

White River Log and Booming Company

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C1876 – The White River Log and Booming Company, in which all of the area lumbermen owned stock, was headquartered at the Franklin House, considered one of the finest hotels in western Michigan at the time.

According to an item in the History of Muskegon County for 1882, the White River Log and Booming Company was incorporated on 10 September 1870. It was started by a few of the leading and most enterprising citizens who had long seen the necessity of joining efforts on a large scale in order to supply the mills with logs, and to accomplish river improvements that would be impossible when acting as individuals.

The first shareholders were: George E. Dowling, Joseph Heald, John Welch, Edward P. Ferry, Edwin R. Burrows, Charles A. Floyd, Warren Heald, Frank English, G. F. Goodrich, H. B. Cone and Sons, James Dalton, Jr. and Brother. John C. Lewis, John P. Cook and Son, Staples & Covell, George W. Franklin, George M. Smith, D. C. Bowen, I. E. Carleton, Hedges & Green. The first officers elected were Solomon F. Cone, President; George M. Smith, Secretary; George E. Dowling, Treasurer.

The shareholders in 1881 were George E. Dowling, E. P. Ferry, James Dalton & Bro., Staples and Covell, estate of G. M. Smith, C. D. Dowling, J. Alley & Co., George Green, C. H. Cook, Rhoda F. Smith, A. J. and C. E. Covell, David Kelley, Emily S. Dalton, Heald, Murphy & Crepin, and Asa P. Kelley. The officers for 1881 were: Joseph Heald, President; C. Dowling, Secretary; George E. Dowling, Treasurer.

In December 1884, the local paper indicated the following officers had been elected: S. J. Murphy, Jr., President; F. H. White, Secretary-Treasurer; Directors: H. E. Staples, F. H. White, S. H. Lasley, C. E. Covell, C. G. Alley, S. J. Murphey, Jr., and C. H. Cook.

The company gave employment to a force of two hundred river drivers and one hundred men who were required to assist, raft and deliver the logs. The office of the Secretary was in the Franklin Block in Montague.

For the first five years of its existence the company brought down an annual average of seventy million feet of logs, for the next five years ninety million feet, and for the season of 1881 it got out about one hundred and forty million feet.

Production reached its peak in 1881 with 140,000,000 board feet of lumber produced. Perhaps the reason for the major increase of White Lake lumber production that year was the fact that the sawmill workers in Muskegon went on strike. This significantly reduced the amount of lumber shipped from that port. To make up for the loss, retailers in Chicago turned to White Lake mills as alternatives. Even after having shipped a record amount to Chicago, White Lake mills still had over 19,000,000 board feet of finished lumber on hand and another 18,000,000 board feet of logs in the water.

The last lumber drive on White River was reportedly in 1903.