

LOGGER FRED SMITH TELLS OF INDIAN SCARES, RIVER DRIVES AND OLD DAYS

(As told to W. M. Allen, of The Merrill Daily Herald, by Fred Smith, "The Logger.")

Fred Smith, the narrator of this historical "tale," was born in the "Village of Jenny" on July 20, 1858, and with his brother, James, were the first white boys born therein. For many years they were believed to have been the first white children born here, but recent inquiries revealed the fact that Miss Liberty Strowbridge, sister of Mrs. Walter Hester, of Wausau, was the first white child, having been born about one year previous to the Smith twins.

Fred Smith was born in a house located just west of the present Oswald Hesterman residence, 100 Court street, it having been the first dwelling built in the village of Jenny, in 1856, and was destroyed by fire in 1866.

Mr. Oliver Barr Smith, parent of the narrator, came to Lincoln County, from Kajie County, Illinois, in the fall of 1842.

"My father," he was familiarly known here, was in the year above mentioned, cradling grain on his father's farm, in Illinois. For some time he had been affected with a "western fever." About mid-afternoon of a certain day, he being his cradling in the field, the fence, went to the house and informed his mother that he was "going to the pinery," which determination was indicative of the promptness with which he made his decisions in after life, in matters of personal affairs.

His mother gathered all of her son's worldly possessions and packed them in a bandanna handkerchief, the common "grip" of the day; scraped up all the money they could, amounting to some \$7.00, and started the son off to seek his fortune. It required three weeks to complete the journey to Wausau. He spent that winter logging on the Eau Claire river, and making trips out to that river with lumber. He also spent three seasons on Trappe river and the sawmills. His connection with Ed. Bosworth, young Smith formed a partnership, and "ran the Pine river" the two or three succeeding years. They also worked together during the years 1854-4, on Prairie river.

O. B. Smith was married in Kane County, Illinois, in 1855, to Sophronia Ravlin, who became the parents of six children, two daughters and four sons, all of whom except one were born in the village of Jenny, none of whom are alive at present. Fred, of this city, and a brother, Charles, of the State of Washington.

"Jenny Bull Falls"
About 1850, Andrew Warren, Jr., who was destined to figure extensively in the early history activities of this section, Fred, of this city, and a brother, Charles, of the State of Washington.

"Where and how 'Jenny Bull Falls' got its name, is something that I never was able to determine satisfactorily, even from the oldest inhabitants." Mr. Smith avowed, and then proceeded to name the various "rapids" and "falls" along the Wisconsin river as follows:

"The first rapids on the Wisconsin river, was Grand Rapids, below Stevens Point. Then 'Little Bull Falls' at Wausau; 'Jenny Bull Falls' at Jenny. The encyclopedia shows that the word 'Jenny' has reference to a female donkey, but how the word 'Bull' has any bearing, is an unsolved question. The next 'rapids' or 'falls' is 'Grandfather'; then 'Grandmother'; then the 'Rocky Toro,' meaning 'bull' in Spanish; then follows the 'Whirlpool,' 'Hot Rapids,' 'Pelican Rapids,' now Rhinelander; 'Rainbow Rapids,' 'Otter Rapids,' the end of the chain of rapids of the Wisconsin river, and each name represents some natural physical feature.

"Little Bull Falls picked up more good men than all the rest of the rapids on the river. The end of them were pilots that would get knocked overboard by their cars before they would get through the 'Big Whirlpool' below the old bridge, never to survive its raging torrents.

Early Activities
"About 1850, Andrew Warren, Jr., arrived from Kane County,

Illinois, and prepared to build a sawmill; first erecting a set of log buildings, consisting of a house, boarding house, warehouse and barn, which were located on what is now East Main street, in front of the present location of the Citizens' American Bank.

