

GEORGE HENRY WARREN

THE PIONEER
WOODSMAN AS HE IS
RELATED TO LUMBERING
IN THE NORTHWEST

George Henry Warren

**The Pioneer Woodsman
as He Is Related to
Lumbering in the Northwest**

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George Henry Warren
The Pioneer Woodsman as He Is
Related to Lumbering in the Northwest

I DEDICATE

THIS BOOK TO THE MEMORY OF

WILLIAM S. PATRICK,

GUIDING FRIEND AND HELPFUL COUNSELOR

OF MY EARLIER MANHOOD YEARS.

Foreword

The aim will be to take the reader along on the journey of the pioneer woodsman, from comfortable hearthstone, from family, friends, books, magazines, and daily papers, and to disappear with him from all evidences of civilization and from all human companionship save, ordinarily, that of one helper who not infrequently is an Indian, and to live for weeks at a time in the unbroken forest, seldom sleeping more than a single night in one place.

The woodsman and his one companion must carry cooking utensils, axes, raw provisions of flour, meat, beans, coffee, sugar, rice, pepper, and salt; maps, plats, books for field notes; the simplest and lightest possible equipment of surveying implements; and, lastly, tent and blankets for shelter and covering at night to protect them from storm and cold.

Incidents of the daily life of these two voluntary reclusionists, as they occurred to the author, and some of the results obtained, will be told to the reader in the pages which are to follow.

CHAPTER I.

Sowing the Germ That I Knew Not

"This superficial tale is but a preface of her worthy praise."

Early environment sometimes paints colors on the canvas of one's later life.

Fifty years ago in western New York, there were thousands of acres of valuable timber. The country was well watered, and, on some of the streams, mills and factories had sprung into existence. On one of these were three sawmills of one upright saw each, and all did custom sawing.

My father was a manufacturer, especially of carriages, wagons, and sleighs. There were no factories then engaged in making spokes, felloes, whiffletrees, bent carriage poles, thills or shafts, and bent runners for cutters and sleighs. These all had to be made at the shop where the cutter, wagon, or carriage was being built. Consequently the manufacturer was obliged to provide himself with seasoned planks and boards of the various kinds of wood that entered into the construction of each vehicle. Trips were made to the woods to examine trees of birch, maple, oak, ash, beech, hickory, rock elm, butternut, basswood, whitewood, and sometimes hemlock and pine. The timber desired having been selected, the trees were converted into logs which in turn were taken to the custom mill and sawed into such dimensions required, as far as was possible at that period to have done at these rather primitive sawmills. Beyond this the resawing was done at the shop.

Thus, almost unconsciously, at an early age, by reason of the assistance rendered to my father in selecting and securing this manufactured lumber from the tree in the forest to the sawed product of the mill, I became familiar with the names and the textures of many kinds of woods, the knowledge of which stood me in good turn in later years.

CHAPTER II.

Preparations for the Wilds of Wisconsin

In the city of Detroit, early in June, 1871, was gathered a group of four veteran woodsmen of the lumbermen's craft, and two raw recruits, one, a student fresh from his father's law office in Bay City, and the other, myself, whose frontier experiences were yet to be gained.

A contract, by William S. Patrick of Bay City, the principal of this group, had been made with Henry W. Sage, of Brooklyn, New York, to select and to secure by purchase from the United States and from the state of Wisconsin, valuable pine lands believed to be located in the wilds of northern Wisconsin. Tents, blankets, axes, extra clothing, cooking utensils, compasses, and other surveying implements were ordered, and soon the party was ready for the start.

At that time no passable roads penetrated the northern woods of Wisconsin from the south. The country to be examined for available pine lands at the commencement of our work was tributary to the head waters of the Flambeau River. To reach this point in the forest it was thought best to enter the woods from the south shore of Lake Superior. Also, the United States land office controlling a part of this territory, was located at Bayfield, Wisconsin, and at that office must be selected such township plats as would be needed in the examining of lands in that portion of the Bayfield Land District.

The quickest line of transit at that date was by railroad to Chicago, and thence to St. Paul over the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway, crossing the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, to McGregor, Iowa, and thence north to St. Paul. There was no other railroad then completed from Chicago to St. Paul. The only railroad from St. Paul to Lake Superior was the St. Paul and Duluth. From Duluth, passage was taken by steamer to Bayfield. Township plats were here obtained from the government land office. Provisions of pork, flour, beans, coffee, rice, sugar, baking powder, dried apples, pepper and salt, tobacco, etc., for one month's living in the woods for nine men, were bought and put into cloth sacks. Our original number of six men was here augmented by three half-breed Indians of the Bad River Indian Reservation, who were hired as packers and guides over a trail to be followed to the Flambeau Indian Reservation. A Lake Superior fisherman was then engaged to take the party and its outfit in his sailing boat from Bayfield to the mouth of Montreal River, which is the boundary between Wisconsin and Michigan. The distance was about thirty-five miles.

