

HISTORY OF THE

LUMBER INDUSTRY IN WINNIPEG.

An interesting historical chapter relating to the early days of lumbering in Winnipeg is found in the recent issue of the Commercial of that city. According to the Keewatin Lumberman, the lumber yard of Dick, Banning & Co., the commercial says:

The transfer of Dick, Banning & Co.'s business to the early days of the lumber trade in Winnipeg and Fort Garry (Winnipeg), so also does the early history of the lumbering industry in the province. The first account of the introduction of saw mill machinery was in the year 1866. Machinery for a combined saw and grist mill was purchased in Chicago, and brought into the country in the year 1866. The motive power for the mill consisted of 25 horse-power engine. The machinery was transported across the country from Chicago to the Mississippi river, where it was loaded upon flat boats and taken up the river to St. Paul, the head of navigation on the river. At St. Paul the machinery was loaded upon wagons and hauled by oxen across to the head water of the Red river, where it was placed upon flat boats built for the purpose, and floated down to Winnipeg. On arriving at Winnipeg the flat boats were broken up and the lumber of which they were composed was sold in the settlement. This was the first lumber imported into the settlement, and was the commencement of what afterwards grew to be a very important trade. At the arrival of the machinery at Winnipeg the work of setting up the pioneer mill was commenced, but owing to lack of knowledge on the part of the operators, considerable difficulty was experienced in making the machinery work. Finally, however, the mill was got into working order, and for a time did good service in supplying the settlement with both flour and lumber. The mill occupied a site within the present corporation limits of the city of Winnipeg, in the vicinity of Brewry's brewery, and was operated by a company of settlers. The investment, it is said, did not prove profitable to the proprietors, though there was always plenty of work to be done, and the mill was frequently kept in operation night and day. The logs sawn were the native timbers of the country, growing in the Winnipeg district, and consisting of poplar, oak, tamarac and spruce. The mill was burned in 1862, and so ended the first milling enterprise in the settlement.

About the time of the destruction of the pioneer mill another mill was established by Andrew McErmot. This was also a combined saw and grist mill, and was located near the spot where afterwards were built the Dick & Banning and the Jarvis & Berridge mills, on the Red river. Like its predecessor, this mill was also burned down, after serving the settlement for about ten years.

About this time the flat boat trade on the Red river was commencing to assume some importance, and lumber as well as other supplies were coming in from the United States in this way. It was also customary to sell the material of which the flat boats were composed for lumber, as the boats could not be taken back up stream to advantage. Lumbering on the upper Mississippi had by this time developed to a considerable extent, and lumber was coming into Mani-

toba by the flat boat route from that quarter from mills located at Minneapolis, Brainerd and other points on the Mississippi river. With the construction of the Northern Pacific railway the lumber was carried to Moorehead, and thence brought down the river to Winnipeg. W. J. McAuley, of St. Paul, was the first to go into this business extensively. In 1873 he brought the first stock of lumber of importance into the settlement, which was rafted down the river as described. During the following summer McAuley & Co. commenced the erection of a saw mill at Winnipeg. This mill was sold to Jarvis & Berridge in 1879, but shortly afterwards was blown up and destroyed. It had a capacity of 30,000 to 35,000 feet per day. A new mill was built and a company formed, called the Winnipeg Lumber Co., which succeeded Jarvis & Berridge. The new company came into business at a critical time, when the lumber business was going down with the collapse of the "boom." The company did not prove a success, and the property soon passed into the hands of the banks which had advanced money to the projectors. The machinery of this mill was sold and moved to other points, some to Rat Portage. It was the largest mill ever established in Winnipeg, and had a capacity of about 100,000 feet daily, with battery of five boilers, and 250 to 300 horse-power.

