

# SUNSET ALONG SUSQUEHANNA WATERS

WILLIAMSPORT

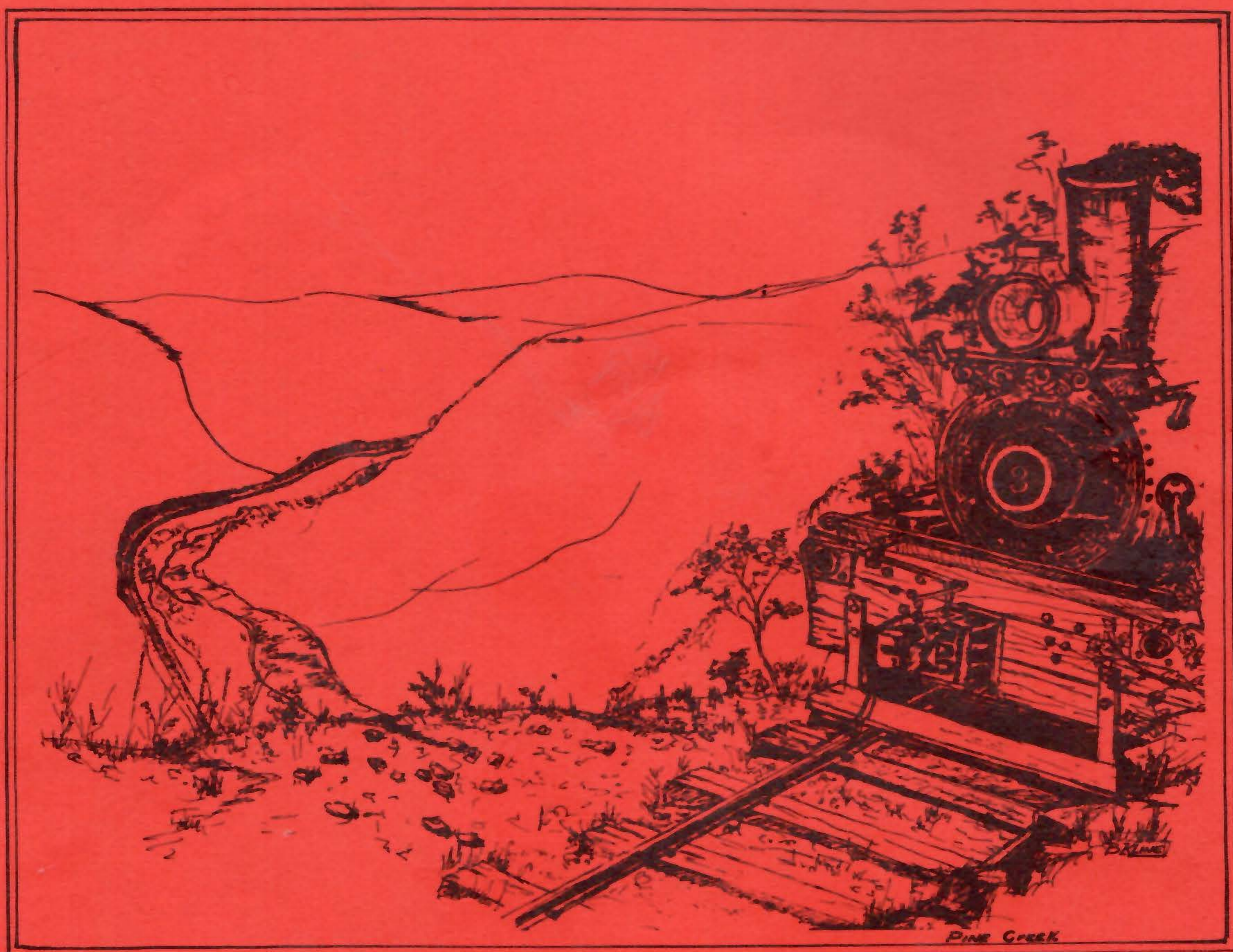
LEETONIA

SLATE RUN

CAMMAL

GLEN UNION

GLEASONTON



Thomas T. Taber, III

Book No. 4 in the series  
Logging Railroad Era  
of Lumbering in Pennsylvania



## A WORD OF NOTE

The railroad logging era of the lumber industry in Pennsylvania has been largely ignored by historians. Accordingly, this book represents one of a planned series of thirteen to comprehensively portray this history.

The history of lumbering in Pennsylvania can be divided into four eras. The first existed in pioneer times and was represented largely by small water powered and family operated saw mills scattered throughout the State.

The second era and generally best recorded is the water transportation period. During this era the lumber mills depended upon streams to supply a means of transportation of the logs to the mills and lumber to the markets. From this dependence upon water transportation grew the City of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, which during the 1870's and the 1880's was recognized as the lumber capital of the United States, the only city to ever hold that title.

The third era was the railroad era. No longer was the lumberman dependent upon the river valley and the spring thaws for the movement of his timber, but rather, on steam power and railroads that penetrated everywhere and operated without regard to changes of season. The log railroad supplied the wood ingredients for more than 600 saw mills, tanneries, wood chemical companies, and stave mills beginning with the first known railroad operation in 1864 in Jefferson County and ending in 1948 in Elk County. The variety and size of these railroads was extensive; no other state ever approached the diversity in Pennsylvania.

The fourth and present era, as in the first period, is that of the small, family owned mill but now powered by an internal combustion engine or electric motor. The combined production of all such mills in Pennsylvania today is less than the largest single mill in the State during the height of the logging railroad era.

The story of the railroad era will be covered by this series of histories. These books will deal with geographical areas, the empires of lumbermen, and the manufacture of specific products stemming from the forests. They will be published over a five year period. Each book will represent more than a decade of research and will be written by one of three lumber railroad historians. While each book will be written and credited to a single author, in actuality they will represent the contributions of all three — Walter C. Casler, Benjamin F. G. Kline, Jr., and Thomas T. Taber, III.

These books are purposely being written, each in the same general format, so that when bound into a set, they will represent a comprehensive study of the logging railroad era of Pennsylvania lumbering. Anyone desiring a cloth bound set of all thirteen will be allowed to exchange individual copies for the complete bound volume at a nominal binding charge plus the cost of any individual books missing from the exchange.

Lastly, the authors urge anyone to write to one of them giving suggestions for corrections or to supply additional information or photographs to make this history more complete.

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## PREFACE

Sunset: The end of the day; the end of an era — the era of lumbering on the Susquehanna watershed. In particular, for this history, the last days of lumbering along the waters of Pine Creek and the Susquehanna River in Clinton County are recorded.

It is the period when Williamsport lumbermen are winding up their city operations. Their tracts are now cut or are being sold to others, or new mills are being built adjacent to their remaining timber. This is a time when mills located along these rivers, served by railroads, witnessed the spring drive of logs pass by on its way to Williamsport. This is indeed a period of change.

In this history I have recorded this change from the water era to the railroad era; from pine to hemlock to scraggily prop timber. The railroads removed the inaccessible hemlock and small timber suitable only for pulp and chemical wood and mine prop poles.

This study represents the culmination of a decade of seeking persons who worked or grew up with the different lumber jobs. An abundance of photographs, largely made possible by Pine Creek photographer Nelson A. Caulkins, relives this period. Mr. Caulkins had a studio at Slate Run during the height of the railroad era, 1904-1908, and from here he journeyed to Leetonia, Asaph, and Cammal. He took hundreds of photographs, not only portraits but also other objects — buildings, streets, towns, mills, camps, trains. Unlike most other photographers, he printed his pictures as post cards and sold thousands of them. A few remain today.

Many years later he lived at Waterville, where his collection of glass plates was stored. In the late 1950s a fire destroyed the home and plates. Shortly before his death in 1965 at the age of 91, I had the pleasure of meeting him. From a small packet of old cards, all that he had left, were six of Slate Run. None had I

previously run across. He gave them to me, and several are included in the Slate Run chapter. I left wondering how many other fine lumbering pictures, which he had taken, have yet to be uncovered.

Many persons assisted in supplying information to whom I am most grateful. Their names are included in the text. Of particular assistance were Leo J. Bailey for his memoirs on Leetonia, James L. Moore for his research on the Oregon and Texas Railroad, Charles Morton for his study on the North Bend and Kettle Creek Railroad, and James P. Bressler for his assistance on the water era.

Defebaugh's "History of the Lumber Industry in America" and the 1876 "History of Lycoming County" supplied the nucleus of information used in the first chapter on the water era. The maps and printed material collections of the Lycoming County Historical Society are the source of information on the Williamsport saw mills.

The newspapers of Wellsboro, Renovo, Jersey Shore, and Williamsport confirmed or established many dates and events, as did the recorded deeds in the court houses of Lycoming, Clinton, and Tioga Counties. Additional information came from the Annual Reports of the Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture and Internal Affairs and incorporation papers. Poor's Manual of Railroads, 1885-1922, and the locomotive builder records of Lima and Porter provided additional information.

My particular thanks are also extended to David Beagle for map preparation and to George Hart for editing the manuscript.