"This section of country had not been surveyed at that time, and all was government land. On March 9, 1852, township 31, range 6, was surveyed by the Government, and on November 26, 1852, Andrew Warren entered from the government, five lots or fractions thereof, on the Wisconsin river, bounded by what is now north on Center avenue, to Sixth street, along Sixth street west to Prairie river, thence back again to the Wisconsin river, embracing a part of what is now the Stange; Comstock's yard, and what now constitutes the Third Ward.

"He then cleared land for a sawmill site, and erected what was then called a 'two-span' sawmill. The west span of the mill contained a perpendicular saw, for cutting big logs measuring from 40 to 50 inches thick. The east span was equipped with both a perpendicular and a rotary saw. The site of this mill was about where the Electric Light Company's plant now stands. This plant, including the dam, was not completed until the fall of 1852. Mr. Cooper and B. Smith worked on this dam, that year, it being their first work here.

"This sawmill was operated during the winters of 1852-3-4. On June 1, 1854, O. B. Smith and B. F. Cooper bought the east span of the sawmill, containing the perpendicular and rotary saws, for a consideration of \$6,000. The first payment made on this deal was 600,000 feet of No. 1, clear white pine lumber, at the tail of the mill, for the price of \$6.00 per thousand.

"Cooper & Smith ran the mill until about 1859, then sold out to Combs and Andrews, who came here from Pennsylvania.

Sawmill Goes Down The River
"About 1864-5, high water came in the spring, after the sawing season had ended, however, and carried away the entire mill.

"In the afternoon, of the day of the big flood, Frank Andrews, who was a very excitable individual, in those times, always was supplied with thousands of feet of 2 and 3 inch cable, about the premises for emergencies.

"Calling his men to action, and through his orders, they attached the 18 1/2 ton cable, and about the 'bull-wheel' in the mill, and also to a very large ox-frame used for shoeing oxen, located just back of where Dr. Reinhardt's office now stands. About 4 p. m. that day the mill, bull wheel, and ox-frame, all went down the river.

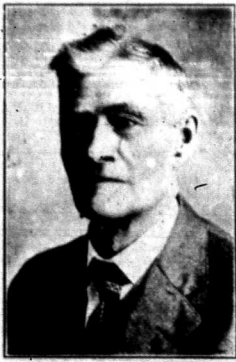
"They built a new, different and better mill the following summer, and ran it until the spring of 1872.

"Thomas Scott, Henry Corwith and John Ross, were buying lumber on the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers, with headquarters at Galena, Illinois.

"Then Scott bought Harrison Combs' interest in the mill, the firm being Scott & Andrews. It was operated until they attached to the mill when the railroad came through, at which time they formed what was known as the 'Scott Lumber Company,' composed of F. P. Hixon and Pettibone of La Crosse, and T. B. Scott, of Jenny. They rebuilt the mill, and at that time had the biggest mill in the Wisconsin Valley, and which was operated under that name until it burned in about 1893-4.

"They had practically quit rafting and running the river, by this time. The railroad came into Wausau about 1874, and the sawmills of Jenny dropped their lumber down to Wausau, and shipped it by rail.

"The last fleet of lumber left Jenny in 1875, with Charles Richards as pilot. I hired out to 'tail-out' the river from here to St. Louis, for Allen Space. My father fought to keep me from making the trip, on account of my youth, and the hard work entailed. So I had only the fun of it, you see. It was only the fun of 'Big Bull' and 'Little Bull' falls, for when we got



FRED SMITH, "the logger", and relator of the early history and personal experiences published in this special edition of the Daily Herald.

to Stevens Point, with the feet, father was there, and being a good friend of Richards, father succeeded in getting him to pay me off and send me home.

"They went on, had a fine trip, and were all back home inside of six weeks.

"Few people in the county today, have any idea as to how lumber was rafted or run out of the river. I think there are about five men in the entire valley: George Langley, Wm. H. Kaiser, Henry Dudley, Ben Bessy and Geo. Gibson.

"Returning to the Village of Jenny, the only road leading to the village from the south about 1868, was the wagon road from Wausau, not much of a road, at that, being principally a mud hole.