CHAPTER III.

Entering the Wilds of Wisconsin

The party disembarked at a sand beach, but the sailboat drew too much water to permit a close landing. Here it was that the two tenderfeet got their first experience with Lake Superior's cold water, since all were obliged to climb or jump overboard into three feet of the almost icy water, and to carry on heads and shoulders portions of the luggage to the dry land. Here was to begin the first night of my camp life. Dry wood was sought, and camp fires were kindled to be used, first, to dry the wet clothing, and second, to cook the food for the first out-of-door supper.

To avoid mosquitoes, orders were given to prepare beds for the night on the sand beach away from the friendly tall trees that stood near by. One mattress served for the whole party and consisted of as level a strip of the sandy shore as could be selected. Promise of fair weather rendered unnecessary the raising of tents which were made to serve as so much thickness to keep the body from contact with the sand.

That night the stars shone brightly above the sleepers' faces, the waters of Superior broke gently along the beach, and the tall pines lent their first lullaby to willingly listening ears.

"The waves have a story to tell me,
As I lie on the lonely beach;
Chanting aloft in the pine-tops,
The wind has a lesson to teach;
But the stars sing an anthem of glory
I cannot put into speech.

They sing of the Mighty Master,
Of the loom His fingers span,
Where a star or a soul is a part of the whole,
And weft in the wondrous plan."

The next morning broke bright and clear, and the sun sent a sheen upon the dimpled waters of old Superior that gave us a touch of regret at the parting of the ways; for the members, one by one, after a well relished breakfast, shouldered their packs and fell into single file behind the Indian guide who led the way to the trail through the woods, forty miles long, to the Flambeau Reservation.

Two days and the morning of the third brought the party, footsore in new boots and eaten by mosquitoes, to the end of the trail. Now, lakes must be crossed, and the Flambeau River navigated for many days. In the Indian village were many wigwams, occupied by the usually large families of two or three generations of bucks, squaws, children, from the eldest down to the liquid-nosed papoose, and their numerous dogs that never fail to announce the approach of "kitchimokoman," the white man.

Some of the old men were building birch canoes, and many birch crafts of different ages and of previous service were to be seen in the camp. From among them, enough were bought to carry all of the men of the party and their outfits. The last canoe bought was a three-man canoe, which leaked and must be "pitched" before it could be used.

At this point let it be explained that every woodsman, trapper, pioneer, settler, or camper who depends upon a birch canoe for navigation should, and generally does, provide himself with a quantity of commercial resin and a fireproof dish in which to melt it. The resin is then tempered by adding just enough grease to prevent the mixture, when applied to the dry surface of a leaky spot on the canoe, and cooled in the water of the lake or river at the time of using, from cracking by reason of

too great hardness. The surface must be dry or the "pitch" will not adhere firmly to the leaky seam or knot in the bark of the canoe. The drying is quickly done by holding a live ember or firebrand close to the surface of the wet bark.

Mr. Patrick had bought the canoes from different owners and had paid for them all except the leaky three-man canoe. It was the property of a fat squaw of uncertain age. The price agreed upon for this canoe was twenty dollars. Mr. Patrick and the squaw were standing on opposite sides of the canoe as Mr. Patrick took from his pocket a twenty dollar bill to hand her in payment. Just then he discovered that the pan of pitch (resin), which had been previously placed over the live coals, was on fire. He placed the twenty dollar bill on the canoe in front of the squaw, and quickly ran to extinguish the fire in the burning pitch. When he returned to the canoe, the bill had disappeared, and the wise old squaw claimed to know nothing of its whereabouts. A second twenty dollar bill was produced and handed to the squaw, when Mr. Patrick became the owner of a forty dollar birch canoe.

CHAPTER IV.

Surveying and Selecting Government Timber Lands

Our party of land surveyors, or "land lookers" as they were often called, being thus supplied with water transports, proceeded in their canoes a short distance down the Flambeau River, where the work of selecting government or state lands timbered with pine trees was to begin.

The questions have been so often asked, "How do you know where you are when in the dense forest away from all roads and trails, and many miles from any human habitation?", "How can you tell one tract of land from another tract?", and "How can you tell what land belongs to the United States and what to the State?", that it seems desirable to try to make these points clear to the reader.

