

A quarterly newsletter from the

**Forest History
Association of Wisconsin, Inc.**

P.O. Box 1001
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Spring - 2002

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Chips and Sawdust

Volume 27, Number 1

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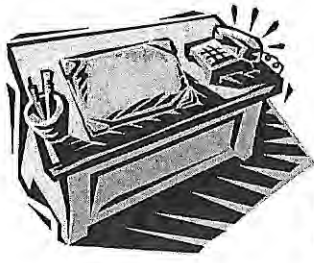
Introducing a new book
published by the Forest History Association of Wisconsin:

Ghosts of the Forest: Vanished Lumber Towns of Wisconsin

Volume I

By
Randall Rohe

- ◆ Order your copy today—see **page 7** for more information and **page 15** for an order form and instructions!
- ◆ Support the FHAW by encouraging your local library to order a copy. Provide your librarian with a copy of the description and order form!



From the Editor's Desk

FHAW member Frank Hitz sent in a recollection of logging in the vicinity of Butternut Lake in northern Wisconsin along with a request for information about such activities (page 13). Frank

witnessed the work of the Thunder Lake Lumber Company and its affiliated narrow gauge railroad in its final years of operation. For Frank, or anyone interested in this particular era of Wisconsin forest history, the late Harvey Huston's *Thunder Lake Narrow Gauge* is a must-read! The hard-cover, privately published book is an excellent account of the railroad and the logging activities of the Thunder Lake Lumber Company and its predecessors. Huston's chapters include: Before the Narrow Gauge Came; Historical Sketch 1893-1919; Historical Sketch 1919-1941; The End of the Line; People; Railroad Operations; Woods Operations; Line and Track; Financial Notes; Winter, Wind and Trespassers; Recreation; and Equipment. The book is profusely illustrated with rare photos; it is well researched, organized and written.

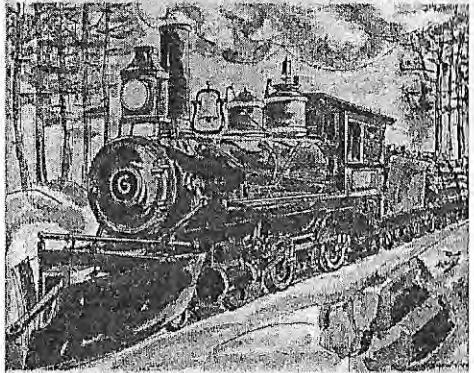
In his introduction, Huston writes:

This is the story of the last narrow gauge logging railroad in the Middle West... It served as a common carrier from the time of its incorporation in 1898 until abandonment in 1941, which made it also the Middle West's last narrow gauge common carrier...

The operation of the Robbins Railroad was tied closely to the private narrow gauge logging lines operated by the Thunder Lake Lumber Co. and its predecessors from 1893 to 1941, and likewise this story concerns both the common carrier and the private railroad operations...

Forest products always provided the

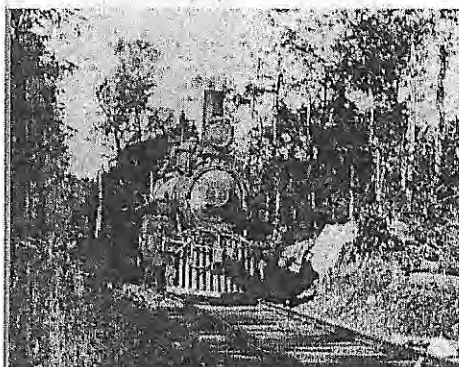
'93 /41 Thunder Lake NARROW GAUGE



HARVEY HUSTON

Harvey Huston. '93/'41 Thunder Lake Narrow Gauge, 2nd Edition. Winnetka, IL: Privately published, 1961, 1982.

the RODDIS LINE



HARVEY HUSTON

**Harvey Huston. *The Roddis Line.*
Winnetka, IL: Privately published,
1972.**

traveled to Winnetka, IL and was able to look through Huston's carefully indexed photographs, photo copies, and index note cards. Not only did Huston's work and his daughters kindness make my community study more complete, but it helped foster in me an interest in the lumber industry and logging lines that has endured to this day.

