

...Time healed ravaged lands

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verse City. This was the first sawmill in the five-county Grand Traverse region.

At that time, the land on which the city stands was a vast park of towering white and Norway pines — so thick that nothing grew beneath them, and the ground was covered with a thick carpet of pine needles. So open and park-like was the forest, one man wrote, "you could ride through it in all directions on horseback at a rapid pace."

Two years later, Perry Hannah, a young Chicago lumberman, bought out Boardman for \$4,500 and with two partners went on to found the Hannah, Lay & Co. lumbering empire. In 1853, Hannah built the "Big Mill" on the Bay where Clinch Park now stands.

From then until 1886, when Hannah sold his lumbering interests and began to concentrate on even more profitable fields in merchandising and banking, the company cut an estimated 500 million board feet of "cork" pine (so called because Norway and white pine would float high, making it easy to get down the rivers). That year marked the end of the great pine lumbering days in this region.

Many people have the notion that the Traverse region was covered almost entirely with giant pine in the early days. That isn't so. The pine forests lay along the river valleys — along the Boardman, Manistee, Pine, Betsie and other area rivers. The uplands were mostly covered with hardwoods — maple, beech, oak and elm.



A log railway on the Boardman River near Mayfield.

These hardwood forests, in their turn, fell also to the lumberman's axe and saw. In 1900 Traverse City had almost 50 small industries devoted to the manufacture of forest products. Some weren't so small. Oval Wood Dish Co., for example, whose products included rolling pins, clothes pins and disposable butter dishes for grocery stores, had a work force of 500 people and the equivalent of a million-dollar annual payroll. O.W.D. moved from Traverse City

to Tupper Lake, N.Y., after the hardwood forest ran out. It is still in operation there; among its many wood products are tongue depressors for doctors!

By 1916, the hardwoods were gone too, and for a few years the land resembled a moonscape.

But time heals almost everything, and today the forests of the Grand Traverse region are back again in their pristine

glory — all, that is, except the big pines; they'll take a little longer since they didn't reseed naturally and had to be grown on plantations.

A few stand of virgin pine are still to be found in the region — those trees weren't big enough in the early days to make lumber. Among them are the big whites and Norways on the campus at Northwestern Michigan College and at Interlochen.

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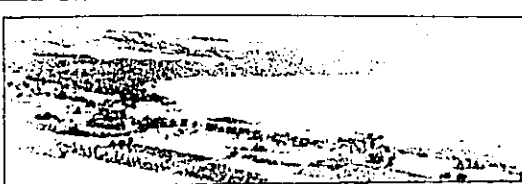
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