The Continental Congress, through its committee appointed expressly for the work, inaugurated the present system of survey of the public lands in 1784. For the purposes of this explanation it will be sufficient to recite that the system consists of parallel lines six miles apart running north and south, designated as "range lines"; also of other parallel lines, six miles apart running east and west, designated as "township lines". Any six miles square bounded by four of these lines constitutes a "township". The territory within these two range lines and two township lines is subdivided into "sections", each one mile square, by running five parallel lines north and south across the township, each one mile from its nearest parallel line, and, in like manner, by running five other parallel lines east and west across the township from the east range line to the west range line, each line one mile from its nearest parallel line. In this manner, the township is subdivided into thirty-six sections each one mile square. The four township corners are marked by posts, squared at the upper end, and marked on the four sides by the proper letters and figures cut into the four flat faces by "marking irons", each flat surface facing the township for which it is marked.

In addition, one tree in each of the four township corners is blazed (a smooth surface exposed by chopping through the bark into the wood) on the side of the tree facing the stake, and the same letters and figures as are on the nearest face of the stake are marked thereon. These letters and figures give the number of the township, range and section touching that corner. On another blaze below the first, and near the ground, are marked the letters "B T", meaning "bearing tree".

The surveyor writes in his field book the kind and diameter of tree, the distance and direction of each bearing tree from the corner post, and these notes of the surveyor are recorded in the United States land office at Washington.

Even if the stake and three of the bearing trees should be destroyed, so that but one tree be left, with a copy of the notes, one could relocate the township corner.

The section corners within the township are marked in a similar manner.

Midway between adjacent section corners is located a "quarter corner", on the line between the two adjacent sections. This is marked by a post blazed flat on opposite sides and marked " $\frac{1}{4}$ S". There are also two "witness trees" or bearing trees marked " $\frac{1}{4}$ S".

By running straight lines through a section, east and west and north and south, connecting the quarter corners, the section of six hundred and forty acres may be divided into four quarter sections of one hundred and sixty acres each. These may in turn be divided into four similar shaped quarters of forty acres each called "forties", which constitute the smallest regular government subdivisions, except fractional acreages caused by lakes and rivers which may cut out part of what might otherwise have been a forty. In such cases the government surveyor "meanders" or measures the winding courses, and the fractional forties thus measured are marked with the number of acres each contains. Each is called a "lot" and is given a number. These lots are noted and numbered on the surveyor's map or plat which is later recorded.

The subdivision of the mile square section is the work of the land looker, as the government ceases its work when the exterior lines are run.

On the township plat which one buys at the local United States land office, are designated by some character, the lands belonging to the United States, and, by a different character, the lands owned by the State.

The country presented an unbroken forest of the various kinds of trees and underbrush indigenous to this northern climate. The deer, bear, lynx, porcupine, and wolf were the rightful and principal occupants. Crossing occasionally, the trail of the first named, served only to remind us of our complete isolation from the outside, busy world.

The provisions yet remaining were sufficient to feed our party for less than three weeks. In the meantime two of the Indians had gone down the river in a canoe with Mr. Patrick to the mouth of the Flambeau, to await the arrival of fresh supplies which he was to send up to that point from Eau Claire by team. The experienced and skilled woodsmen had divided the working force into small crews, which began subdividing the sections within the townships where there were government or state lands, to ascertain whether there were any forty acre tracts that contained enough valuable pine to make the land profitable to purchase at the land offices. Two thousand acres were thus selected during the first cruise, but, on our agent reaching the land office where the lands had to be entered, only twelve hundred acres were still vacant (unentered), other land lookers having preceded our representative and arrived first at the land office with eight hundred acres of the same descriptions as our own.

As there were many land lookers at this time in the woods, all anxious to buy the good pine lands from the government and the state, conflicts like the above were not unusual.

Through a misunderstanding of orders, our working party, now nearly out of everything to eat, assembled at The Forks, a point forty-five miles above the mouth of the Flambeau, and waited for the Indians to bring up fresh supplies. They did not come, and, after waiting three days, while each man subsisted on rations of three small baking powder biscuits per day, all hands pushed down to the mouth of the river where the Indians were awaiting us with plenty of raw materials, some of which were soon converted into cooked food of which all partook most heartily.

Corrected plats, showing the unentered lands of each township which we were directed to examine, were sent to us.

CHAPTER V.

Gaining Experience—Getting Wet

Some field experience which I had acquired in surveying when a sophomore in college, assisted me greatly in quickly learning how to subdivide the sections, while my knowledge of timber gained at an early age, when assisting my father in choosing trees in the forest suitable for his uses as a manufacturer, aided me greatly in judging the quality and quantity of the pine timber growing in the greater forests of the Northwest.