Thomas T. Taber, III  
Muncy, Pennsylvania  
April 1, 1972



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Two of the arks tied up on Little Pine Creek during the last drive in 1909. An ark was used only once, the boat being sold and dismantled after it reached Williamsport. Nelson Caulkins was one of the earliest photographers to photograph "last" events. Mrs. George Smith



Hundreds of logs line the bank of Little Pine Creek, having run aground. In the far distance can be seen a crew of men working to get the logs back into the water. Irvin Antes



## CHAPTER 4.1

### DOWN THE SUSQUEHANNA



Lycoming County Historical Society

The largest mill in Williamsport belonged to the Pennsylvania Joint Land and Lumber Company. The Dodge mill, as it was named for one of the owners, was built in 1870. Initially it cut 130,000 feet daily, one of the largest in the United States at that time. Later the output was increased to 170,000 feet. There were three jack slips to move logs from pond to mill.

The weather moderates, winter's grip breaks, and the creeks rise. Now, as far as the eye can see — a continuous procession of logs and rafts floating toward Williamsport. Along the banks of creeks and rivers, thousands of men and teams of horses wade into icy waters to refloat stranded logs. The drive is on! "The boom is hung!"

Each year for more than three score, this scene was repeated on the Susquehanna and its tributaries — first for the white pine and then for the hemlock.

No study of the railroad era of lumbering can be complete without including a summary of the water era along with its advantages and disadvantages as compared with railroad lumbering. This brief chapter reviews the water era and the role of Williamsport, which for a few years was the lumber manufacturing capital of the United States.

Generally speaking, Pennsylvania's lumber history can be outlined by dividing into northern and southern areas and four major river watersheds. The northern portion of the forests was largely white pine and hem-

lock; the southern portion was largely hardwood and scrub pine although there were large stands of hemlock in Somerset County and scattered smaller tracts elsewhere.

The river networks were the Delaware, the Allegheny, North Branch of the Susquehanna, and the West Branch of the Susquehanna. Since the Delaware River was nearest to the coast and flowed to Philadelphia, it was the first of the four river systems to develop considerable lumber activity; also, the first to decline. By 1880 its lumbering was largely over. Few mills of any size are recorded as having been built, but there were hundreds of small ones. Their output was originally rafted to Philadelphia; later it was carried by canal boats.

The North Branch of the Susquehanna River forests were similarly cut. Rafting is believed to have started about 1807 and reached its peak in the 1830s when canals came into being. Square timber rafts continued to be floated to the mills below Harrisburg. On the lower reaches of the Susquehanna, rafting of lumber was significant prior to 1800, going back to Revolutionary



War days. Floating of logs in the North Branch to mills was evidently minor.

The Allegheny River, with its larger tributaries of the Clarion River and Tionesta Creek, was a major rafting stream from the end of the Civil War until after 1900. Along it were neither canals nor railroads to carry the lumber. Large saw mills were erected, and logs were floated to them. Rafting along the river was largely limited to carrying the finished lumber to Pittsburgh and points south.

The West Branch of the Susquehanna River drained the largest area of the dense pine and hemlock forests — approximately four thousand square miles, a vast, and even today, a relatively uninhabited area of the state. Besides rafting, the river was the only one of the four to have the "great log drives." This was made possible by the boom at Williamsport which caught the logs and sorted them according to mill owner. Where there was only a single mill on a stream, logs could easily be floated to it; where there were several mills, the logs had to be sorted. This could be done by catching them in a boom.

On the West Branch there were few, if any, lumber rafts. The finished lumber was shipped by canal and railroad. The rafts on the West Branch were square and round timber rafts and spar timber rafts. These differed from the lumber rafts. The latter were made of sawed timbers on which lumber was loaded. The former were a single layer of logs secured together. Round and square



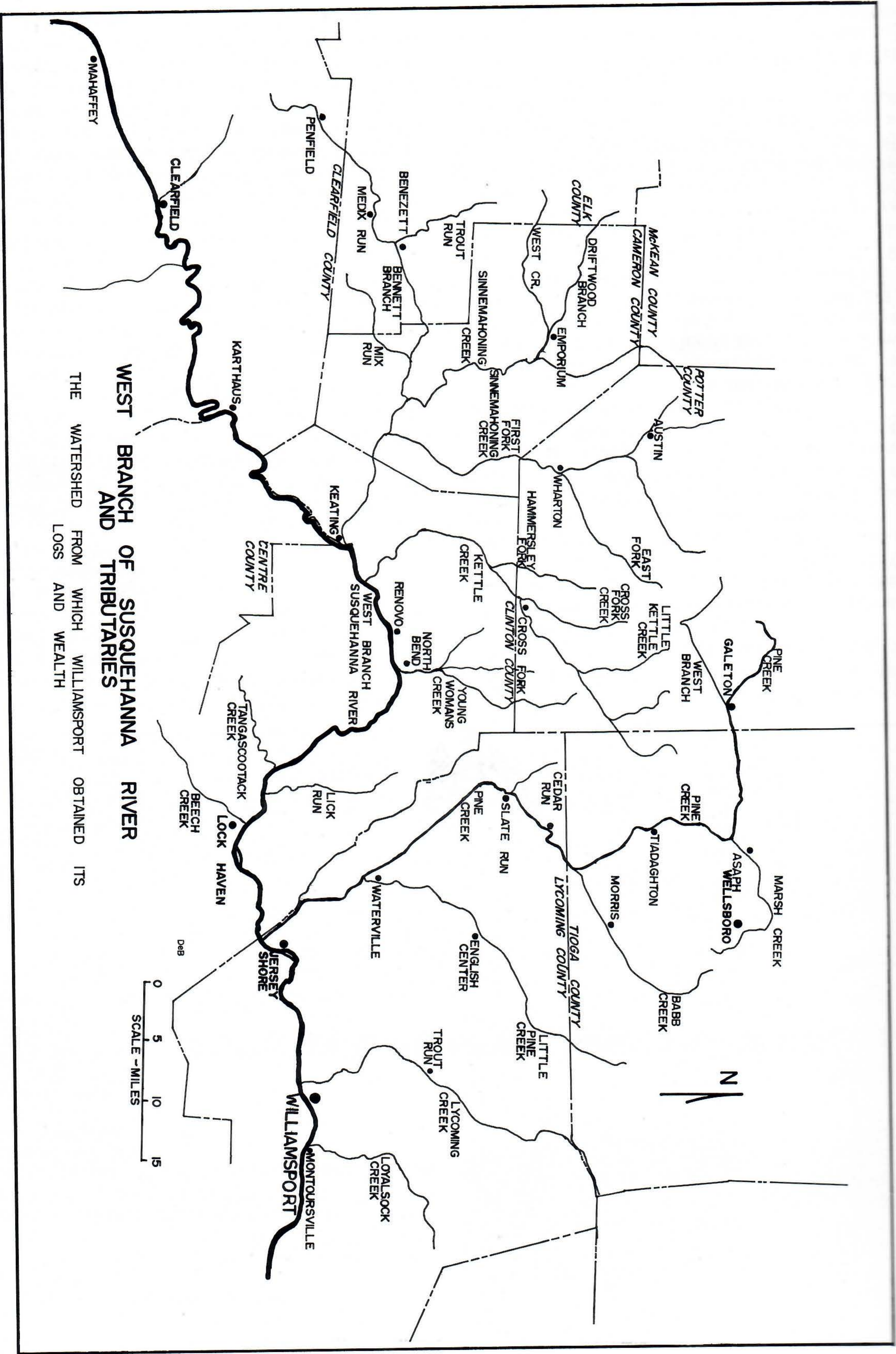
Penna. Historical & Museum Comm.

One of the last rafts to come down the West Branch, tied up at Westport, Clinton County about 1910. Rafting was not as prevalent on the West Branch as on the Clarion River because so many logs were floated to Williamsport. Although Dr. Lewis Theiss claimed the last commercial raft went down the West Branch in 1912, the May 1917 newsletter of the Pennsylvania Lumberman Association stated that "a few rafts still come down or at least try to. One that was made by a man McGonigal got only as far as Karthaus before getting stranded. The lumber was sold there." Rafts did not exceed twenty eight feet wide because chutes in the river dams were that width. They were from 150 to 200 feet long, and would contain from fifty to seventy thousand board feet of unsawed, or squared logs; in other words, one day's output of a medium size mill.