Huston also published an equally impressive work on the Roddis Lumber & Veneer Co. Railroad and the Dells & Northeastern Railway entitled *The Roddis Line*. In writing this book, which he published in 1972, Huston worked closely with the late Marry Roddis Connor, who many of you know from her extensive involvement with our organization.

Both of these publications are as hard-to-find as they are extraordinary. Both titles are, however, available from Brown Street Books in Rhinlander, Wisconsin. Members interested in obtaining copies of either title should write or call: Brown Street Books, 25 South Brown Street, Rhinlander, Wisconsin, 54501 (tel. 715/362-5111).

great bulk of the traffic of the Narrow Gauge, so inevitably "Thunder Lake Narrow Gauge" is logging history as well as railroad history. It is hoped that this book will throw light on a colorful era of logging railroad operations.

The book definitely "sheds light on the colorful era of logging railroad operations." I also have a more personal connection with the book. In the early 1990s, I was working on a community study of my home town, when I discovered my home community was founded by the logging activities and railroad operations of the Thunder Lake Lumber Company's predecessor, the Robbins Lumber Company and the Robbins Railroad. I found Huston's work extremely useful to my study. I had the fortune to arrange a meeting with Huston's daughter (regretfully Harvey Huston passed away in 1979). I

-Kurt Kortenhof



Board of Directors' Update

Minutes of the September 26, 2001 Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM at the Black Forest Restaurant by Tom Albrecht. In attendance were Albrecht, Baumann, Benson, Einspahr, Harm, Lambrecht and Cline (who arrived late because of car problems).

Minutes of the September 22nd Annual Business Meeting

Tom Albrecht, in the absence of Bob Brisson, passed out copies of the minutes and briefly discussed the information. One minor addition was made and the minutes were approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Albrecht indicated that he had nothing new to add over and above the information presented in his report at the Annual Meeting. He stated that the costs for the Sept. 22nd Annual Meeting were expected to exceed income by about \$200. Karl Baumann moved and Eugene Harm 2nd the motion that both the minutes of the annual meeting and the treasurer's report be approved. All were in favor.

Election of New Directors (At the 2001 Annual Meeting)

Don Lambrecht stated that directors up for election for two year terms starting at the 2001 Annual Meeting were Lambrecht, Baumann, Benson and Rohe. It was moved by Albrecht and 2nd by Baumann that the new president appoint John Grossman for a one-year term. All were in favor.

Election of Officers

The election of officers was held and the results were as follows:

- President -- Miles Benson - two year term
- Vice-President -- Randall Rohe - two year term
- Executive Secretary -- Bob Brisson one year term
- Treasurer -- Thomas Albrecht - one year term

Eugene Harm moved and Baumann supported the motion that we cast a unanimous ballot. All were in favor.

Standing Committee Reports

Auction

Karl Baumann and Bob Brisson conducted the auction and it was a success. Albrecht reported that the total sales; minus expenses, was expected to result in a return of about \$700.

Chips & Sawdust

Miles Benson reported for Kurt Korten Hof and indicated that he needed news and history items. Miles also strongly suggested that Ray Clark supply Kurt with a complete file of the back issues of "Chips & Sawdust" and also with the file that contains articles available but not yet published. Don Lambrecht requested that Kurt be invited to future board meetings.

Distinguished Service Awards

Tom Albrecht repeated Randy Rohe's request for nominations for the 2001-2002 distinguished service award.

Forestry Hall of Fame

Chairman Don Lambrecht discussed possible future nominations. Alvin Nelson, Bob Engelhard, and Jay Cravens were names mentioned. Lambrecht noted that considerable lead time and research is required to pull together the necessary documentation. Names of possible candidates should be given to Don or Miles.

Membership

President Benson stressed the need for younger members. Approaches suggested were to contact SAF members, provide prospective members with copies of the FHAW Proceedings (and Chips & Sawdust) and maintain the dues at \$15/year.

Proceedings

Benson and others felt that we should print extra copies of the *Proceedings* for use in obtaining members and that they should also be sent to all authors, speakers and other individuals that contributed to the success of the annual meetings.

