

Prepared by Daniel Crooked of Jeannette, a survivor of the many lumber & Raftmen of the Allegheny & Ohio

RAFTING AND RUNNING RIVERS.

Read at Meeting August 1916

When I was a boy they run rafts from Goose Creek down the Chadakoin to the Cassadaga. They had to raft them about twelve feet wide.

We run rafts from the Kennedy Mills to the Allegheny River at Warren, Pa. We rafted them in five platform pieces, a platform we called sixteen feet square. We put two of those fives together and run them in ten platform pieces to Warren Eddy, then coupled them together, put six tens together and made an Allegheny Fleet which we run down the Allegheny to Pittsburgh.

When a boy I talked with Guy Irvine, Harry Abbot and Joseph Lindsey of Lander. They were keel boatmen and lumbermen in an early day. The rafts that they run were not large and they used to peel moose wood bark in the woods and make cables to use in stopping their rafts. They also used grousers. A grouser is a stick about eight or ten feet long and about three inches through and they slipped that down between the couplings of the raft and groused along on bottom to land their rafts. With their moose wood cables, hickory withes and grousers they managed to stop their rafts. I used to talk with these men considerable. Guy Irvine at one time owned fifty thousand acres of timberland near the Allegheny River and its tributaries.

Now I will give you my own experience in later days. We run larger rafts, rafted them deeper and had long cables to land them with. The way we rafted: We would raft in five platform pieces on the Allegheny River. We used grubs of Oak and Hickory furnished by the Indians of the Cattaraugus and the Alle-

gheny Reservations. The Indians dug the little trees up by the roots and would cut them about four feet long, leaving a lump on the bottom about four or five inches big. We used for running planks for our rafts, a plank about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick and about ten inches wide and that formed the bottom of our rafts and platforms. After we had rafted our boards around these grubs we would bind them off with other planks. We used wedges about six inches long made from Ash plank, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches thick. In binding off a raft we would use an instrument called a witch which was about six feet long and had a clevis over the end which was ironed off. We would take this witch, slip a clevis over the grub and use a block for a fulkrum.

In making the oars to run the rafts, we cut little Pine trees about seven inches through at the large end and they would be tapered to about two inches at the small end. We would stick them up about a year before we used them, to let them season. An oar blade would be a plank $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick at one end, and $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch thick at the other and would be fourteen inches wide and about fourteen feet long and we would pin them on to the oar stem. We would bore a two inch hole through the oar stem about seven feet from the large end to the raft and insert a thole pin there for the oar to hang on, then we would bore holes in a board and slip on to the grub at the corner of the raft and over the thole pin to hold the oar in place. We called these bridles.

We rafted from twenty to twenty-six courses deep, five platform pieces. At Redhouse, we coupled four of these five platform pieces together and run them to Warren. We called them a Warren Fleet. Then when we got to Warren, we would take about three of these Warren Fleets to make an Allegheny Fleet to run to

Pittsburgh. When we got to Pittsburgh we would take from two to three Allegheny Fleets and couple them up to make an Ohio Fleet. Sometimes these would be loaded with shingles.

The modern way of stopping a raft was to take a stick of timber ten inches through and bore holes in it and slip it on to about three or four grubs, wedge it on tight and use hemp line from five hundred to a thousand feet long, to snub and land the raft.

Then, we used to run boats from William Falconer's mill down the Chadakoin to the Cassadaga, down the Cassadaga to the Conewango and down the Conewango to Warren, Pa., and peddle such wares as were manufactured in Jamestown along the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers. Myself, Nathan Brown and two or three others, in those days, run all the Jamestown manufactured articles down the river for a market.

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