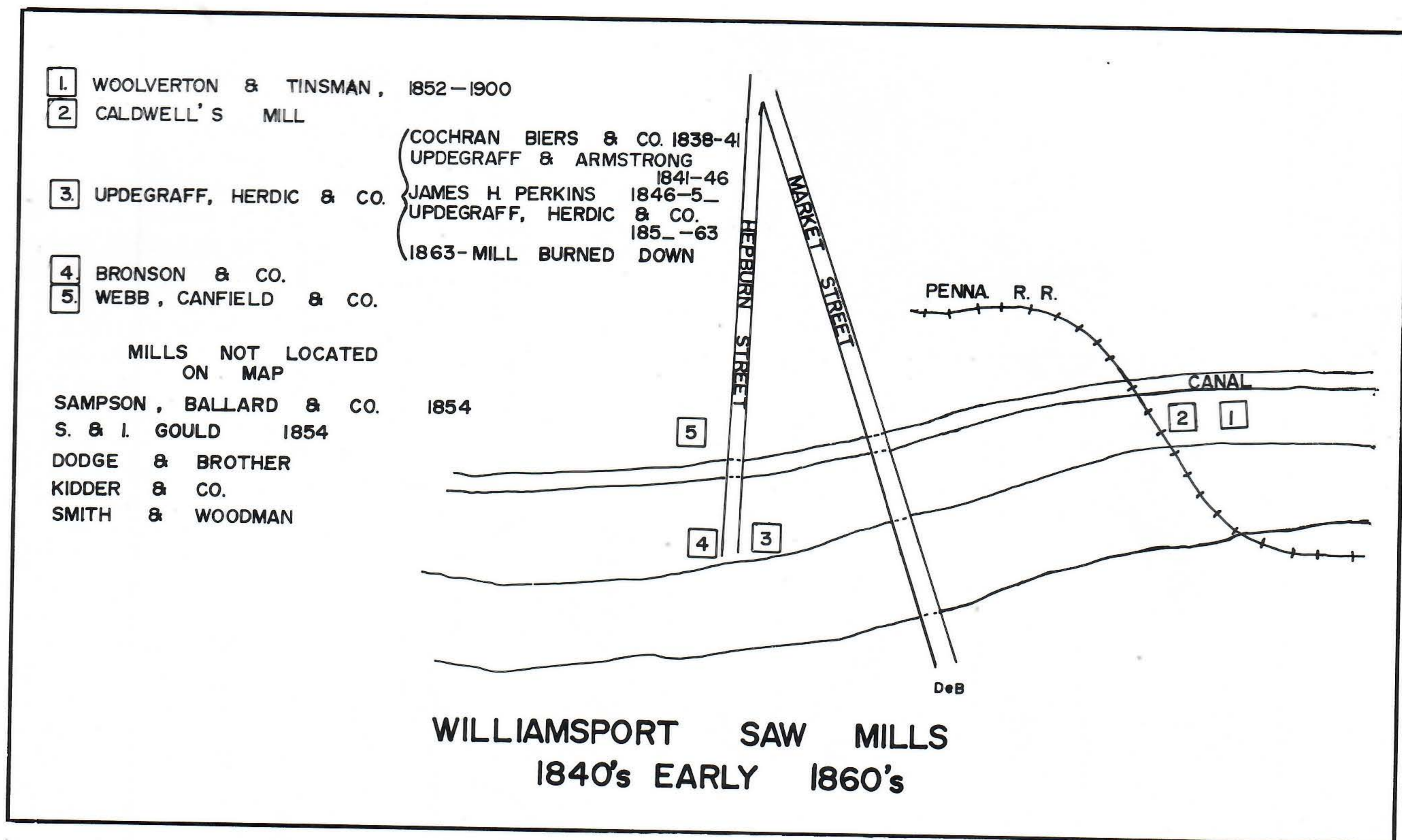
1  
The earliest mills in Pennsylvania were water powered. They were usually a family run enterprise, small, and slow. This photograph shows a typical mill. The picture was taken in the 1890s near Hebron, Potter County. Extremely few photographs of water powered mills exist, most having collapsed before photography.





WEST BRANCH OF SUSQUEHANNA RIVER  
AND TRIBUTARIES  
THE WATERSHED FROM WHICH WILLIAMSPORT OBTAINED ITS  
LOGS AND WEALTH





timber rafts went to Lock Haven and below Harrisburg to be cut into lumber. Much of the lumber cut from logs coming down the West and North Branches went to Baltimore to be used in clipper ships.

The spar rafts were unique to the West Branch. The spars were mostly used for sailing ship masts. They were the finest white pine that could be found. Less desirable pine was cut into logs and floated to saw mills.

Besides the Williamsport boom, there were smaller booms at Lock Haven, Jersey Shore, Montoursville, and Muncy. Floating the logs, destined for booms above Williamsport, required careful scheduling into the river so as to keep them apart from Williamsport logs. The Montoursville boom was used for Loyalsock Creek logs and catching strays that passed the Williamsport boom. The Muncy boom was small and served logs cut downstream from below Williamsport.

The construction of a boom at Williamsport in 1851 eliminated the need for large mills on the river network that fed Williamsport. Up stream, few mills cutting 40,000 feet or more daily were constructed that depended upon floating logs to the mill. However, there were exceptions. One was R. W. Clinton at Galeton; another was S. S. Hackett at Emporium.

First the white pine was cut. Because of its high value, considerable expense could be absorbed in cutting and skidding the logs to a splash dam. The lesser valued hemlock would not justify the expense unless readily available to considerable water. That which was handy went to Williamsport; that which wasn't, was handled by logging railroad. Also, the average white pine log was larger than the hemlock. Records of the Susquehanna

Boom Company report the logs of the 1860s and 1870s averaged two hundred board feet. In the 1890s and 1900s, which represented the hemlock period, the average was only one hundred thirty feet.

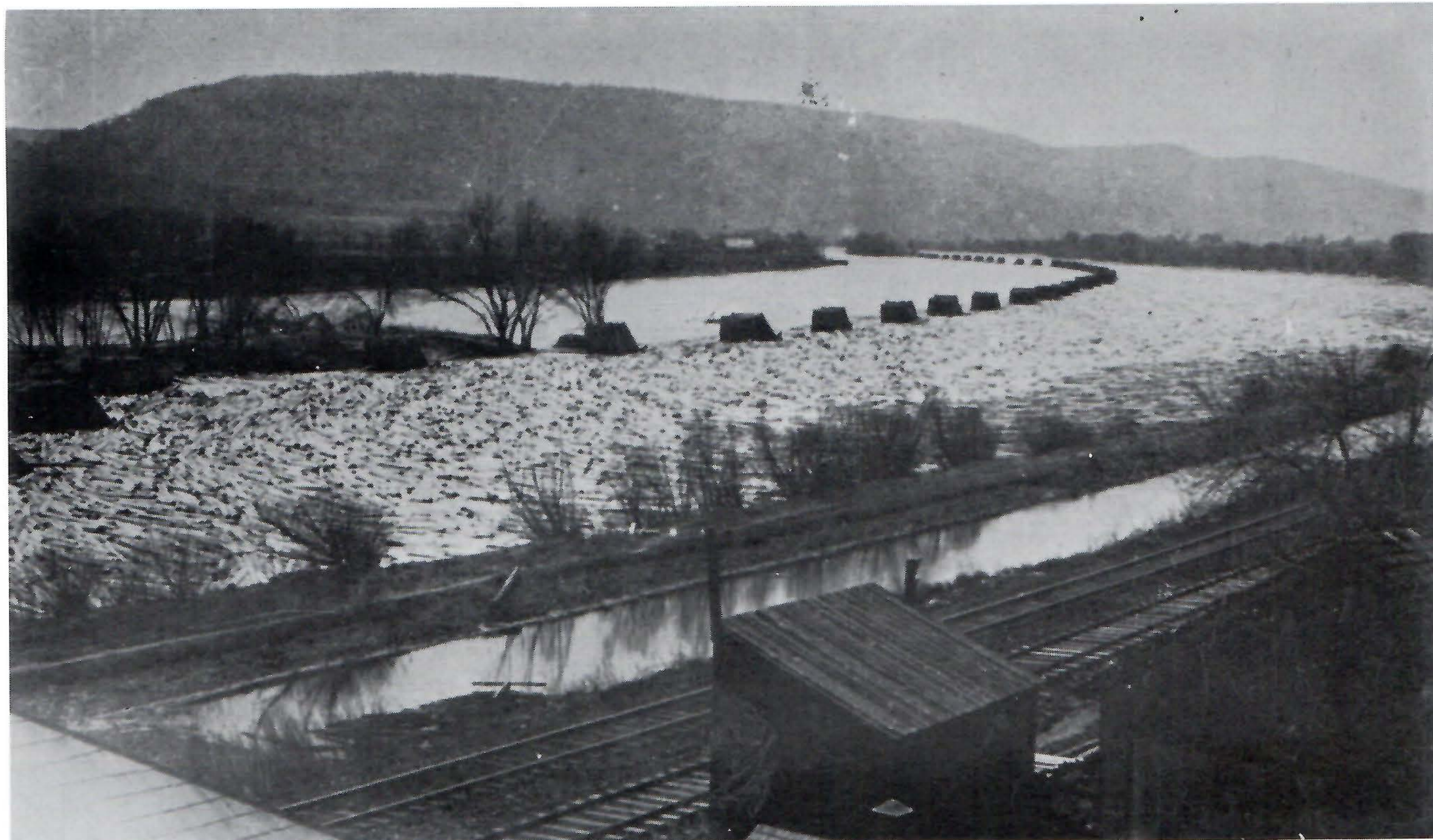
The pine belt stretched from Susquehanna County across Bradford and Tioga, into Potter, and then southward over Elk, Cameron, and Clearfield Counties. It continued in a lesser degree further south and was again prevalent in Garrett County, Maryland.