"The only building on the south side of what is now Main street, was an old boarding house, located where the Schram furniture and the Allen & Zander garage now stand. The first frame building was erected in 1854, and was located where the Merrill Daily Herald now stands, Cooper and Smith built it for office and store use, and it was a small one, too. That same building now is a part of the James Meunier residence, on First street, and still shows some of the original architecture.

"The next frame building erected was a tavern, built by Cyrus Strowbridge about 1860, on Hannibal Street, which was then occupied by the American State bank, in 1856. This building now stands on the Joe York farm, on the bank of the Prairie river, and is occupied by the family of Thomas Moore. Strowbridge sold the building about 1880 to Hannibal Streeter, who sold it to Lansing Norway, who later moved it out to the Joe York place.

"There was very little logging done in the Valley at that time, until after the railroad came through. About three to four million feet would be a big cut for the sawmills. There being no boom on the river to hold logs, except at Wausau, Combs & Andrews and Scott & Andrews got all their logs off Prairie river, about two to four million feet per year.

"After the railroad came to Merrill, and booms and divides were built, then they commenced logging very extensively on the Wisconsin river, especially following the panic and consequent hard times from 1873-9. At one time in the late 80's and early 90's it was logged out as high as three hundred and fifty million feet a season.

"The seven sawmills running in Merrill, at that time, would cut as high as 125 million feet of lumber per season—the rest of the logs going out to down river firms."

"The next one built by Strowbridge, was a dwelling on the southwest corner of what is now the Court House block, which was later sold to Gideon Young, who sold it to E. B. King, and it is now located on the corner of Second and Court streets, and owned by the Warzinkas.

"Then he built the house on Main street, known as the Russell property, which was sold to F. W. White, Sr.

"This makes three buildings built by Strowbridge in the 60's, which are now standing and occupied today.

"Zachariah Space built a tavern in 1858, on the corner now occupied by the Merrill Commercial College. Main and Court streets, which now stands on the northeast corner of the block, and is occupied by Albert Woller, as a residence.

"These were all the buildings on what is now Main street, for a number of years.

The First School House
"The first school house ever built in the Village of Jenny, was in the late 50's, and was a small building at the intersection of Court and Main streets, as now located. It had a capacity of about eight or ten children, and not one of those who attended that school are alive today.

"The next school building was erected in 1863, at the upper end of the village, where the Dr. Walker Pelican river stands. It would hold twenty-four pupils, and that's where I got my schooling.

"By the year 1873, this building had become too small, and the Third Ward school was built, with one room for Pelican, and two downstairs, which I attended in 1875, as a last chance. There were but two teachers, and perhaps 25 to 40 pupils.

State Road Project
"They played politics and graft in the early 60's as well as they do today.

In 1861, the state appropriated money to build what was called the Wausau North State Line Road, from Jenny to Lac Vieux Desert. O. B. Smith started at Jenny and cut the road to the mouth of Pelican river; John Kurin cut it from Pelican to Eagle River; Joe Fox and Alex Drapper cut it from Eagle River to Lac Vieux Desert.

"There never was a team or a sled driven over that road, excepting the team they had with the sawmill, and a few big logs out of the road, and moving the company's outfit. The road was to be cut two rods wide, and graded in the center. When completed, it wasn't even a decent 'tope road.' It was cut in the winter and never a grub hoe put on the road. They followed all the swamps and covered all the lakes they could possibly find on a practically straight route. Of the large amount of money appropriated for that road, perhaps 10% of it was used on the road, and the rest of it went to, nobody appeared to know.

"There was what was known as a 'Military Road,' however, at that time, beginning at Shawano, and going through to Ontonagon, Michigan, used for transportation of soldiers, and it was built at that place, located on Lake Superior. Both roads were abandoned after a time, and the old 'tope road trail' followed up the Wisconsin Valley to Lac Vieux Desert, then over the 'Military Trail,' to Ontonagon.

