michigan Historical Museum

system, has a recreation of a nineteenth-century logging camp. Exhibits show life in the bunkhouse, cook shanty, and camp store and office, as well as describing the different jobs within a logging operation. For more information, telephone Hartwick Pines at (989) 348-2537 or visit [www.michiganhistory.org](http://www.michiganhistory.org).



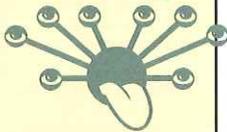
**Estivant Pines Nature Sanctuary** near Copper Harbor is another place to see never-logged white pine forests. A walking trail guides visitors to trees that are 500 to 1,000 years old.

Near Ludington is **Historic White Pine Village**, which has among its 21 buildings the Abe Nelson Lumbering Museum. The museum displays items from lumber camps in the Lower Peninsula. The village also includes a blacksmith shop, courthouse, general store, post office, and four other museums. Telephone (231) 843-4808 or visit [www.historicwhitepinevillage.org](http://www.historicwhitepinevillage.org).

As far back as the 1790s, **Historic Mill Creek** was the site of a sawmill providing lumber to Mackinac Island. Today, the sawmill, sawpit, and nature trails near Mackinaw City are the sites of living history demonstrations and nature presentations. For more information, telephone (231) 436-4100 or visit [www.mackinacparks.com/millcreek](http://www.mackinacparks.com/millcreek).

# What Did You Learn?

## Vocabulary WORDS



**Boomer:** man who sorts logs by log mark

**Log mark:** symbol hammered into log ends to identify ownership

**Riverhog:** man who drives the logs down the river to the sawmill

**Shanty boy:** lumberjack, man who cuts trees down

**Stamper:** man who marks the logs

**Swamper:** man who pulls logs to the riverbank

**Teamster:** man who drives a team of horses or oxen

**Timber cruiser:** man who finds the best forests to cut

1. What kind of tree made Michigan the top lumber producer in the country?

- a. birch
- b. walnut
- c. white pine

2. Areas where forests had been cut down were called \_\_\_\_\_.

3. How did the lumbermen get logs to the sawmills?

- a. They hauled them on wagons.
- b. They floated them down rivers.
- c. They shipped them on boats.

4. Today about \_\_\_\_\_ of Michigan's land is covered with forests.

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Find the following  
**LUMBERING**  
 words  
 BOOMER  
 LUMBER  
 RIVERHOG  
 SAWMILL  
 SHANTYBOY  
 TIMBERCRUISER  
 WHITEPINE