By the late '70s the pine was largely gone from Susquehanna and Bradford Counties due to comparatively early settlement of the area. The heaviest pine growth was then considered to be along Pine Creek in the southwest corner of Tioga County.

It is generally believed that the pine was largely gone by 1880 (witness the reduced lumber output of that year over 1870). This is incorrect — a great deal of pine remained and was cut during the hemlock era of the late '80s, '90s, and early '00. In 1900 221,000,000 feet of pine were cut. This is the same as the average annual cut of white pine from 1851 to 1876. It is evident that there was a great deal left after the "pine era" was considered over. It was however scattered. The impressive, dense tracts were gone. A white pine tract, in later years, of four to five hundred acres would average only 10,000 feet of pine per acre. However, smaller tracts of fifty to a hundred acres often averaged 25,000 feet, and as much as 100,000 feet was occasionally reported on a single acre.

Because of the dominant position of Williamsport, with its many saw mills, the water era of saw milling on the West Branch is a history of the Williamsport mills.





The Williamsport boom stretched more than seven miles from near Arch Street in Williamsport to above Linden. The cribs were thirty feet high. At the up stream end there was a shear boom which diverted the logs into the boom. When rafts came down the river, the shear boom allowed the rafts to pass thru. Some of the cribs still remain, and close inspection will reveal the locations of others. Although the boom held 300,000,000 feet, it was rarely filled to capacity. Only seven years was it filled more than 85% full.

It covers a period of about seventy years.

Saw milling at Williamsport dates from 1773 when the first was recorded. Sawing was done sporadically. Continuous lumber manufacturing did not start until 1838 when the canal was completed, and the lumber could be more easily shipped. In that year Cochran, Biers and Company erected a water powered mill near Hepburn Street. After three years of haphazard operation, it was closed down. Updegraff and Armstrong purchased it, but in 1846 sold it to James H. Perkins. In 1851 Nehemiah Shaw who was to operate saw mills in Williamsport probably longer than any other man, joined Perkins. Peter Herdic then bought Perkins's interest.

It is often said that Herdic "made Williamsport." He was involved in several of the saw mills, paved streets, erected costly buildings, built a street railway, had the town incorporated as a city, became mayor, and generally "flew a high kite" until the panic of 1873 caught him off guard. With unpaid liabilities of over \$2,000,000, bankruptcy quickly followed. Many people suffered.

Herdic and Shaw kept the big water mill operating until it burned in 1863. It was not rebuilt.

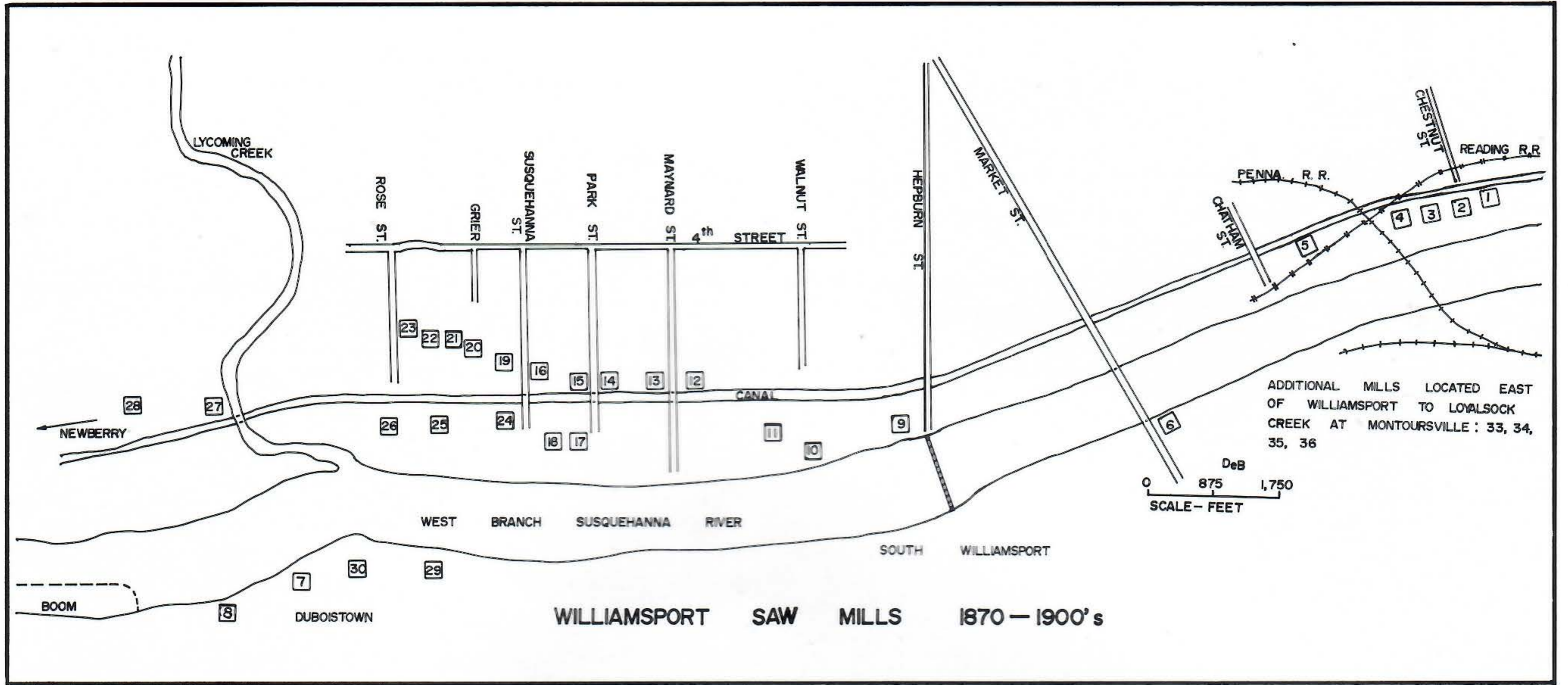
The key to making Williamsport the lumber city was the boom. The idea for a boom at Williamsport, according to the 1876 History of Lycoming County, should be credited to John Leighton. In 1836 he came from Maine to explore the lumber potential, determine the site for mills, and locate the necessary boom. He walked

most of the West Branch and many of its tributaries. For a boom four or five different factors had to be considered; a site just west of Williamsport appeared ideal. However, he could induce no one to enter into the venture. He returned to Maine. In 1840 he revisited the area, but again without success. Then, late in 1844 he persuaded James H. Perkins of Lincoln, Maine to visit Williamsport. This was done the following year. Perkins now took the initiative. He interested John DuBois in the project. On March 26, 1846 the Susquehanna Boom Company was organized with John DuBois as president. Then everyone turned their interests to other matters. Nothing was done for three more years. Not until 1851 was the boom finally constructed.

The boom proved inadequate. It broke during a flood in 1860. Fifty million board feet of logs went down the river. The next year a repeat performance resulted in a similar loss. More cribs of heavier construction were added between those already in place. Gradually the boom was extended up river until it was seven miles long and had almost four hundred cribs. For many years the boom performed satisfactorily. Disaster again struck on June 1, 1889 when the flooding Susquehanna rose three feet above the cribs. The boom broke, and an estimated 200,000,000 board feet of logs headed for Chesapeake Bay. About half of them washed up along the bank. These were then cut by portable mills.

In May, 1894, the final disaster occurred. Another flood washed out about the same number of logs. Fifteen





Number key on adjacent page.



It was not practical to construct splash dams every half mile or so along a stream nor was it practical to skid logs by horses any great distance. Most streams had only a single dam. The smallest streams had none; log slides being used to bring the logs out to a larger stream having additional water. Some had to be three or four miles long. These required horses to move the logs in the slide. Ten to twenty logs would be placed in the slide, and a horse chained to the last log to move the entire string. Some slides were sufficiently steep, usually coming down the side of a mountain, that gravity moved the logs. The slide in this picture is comparable to a tramroad. It parallels a small stream and will require horses to move the logs. Construction of a slide, although simpler and less costly than a railroad, still necessitated grading. Logs have been rolled into position all along the slide in the same manner as a logging railroad not having a log loader.



