

NORTH WOOD LOGGERS

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

I'm sure any Pennsylvanian has the time to read a new book-- only 42 pages and with 43 pictures. It's titled "Logging in the Pennsylvania North Woods" and it's about Pennsylvania's famous loggers--tough men of the industry the was once Pennsylvania's most productive. Mel Horst and Elmer Smith of Lebanon have come up with it--and its worth short reading and enjoyment. The loggers were quite a bunch, particularly before the development of the railroads. They would assemble North Woods Logs up around Lock Haven--25 to 80 feet long, lashed together so that there were 100 to 150 feet long--rafts of logs--and about 24 feet wide. A fleet consisted of two rafts together, and it took four tough men to handle it. In the spring, during high water along the Susquehanna the raftsmen would thunder down the river to Middletown, Marietta, Columbia and Wrightsville. Occasionally these wild log-men would thunder right over the Conewango Falls down river. They'd be dressed in style, with bear, fox or coonskin caps, and in Pennsylvania frock coats. What a sight! Greenhorns making their first trip through the Conewango Falls were expected to treat the coattail--buy whiskey for all, or they'd cut off the tail of his frock coat. After the log-men made their trip down the Susquehanna, they would return the hundred miles or more up-State to the Northwoods, an enjoyable trip, for there were taverns every four or five miles on the trail. The smart Pennsylvania Dutch who operated the taverns sometimes sent small boats out to the down-stream rafts encouraging

the hard-drinking logmen to come ashore for a quickie. And they did! And what great Pennsylvania grog it was. History tells us the log-men drank Squirrel--which made you want to climb trees--fighting and sleeping whiskey, which are self-explanatory, and Logger's Delight. The latter was said to be gain alcohol, aged in a barrel with four pounds of fine-cut tobacco to the gallon. These men of the north-woods hand-sawed the great Pennsylvania pine and hemlock, moved them by horse and oxen and then floated them down the river. Hard work by hard men, who at the time of the Civil War put Pennsylvania in the forefront of the nation in the lumbering industry. The hemlock forests of Potter, Elk, McKean, Clarion and Forest counties were unsurpassed in the entire world. But those forests were worked hard so that now, despite the fact that Pennsylvania has 29 millions acres of woods, only 25,000 of them are original forest. Thanks to Gifford PinChot, who had the courage to lead the thinking on conservation, it can be imagined that someday, lumbering might come back to Pennsylvania as an important industry. Those were the good old days--the lodging days of Pennsylvania's past--with men who worked hard in Pennsylvania's forests and along its rivers and whose industry and sweat is still seen in the labor market which Pennsylvania claims.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.