Publicity

Carl Krog sent out publicity items to area papers for the most recent annual meeting and is expected to be chairman and in charge of publicity for the coming year.

Scholarship

Lambrecht reported that Saemann will continue as chairman with help from Sohasky, Rohe and Krog. The board decided that the scholarship committee should write the letter to the winner and the treasurer supply the necessary check.

Annual Meetings

President Benson introduced the discussion on the future locations of the Annual Meetings. For 2002- Oconto was selected with Carl Krog working with people in the area and Brisson and Baumann assisting. For 2003 - Wade House State Historical Site was suggested. For 2004 - Madison or Wisconsin Dells was suggested.

Adjournment

Karl Baumann moved and John Cline supported a motion to adjourn at 12:05. The motion carried. No date for the next meeting was scheduled.

*Ghosts of the Forests:
Vanished Lumber Towns of Wisconsin
Volume I*

By Dr. Randall Rohe

A New Book from the
Forest History Association of Wisconsin

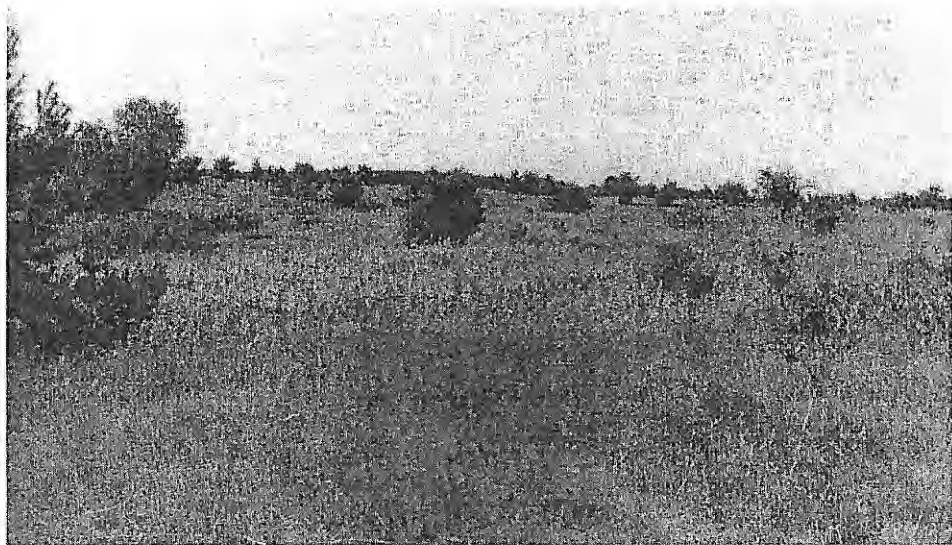
Most people associate the term “ghost town” with the mining industry of the West. Wisconsin, however, has more than its share of ghost towns. Most of them originated during the lumber era. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, hundreds of mill towns dotted the northern two-thirds of Wisconsin. With the end of lumbering, there often remained no reason for the continued existence of these towns. Today, all that remains of some of these towns is a grassy clearing, a vague outline of a street pattern, perhaps a foundation or two, or some other remnants of the past. Others have declined over the years to a shadow of their former self, but still have a few buildings and perhaps a handful of residents.

What were these communities and life in them like? Were these towns full of mayhem and violence or did they experience little in the way of crime, drinking, fighting, prostitution, and other such activities? What did their residents do for recreation and relaxation? How were their educational, religious, medical and other needs met? What happened to these towns after the end of lumbering, and what remains of them today? These and other questions are answered in *Ghosts of the Forest*, the first book-length study of Wisconsin’s lumbering ghost towns.