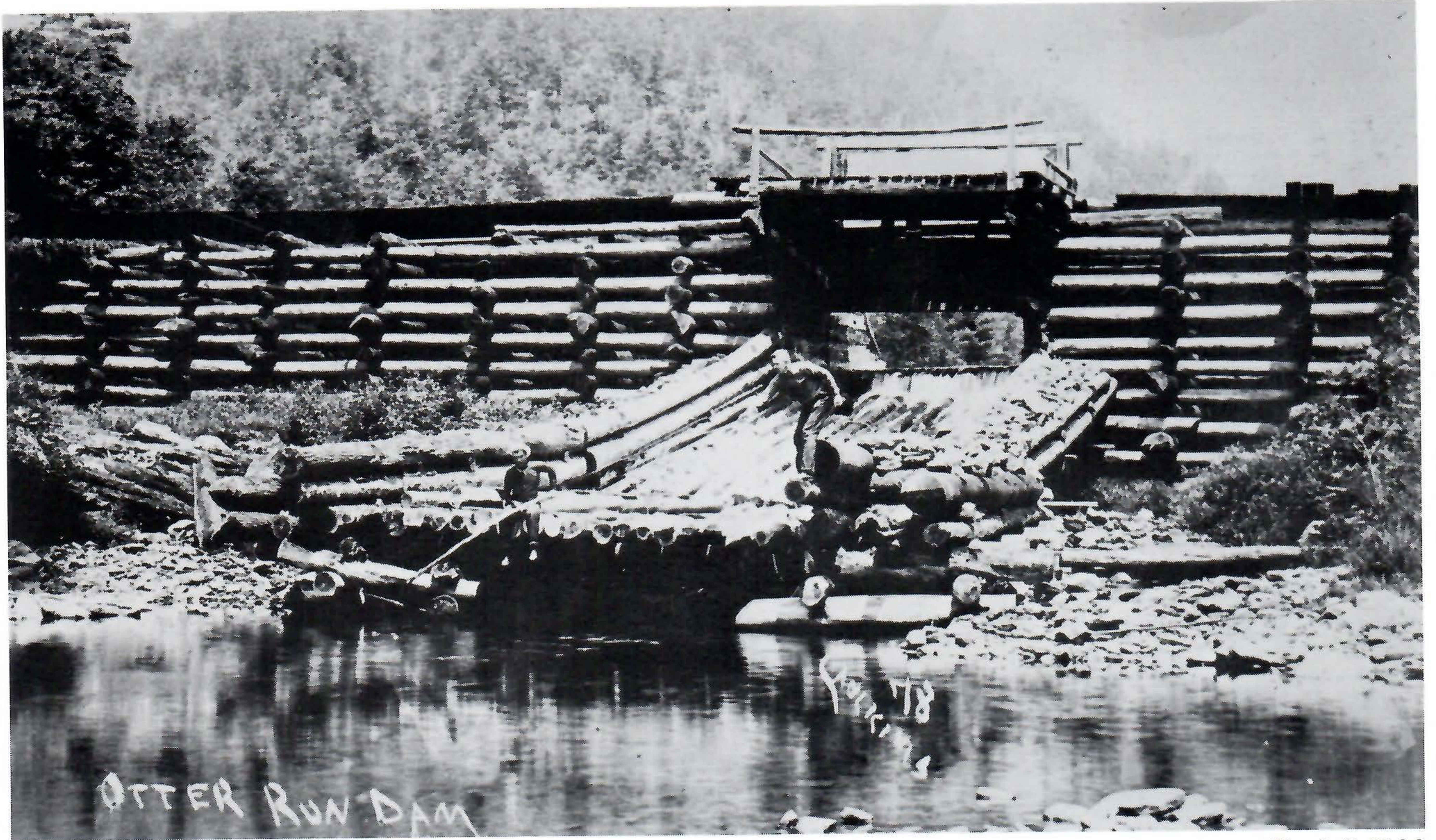
## WILLIAMSPORT SAW MILLS AFTER 1870

No. on Map	Owners	Daily or Annual Capacity	Years Known to be Operating
1	Woolverton & Tinsman Tinsman and Ryan <b>Notes:</b> Original mill burned and replaced	12,000,000'	1852-18 18 -1900
2	Geo. W. Quinn	4,000,000'	1870s
3	Elias Deemer & Co. Mills B. Weed Weed and Allen <b>Notes:</b> Mill burned 1890; not replaced.		1880s—after 1900 1880s 188 -1890
4	Elijah B. England N. Shaw & Co. — P. B. Merrill & Co. Shaw and Merrill N. Shaw & Co.	100,000'	18 -1873 1873-1884 1886 In use in 1897
5	Deemer, Hunt & McCormick		1884
6	Hunt, Deemer & Strong		1890s—after 1900
7	Lutcher and Moore (South Williamsport)		Prior to 1873 until after 1886
8	Ten Euyck, Emery & Co. John DuBois Emery & Reading Corcoran, Richards & Co. Dent Lumber Co.	12,000,000' 15,000,000'	1870s 1850s-1873 1873-188 1880s 1890s
9	<b>Notes:</b> Possibly some of these owners actually owned mill No. 30 or 7 instead of 8. Peter Herdic & Benj. H. Taylor; Bronson & Co. Ezra Canfield, H. C. Miller, Seymour J. Noble S. J. Noble (Beaver Mills & Lbr. Co.) B. H. Taylor & Co. <b>Notes:</b> Washed out by 1889 flood. This mill named Beaver Saw Mill This saw mill operated by two companies — Taylor and Noble simultaneously.	9,000,000'	1854-1871 1871-187 187 -1889 1854-1889
10	Krause, Herdic & Co. Payne, Cochran & Co. <b>Notes:</b> Payne, Cochran may have had a different mill but same location.		1870s 1890s-1902
11	Herdic, Lentz (Geo. W.) & White (John & Henry)	15 - 20,000,000'	1859-1867
12	White, Lentz & White Herdic & Co. Guy W. Maynard & Co.		1867—about 1891 1870s 1880s
13	Strong, Deemer & Co.		1890s—after 1900
14	Filbert, Otto & Co. Slonaker and Smith Brown (Henry, James & Stephen), Early (Henry W.) & Co. Brown (Stephen), Clark, (Timothy), & Howe, (David A.)	125,000'	1870s 1860-1866 1866-1883 1883-1909
15	<b>Notes:</b> Had two band saws. Next to last mill to close. Finley, Young & Co.	18,000,000'	Prior 1873-1885
16	<b>Notes:</b> Burned in 1885; not rebuilt. Foresman, Merriman & Co. H. Merriman		1870s 1880s
17	Reading, Fisher (Mahlon) & Co. Payne, Cochran & Co.	11,000,000'	1870s 1880s-1890s
18	J. E. Goodrich		Prior 1873—after 1886
19	Edgar Munson Susquehanna Saw & Planing Mill (E. Munson, owner)	80,000'	Prior 1873—after 1897
20	Starkweather & Munson	9,000,000'	Prior 1873—after 1875
21	John A. Otto & Son E. L. Piper & Co. Righter (Washington & Joseph), Benedict (Frank W.) & Co. W. Righter's Sons & Co. (Washington, Jr. & Joseph) Central Pennsylvania Lumber Co.	100,000'	1870s Prior 1884-1887 1887-1889 1889-1903 1903-1919
22	<b>Notes:</b> Double band mill. Last mill in Williamsport. Closed December 17, 1919. Trullinger, Croft & Co.		Prior 1873—gone by 1884
23	Nichols (A. T.), Finney (A. C.), Gibson, (Charles), & Foresman R. M.) Barrows (S. V.), Bowman (B. C.) & Co. Williams (S. N.) & Foresman (S. T.), B. C. Bowman & Co. Bowman (J. W.), Foresman (S. T.) & Co.	120,000'	1865-1861 1861-1876 Late 1870s Late 1870s-1907
24	<b>Notes:</b> The Star Mill. John & Charles Dodge Fletcher Coleman	12,000,000'	1852-1863 1863-1898
25	<b>Notes:</b> Original mill built 1852. Replaced by larger mill 1854. Slonaker, Smith & Co. Slonaker & Howard	9,000,000'	1870s 1870s
26	Howard (Charles B.), Perley (Allen) & Howard (Wm.) Thomas U. Thompson & Co. Corcoran, Richards & Co.		1880s—about 1891 Prior 1873-1884? 1880s
27	Williamsport Land & Lbr. Co. (E. Deemer, owner) <b>Notes:</b> Named West End Mill Dodge, James, & Stokes	120,000' 200,000'	18 —after 1901
28	Pennsylvania Joint Land & Lumber Co. <b>Notes:</b> Largest mill in Williamsport. P. G. Fessler & Co. Geo. B. Breon	9,000,000'	Prior 1873-1873 1873-1902 Prior 1875-1890 1890-1897
29	<b>Notes:</b> Mill located in Newberry. Moyer		1880s
30	P. Herdic		1870s

**Note:** An 1875 listing of mills gave the following firms which have not been able to be tied to any of the thirty mills shown above: Merriman, Piper and Sons; Canfield and Cotton; Bowman, Finney and Co.; Thompson, Harper & Co.; Eder, Housel & Deemer; Hebard, Foresman and Smith; Geo W. Sands & Co.; James Murch & Co.

