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A Chronology of "Firsts" in Wisconsin Forest History



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FOREWORD

This compilation of "firsts" in Wisconsin forest history is itself a "first"; to the best of the author's knowledge, no similar collection of facts has been attempted before, nor does a similar publication exist.

In essence, this chronology comprises a condensed record of the changes that have occurred in Wisconsin's forest products industry from the time when broadaxes and muley saws produced lumber for the earliest homesteads to the present day complex timber harvesting machines and manufacturing plants that produce a multitude of wood-derived products. Additionally, it provides a capsulized summary of major achievements in the fields of forestry, conservation and land use.

Few, if any, of the events chronicled here were of world-wide significance. Indeed, only a small number were even of national importance. Nevertheless, to the people of Wisconsin and of the communities involved, most of these happenings were of more than passing interest at the time. To varying degrees, they often affected their social and economic lives, as well as the very environment in which they lived.

The author makes no claim that this record is entirely complete, nor even completely accurate in every detail. Although documentation has been attempted whenever possible, there may be some errors of fact because it was not always possible to check on the reliability of all sources of information. Accordingly, corrections as well as additions are solicited from readers who may be better informed, so that future editions of this publication may become a more reliable reference work.

The Forest History Association of Wisconsin and the author are grateful to all that made this compilation possible with their contributions of many "firsts". Special acknowledgement is due the following for their financial support of the initial printing: The late L.G. Sorden, professor emeritus of the College of Agriculture, U.W.-Madison, who first promoted the idea for this pamphlet, and Jay H. Cravens, former regional forester, U.S. Forest Service. This revised edition was made possible by a grant from the Mosinee Paper Corporation and by Wausau Paper Mills Company for its donation of the paper stock that helped to reduce printing costs.

Frank N. Fixmer
Secretary
Forest History Assoc. of Wis.

July, 1996

A Chronology of "Firsts" in Wisconsin Forest History

- 1809 - First sawmill in Wisconsin was built by Jacob Franks, on the Fox River near present-day DePere. (13)
- 1819 - First sawmill west of Green Bay, built by Colonel Daniel Shaw on the Black River near Black River Falls. (13)
- 1822 - First timber cutting permit in Wisconsin was issued in the Chippewa River Valley, by U.S. Indian Agent James H. Lockwood.
- 1828 - First marketing of wild cranberries, by Daniel Whitney, via boat from the mouth of the Yellow River near Necedah to Galena, Illinois. (22)
- 1831 - First sawmill on the Menominee River, built by William Farnsworth and Charles R. Brush. (18)
 - First sawmill on the Red Cedar River, built by Lockwood and Rolette at Menomonie. (21)
 - First sawmill on the Wisconsin River, built by Daniel Whitney at Point Basse (now Nekoosa). (6)
- 1837 - First known permission given by Indians to white men to cut timber and build sawmills in the St. Croix River Valley. (9)
 - First sawmill on the Chippewa River, built by Jean Brunet and H. L. Dousman near Chippewa Falls.
- 1839 - First lumber sawed in the St. Croix River Valley, by the Marine Lumber Company, on the Minnesota side of the St. Croix River. (9)
- 1840 - First fleet of lumber rafts went down the Wisconsin River from the Francis Biron sawmill at Biron. (27)
 - First general use made of the mechanically-operated muley saw. (12)
- 1841 - First law enacted regulating construction of dams on navigable rivers for log-driving purposes. (23)
- 1842 - First rafting of logs, done by Mormons on the Black River, to their settlement at Nauvoo, Illinois, on the Mississippi River. (12)
- 1844 - First sawmill built on the Wolf River, near Shawano, by Samuel Farnsworth and B.F. Moore who then shipped the first raft of lumber down the Wolf to Oshkosh. (38)
- 1848 - First paper mill, built at Milwaukee by Ludington and Garland, to make newsprint from rag stock. (15)
 - First towing of log rafts by steam towboats, on the St. Croix River. (12)
- 1850 - First railroad built in Wisconsin, the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad, later becoming the base line for branches that depended on timber resources for a major portion of their freight revenues. (26)
 - First cultivation of wild cranberries, by the Carey Brothers, near Berlin, with the ditching, diking and fencing of a one-acre tract. (22)
- 1852 - First sawmill near LaCrosse, built at the confluence of the Black, LaCrosse and Mississippi Rivers. (12)
- 1854 - First mechanical sawmill built and operated at the "Head of Lake Superior", by George R. Stuntz and three partners, at Iron River, Wisconsin. (39)
- 1858 - First modern gang saws put into operation, at the sawmill of Dole, Ingram & Kennedy near Eau Claire. (30)
 - First log drive on the Upper Wisconsin River, made from Eagle River to Little Bull Falls (now Mosinee). (14)
- 1860 - First lumber-carrying railway came into being with the extension of the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad from Oshkosh to Green Bay. (12)
- 1866 - First native forest animal to become extinct in Wisconsin was the elk. (No documentation exists as to the exact year.)