Utilizing lumber trade journals, period newspapers, local and county histories, personal interviews, and many other sources, Randall Rohe examines in detail the histories of: Zeda, McKenna, and Goodyear (Jackson County); Porter’s Mills (Eau Claire County); Shanagolden (Ashland County); Morse (Ashland County); Knox Mills (Price County); Peshtigo Harbor (Marinette County); Heineman (Lincoln County); March Rapids (Marathon County); Parrish (Langlade County); Harrison (Lincoln County); Little Sturgeon (Door



Star Lake, Wisconsin, 1895 (courtesy of the Marathon County Historical Society).
Ghosts of the Forest: Vanished Lumber Towns of Wisconsin, volume I, p. 331



Star Lake, Wisconsin, 1995. *Ghosts of the Forest: Vanished Lumber Towns of Wisconsin, volume I, p. 331*

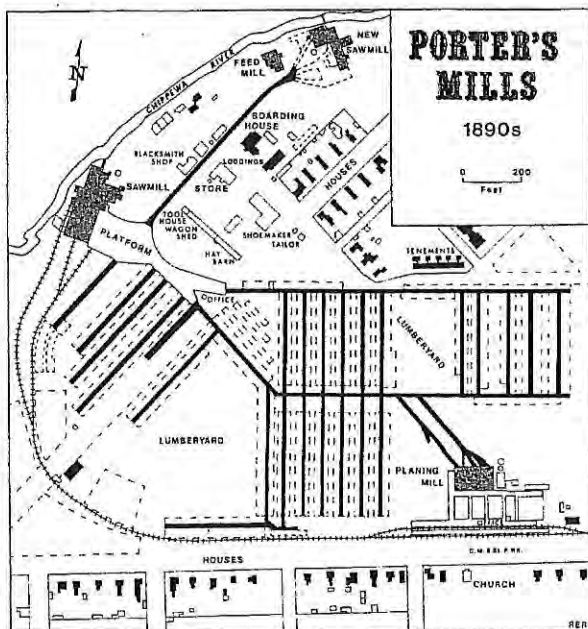
County); and Star Lake (Vilas County) [See page 10 for a map of ghost town locations]. The conclusion, which is based on the author's research of over forty lumbering ghost towns, specifically mentions such towns as Romeo (Marathon County), Badger Mills (Eau Claire County), Holt (Marathon County), Wildwood (St. Croix County), Pineville (Polk County), Dexterville (Wood County), Emerson (Iron County), Jeffris/Bundy (Lincoln County), Nashville (Forest County), Buckbee (Waupaca County), Doudville (Wood County), Buswell (Vilas County), Kimball (Iron County), and Woodboro (Oneida County).

