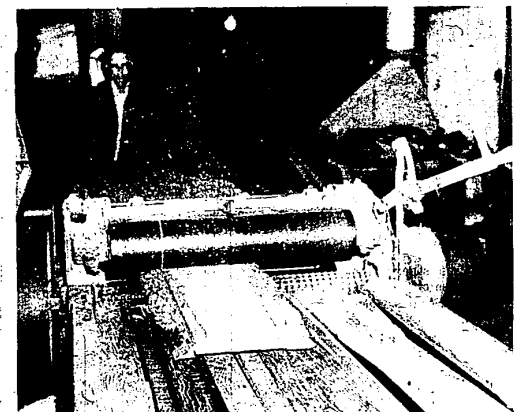


PAUSING — Ken Bassett and Ray LaFond with some of their stock outside the Novi Sawmill.



TRIMS — Ray LaFond operates the trimmer to whittle down a plank.



SPLIT — Ken Bassett watches as the saw bites into a log.

Novi Sawmill, A Reminder Of Early Pioneer Days

By W. W. EDGAR
Observer Writing Editor

There is no neon sign to identify it. In fact, there isn't even a marker at the entrance. But you'll find one of the most interesting business establishments in the state on 12 Mile Road, just a bit east of Novi. It is the Novi Sawmill & Lumber Company, one of the last links with the pioneer days of Michigan when lumbering was the chief occupation as the early settlers cleared the land to establish homes.

"There are only a few of us left," Ray LaFond, one of the two partners, explained with considerable pride. "As a matter of fact I don't know of any in Wayne County — unless the Road Commission may have one."

The grey-haired gent with the look of the outdoorsman, glanced around the yard and the mill where a large 54-inch saw had just sliced a strip off a huge tree trunk, and admitted that he finally was being squeezed by the encroaching development of subdivisions.

"We've been at this location for 25 years," he said, "and prior to that we were on the corner of Hagerty Road where the golf club now is located. There was a lot of timber

around then — but it is fast disappearing. "We now go as far as 25 miles to obtain our lumber," he said, "and at present we are working in the Kensington Park area."

HOW DO they go about clearing a wooded area?

"Do the lumbermen just enter the woods and cut down every tree in sight — with no regard for size or variety?"

"Is their task just one of clearing the land?"

"Oh, no," LaFond stated with considerable emphasis.

"We do what is called select cutting. The State Forester marks the trees that are to be removed. We follow up and cut them down."

"After that we haul them to this location and saw them up for both wholesale and retail sales."

He pointed out that it was strictly a saw mill and that no finished lumber was produced. It is just rough cut and the furniture manufacturers and builders do the rest.

At that moment he was standing close to seven large pieces of tree trunk that were about four feet in diameter.

"Would you believe it," he said, "these pieces all came from one tree — over in South-

field. It was white oak and was about 70 feet high when it was cut."

Just then a housewife entered and inquired about the price of sawdust.

"When she left he returned and said:

"Yes, we use every bit of the log. There is a great market for sawdust."

"It is used for much around shores. It also is used for sweeping compound and now is in great demand at the various schools and colleges for use in the pits for such events as the high jump and pole-vault."

"We even sell a lot of it to big industries," LaFond explained, "where they use it in the tumbling machines."

ASIDE from producing long

planks of various sizes and the sawdust there also is a market for such things as engineering stakes and wedges that are used in the foundries for shipping.

"And the bark of the trees also is finding its way into landscaping," he added. "It not only is decorative but keeps down the weeds."

What would cause a man of his age (he's only 60) to devote his career to the age-old lumbering trade in the face of diminishing timberland?

"Well," he answered with a smile, "in my earlier years I managed an apartment in the city, along with my mother."

"After a while my health failed and the doctor ordered me to look for some kind of outdoor activity."

"I met up with Ken Bassett out here and we started the sawmill. That was years and years ago and I think we are one of the few original owners of any business in the Novi area."

How much longer did he think he could continue business at the old stand?

"I'll be here as long as I can," he said, "for I sure have enjoyed it. But I'm also looking for the time when I can go fishing."

"We haven't made a fortune, but we've had a lot of fun," he added, "because you can get away almost any time you want."

THEN, half apologetically, he added:

"I'm going to take my mother up to our place at Indian River this afternoon. She wants to see the start of the color season and I'm going squirrel hunting."

It is a rare combination — Mr. and Mrs. Ernest F. Chase and daughter, Karen, are new residents of Independence Green, having moved here from Pontiac. They have a son, Edward, who is in his senior year at the University of Michigan.

Their oldest son, Richard is in the Navy, stationed in Norfolk, Va. Richard recently was married to Judy Grooms, of Pontiac. A five-day leave is coming for Richard soon and he and his bride expect to visit his parents at this time.

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F'ton Man Joins State

Louis Van Kempen, 54, of Farmington, has joined the staff of the Michigan Department of

Agriculture as an international marketing specialist.

Van Kempen, who was educated in his native Netherlands, has been a Michigan resident for about 30 years. Prior to joining the department he worked for private industry as director of international marketing. He speaks several languages in addition to English, and is the holder of an international banking certificate.

Developing and expanding world markets for agricultural products is becoming increasingly important to the United States, and 26 states are now working extensively in the field of foreign trade.

It has been estimated that book reports and produce which go across Michigan docks bound for foreign markets adds from \$17 to \$30 to the economy.

On Nov. 11, 12 and 13, new books as well as old favorites will be on display in the school and youngsters will make selections of those that they would like to receive as gifts. Parents may order the books at the PTA Book Fair on Nov. 13 and be assured of pre-holiday delivery.

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Local News Items

MARIE LONG
GR. 4-3114

A GREETING to former Farmingtonians John and Florence Bragg, who now reside in Webbville where they own and operate the Round Table Restaurant on Old Grand River, John and Florence lived for many years on 14 Mile, Farmington Township.

A big welcome to our new neighbors, Floyd and Barbara Weimer and son David, 17, and daughter Joan, 16 who moved to Farmington from Glen Ellyn, Ill. They are living in the former Baird home in Alta Vista. Weimer was transferred here with American Telephone and Telegraph.

Mr. and Mrs. Ernest F. Chase and daughter, Karen, are new residents of Independence Green, having moved here from Pontiac. They have a son, Edward, who is in his senior year at the University of Michigan.

Their oldest son, Richard is in the Navy, stationed in Norfolk, Va. Richard recently was married to Judy Grooms, of Pontiac. A five-day leave is coming for Richard soon and he and his bride expect to visit his parents at this time.

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RE-ELECT CONGRESSMAN JACK McDONALD

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