"The U. S. mail and all travel went through Jenny when the lakes and trails were frozen in the winter time.

"Large droves of cattle were also driven through Jenny by Geo. Sturdevant and Starr Laport, who were destined to become fresh meat for the miners—and it would not be difficult to imagine what kind of beef they would make after having been driven such a distance, and fed only on wild hay along the way.

Large Herd of Starving Cows
"After a few years the parties logging up there, and who were stealing the timber from the government, found the expense of getting their logs to Grand Rapids too great, (it required about 2000 feet of log to get to the Eagle River), the village of Eagle River became dormant, and many buildings were destroyed by fire, and it continued practically uninhabited until the Northwestern railroad went through about 1883, except for two old-timers, 'Old King' and 'Old Pine' Lawler, both of whom died there a few years ago.

"Since the coming of the rail-

road, the town recovered, and has continued to prosper.

Early Settlers Mostly Easterners
"Most of the people who came here in an early new day, came from Pennsylvania and Illinois. The Westerns all came from Kane county, Illinois, including my father. Ale and John Stewart came from New Brunswick to Kane county, but later, when they wanted to get further west and into the logging and lumber business, they followed up and came here.

"The first work they did in the woods was to chop and saw logs one winter.

"The next year they 'shaved shingles' packed them, and when the lumber was sent out in the spring, they piled them on the market. Their first shingle shantoung lumber and sent them to one was built on the John Nutterly was located near where the first plant now stands. The next farm, on the bank of the Wisconsin river, about a mile above Pine River.

"Having accumulated money, they bought Schuster's interest in the McIndoe & Schuster company, and the first became McIndoe & Stewart. When McIndoe died his interests were turned over to Walter Alexander, which then formed the Stewart Lumber company.

More Indians Than White Folks
"In an early day," continued Mr. Smith, "there were a great many more Indians in the country, than 'white people.'"

"The Chippewa tribe, at one time, consisted of about 5,400 Indians, and about 1,500 to 2,000 of them used to come to Wausau twice a year to receive their titles from the 'Great White Father,' and it was quite interesting to see them down here, sometimes numbering 1,000 in a bunch. Each family had its own bark canoe, and they were trimmed and dressed like they were going to a circus—the squaws and pappees with ribbons and beads all over. They were always in a hurry to get down here, but never in a hurry to go back.

"The regular payment consisted of \$4.00 in cash to each member of the family, and one first-class machine, blanket, weighing eight pounds each, and a small portion of 'wampum,' completed their donation; their appearance changed on their return trip, as Jenny was the first point at which they could get any 'fire-water.'"

"The Chippewa's were very peaceful and generally, and got along with the white people fine. There was never but one Indian scare, which was in 1862—the time of the Minnesota massacre, by the Sioux.

"The Sioux wanted the Chippewa to get together, and about 2,500 of them held a council of war, at Gilbert, on the Wisconsin river, south of Tomahawk. All fur traders, and others having influence with the Indians, went up there and put in weeks with them, arguing for continued peace. Finally, after about six weeks of council, they rebelled against the Sioux.

"At the beginning of the threatened outbreak, father hitched his horse to the old lumber wagon, took his mother and us four kids, and drove to Berlin, where we took the train back to Illinois, to mother's folks, where we remained until the next summer.

A Ten Dollar Incident
"About 1860, father had just gone to the rapids with a fleet of lumber, when he wrote mother a letter, in which he placed a \$10 bill—mail came up from Wausau twice a week, in those days. In opening the letter, the bill dropped out unnoticed by mother. She picked it up, and started down town waving it like a flag. Down by the Strowbridge tavern, located about where the Peterman Brothers' department store now stands, which had become a great 'hangout' for the Indians, a couple of the redskins saw me 'flash' the bill, and two of them took the bill away from me.

"Alvin Zahn, afterwards Mrs. Gottlieb Schroeder, mother of George and Gottlieb Schroeder, Jr.—at that time, employed at the

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