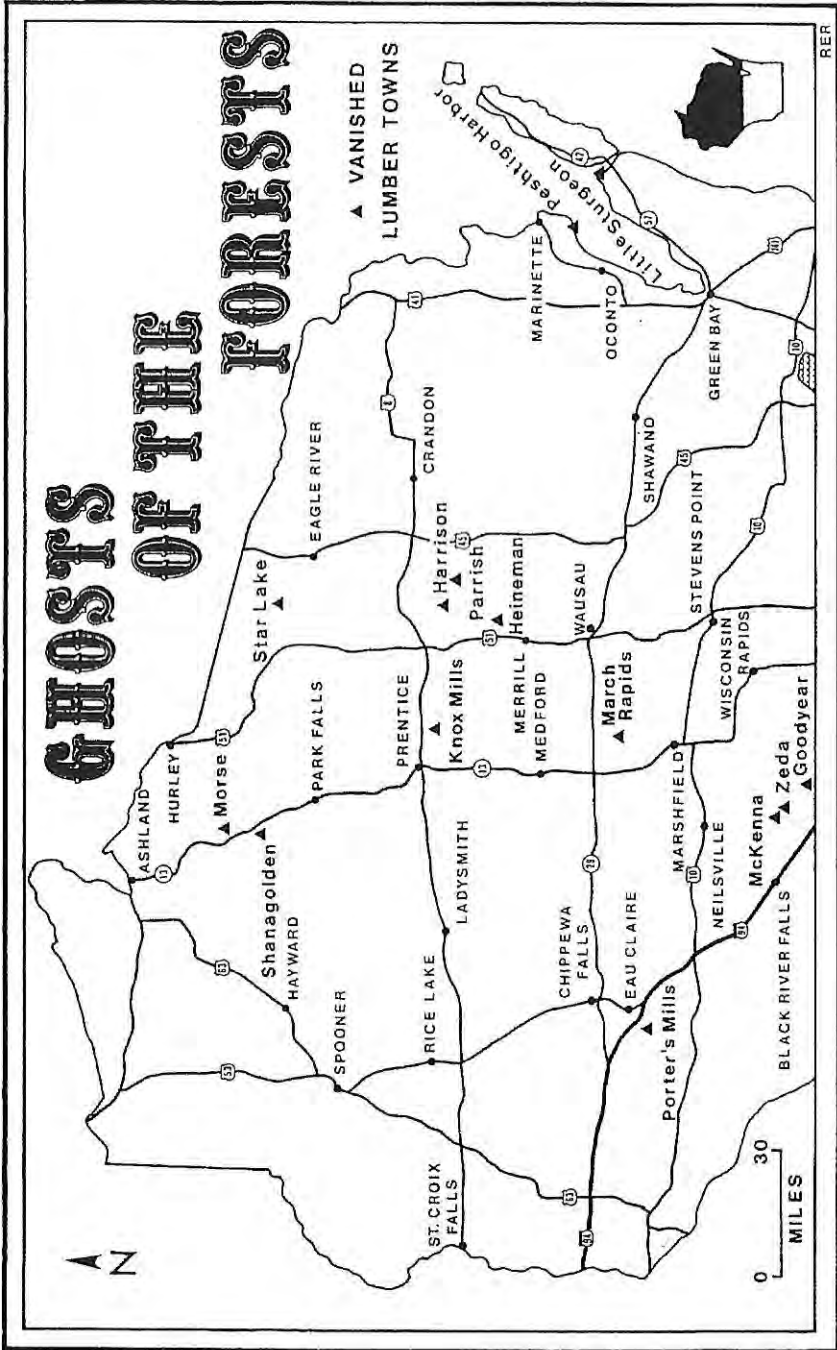
Dr. Randall Rohe, Professor of Geography at the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha has over thirty publications about lumbering in Wisconsin or the Lake States. All of the towns have been personally visited by the author; their histories carefully researched. *Ghosts of the Forests* blends history and old photographs with a discussion of the present condition of each town. Written in nontechnical language, this study of a fascinating element of Wisconsin's past will interest both scholars and general readers. *Ghosts of the Forests* is the definitive book about the lumbering ghost towns in Wisconsin.

Ghosts of the Forest is 344 pages with index and includes over 200 photographs and over dozen maps, many of them never before published. The book is published on a high quality, glossy, acid-free paper.

*Ghosts of the
Forest*
ORDER FORM
Can be found on
page 15

Map of Porter's Mills
in 1897 (based on
Sanborn Insurance
Company map).
*Ghosts of the Forest:
Vanished Lumber
Towns of Wisconsin,*
volume I, p. 42.





Map of Ghosts of the Forest: Vanished Lumber Towns of Wisconsin, volume I, p. 3.

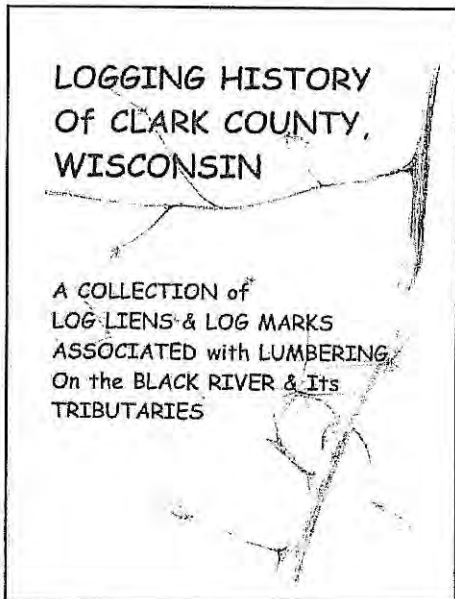


Forest History Books of Note

👉 **Local author donates a copy of her new book, *LOGGING HISTORY OF CLARK COUNTY WISCONSIN*, to the FHAW archives**

Kay Scholtz recently donated a copy of her newly self-published book to the Forest History Association of Wisconsin's archives. The book, *Logging History of Clark County, Wisconsin: A Collection of Log Liens & Marks Associated with Lumbering on the Black River and its Tributaries*, first caught the attention of long-time FHAW member, Paul Brenner. Paul, who has been indexing Wisconsin's log mark for many years, remarked "it is by far the best record of log marks that I have ever gotten from anyone."