- 1867 - First forestry commission authorized by the state legislature, to study forest destruction in the state. (34)
- 1871 - First official state log rule, the Scribner Scale, adopted by the legislature. (34)
- 1872 - First groundwood pulp mill, built by Colonel Frambach at Kaukauna. (15)
- 1873 - First segment of the Wisconsin Valley Railroad completed, from Tomah to Grand Rapids (now Wisconsin Rapids), marking the beginning of rail transportation of forest products in the Wisconsin River Valley. (26)
- 1876 - First reforestation project, completed by Walter Ware near Hancock, by the transplanting of wild stock with oxen-drawn wagons. (32)
- 1878 - First state park lands established, comprising 50,000 acres in Iron and Vilas counties. (8)
- 1881 - First steam-powered logging railroad, the Crescent Springs Railroad owned by the Shell Lake Lumber Company, began operations near Shell Lake in Washburn County. (7)
- First strike of sawmill workers occurred at the Eau Claire Lumber Company in Eau Claire and became known as the "Sawdust War" in the national news media. (10)
- 1883 - First veneer plant, established by the Frost Veneer Company near Antigo. (33d)
- 1884 - First plywood plant, established by the F. Eggers Company in Two Rivers. (33d)
- First wood pulp mill, on the Wisconsin, built by the Pioneer Pulp Company at Centralia (now Wisconsin Rapids). (27)
- 1887 - First integrated pulp and paper mill began operations as a result of the conversion of a sawmill by the Centralia Pulp & Water Power Company near Wisconsin Rapids. (27)
- 1892 - First official state observance of "Arbor Day", following the adoption of the custom that had been established in Nebraska twenty years earlier. (31)
- 1895 - First formal forest protection organizations authorized by the legislature. (34)
- 1898 - First man from Wisconsin won the men's world logrolling championship -Tom Fleming of Eau Claire. (16)
- 1900 - First competitions held in Wisconsin for the men's world logrolling championships, at Ashland. (16)
- First land acquisitions completed for the eventual establishment of the St. Croix Interstate Park at the Dalles of the St. Croix River. (6)
- 1903 - First comprehensive forestry law passed, creating a Forestry Commission, providing for the employment of a superintendent of forests and the establishment of a forest reserve. (3)
- First resident instruction in forestry offered at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. (3)
- 1904 - First State Forester, Edward M. Griffith, appointed. (3)
- 1905 - First State Board of Forestry created, composed of the president of the University, dean of the College of Agriculture, director of the Geological Survey, Attorney General and one citizen appointed by the Governor. (3)
- 1906 - First professional forester, F. B. Moody, appointed as a result of the first civil service examination instituted by the Board of Forestry. (3)
- 1907 - First State Park Board established. (8)
- 1910 - First wood products research institution in the nation established by the U.S. Forest Service in Madison.
- First forestry amendment to the state constitution passed, permitting the state to engage directly in forestry as a work of internal improvement. (34)
- 1911 - First completely integrated kraft (sulphate) pulp and paper mill on the North American continent, built by the Wausau Sulphate Fibre Company (now Mosinee Paper Corporation) at Mosinee. (15)
- First state-operated tree nursery established at Trout Lake north of Woodruff. (3)
 - First headquarters of the State Forester established at Trout Lake. (3)
 - First state forest rangers appointed as a result of a civil service examination. (3)
- 1913 - First forest plantation planted by the state, near Star Lake (Vilas County), with the first seedlings grown at the first state tree nursery.
- 1915 - First aerial forest patrol flight, made by Jack Vilas from the Trout Lake state forest headquarters, marking the first time anywhere that an aircraft was used for detecting and locating forest fires. (6)
- 1922 - The first state extension forester was Fred G. Wilson, hired by the University of Wisconsin - Madison. (40)
- NOTE: Differs from statement made in report cited as Reference No. 3.
- 1922? - First aerial application of an insecticide made to demonstrate that a destructive forest insect could be controlled — the hemlock looper infestation in Peninsula State Park, Door County. (33b)
- 1924 - First forestry consulting firm, Banzhaf & Watson, organized in Milwaukee. (5)
- First selective logging undertaken, by the Holt Lumber Company of Oconto, under the supervision of Banzhaf & Watson, on 80 acres near Archibald Lake in Oconto County. (5)
- 1925 - First state forest established (Northern Highland State Forest, Vilas County), following the adoption in 1924 of a second forestry amendment to the state constitution.
- First reforestation program by a public utility, initiated by the Wisconsin Power & Light Co. in cooperation with George Crandall, in the Wisconsin Dells area. (33d)
 - First industrial forester, F. G. Kilp, hired by the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company, who then began the first industrial forestry program in the Lake States with the establishment of his company's tree nursery. (11)
 - First authorization given by the state to the federal government to purchase land within the state for national forest purposes. (3)
- 1926 - First joint agreement made between the University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Conservation Department to initiate a program of better forestry and land use among private forest landowners. (33g)
- First farm forestry extension program begun, with F. G. Wilson as the first extension forester. (3)
- 1927 - First forest land tax relief legislation enacted with the passage of the Forest Crop Law. (34)
- First enabling legislation passed permitting school districts and municipalities to own land for, and engage in, forestry programs. (28)
 - First meeting of the new Wisconsin Conservation Commission held, with William Mauthe of Fond du Lac as its first chairman.
- 1928 - First county forest established by Langlade County, under the County Forest Reserve Law of 1927.
- First entry of industry-owned forest land under the Forest Crop Law made by the Goodman Lumber Company of Goodman.
 - First publication of educational and research material published by the Wisconsin Conservation Department was F. G. Wilson's "Forest Trees of Wisconsin".
 - First state forestry conference, held in Milwaukee, brought