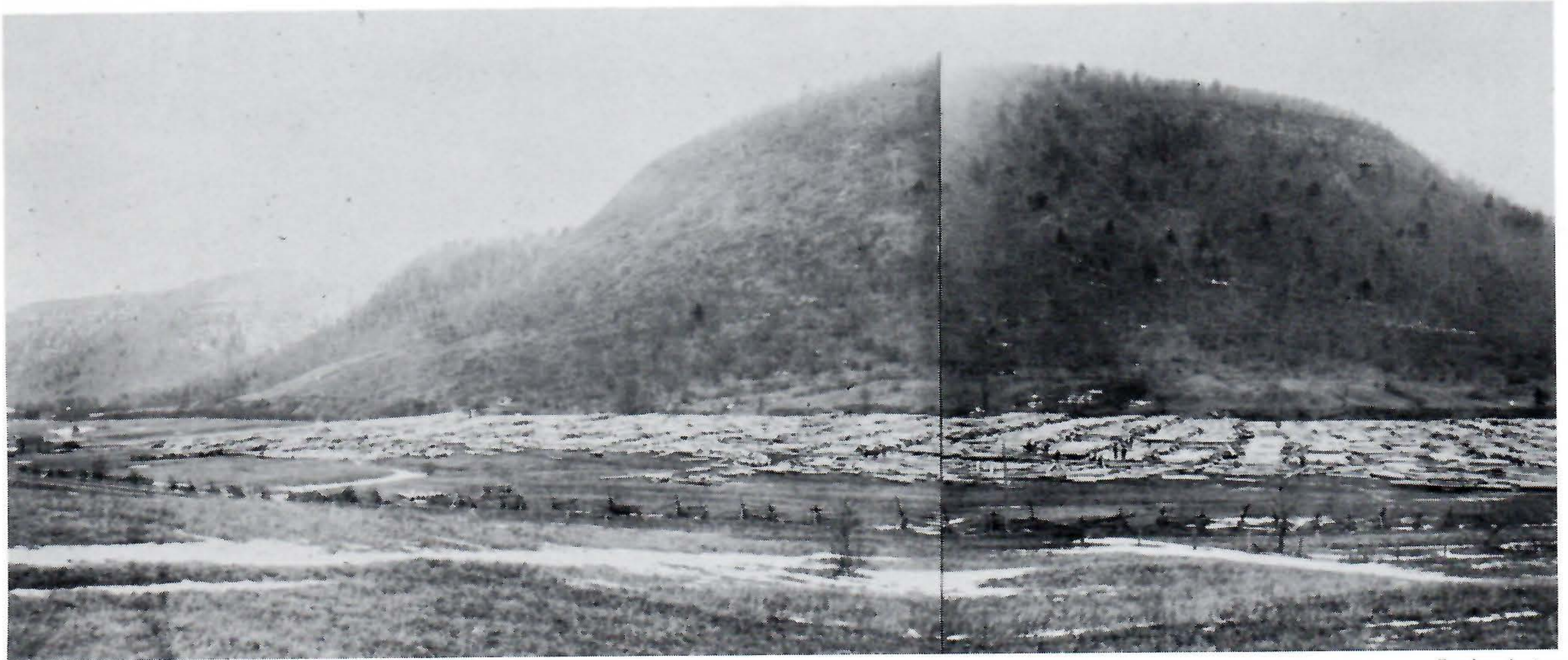
**Note:** Located east of Williamsport to Montoursville were Elias Deemer & Co. 4,000,000 feet; J. B. Emery & Co., 2 mills, 15,000,000 feet; and Ezra Canfield, 20,000,000 feet.





Marshall Welch

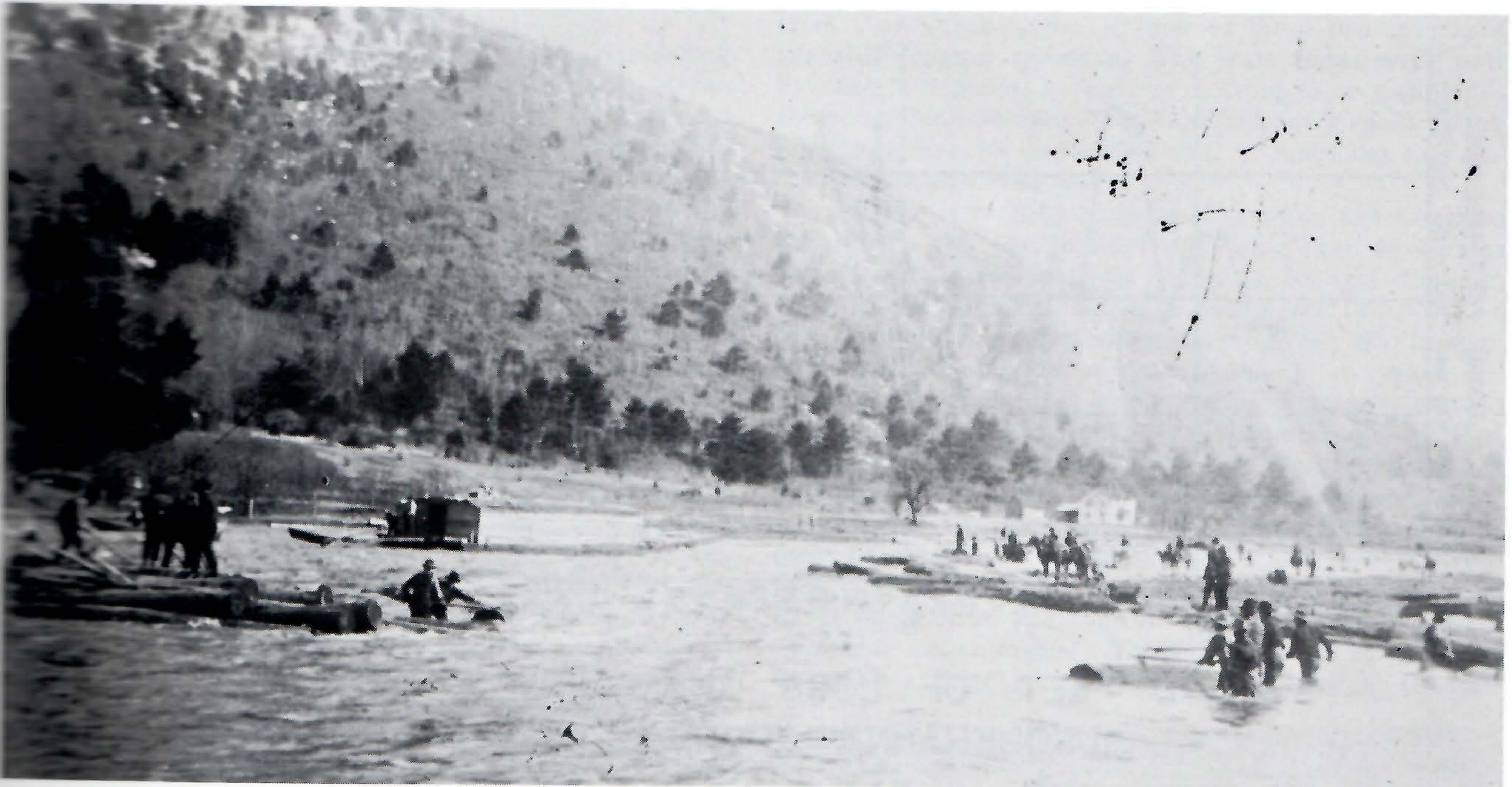
A splash dam might be used only one year or several years. It might be several hundred feet across or only fifty, and were usually constructed as a log crib which was then filled with rock and dirt. However, boards were sometimes used in place of logs for facing the dam. It was necessary to completely clear the stream bed downstream from the dam to minimize logs hanging up along the banks. This required considerable work as can be well imagined if you take a look along any small stream. Everything had to be just so as there were a large number of logs and only a limited amount of water. Above the dam, which had to be located sufficiently down stream to store enough water for the wash, it was necessary to construct log slides to bring the logs down to the dam. A few jobbers built logging railroads on these small streams rather than to attempt to clear them, and those who did this are not known to have reverted back to splash dams. The big cost of a tram road was the locomotive and rails. Once these had been purchased, building a tram road probably required no more expense than preparing a stream bed, and the jobber didn't have to worry about availability of water. This splash dam is on Otter Run near English Center. It feeds into Little Pine Creek. The gate of the chute is open, the photo having been taken in the summer when repairs were being made to it.



