This is an interview between Elwood Maunder of the Forest Products History Foundation and Mr. George Frederick Eitel of Saint Paul, Minnesota. Mr. Eitel was born on March 21, 1880 in Middle Frankin in Bavaria, Germany, about 25 miles Southwest of Nuerenberg. He came to this country with his parents and 1 brother in the year 1885. They settled in Medford, Taylor County, Wisconsin. Two years later the family took up homesteading in Phillips in Price County in Wisconsin. His father, George Eitel, and two other men, August Schoof and Adolf Jergens, blazed the first trail into the woods East of Phillips, Wisconsin in June of 1887.

Now, Mr. Eitel, I'd like you to tell us exactly how you got into the lumber industry.

Mr. Eitel: "Well, around this old homestead there were lumbering camps anywhere from 4 miles in distance and I grew up here and when I was 16 years old I took to the lumbering camps to make a living. Of course, there was nothing else there for a man to do. Lumbering was the only industry. It was only that you had to get a little cash money that was needed for these homesteaders. Sometimes these homesteaders cleared ground and tried to cultivate among the stumps and stones that looked like purgatory itself. So there was really nothing for them to do when winter came, but to head for the woods to make a living. My brother was four years older then I and so we both headed for the logging woods and earned a little money and pulled it out over the summer."

Mr. Maunder: "How did your family happen to come to this particular section of Wisconsin? You say that the ground was poor and stoney."

Mr. Eitel: "The ground was good except for the stones. There is quite a story behind this. It would take too long to tell now. You see, father had served in the army in Germany, which was compulsory at that time. When he got

out of the army services he was under what they called reserves. He was only 32 years old then. He was one that like to travel and did a lot of traveling in Germany as far as his finances would allow him.. He was just a laboring man and didn't earnmuch money. When he got out of the army he was married and managed to get enough money together to take his family to the United States of America. We came to a little town just 10 miles from Neishtah, knownas New City. There was a steamboat agent there with whom he got in tough with and this man likewise represented the immigration system in Northern Wisconsin. Father got no financial assistance. The family brought with them only their clothing and their bed clothessuch as their feather beds.

"I left school to go to the woods. There was no rule as to whether you went to school or not. Father sent us to school because he wanted us to at least be able to read and write. There was a girl with a high school diploma who did the teaching. She was paid $20.00 a month which was the average teacher's salary at that time. There was no school house. Our neighbor, August Schoof, built a log house which consisted of four rooms downstairs and two rooms in the attic. One of these rooms was used as a school room. There were three wooden benches and these benches were from six to eight feet long. The school teacher lived right in this same house. This didn't work out at all because Mrs. Schoof, being a very envious women, would stand at the door and listen while the teacher was conducting class, and if anything went wrong as far as her children were concerned, she would get into an argument with the teacher. So two years later money was appropriated and a school was built. The school district depended pretty much on the Schoof family.

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"I started my work in the woods at the age of sixteen. I was in the woods from 1896 to 1906. When a young fellow started in the woods they usually put him at some light job such as sleigh hauling and road cleaning. The person who did the road cleaning was known as the "road monkey". The "road monkey" would sweep the ruts and repair them. The horses wore sharp shoes and these would cut into the ice, thus causing chips of ice to fly into the ruts. Also, horse droppings would fall into the ruts and it was the "road monkey's" job to sweep these ruts clean.

"Another job was known as the "swamper". the "swamper" would cut a pathway into the woods for the horses to walk and haul logs out to the road.

"In preparing an ice road a water tank was placed on the sled. This tank was pulled by horses. The water was allowed to run into the ruts. Inside of about 3 days they had a good solid ice road. The sleds were built from 7 to 8 feet in length. One of these empty sleds weighed 2 tons or better. The horses walked in the center of the road between ruts. The ruts were only for the sled.

"In 1889 a large load of logs was loaded to be hauled 18 miles and pulled by 4 horses. This took them about three days as they had to stop and rebuild the load. People often wonder how such a large load of logs can be hauled by only 4 horses. You see, when the ruts are rewatered and are still wet there is less friction. Half of the time the tucks are slack on these horses. The weight of dry pine timber is about 4 pounds to the square foot. This differs as to how much pitch there is in the timber. If there is a lot of pitch in the lumber it weighs more.

"In our time in the woods we harvested mostly virgin timber. That was the very best in pine timber (1898-99). We took everything that was woods. When you come through these parts now there is nothing but brushes. This will eventually grow into forests again. It was more than 50 years ago when we cut those trees. Several years ago I was out by the old homestead and this brush was so thick that a hog wouldn't be able to get through. There are some trees that are from 40 to 50 feet tall and from 3 to 5 feet in diameter. This crouds out the small brush underneath. It will be a long time before it gets back to what it was originally. At one time we came across a birch tree that had been lying on the ground of the forest for at least 100 years and still was preserved. We told the age of the tree by the number of rings in the wood. Moss had accumulated and this had preserved the tree. "

Life of a lumberjack:

"The lumberjack is a fellow that likes to drink. About 90% of them were heavy drinkers. They would lay around town and when the company was ready they would head for the lumbering camps. Pinery and shanty boys were the terms which precede lumberjack, The term lumberjack wasn't actually used until the middle or late '90's. To give you an idea what a real lumberjack is, was nothing but a trycot made out of timber about 3 feet high with braces around the bottom to steady it. Down through the center there was a hole in it through which a pipe was placed. Holes were drilled into this and pins placed in these holes so it could be adjusted to the height that the man wanted. The lumber was brought on 2 wheel trucks. It then had to be piled onto the tram-way which was approximately 6 to 10 feet above the ground. The lumber pilers out there worked in twos. One would put the lumber on the lumberjack

or trycot and press down on the end and swing it over to the other man who would take it. The man who was handing the lumber was known as the lumberjacket. His trycot was the lumberjack. These men would change off after truck loads and take terns with lumberjacking and piling. These men would go into the woods when the mill was shut down. These men were known as lumberjacks and that is where the term comes from.