Freshly equipped with provisions, and with plats corrected up to date, we returned to the deep woods. There we divided into parties of only two—the land looker and his assistant. The latter's duty was chiefly to help carry the supplies of uncooked foods, blankets, tent, etc., to pitch tent at night, and, ordinarily, to do the most of the cooking, though seldom all of it. On some days much good vacant (unentered) pine was found, and on other days none at all. Several miles of woods were at times laboriously passed through, without seeing any timber worth entering (buying). Some portions would consist of hardwood ridges of maple, oak, elm; some of poplar, birch, basswood; others of long stretches of tamarack and spruce swamps, sections of which would be almost without wooded growth, so marshy and wet that the moss-covered bottom would scarcely support our weight, encumbered as we always were by pack sacks upon our backs, which weighed when starting as much as sixty pounds and sometimes more. Their weight diminished daily as we cooked and ate from our store which they contained.

Windfalls—places where cyclones or hurricanes had passed—were sometimes encountered. The cyclones left the trees twisted and broken, their trunks and branches pointing in various directions; the hurricanes generally left the trees tipped partly or entirely to the ground, their roots turned up and their trunks pointing quite uniformly in the same relative direction. The getting through, over, under, and *beyond* these places, which vary from a few rods to a possible mile across, especially in winter when the mantle of snow hides the pitfalls and screens the rotten trunks and limbs from view, tries the courage, patience, and endurance of the woodsman. All of the time he must use his compass and keep his true direction as well as measure the distance, otherwise he would not know where he was located. Without this knowledge his work could not proceed.

Sometimes we would come to a natural meadow grown up with alders, around the borders of which stood much young poplar. A stream of water flowed through the meadow, and the beavers had discovered that it was eminently fitted, if not designed, for their necessities. Accordingly, they had selected an advantageous spot where nature had kindly thrown up a bank of earth on each side and drawn the ends down comparatively near to the stream. Small trees were near by, and these they had cut down, and then cut into such lengths as were right, in their judgment, for constructing a water-tight dam across the narrow channel between the two opposite banks of earth. The flow of water being thus checked by the beaver dam, the water set-back and overflowed the meadow to its remotest confines, and even submerged some of the trunks of the trees to perhaps a depth of two feet. Out further in the meadow and amongst the alders where had flowed the natural stream, the water in the pond was much deeper.

These ponds sometimes lay directly across the line of our survey and inconvenienced us greatly. We disliked to make "offsets" in our lines and thus go around the dam, for the traveling in such places was usually very slow and tedious. The saving of time is always important to the land hunter, since he must carry his provisions, and wishes to accomplish all that is possible before the last day's rations are reached. It was not strange, then, if we first tried the depth of the water in the pond by wading and feeling our way. While we could keep our pack sacks from becoming wet, we continued to wade toward the opposite shore, meantime remembering or keeping in sight some object on the opposite

shore, in the direct course we must travel, which we had located by means of our compass before entering the water. Sometimes a retreat had to be made by reason of too great depth of water. During the summer months we did not mind simply getting wet clothes by wading; but once in the fall just before ice had formed, this chilly proposition of wading across, was undertaken voluntarily, and was only one of many uncomfortable things that entered into the woodsman's life.

Subjected thus to much inconvenience and discomfort by those valuable little animals, we could but admire their wisdom in choosing places for their subaqueous homes. They feed upon the bark of the alder, the poplar, the birch, and of some other trees. These grew where they constructed their dam and along the margin of the pond of water thus formed. They cut down these trees by gnawing entirely around their trunks, then they cut off branches and sections of the trunks of the trees, and drew them into their houses under the ice. Most trees cut by the beaver are of small diameter. I once measured one beaver stump and found it to be fourteen inches in diameter. I still have in my possession a section of a white cedar stump measuring seventeen inches in circumference that had been gnawed off by beavers. It is the only cedar tree I have ever known to have been cut down by these wise little creatures.

CHAPTER VI.

A Birthday Supper

Flambeau Farm was located on the right bank of Chippewa River opposite the mouth of Flambeau River. There old man Butler kept a ranch for the especial accommodation of lumbermen and land hunters, who included nearly everyone who came that way. It was at the end of the wagon road leading from Chippewa Falls and from other civilized places. Canoes, dugouts, batteaus—all started from Butler's ranch at Flambeau Farm for operations up the Flambeau and its tributaries, or for either up or down the Chippewa and its branches.