- together all forestry interests to review past accomplishments and to develop policies for the ensuing 25 years. (33c)
- First tract of land acquired by the U.S. Forest Service to form the beginning of the Nicolet National Forest - 12,940 acres near Three Lakes, purchased from the Thunder Lake Lumber Company of Rhinelander. (6)
 - First school forests established by the Laona and Crandon school districts as a result of enabling legislation enacted in 1927. (3)
 - First land use report, "Making the Most of Marinette County Lands", published as a result of wide-spread farm abandonment and tax delinquency. (3)
- 1929 - First tax law passed to provide revenue for the improvement and management of state-owned forest land - a mill tax on all real estate. (34)
- First women's world logrolling championship competition held at Washburn, and won by Agnes Hare Dixon of Ashland. (16)
- 1930 - First county forest land entered under the Forest Crop Law, with the entry of 14,003 acres by Marinette County. (36)
- First cooperative fire control agreement between an industrial forest landowner and the Wisconsin Conservation Department entered into by the Nekoosa Edwards Paper Company. (11)
- 1931 - First federal forest ranger was employed by the U.S. Forest Service in Moquah district of area that became part of Chequamegon National Forest.
- The first federal forest rangers employed by the U.S. Forest Service were Donald R. Bolt on the Moquah District of the Chequamegon National Forest and Ray Iverson on the Argonne District of the Nicolet National Forest.
- 1932 - First museum built as a replica of a logging camp for the exhibition of relics of pioneer logging days, constructed at Rhinelander. (24)
- The first federal ranger station on the later named Nicolet National Forest was built on Highway 32 near Virgin Lake, 6 miles southeast of Three Lakes, Wisconsin. (41)
- 1933 - The first two federal Civilian Conservation Corps camps in Wisconsin were constructed on the Nicolet National Forest near Eagle River and on the Chequamegon National Forest near Washburn on May 5th and 6th. (19)
- The first forest supervisor's office for the Nicolet National Forest was established in rented space above DeByle's clothing store in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. (41)
 - The first watershed demonstration for soil erosion and flood control project in the United States was begun in the Coon Creek Valley, southeast of LaCrosse. (42)
 - First rural zoning ordinance in the nation adopted by Oneida County, subsequently becoming a model for other counties in Wisconsin and throughout the United States. (6)
- 1942 - First "farm forester" assignment made by Wisconsin Conservation Department to increase timber production on farm wood lots. (40)
- 1944 - First conservation education program begun by Trees-for-Tomorrow, Inc., with the financial support of nine paper companies and the cooperation of the U.S. Forest Service in making available its training school facilities at Eagle River. (29)
- First mechanical tree-planting machines used for large scale reforestation by state, county and industrial foresters as a result of development by the University of Wisconsin's Department of Agricultural Engineering and the state extension forester, F. B. Trenk. (33g)
- 1946 - First two farm forestry districts organized and staffed, in Manitowoc and Sheboygan counties. (40)