The lumber firm of Dick, Banning & Co. date their commencement of operations here from the year 1872. Mr. Dick, who had visited the country during the previous year to look over the situation, returned from Ontario in 1872, with machinery for a portable mill. The machinery arrived by flat boat from Moorehead, and the cost of transportation from St. Paul was \$1,410.70. The mill building was burned some years ago, but the machinery had been removed previous to the destruction of the building. Mr. Dick formed a partnership with the late W. W. Banning, who died in 1885. The mill was operated up to 1882, when the firm bought out a mill which had been established at Keewatin, Lake of the Woods, by W. J. McAuley. The Winnipeg mill was then closed and the machinery moved to Keewatin, and a portion was sold to establish a mill in the Rocky Mountains. The timber sawn at the Winnipeg mill was such as the district afforded. The firm also operated a mill on Lake Winnipeg for a while, where they built a mill in 1878, but sold out a few years later. This firm brought the first lumber from eastern Canada to Manitoba, early in the seventies. It came in bond via Duluth, thence by the Northern Pacific railway to Moorehead, and from the latter place it was brought down the Red river to Winnipeg. This firm imported lumber and building materials from Minneapolis and other points largely, especially during the "boom" days, during which time it was almost impossible to keep up with the demand. In 1882 the firm brought in 10,000,000 feet, and paid nearly \$150,000 in freight that year. These were the halcyon days for the lumber trade in Winnipeg, when purchasers stood on guard waiting for a car of lumber to arrive, when it would be gobbled up, regardless of price, and always for cash down. The trade, however, made up for it during the following years, when stocks were greatly in excess of demand and prices were cut down to unprofitable figures. Before the "boom" period prices of

common lumber ranged about \$25 per M. During the "boom" period prices went up to \$30 per M. for common lumber, but after that period declined to \$15 to \$18 per M.

In the year 1882 J. R. Sutherland built a mill at St. Boniface, across the river from Winnipeg. The mill was a very good one, and had a capacity of 60,000 to 70,000 feet. It was a double circular mill, and was destroyed by fire in 1884. In 1882 D. E. Sprague built a mill in Winnipeg, single circular, with a capacity of 40,000 feet in ten hours. This mill is the only one which has been in operation here of late years, and it has been operated every year since established except during one season. The logs sawn at this mill come from the Red Lake district of Minnesota, down the Red River, and some good logs are also secured on the Rosseau river in Manitoba. The timber is pine. There is little timber in Manitoba tributary to Winnipeg now. On the Rosseau river, a tributary of the Red river, in Manitoba, there formerly was a considerable pine country, but this is now nearly exhausted.

This sketch covers briefly the main points connected with lumbering at Winnipeg. With the construction of the Canadian Pacific railway eastward from Winnipeg to Lake of the Woods, the centre of the lumbering industry was established at the Lake of the Woods towns of Rat Portage and Keewatin. A number of mills have been established at these points, and for many years the Lake of the Woods mills have remained the principal source of the lumber supply for Manitoba and the prairie region bordering Manitoba to the west. Supplementary lumber supplies are drawn from such districts as Lake Winnipeg and other timber regions in the northern part of Manitoba.

Present indications point to a revival of the lumbering industry at Winnipeg. The improvement of the St. Andrew's rapids, now under way, will permit of bringing logs up the Red river from Lake Winnipeg to the city, and this may possibly be taken advantage of to some extent to bring logs from the timber country tributary to the lake to this city for sawing. The construction of the South-eastern railway from Winnipeg to the Rainy river country is another important factor which promises to aid in reviving the lumber milling industry here. The Rat Portage Lumber Co.—the largest institution of the kind in the west, operating several mills at the Lake of the Woods—has already made arrangements to establish a mill in Winnipeg. This new mill will be in operation, it is expected, next spring, and the logs for the mill will be brought from the Rainy river district, over the Southeastern railway. Thus Winnipeg promises to once more regain to some extent at least some prominence as a lumber manufacturing centre for Manitoba.

The operation of cutting down an elm tree over three feet in diameter at Jacksonville, Ill., by means of wires heated by electricity, was successful, though slow. The cautery device consisted of a piece of 7-strand No. 16 iron wire connected with an electric light circuit, three of the strands being removed to afford air space within the cable. The current used was from 120 to 135 amperes, the voltage at the machine being varied from 80 to 115. After the wire became heated it was pulled back and forth like a cross cut saw, and in this manner it burned its way through the tree, the time consumed being 2 hours and 10 minutes.