

Clear Water County

On April 1, 1840 the Legislature of Michigan set off that portion of the State embraced in townships 29, 30, 31 and 32 North of ranges 1, 2, 3 and 4 West as a separate county to be known as Okkuddo County. The name Okkuddo, probably suggested by Henry Schoolcraft, was said to be an Indian word meaning sickly or stomach pains. Thankfully on March 8, 1843, by an act of the Legislature, the name was changed to Otsego, meaning "Clear Water."

Most Indian activity in the county was probably limited to excursions by the tribes from the Great Lake shores into Otsego County area for blueberries and fishing. The area most frequented by the Indians was the shores of Otsego Lake apparently for fishing. It is said that an Indian village once occupied the southern shore of Otsego Lake but no evidence of it remains.

In the spring of 1868 Otsego County was largely an untrodden wilderness, the permanent home of wild beasts and, for three or four months in the winter, the temporary home of a few hardy trappers.

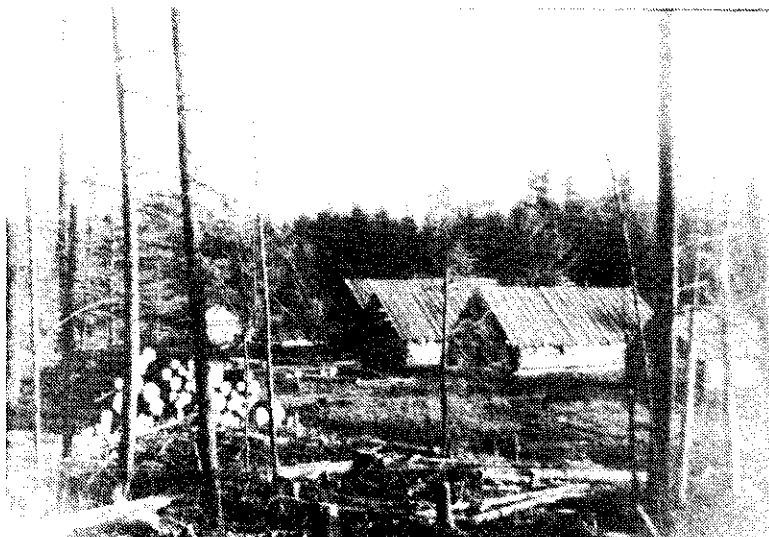
In April, 1868 A. A. Dwight, the pioneer lumberman of the County, fitted out a small expedition in Almont, Lapeer County, consisting of six men and a foreman and one yoke of oxen. This crew literally hewed their way to the border of Crooked Lake along the hunter's trail and commenced to open up the forest, build log cabins, etc. Not much was done in the way of farming that first season. Difficulties were great and many. The men were forty miles from their base of supplies which was Spencer Creek on Torch Lake and much of their "toting" was done on the back of an ox. Some time toward winter they folded their tents like the Arabian and silently stole away in disgust. The

settlers at the west end of the route were sadly disappointed at the supposed failure of Mr. Dwight to establish a new rendezvous for needy homesteaders when in want of a few days work.

Spring on 1869 brought Charles S. Brink with a crew of fourteen men and that summer, although a very wet season, there was accomplished the clearing of twenty five acres all of which was put into crops; however, early frost ruined much of the harvest. In September of 1869 the Torch Lake and Alpena State Road was surveyed and extended from the farm to the center of Section 25, Township 29, where a camp was established and operations conducted for clearing the river for logs in the spring. Snow began to fall the 11th day of October and not only stayed on the ground but continued to increase in depth every few days. A dam was built at the outlet of Chub Lake but went out with the first rush of water. Toward the close of 1869 the snow was two and a half feet on the level.

Mrs. Brink arrived at the camp about the middle of November after a difficult and tedious journey along the old hunter's trail in a rickety sleigh through a blinding snow storm. Mrs. Brink was the first white woman in the County. By March 15, 1870 there were 52 inches of snow in the woods and lumbering was seriously embarrassed. Sometime in May the first log drive was started but the dam was inadequate. The drive only reached a point eight or nine miles below where the building of another dam was commenced known thereafter as Dam No. 2. In the fall of 1870 No. 2 was strengthened, Nos. 3 and 4 were built and the river was cleared for driving the big forks of the AuSable.

During the following winter another stock of logs was



Typical Early Lumbering Camp