One rainy afternoon in October our party of three started from Butler's ranch in a dugout (a long, narrow canoe hewn out of a pine tree), to pole down the Chippewa River to the mouth of Jump River, a distance of about ten miles. Notwithstanding the rain, everything went smoothly for the first hour, when, without warning, the bow of the canoe struck the edge of a sand bar which caused the tottlish craft to tip. The man in the stern jumped overboard to save it from capsizing, expecting to strike his feet on the sand bar, but, in the meantime, the frail craft had drifted away from the bar, and we were floating over deep water which resulted in our comrade's disappearing under the surface. He soon rose hatless, and with a few strokes swam to where he seized the stern of the boat to which he was obliged to cling until we could paddle to the shore, as any attempt on his part to have climbed in would have resulted in capsizing the boat, and would have cost us all of our supplies.

We built a fire, and partly dried his wet garments, after which we proceeded on our journey. Entering the mouth of Jump River, we flushed a small flock of wild geese, one of which we shot and gathered into our dugout. A little farther on, we were fortunate in bringing down a fine mallard. By this time the snow had begun to fall very rapidly, so that when we had reached a suitable place to camp for the night, the snow was fully three inches deep. Here, near the bank of the river, we found an unoccupied claim shanty built of logs, and containing a very serviceable fireplace. We took possession of it for the night, in consequence of which it was unnecessary to pitch our tents. We began the usual preparations for our evening meal and for comfortable beds upon which to lie. The latter were soon prepared by going outside into a thicket of balsam fir trees, felling a few with our axes, and breaking off the soft, springy boughs which were stacked in bunches, carried into camp, and spread in the convenient bunks to constitute the mattresses over which the blankets were later laid.

While thus busy, an Indian hunter clad in a buckskin suit came down the trail by the river bank, bringing with him a saddle of venison. Owing to the Indian's natural fondness for pork, it was very easy to exchange a small piece of the latter for some nice venison steaks. I remember that because of the wet condition of the snow, the Indian's buckskin pants had become saturated with water, causing them to elongate to such an extent that he was literally walking on the bottom ends of them. His wigwam was not far down the river, to which point he soon repaired. Then the cook made a short calculation of the menu he would serve us for our supper after the very disagreeable experiences of travel during the day. He decided to broil the mallard and cook some venison steak. Besides this, he boiled rice, some potatoes, some dried peaches, and baked a few tins of baking powder biscuits.

The land hunter's or surveyor's outfit of cooking utensils invariably includes a nest of tin pails or kettles of different sizes fitted one within the other, and sufficient in number to supply the needs of the camp; also a tin baker, so constructed that when set up before an open fire, it is a tilted "V" shaped trough of sufficient length to place within it a good sized baking tin, placed horizontally and supported midway between the two sides of the "V" shaped baker, so that the fire is reflected on the bright tin equally above the baking pan and below it.

The snow had ceased falling, and, by building a rousing camp fire outside of the claim shanty, we were soon able to dry our clothing. Having partaken of a sumptuous meal, we "rolled in", contented

and happy, for a night's rest. To me, this 14th day of October was a red letter day, and in memory ever since has been because it was the birthday of my then fiancée, who, not many years subsequent, became and ever since has remained my faithful and loving wife.

The second and final trip of that season in open water was made several weeks later when we again poled up the Chippewa River in a dugout, taking with us our supplies for the cruise in the forest.

The current in that part of the river was so swift, not infrequently forming rapids, that we were obliged always to use long poles made from small spruce trees from which the bark had been removed, and an iron spike fastened at one end to aid in securing a hold when pushed down among the rocks. The water was so nearly at the freezing point that small flakes of ice were floating, and the atmosphere was so cold, that, as the pole was lifted from the water, ice would form on it unless the pole at each stroke was reversed, thus allowing the film of ice formed on the pole to be thawed when immersed in the slightly warmer water beneath. The day spent in this manner was attended with very great discomfort, and when night came, each man found himself tired and hungry, and glad that the day had come to an end. We camped that night at a French-Canadian logging camp. Our party was too fatigued to pitch its own tents and prepare its own meal, and gladly accepted the foreman's hospitality at the rate of two dollars a day each, for some of his fat pork, pea soup, and fairly good bread.

On the morning following, we found the ice had so formed in the river that further journeying in the dugout was impossible, so the latter was pulled up on shore, covered with some brush, and abandoned, at least for the winter, and, as it proved in this instance, for always, so far as it concerned our party. We finished this cruise on foot, and returned about two weeks later to Eau Claire.