Irvin Antes

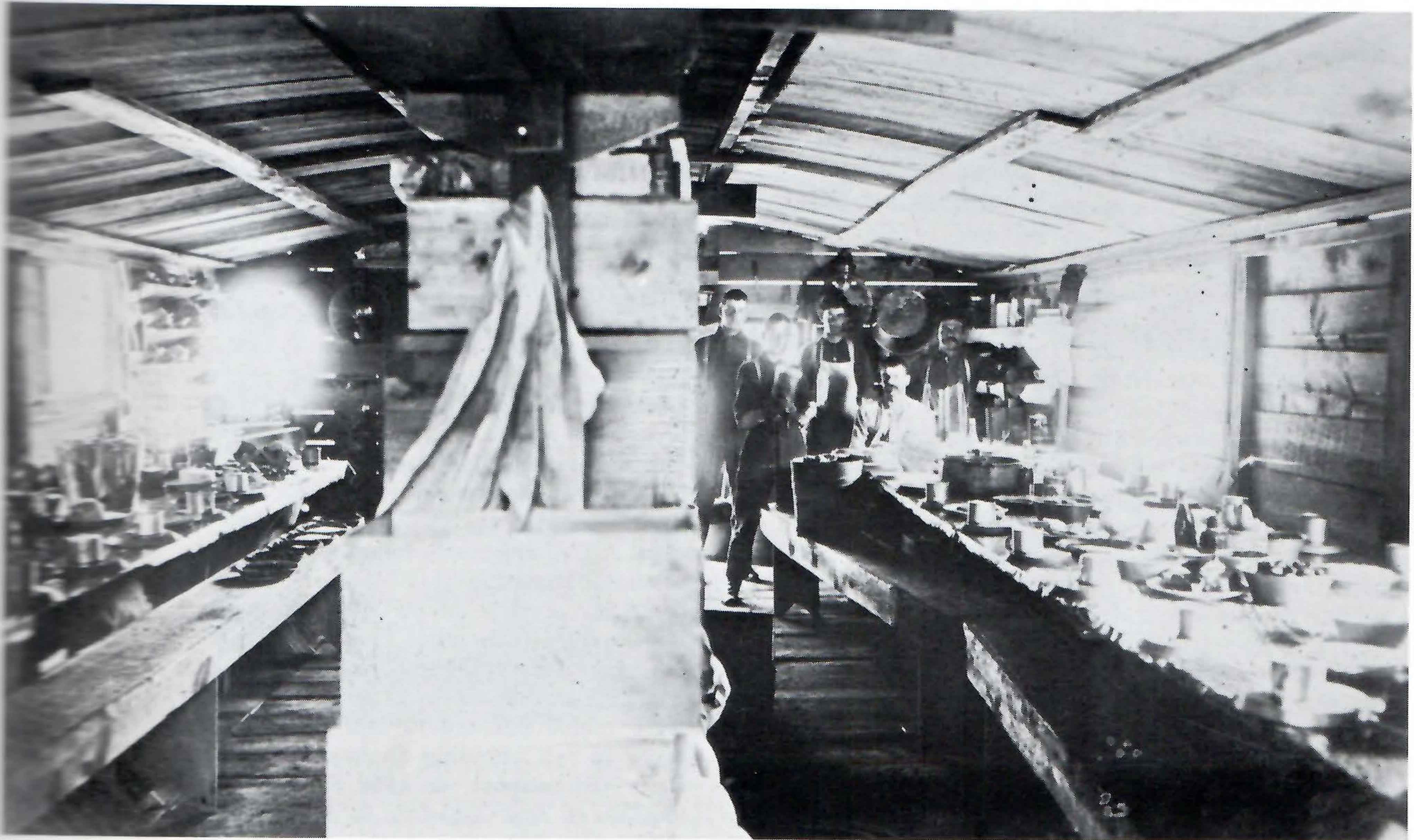
A log landing at a splash dam. The dam is at the left with the gate on the far side. This photograph was taken about eight miles above English Center in 1908. Supposedly, there are eight million board feet of logs carefully piled for the splash. The picture was probably taken in December or January before there was a heavy snow. This single landing represented at least one quarter of all the logs floated to Williamsport that year.





Irvin Antes

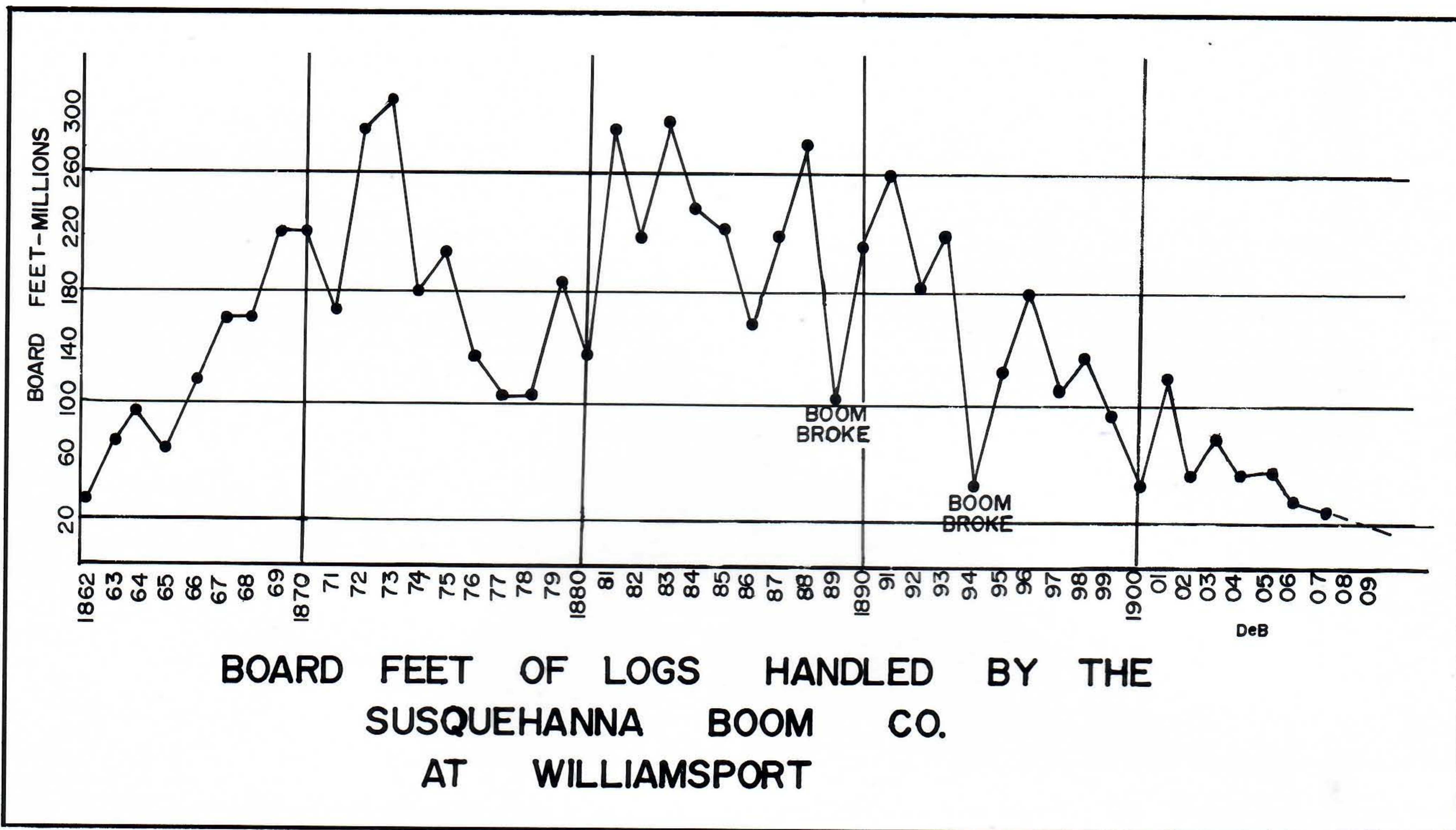
Once the logs were thru the dam and floating downstream, they had a tendency to wash up on the banks. This necessitated hundreds of men working in the freezingly cold water to roll the logs back into the stream. As the water level receded, leaving logs high and dry, teams of horses were used to move those logs back into the water. This picture was taken on Little Pine Creek in 1908. In the background is one of the three arks that accompanied every drive. One ark served as a dining hall, another provided sleeping quarters, and the third was for sheltering the horses at night. The logs in this picture are headed for the Central Pennsylvania Lumber Company's mill.



Irvin Antes

Inside the kitchen ark. There were two rows of tables that provided for feeding sixty to eighty men. In the center are the food provisions. At the far end beside the men were two large stoves where the food was prepared. The normal dining crew was composed of two cooks, two waiters, and a boy to peel potatoes and do odd jobs.





The amount of lumber cut at Williamsport varied considerably from year to year. This chart shows the records of the Susquehanna Boom Company from 1862, when accurate record keeping started, until final closure.

years later the boom closed.

More than twenty saw mills at a time depended upon the boom. It is hard to determine exactly how many mills and which ones were operating each year. In an adjacent table, a partial listing is presented. The information was obtained from the Lycoming County Histories of 1876 and 1892, city maps of 1857, 1873, 1884, 1886, and early or mid 1890s, newspaper references, Defebaugh's history, and the 1901 Centennial Edition of the Williamsport "Daily Gazette and Bulletin."

Most of the mills were good size. The Third Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Volume 2, 1897, described many of those still operating. Only four of the fifteen in Williamsport and Montoursville had band saws. All had circular and gang saws. Fletcher Coleman's mill, the oldest in the city (1863), still used an Up and Down "Muley". The average daily cut was one hundred thousand feet. The typical mill was about sixty feet wide and 125 feet long, and employed ninety men in the mill and yard.

There were many drawbacks to floating logs to the mill beside the occasional losses at the boom. The mill could operate only seven or eight months because the river and large log ponds would freeze. Clearing the streams and splashing logs down them was expensive and also unreliable when there was little snow.

Many of the mills didn't even operate the full seven month period. The number of logs received in the boom varied greatly from one year to the next.

