



the Mittens

HOW TO LOG A FOREST

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

First, you call your timber cruisers. These men are sent to nearby Osceola County to look for a new stand (group) of pine trees. They eagerly return after discovering 40 acres near the Muskegon River that contains much cork pine. Your company purchases the land from the federal government.

The next task is to establish a logging camp on the site. The camps are temporary. They include a bunkhouse, a stable and blacksmith shop, and a cookhouse where the meals are served. The bunkhouse is home to shanty boys who work six days a week. They are paid about \$25 a month. Pay is received at the end of the logging season when the work is done. The season lasts from fall to spring each year.

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

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

After the Osceola timber cut, the Ajax crew will move on to another parcel of land and start the process over again.