

The Town History Corner

by Harry L.D. Weldon, Town Historian

The 600 is a place in Dryden's Town, it is a large tract of land with white pine and hemlock very near the Town of Caroline's border line in the most western corner of Tompkins County and adjuncts to the Town of Richford in Tioga County.

Parts of this corner even have overlapping survey boundaries from mapping done in the late 1790's of the Massachusetts Ten Towns. These 600 acres, which is not generally well known these days, but many years ago it was a center for some Tompkins County lumber industry.

The approach to the 600 in those days, as well to today's deer hunters, is best made from Caroline Town side. The Flat Iron Road, so named because its lie with Route 79 and the Harford Road, shows as a triangle on maps making the print of a flat iron.

A study of 1866 Gazetteer or atlas indicates that there were two saw mills along a tributary, originating in the 600 (acres), of Six Mile Creek through Slaterville. Records indicate that there was a saw mill along the tributary creek as early as 1808 at a spot still known as Bottom Mill.

The names of places in this area strike of some of those found in many mountainous areas, such as the Adirondacks and the Catskills. These colloquial names are strictly local in sound, yet are of the character of undeveloped lands that were given to such in the early days of settlement. There is Sodom in a secluded area at the north end of a valley between two hills within the 600. And there is Cannon, to the east of the 600 with a road leading to the log cuttings.

One account reports of a magnificent growth of white pine and hemlocks (of virgin growth) and further states that these monarchs of the primeval forest were as much as five feet in diameter and reached skyward well up to hundreds of feet.

Typical of the period, logs were hewed-split in measured sizes with use of an "up-and-down" saw. Many of these mills were steam powered, especially those that were located well within the lumbering areas, such as the second mill.

The 600 mill produced lumber that was desired by settlers as well as entrepreneurs. In those days, many a fortune was made harvesting the "wooden gold sticks."

Old timers still living tell of being in crews that harvested parts of this stand with two man "push-pull" saws and dragging the logs with horse or mule teams to waiting portable saw mills. Others relate of doing this with gas operated chain saws and dragging the logs with a diesel powered tractors (i.e. log mules) to waiting tractor-trailers for transport to distant saw mills and industrial factories.

It was a number of years ago while deer hunting on Hammond Hill off the Irish Settlement Road, when it was one of those days that the fish weren't bitin' (I mean the deer were in hiding). Due to a heavy fog, I decided to follow the 600 Road from that (north) end on foot!

It seemed like that it took forever to walk to the other (south) end of the full length of the 600 (acres) Hundred Road, but I did it— I walked on historical paths of those grand old loggers!