Another problem facing the mill owners was obtaining their supply of logs from the boom. Every log

was marked with a jobbers stamp. This meant that that particular log could only go to one specific mill. Because the boom was seven miles long and logs were only removed from the lower end, it was necessary for the logs of all different owners to be thoroughly mixed if all mills were to have a continuous supply. This was impossible. When logs couldn't be found for a particular mill, because they were at some unknown or inaccessible location, the mill had to shut down. An alternative, that probably was practiced, was for a deficient mill to buy logs from another owner whose logs were in abundance at that moment at the boom's outlet. Later when the logs of the previously deficient mill showed up, they could be sold or traded to the other mill. Every mill owner knew just how many logs and their footage that his jobbers had floated to the boom. Lumber scalers at the boom tallied every log moved out to each mill.

Each of these factors contributed to the willingness of the Williamsport lumbermen to listen to other proposals for cutting their timber lands. One of the first deals to be made involved the Pennsylvania Joint Land and Lumber Company. This company, the largest in Williamsport, early in 1891 sold a large tract above Emporium to C. B. Howard and Company. The Goodyears were major persuaders that it was more profitable for them to sell standing timber rather than cut and float it to Williamsport. In 1894 Elias Deemer sold ten thousand acres near Galeton to Goodyear. In 1902 Payne, Cochran and Company sold almost fifteen thousand acres near Kettle Creek on the Hammersley to Goodyear. All these sales hastened the closing of their respective Wil-



transport mills.

Other timber, requiring expensive stream clearing, was brought out by logging railroad to a larger stream and unloaded into the creek or river. R. M. Foresman was one of the first to use this method. As early as 1882 he purchased a small 0-4-2 tank engine to bring logs down to the river. Unfortunately the location of this pioneering tram road is now unknown. Others who did include Emery and Reading in the late '80s at Dents Run, Elk County, Oliver W. Wolf at Gleason, and a jobber, Francis DeLoy, on Pine Creek.

By the middle of the 1890s it was found that it was more economical to bring logs by rail to Williamsport. By building the tram road more substantially, the Pennsylvania and New York Central Railroad freight cars could be taken into the woods, loaded, and returned to the mill.

Brown, Clark and Howe were early users of rail shipments to the city. For timber not adjacent to railroads, they continued to use the river and boom. Starting in 1898 the Pennsylvania Joint Land and Lumber Company switched to rail shipments for all logs. They came

from Pine Creek lands. Neither of these two companies operated logging railroads. The tram roads were built by other companies as part of cutting their own lands. However, Pennsylvania Joint Land did buy a small switching locomotive for use at the mill to move log cars and lumber shipments about.

During 1899-1900 Bowman, Foresman and Company built their own log railroad on Hyner Run in Clinton County. The Pennsylvania Railroad brought the cars down to Williamsport until the mill closed in 1907.

By 1906 it was estimated that half the Williamsport logs came by rail. The percentage further increased that year when the Central Pennsylvania Lumber Company started to receive by rail. These came from Mix Run, Cameron County. At the same time they continued to float logs down Little Pine Creek above English Center.

Besides the choice of using a railroad or selling their timber lands, the Williamsport mill owners had a third alternative — to build saw mills at their timber. Surprisingly, this was done in only five instances in the Susquehanna watershed. These were C. B Howard and Company at Emporium, Howard and Perley at Gleason-



Lycoming County Historical Society

The major expense to operate the boom was sorting and delivering logs to the different mills. More than one hundred men were needed. For many years a charge of one dollar per thousand feet was made. For a mill cutting fifty thousand feet daily, the cost was fifty dollars. This was particularly costly when hemlock was selling for only six to seven dollars a thousand feet. For a logging railroad, a five man log train crew could do the equivalent work of rolling logs into slides, banking along side a splash dam, splashing the logs out, rolling stray logs back into the water, and the work performed by the boom crew. For fifty thousand feet of logs per day, the boom crew, alone, required five or six men. This photograph shows the down stream end of the boom. Here, logs were floated out of the boom, checked to determine who owned each one, individually moved to a collection area for the particular mill. This photograph shows these individual collection areas. The logs for a mill were then tied together into rafts, and a small steamboat moved them to the designated mill.



ton, and the Pennsylvania Joint Land and Lumber Company at Asaph, Tioga County, Cameron, Cameron County, and Medix Run, Elk County. At Asaph and Cameron they contracted with others to cut their timber; at Medix Run they formed the Medix Run Lumber Company.

Generally speaking, the Williamsporters were content to remain on the Susquehanna watershed. There were a few exceptions, including John DuBois going to Clearfield County, J. T. Ryan's Mifflinburg operation, Coleman, Harter and McCormick in Forest County, and Allen Perley's move to Beaverdale, Cambria County. Additionally, other lumbermen in Pennsylvania are known to have come from Williamsport, but they never operated mills in the city.

The end of the water era occurred quietly in 1909. The Williamsport newspapers made only casual mention of the final days as the last logs cleared out of Kettle Creek and Little Pine and headed for the boom. By mid April about 15,000,000 feet of logs had arrived in the boom destined for C. P. L. and Brown, Clark and Howe. Six weeks later the logs had been sorted and rafted to the proper mill. The boom was closed, and dismantling started immediately.

As soon as Brown had cut their logs, that mill closed, leaving the C. P. L. mill to operate another decade. At the time of its formation in 1903, C. P. L. received considerable timber from its parent company on Little Pine Creek and other scattered areas. On Little Pine there was no nearby railroad. To build one and a mill was not economical. The other small tracts were too small to warrant constructing a mill and company town. The solution was to buy a Williamsport mill. Righter's mill was available for purchase in 1903, and so it was bought.

Until 1906 C. P. L. stocked the mill with logs floated to Williamsport. From 1906 thru 1909 they used both water and rail. Starting in 1906 in order to supply sufficient logs, tracts not economically suitable for water shipment had to be cut. The first was at Mix Run. Several locomotives were purchased and a railroad built. A year or two later, the timber was gone. The equipment was moved to Penfield, Clearfield County where cutting continued until 1911 on two sites. Port Allegany followed. Another railroad was built and until the start of World War I operations continued there. The story of Mix Run, Penfield, and Port Allegany is covered in chapters dealing with their respective counties.

Logs from Lycoming County supplied the mill for the final two years. A railroad was built up Trout Run about two and a half miles to reach a tract. Eight cars of logs were loaded each day, sufficient to operate only one side of the double band mill. After Trout Run, a railroad branch was built from this line back around the face of the mountain and up Wolf Run three or four miles. This operation continued for about a year. From there the next move was to Fields Station.

One of the men who worked these final operations was Dorsey Ringler. Now living near Williamsport, he

was conductor on the log train. He was hired shortly after the tram road was built at Trout Run. When they moved to Fields Station, the train crew found they were in for an easy four months of work. In a period when easy jobs were seldom found, Mr. Ringler's description proves particularly interesting.

"At Fields we had only a short spur from the Pennsylvania's track. Fields is located just above the mouth of Grays Run. They had an immense log dump there. It took us four months to remove it. (There were probably about four million feet of logs.) All we did was place the empty log cars beside the pile and wait until the loader filled them. This took only a few hours, and so we got done in half a day. Furthermore, as conductor, I didn't have anything to do if there were no cars to be moved about. Sometimes though, the logs were too far from the loader to reach. Then we had to pull out the key log and let the pile tumble down closer to us. Usually this meant that the logs crossed the track. When that happened and until we could remove all the logs on the track, we could only load a single car, remove it to a siding, place another empty car for loading, have it loaded, and repeat the process. This took us all day to load eight cars."

Mr. Ringler received the fastest promotion he ever was given on this job, which he related: "Hillery Smith was superintendent in charge of the operation there (Trout Run). He hired me as a brakeman, and I went to work. The next day he told me that I was now conductor. Warren Fenner had been called into the army for World War I. He was the conductor before me. I remained a conductor while we cut on Trout Run, Wolf Run, Fields Station, and finally over at Rock Run. When Rock Run closed, and they wanted us to move to Ricketts, I quit. Neither my wife nor I wanted to go up there."

Among the men that he remembered working with were Frank Head, locomotive engineer, Jack Haight, fireman, Lewis Wilkenson, Floyd Bower, and Bud Radley, tong hookers, and Charlie Radley, loaderman. The Williamsport mill was superintended by H. A. McEwan with F. A. Marlett as his foreman.

To earn a little extra money, four dollars to be exact, they took turns being the night watchman of the locomotive and loader. This involved cleaning and banking the fires and reloading coal and water. Then the watchman could snooze the rest of the night before taking up his regular duties on the log train the next day.

Late in 1919 C. P. L. decided that it was more economical to move the remaining logs in the Rock Run area to Laquin and Masten instead of apportioning some to Williamsport. On December 17th the last log went up the jack slip and thru the mill.

Eighty one years of continuous saw milling in Williamsport had come to an end. Evidently there was no ceremony; certainly the newspapers gave no indication. The mill was immediately torn down to make room for a new high school (now part of the Williamsport Area Community College).