- 1947 - First forest tract owned and managed by a group of newspaper publishers and editors, established as the Wisconsin Press Association Forest near Eagle River; also the first and only such demonstration forest nationally. (29)
- 1948 - First purchases made of tree-planting machines by members of the Wisconsin Bankers Association for use by private land owners, in cooperation with county forestry departments and Trees-for-Tomorrow. (33f)
- 1950 - First official Logging Congress sponsored by the Timber Producers Association of Michigan-Wisconsin held in Wausau.
- First state-wide forest inventory begun as a cooperative effort between state, federal, county and industrial forestry organizations. (33h)
 - First forest entomologist, Norbert Underwood, employed by the Wisconsin Conservation Department.
- 1951 - First aerial forest insect control project by a private forest landowner conducted by the Mosinee Paper Mills Company, in Douglas County, to combat a major infestation of the jack pine tussock moth. (11)
- First historical marker erected by the State Historical Society, in commemoration of the most disastrous forest fire in history: the Peshtigo Fire of 1871. (6)
- 1954 - First woodland tax law enacted which provided incentives for forest landowners with less than 40 acres. (43)
- 1955 - First tree farmer registered in Wisconsin under the national tree farm program sponsored by American Forest Products Industries, Inc.: Bruce Buell, near Green Bay. (2)
- 1959 - The first scaling and purchasing of pulpwood by weight, rather than volume, was instituted by Kimberly Clark Corporation at its Niagara, Wisconsin pulp mill, initially for aspen and three years later for balsam fir.
- 1970 - First satellite debarking plant, for the production of peeled aspen pulpwood, built by the J. C. Campbell Company of Duluth, Minnesota, at Mercer. (1)
- 1972 - First satellite roundwood chipping plant, for the production of debarked aspen chips for pulping purposes, built by Lake States Enterprises of Bemidji, Minnesota, at Ashland. (1)
- 1976 - First association for the preservation of Wisconsin's forest history organized, with Thomas A. Fulk, supervisor of the Nicolet National Forest as its first president.
- The first female field forester employed by Wisconsin D.N.R., identity not on record.
- 1977 - First school forest certified as a tree farm by the American Forest Institute under revised rules of eligibility: Wausau School Forest of 800 acres. (2)
- 1979 - First association of private non-industrial woodland owners organized, with Ernest Brickner of Whitehall as its first president.
- First waferboard plant, constructed by Louisiana-Pacific Corporation at Hayward. (25)
 - First modern public school, Park Falls High School, equipped with a wood-fired heating plant in conjunction with a conventional gas-fired unit, began operations utilizing wood wastes, sawdust, bark and chips for fuel. (37)
- 1980 - First utility to generate electricity by burning chips, sawdust and bark, the Lake Superior District Power Company at Ashland, began producing 20 million kilowatts annually. (19)
- First seeding of hardwoods by helicopter in the United States, done by the Department of Natural Resources on the Flambeau River State Forest near Winter. (20)
- 1992 - First Wisconsin fire lookout tower to become listed in the National Historic Lookout Register, located near Mountain, Wisconsin on the Nicolet National Forest.