Scholtz organized her book into several sections, including: Log Liens, Log Lien Documents (images of actual court documents), Collections from the Press, Log Marks, and Log Lien Index (a genealogical aid). In introducing her section on log liens, Scholtz writes:



The following pages contain information extracted from log lien documents kept at the Clark County, WI, Courthouse. They shed a unique light into Clark County logging history, mainly that of the Black River and its tributaries. Liens were filed with the county when those involved in the harvesting of logs were neglected payment for their services. Many occupations were immersed in the harvest and most of them involved, as stated on the liens, "the cutting, hauling, and falling of timber." Liens were also filed for failure to pay those involved in cooking for the logging camps, driving the logs downstream, and supplying the camps with food for men and oxen or horses. Although these liens only reflect a small percentage of logging activities, they do give a

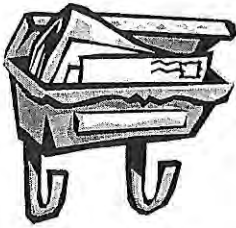
glimpse into many interesting aspects of the industry.

The section entitled "Collections From the Press," includes a sampling of lumber-industry related newspaper articles Scholtz found in local newspapers from 1861 to 1906. Scholtz points out that the sampling of articles she includes compliments her sections on log liens. Together the two provide a vivid picture of logging in Clark County. The newspaper articles certainly provide color and interesting information on the era, one such article included in Scholtz's compilation is reprinted below:

ICE ROADS *Neillsville Republican & Press, December 27, 1878*

One after another the lumbermen are solving the difficulties that have beset them of late years. Raving won in the experiment of driving logs by means of flooding-dams when the regular rises have failed, they went to work at the beginning of the present dry season to find a substitute for the snow, which can no longer be relied upon, and already they have been more than successful. The ice roads which are now coming into general use are pronounced by all who have tried them to be superior to the best snow roads. The fact indeed needs no demonstration, as it is apparent to anybody, the only puzzle being, "How do they get the ice roads?" This object is easily accomplished by the use of huge water sprinklers on runners, which are filled at the most convenient stream, generally at the landing, and the contents sprinkled upon the logging road much as streets are sprinkled, only that the water is confined principally to the track which the round bottomed runners are to follow. By actual experiment a mile of this road has been made in a day with a single team, upon which the same team would haul over two thousand feet of logs. Capt. Tom LaFlesh may be set down as the father of the sprinkling movement, which is already becoming universal and which will be kept up, snow or no snow, as it is as economical as it is simple.

Logging History of Clark County is an excellent compilation of court documents and newspaper articles. It is a great resource to anyone interested in the history of Clark County. The book is well put together and represents an enormous amount of research and care. A copy of the publication will soon be available at the FHAW archives located in the Area Research Center at the University of Stevens Point. Members wishing to purchase their own copy can do so by contacting the author: **Kay Scholtz, W755 Todd Road, Granton, WI 54436**. The book sells for \$15.00 plus \$2.50 shipping and handling.