There were not many men living on government lands in that part of Wisconsin. Those who had taken claims and were living on them depended on their rifles for all of their fresh meat. Some of them made a practice of placing "set guns" pointing across deer trails. One end of a strong cord was first fastened to a tree, or to a stake driven into the ground some distance from the deer trail. The cord was then carried across the trail which was in the snow, for a distance of one hundred feet or less. Here, the gun was set firmly, pointing directly in line with the cord or string. The barrel of the gun was sighted at such an elevation as to send the bullet, when fired, across the deer trail at a height from the trail sufficient to penetrate the body of the deer. The string was then carried around some stationary object and fastened to the trigger of the gun, the hammer of which had been raised. The pressure of the deer's body or legs against the string would be pretty sure to discharge the gun, thus causing the innocent and unsuspecting deer to shoot itself.

While running a compass line one day, we discovered, just ahead of us, a cord or string at right angles to our line of travel. I stopped immediately, while my companion, Tom Carney, followed the cord to its end which he found fastened to the trigger of a rifle. He carefully cut the cord, raised the rifle to his shoulder, and fired it into the air. He next broke the gun over the roots of a tree. Further examination showed that the cord was stretched across a deer trail which we would have reached in a minute more.

With the return of winter the Sage-Patrick contract was about completed.

CHAPTER VII.

A New Contract—Obstacles

"To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language; for his gayer hours
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides
Into his darker musings, with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness, ere he is aware."

My life, up to the time of my contract with Mr. Patrick to go with him into the wilds of Wisconsin as an apprenticed land hunter and timber examiner, had been spent on the farm, in my father's shop, at school and college, and in teaching. The change of occupation and manner of living will therefore be seen to have been radical. In six months of contact with nature, I had been born into a new life, a life of initiative, of daring, and of hardships, insuring health and inspiring hope of financial success in a way honorable and helpful. I loved the forms of nature all about me, untouched by the hand of man. I therefore sought for and found an associate with capital sufficient to permit me to continue in the same line of work. The late Robert B. Langdon then became my partner, and this relationship was most pleasantly continued to the end of Mr. Langdon's life.

Late in December, 1871, my first trip under the new contract for securing pine timber, was undertaken. The ice in the rivers and lakes had now become firm and safe for travel thereon. Considerable snow had already fallen, and the roads were heavy in consequence.

Our work, as planned, lay many miles up the Chippewa River. In order to reach the desired locality with sufficient supplies to enable us to be gone a month or six weeks, it was necessary to take them on a toboggan made expressly for the uses of this proposed trip. Four men were needed to push and pull the load. After a week of hard labor, our party arrived at the point where the work of surveying the lands was to begin. A place to camp was chosen in the thick woods not far from the river bank, where water would be near by and convenient for the use of the camp. A small, but strong warehouse of logs was first constructed, in which to store the supplies not necessary for immediate use.

Having thus secured the supplies for future use from the reach of any wild beasts roaming in the forests, we put enough of them into our pack sacks to last for a ten days' absence from our storehouse camp. We were about to start, when Abbot, one of our axmen, in chopping a stick of wood, had the misfortune to send the sharp blade of the ax into his foot, deep to the bone. The gash was an ugly one and at once disabled him for further usefulness on this trip. The man must be taken out of the woods where his foot could receive proper care. How was this to be accomplished? Two men alone could possibly have hauled him on the toboggan. The distance to the nearest habitation where a team of horses could be obtained was seventy-five miles. There was but one tent in the outfit and not sufficient blankets to permit of dividing our party of four men. It seemed, therefore, that there was nothing possible to do but for the whole party to retrace its steps to the point where it had been obliged to leave the team behind. The wound in Abbot's foot was cleansed and some balsam having been gathered from the fir trees, the same was laid on a clean piece of white cotton cloth, which, used as a bandage, was placed over the wound and made secure. The wound having been thus protected, Abbot was placed on the toboggan and hauled to the ranch seventy-five miles down the river.

Cruising in the woods is always expensive, even when everything moves on smoothly and without accident. The men's wages are the highest paid for common labor, while the wages of compassmen are much more. The wages of the man of experience and knowledge sufficient to conduct a survey, as well as to judge correctly of the quality and quantity of timber on each subdivision of land selected for purchase, are from seven dollars to ten dollars a day. He must determine the feasibility of bringing the pine logs to water sufficient to float them when cut, and the best and shortest routes for the logging roads to reach the banks of the rivers, or possibly the lakes where the logs are unloaded; and, in these modern days of building logging railroads, he must also locate the lines of the railroads and determine their grades. At the time above alluded to, no logging railroads were in existence, and that part of the expense did not have to be borne. The trip proved to be a very expensive one, and there had not been time before the accident to choose one forty-acre tract of land for entry.