"The homesteaders were mainly the men in the woods, but there were men from all professions, all nationalities except Chinese and Japenese. I at one time worked with a man who was a senator from the state of Indiana. I can't remember his name. We became very good friends. He was well educated, and I questioned him as to how a man with his education was out at the lumber camps. He replyed that he was a heavy drinker. He was a good man and/one at time had been a good attorney and then was elected into the senate. Due to the fact that he was a heavy drinker and was often caught sleeping at his desk, after one year was expelled. He was unable to get a job anywhere else so he came to the lumbering camps. After about one month he left because he could not take the hard work to which he was unaccustomed. He said that he was going to go to some small town where he needed no references and try to get a job as a bookkeeper.

"There was no liquor in the woods. At Christmas time they would go into town and get about one to 2 quarts per man. But outside of that there was no drinking in the woods. When springtime came and they left the woods they all got drunk and some were sometimes stiff for two months.

(End of tape.)

These must have been incorporated into the main FHS photo collection.

Information on pictures
Interview with George Eitel

Interior of logging camp, foreman's shanty, 1890.
On right might be the foreman, with mustache. The other gentlemen are probably just in there talking. It was common to have pictures on the wall. The lumberjacks were allowed to put these pictures on the wall. You will notice an hour glass which points out that this is about 1890.

Logging camp, made out of logs. No windows except in roof - called skylight. Occassionally a window above the sink. There was always a foul smell in these camps as no fresh air could get in. It was usually heavy with smoke.

Stand of pine timber, might have been good hemlock. This is beautiful timber. Would make about 1,000 feet of timber. It was common for these men to have dogs with them. A dog was usually a pet for the whole crew. Sometimes they would have cats.

Floating can. Might be a Wannagon, a place where the lumberjacks got their clothes, first aid, etc. Here the foreman also did his bookkeeping.

Log jam. Most of these men would help in the woods with hauling the logs to the river and as soon as the ice would break these same men would do the log driving. This would take anywhere from 20 to 90 days, depending how far this was to go downstream. Until 1890, then this was done mostly my railroad.

Big raft of logs. Here the logs were driven down the Mississippi River to Saint Louis. About 1869.

Another raft. This one is not complete. Boat on one side and logs on other.

Sleeping shanty. Bunks built right into wall with hay or straw. The hay or straw was changed usually once in the fall when a new crew of men came.

Old time dam. Open doors for logs to go through.

Exseptional large load of logs usually selected fine logs.

Sawmill up against railway with stream in background and tramway in front.

Old typical scene of oxen. 4 yokes of oxen. Logs on tramway.

Pictures 1 & 2

This represents an old pine tree. They are falling the timber in this picture. They will try to cut parts of this without knots. Then, when they get to the knots they will cut the timber shorter. This is about in the early 90's in Clearwater, Wisconsin. The logs in those days were always cut before the oxen hauled them away. Then either by river or rollaway. This saw is about from 30 to 50 feet up the tree. The man in the checked shirt is wearing what was known as a stocking cap. These caps were about 3 feet long. The man with the axe on his shoulder may be either the foreman or the swamper.

Picture 3

This is a picture of a travoy. This term comes from the Indians who used a travoy to carry goods on when they moved. The regular travoy had 2 runners about 8 feet in length, straight beams across which were fastened onto the rutters. The men are going to cut this tree down. The man on the left with mustache and axe is the swamper. The man by the oxen is known as the teamster. The man on the right is known as the chainer. He goes with the team when they get the timber. He helps load the logs on the road devil and also helps unload. The log in the foreground will be loaded on sleighs and hauled away. These oxen will do most of the hauling. The average ox weighs about 2600 pounds. The spread in the tips of the horns is anywhere from three to four feet. The man with the cant hook is the chainer. He travels with the team and helps load and unload.

Picture 4

This is a landing where they brought logs and from there they were taken to mill in the spring. The peavey was used by the logger who was driving the logs in the stream. It has a sharp point on it, similar to a cant hook. The cant hook was used mostly by loggers in the woods to load and move logs around. This looks more like small scale logging.

Picture 5

Old time system (1800's) Looks like they had some long tough hauling to do. Probably had hills to go over. That is why there are a number of oxen.

Picture 6

Abe Johnson - Clearwater, Wisconsin. About 50,000 feet of lumber on that load. The ice road is the only reason why they can haul such a large load. The driver does not ride with the load. The sky hooker sees to it that the load is in balance or else the load will collapse. This load is evidently heading for a river, railroad, or a sawmill directly.

Picture 7

This load is coming down hill. You will notice black spots on the rutters. This is hay to keep the load from going too fast down the hill. If there is another load ahead to them they would crash right into it because there is no way of stopping it. The hay is used to slow it down.

Picture 8

This is a picture of a water tank which is used in making an ice road. These tanks are loaded with water from a river or creek or a swamp if it was deep enough. It takes approximately one hour to load one of these tanks. Two men did the loading. The water was allowed to run into the tracks and in about three days they had a good solid road.

Picture 9

Old homesteaders idea of hauling logs. This is probably his own team of oxen.

Picture 10

Hauling logs to river to unload there. Fairly common scene in those days.

Picture 11

Going to mill. Picture of Lanford locomotive, manufactured in Lima, Ohio. Three cylinders, tumbling shaft. About 15 to 16 miles per hour.

Picture 12

Old time logging dam.

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