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Comments: Back of our heritage, Logging again in our Forest , remembering the early lumber industry which was strongly influenced by its geography, a network of creeks and streams which played a crucial part in transporting logs to the mills. Waterways also transported the finished product from the mills to markets on the lower lakes. The lumber would be piled high on the decks of modified sailing ships known as "barges" or lumber "hookers." Later, railroads transported much of the lumber. It was Michigan white pine that provided the lumber for the building of the Midwest and prairie towns, and frequently was exported to European markets. It was also Michigan pine that rebuilt Chicago after its great fire. Pine was popular with the loggers because it floated easily and thus could be driven down rivers and streams to the mills, or assembled into rafts and transported over the open lakes. Denser hardwoods like maple could not easily be felled and rapidly dulled the saws in the mills. The unmarketable hardwoods were often burned in local kilns to make charcoal for iron production. Three Michigan inventions of the 1870s were responsible for increasing the transportation of logs regardless of the weather. The first of the innovations called "big wheels," was invented by Cyrus Overpack of downstate Manistee. These ten feet diameter wheels were pulled by a team of oxen or horses and allowed rapid movement of logs without the need for snow cover. The high axle clearance easily allowed the wheels to move over stumps and rough clear cut ground. Prior to the big wheels, the logs were normally "skidded out" with oxen or horse teams to the main logging road. There they were loaded onto sleighs and hauled over ice roads to river banks where they were stored until spring. The ice roads were also primarily a Michigan innovation. The unique roads were made by running a sprinkler over a logging road during frigid nights. By morning, the normally rutted and rough trails were turned into sheets of ice. During the day heavy sleighs loaded with logs could rapidly move over them. The third innovation was the use of a narrow gauge railway to haul the logs instead of sleds or big wheels. First tried in Clare County, Michigan, during the winter of 1876-77 by Winfield Scott Gerrish, the narrow gauge railroad rapidly became an industry standard.