

## Otsego Lake Village

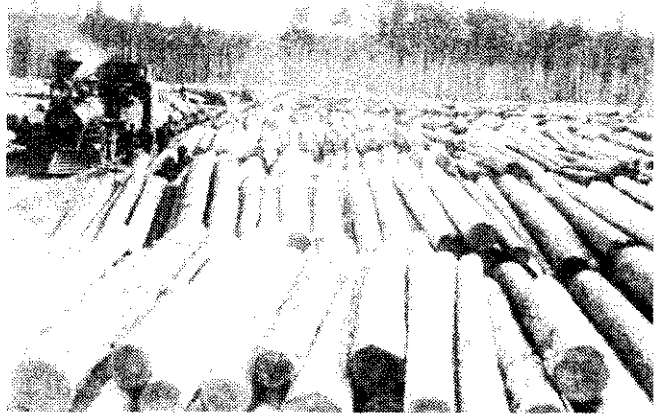
In the late 1850's to mid-1860's lumbermen Gratwick, Smith and Fryer, located on the AuSable River in Oscoda, purchased several thousand acres of land in Chester, Charlton and Otsego Lake Townships, Otsego County. They sent crews to build dams on Lower Chub Creek and the outlet to Otsego Lake in 1969 and 1970 near the present AuSable Club buildings. Because of an extremely wet spring, the dams went out and the venture was unsuccessful. Several of the crew remained to make their homes in the area.

Other lumbermen, Smith, Kelly and Dwight, purchased much of this timberland. They also purchased many parcels from "homesteaders" and encouraged homesteading by Civil War veterans so that they would be able to acquire the timber in that manner. In 1872 a small lumber camp was located in the northwest corner of the tract of land and a settlement started. Invitations were extended to men with families to select choice building lots and erect dwellings. Some early settlers were George A. Finch, Adam Assal and Blackford Smalley. Lumbering was carried on that winter by Alfred Stewart at Otsego Lake and at Chub Creek by C.S. Brink.

Cutting of timber from the town site and the building of houses, business places and the mill progressed rapidly. Houses were built for Osborne H. Kellog and Fred Smith, both of which are still standing and in use today. Others were built for John Hammer, Susan A. Hooker, Adeline Murray, DeWitt Wilson and many others during a two year period.

A large two story structure was built housing a library and township hall below and an opera house above, complete with stage and dressing rooms. A small one room school house was erected but was soon replaced by a two story, three room building. With the physical and financial help of the townspeople, a Methodist Church was constructed nearby. A three story hotel built by Charles Powell supplemented the boarding houses in 1879. A baseball park, surrounded by an eight foot board fence, complete with advertising and bleachers, was constructed by the Company and businessmen. Two grocery stores, a drug store, two dry goods stores, a general store and a butcher shop supplied the material needs of the citizens.

The Company permitted no liquor to be legally sold in the town but rumor has it there was but little hardship since a drug store, the hotel and two "Blind Pigs" accommodated those in need. (Author's note: One of the "Blind Pig" operators, as an old man, always referred to his "penance days" in Jackson Prison as "when I was in college." As a youngster the writer used to be quite proud of the fact that he knew a man who



**Banking ground where cut timber awaited loading onto the train.**

"went to college.")

On March 12, 1875 the County of Otsego was organized with the community of Otsego Lake as the County Seat. The first election was held on April 5, 1875; 174 votes were cast, of which Otsego Lake Township had 76, Livingston Township had 49, Charlton Township had 36 and Elmira Township had 13. The first County officers were as follows: Judge of Probate - Nathan L. Parmater, salary \$250. Sheriff - Samuel Livingston (for whom Livingston Township was named. He never qualified and C. C. Mitchell was appointed at the first meeting of the Board of Supervisors) salary \$250. County Clerk - Charles L. Fuller, who was also Register of Deeds, salary \$1,200 and board and expenses. County Treasurer - Elijah C. Morse, salary \$550. Prosecuting Attorney and Circuit Court Commissioner - Wm. R. Kendrick, salary \$800. Surveyor - Alfred Stewart. Coroners - C. C. Mitchell and Judson Hooker, salary \$25. Superintendent of Poor for three years - Adam Assal, salary \$25 a year.

The first meeting of the Board of Supervisors was held May 1st, 1875 in the Charles Brink Boarding House at Otsego Lake Village. Present were: Charles F. Davis of Elmira, Reuben Murray of Otsego Lake, George H. Smith of Livingston and Thomas G. Woodin of Charlton. At this meeting the Board bargained with Otsego Lake school district for the use of the upper part of the school house for two years to be used as a county building. A building committee was also appointed to look toward erection of suitable county buildings. Later a site was bought of Smith, Kelly and Dwight for \$1,000.