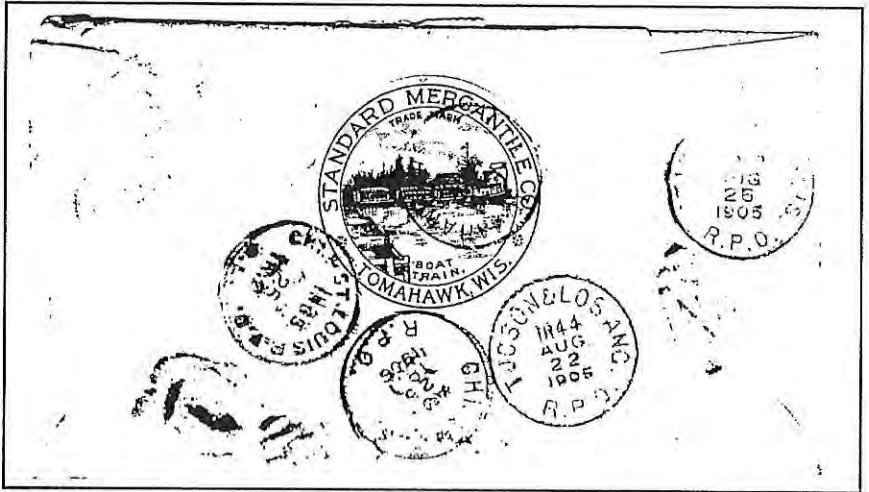


Member Correspondence

FHAW member in search of the "Boat Train"

Thomas Becher is looking for any information on the "Boat Train" associated with the Standard Mercantile Company of Tomahawk, Wisconsin. Please forward any information to:

**Thomas Becher
P.O. Box 205
Stratford, WI 54484**



A Vivid Memory of Butternut Lake Logging By Frank Hitz, FHAW Member

I watched some of the last logging in the Three Lakes area, including that of some virgin timber at Butternut Lake about 1939, when they logged some of the largest (5 to 6 foot diameter) trees that were left at the shoreline, from the 1890's logging boom. I used to go down a trail from the Timber Top Cottages, to the edge of the cutting and remember watching, and then hearing "Timber-r-r-r" and then the crashing and crunching of the limbs, as the lumberjacks fell the trees. It was especially impressive to a nine year old. The

area was the northwest shoreline of Butternut Lake and the end of the tracks of a narrow gauge railroad. I watched the bustling activities when the steam engines arrived and as the trains were loaded with the logs. At night you could hear the whistles - off in the distance, as the trains left, an almost sad - lonesome sound, that one never forgets. Today it still calls one to come and see the romance of those times, the fascinating Wisconsin logging days, which some of us were fortunate enough to experience and retain some feeling of that heritage.

That was over 60 years ago, then just a couple years ago I learned that the railroad was the Thunder Lake Lumber Company Narrow Gauge out of Rhinelander and that they had logged timber up there between 1938 and 1940. This was fascinating news to me, as my father Bruno Hitz worked for the Thunder Lake Lumber Company in Rhinelander at one time and I think my grandfather Frank Wenzel was a Head Sawyer with them as well.

Although today I live in the mountains of Colorado, I still have a strong interest and love of the Northwoods of Wisconsin and am still researching and would like to ask if anyone else remembers anything or has any information about this logging and the cutting of those special beautiful large trees on the shores of Butternut Lake.

I would like to thank [the FHAW] and it's stated goals... Some of my specific interests include, such items as the CCC'S history in the Three Lakes - Eagle River area, history directly related to Sevenmile and Butternut Lakes, the Sawmills of the North Eastern quarter of Wisconsin and companies such as the Underwood Lumber Company of Three Lakes - Eagle River.

Any suggestions on materials or research in the above areas would be appreciated, and I would be glad to share and provide material from my experiences and research. Please forward any E-mails of the association or members, who would be willing to correspond?

-Frank Hitz

Frank can be reached at:

Frank Hitz
PO Box 2056
Estes Park, CO 80527
E-Mail: f.hitz@att.net

*Ghost of the Forest:
Vanished Lumber Towns of Wisconsin*

-ORDER FORM-

The hardcover book, with dust jacket, is available for \$42.50 plus postage and handling. For books shipped to libraries via Wisconsin Libraries' Delivery Network there is no postage charge but a handling fee of \$1.50 per book.

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NAME _____

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Forest History Association of Wisconsin, Inc.

- Membership Application -

Please enroll me as a member and participant in the Association's program of developing the educational and historical aspects of Wisconsin's forestry and logging industry. Attached is payment for:

- _____ Student Membership (\$5.00)
- _____ Individual Membership (\$15.00)
- _____ Family Membership (\$25.00)
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- _____ Corporate Membership (\$50.00)
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Detach and mail this application with payment to:

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Mike Sohasky
Auction

Unfilled
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Randall Rohe
Distinguished Service Awards

Forest History Association of Wisconsin Members are encouraged to submit items of interest for this newsletter to the editor:

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