After arriving at Eau Claire where the land office was located, and being delayed some days by other business, we found on going to the land office, that many entries had just been made of lands within the townships in which we had planned to do our work, when the accident to Abbot occurred. This fact necessitated the choosing of other townships in which to go to search for vacant lands on our next trip.

Having acquired from the land office the necessary plats, and having secured a new stock of provisions, we started again to penetrate another part of the pine woods. This trip occupied several weeks in which we were more than ordinarily successful in finding desirable lands, and we hastened to Eau Claire in order that we might secure these by purchase at the land office.

Rumors had been afloat for some time previous, that there were irregularities in the conduct of the office at Eau Claire. These rumors had grown until action was taken by the general land office at Washington, resulting in the temporary closing of the Eau Claire land office for the purpose, as reported, of examining the books of that office.

Many crews of men came out of the woods in the days that followed, with minutes or descriptions of lands which they desired to enter, each in turn to find the land office closed against them. In this dilemma, advice was taken as to what course to pursue. After having taken counsel, I, as well as several others, sent my minutes, together with the necessary cash, to the general land office at Washington, with application to have the same entered for patents. Our minutes and our money, however, were returned to us from Washington with the information that the entry could not be thus made, and that public notice would be given of the future day when the land office at Eau Claire would reopen for the transaction of the government's business. All land hunters of the Eau Claire district were therefore obliged to suspend operations until the time of the reopening of the land office. This occurred on the first of May following.

I was there early and in line to enter the office when its doors should be open at nine o'clock in the morning, and reached the desk simultaneously with the first few to arrive. All were told that in due time, possibly later in that day, they could call for their duplicate receipts of such lands as they were able to secure. There was present that morning, a man by the name of Gilmore, from Washington, who, so far as my knowledge goes, had never before been seen at the Eau Claire land office. My descriptions which I had applied for at the land office on that morning had all been entered by the man from Washington, resulting in the loss of all of my work from January until May. I was not alone in this unlooked for experience, as I was informed by others that they had shared the same fate.

Thus baffled, and believing that there was no prospect of fair treatment in that land office district, I determined to change my seat of operations and to go into some other district. I did so, going next onto the waters of the Wisconsin River, the United States land office for which district, was then located at Stevens Point. Here I remained for many months, operating with a good degree of success, and found the land office most honorably and fairly conducted for all.

The registrar of the land office was Horace Alban, and the receiver was David Quaw. It was always a pleasure to do business with these two gentlemen.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Few Experiences in the New and More Prosperous Field

The life of the land hunter is at nearly all times a strenuous one. He daily experiences hardships such as working his way up rivers with many swift waters, and crossing lakes in birch-bark canoes, in wind storms and in rain; fording streams when he has no boat and when the banks are too far apart to make a temporary bridge by felling trees across the channel; building rafts to cross rivers and lakes; climbing through windfalls; crossing miles of swamp where the bog bottom will scarcely support his weight, and where, when night overtakes him he must temporize a bed of poles on which to lay his weary body to protect it from the wet beneath him; and traveling sometimes all day in an open and burnt country with his bed and board upon his back, the sun's hot rays pressing like a heavy weight upon his head, while myriads of black flies swarm about him and attack every exposed inch of his skin, even penetrating through the hair of his head. These are a few of his experiences, and, if these had not their offsets at certain times, his life would become indeed unbearable. His health, however, and his appetite are generally as good as are enjoyed by any class of the human family. Possessing these advantages gives him much buoyancy of spirit, and, when a good piece of country in the timber is encountered, he is quick to forget the trials and the hardships of the hour before, and to enjoy the improved prospects.

There is doubt whether or not anything finer enters into the joy of living than being in the solitude of the great unbroken forest, surrounded by magnificent, tall, straight, beautiful pine trees, on a day when the sun is casting shadows through their waving tops, listening to the whisperings, formed almost into words, of the needle-like fingers of their leafy boughs, to the warbling of the songsters, and to the chirping of the almost saucy, yet sociable red squirrel who is sure to let one know that he has invaded his dominion. Such days, with such scenes and emotions, do come in the life of the woodsman, the land hunter, who is alone in the forest, except that if he be at all sentimental, he approaches nearer to the Great Creator than at almost any other time in his life's experiences. Those who have read the books of John Borroughs, John Muir, or Ernest Thompson Seton, may appreciate somewhat the joy that comes to the woodsman in his solitude, if he be a lover of nature.

Those only, who have been through the experience, can fully realize how anxious the land looker is to secure the descriptions of valuable lands that he has found when out on one of his cruises, for he knows full well that it is probable that he is not the only man who is in the woods at that time, for the same objects as his own. Sometimes, but rarely, two such men may meet in the forest while at their work. When this occurs, it is a courteous meeting, but attended with much concealed embarrassment, for each knows that the other has found him out, and, if either is in possession of a valuable lot of minutes which he hopes to secure when he reaches the land office, he assumes that the other is probably in possession of the same descriptions, or, at least, a part of them. It then becomes a question which one shall outwit or outtravel the other, from that moment, in a race to the land office where his minutes must be entered, and to the victor belong the spoils, which means in this instance, to the one who is first there to apply for the entry of his land descriptions.

While on one of these cruises on a tributary of the Wisconsin River, with one man only for help and companion, I had left my man, Charlie, on the section line with the two pack sacks, while I had gone into the interior of the section, to survey some of its forties, and to make an estimate of the feet of pine timber standing on each forty. It was in midsummer and in a beautiful piece of forest. Thrifty pine trees were growing amongst the hard woods of maple, birch, and rock elm. Having completed my work in the interior of the section, and having returned, as I believed, to a point within a hundred yards of where Charlie was, I gave the woodsman's call, then listened for Charlie's answer, in order that I might go directly to the point whence it should come. On reaching Charlie, I picked up my pack

and started following the section line. We had traveled less than a quarter of a mile on the line, when I saw on the ground, a pigeon stripped of its feathers. I picked up the bird and found that its body was warm. Immediately I knew that other land lookers were in the same field and had undoubtedly been resting on that section line at the time I had called for Charlie, and they, hearing our voices, had hastily picked up their packs and started on their way out.

There was much pine timber in this township that yet belonged to the government and to the state of Wisconsin. I, at this time, had descriptions of more than four thousand acres of these lands which I was anxious to buy. My interest and anxiety, therefore, became intense when I knew that my presence had been discovered by the parties who had so unintentionally left that bird on their trail. There were no railroads in that part of the country at that time, and Stevens Point, the location of the government land office, lay more than sixty-five miles south of where we then were. Twenty-five miles of this distance was mostly through the woods and must be traveled on foot. It was then late in the afternoon and neither party could make progress after dark. The route through the woods led through a swamp, and, upon reaching it, the tracks of two men were plainly to be seen in the moss, and in places in the wet ground. One man wore heavy boots, with the soles well driven with hobnails, which left their imprints in the moist soil. Coming to a trail that led off into a small settlement, we saw the tracks of one of the two men following that trail. The tracks of the man with the hobnails kept directly on in the course leading to the nearest highway that would take him to Wausau, a thriving lumber town, forty miles distant from Stevens Point. We reached this road at about three o'clock in the afternoon of the next day. We called at the first house approached, and asked the woman if she could give us some bread and milk, and, being answered in the affirmative, we sat down for a rest, and inquired of her if she had seen a woodsman pass. She replied that she had, and that he had left there within an hour of the time of our arrival. The tracks of the boots with the hobnails could be seen occasionally along the road, and, knowing that the stage, the only public conveyance from Wausau to Stevens Point, was not due to leave Wausau for Stevens Point until four o'clock the next morning, we had no further anxiety about overtaking the woodsman who had left there an hour in advance, since we reasoned that he would probably take the stage at its usual hour of leaving, the next day.

From that time on, the journey was leisurely made, and we entered Wausau at a late hour, when most of the laboring community had retired for the night. Having gone to my accustomed hotel, and changed my clothes, I next walked over to a livery stable and hired a team which I drove to Stevens Point during the night, arriving there in time for breakfast. I then went to the home of the land officer before eating my breakfast, told him that I wished to make some entries that morning, and asked him at what hour the land office would be open; and, seeing that my time agreed with that of the land officer, told him that I would be there promptly at nine o'clock, the legal hour for opening the office. I made entry of the list of lands belonging to the United States government, and was told to return at eleven o'clock to compare the duplicate receipts with my application to enter the lands. While I was thus engaged, the stage from Wausau arrived, and a man came into the land office, wearing a pair of boots with hobnails that looked very much the size of the tracks that I had been previously observing on my way out from the woods to Wausau. He immediately asked for the township plat which represented the lands which I had been so anxious to secure. He began reading the descriptions of the lands he wished to enter, and, as he read them, I heard with much interest, the same descriptions that were in my own list, but there were some that were different. Whenever a description was read that checked with one in my list, the land officer replied that those lands were entered. This occurred so many times that he soon inquired when the lands had been entered. He was told, "At nine o'clock this morning." In his perplexity he had also read some of the descriptions that belonged to the state of Wisconsin and which had to be purchased at the land office at Madison, the capital of the state.

"Well," he remarked, "this is hard luck, but I may secure my state land descriptions."

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