

## Michigan Lumbering History, Lewiston and Hartwick Pines

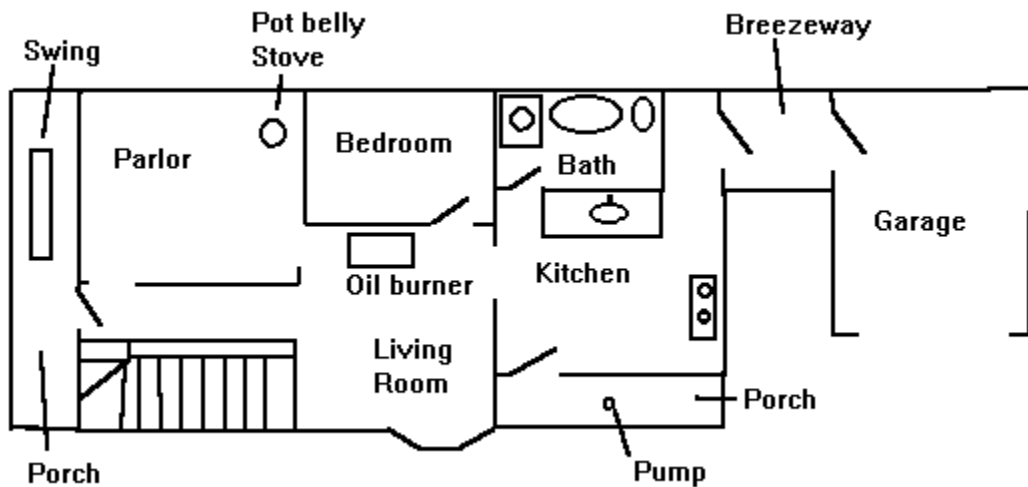
In 1927, Karen Michelson Hartwick donated a tract of land near Grayling to the State of Michigan with 86 acres of virgin white pine and 4,000 acres of land where timber was cut. That became Hartwick Pines State Park. The park was named in honor of her husband Edward who died of meningitis in France while serving as a soldier in World War I. He also served in the Spanish-American war. In the 1930's the Civilian Conservation Corps built a replica of a logging camp at the park near the stand of virgin pines. That is now the Lumberman's Museum.

The Michelson family had ownership interests in the Michelson-Hanson company in Lewiston and the Salling-Hanson lumber company in Grayling. In Lewiston, David Kneeland was the manager of the Michelson-Hanson company and later founded the Kneeland-Bigelow with Herman Lunden and Charles Bigelow. That company was one that pioneered the use of the "Big Wheels" method of hauling logs out of the forest. The Big Wheels were used in the spring when the ground was muddy. Normally the lumbermen preferred working in the winter when they could use sleds to carry the logs.

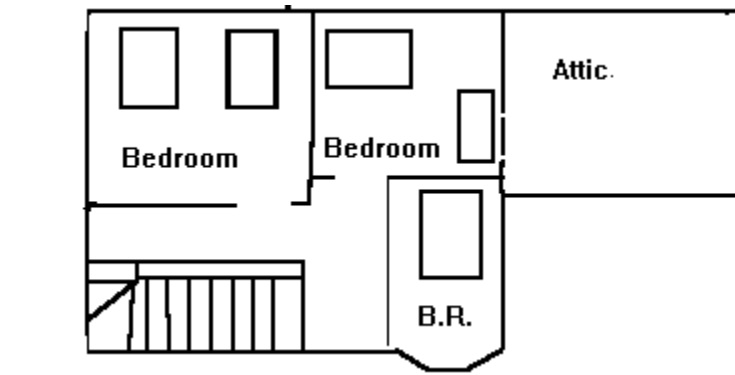


In the 1950's my grandmother's uncle Elmer Thompson left her a house in Lewiston that was next door to the house that David Kneeland built. Elmer used this as a hunting lodge and owned several other vacation properties in the area. Our family used this property as a vacation home for many years. We knew George and Martha Sachs who owned the David Kneeland house and the local Sachs Hardware Store. Later, we found out that the house we owned was built by David Kneeland's brother Otis in 1890.

It was Victorian in design with a bay window that extended up to the second floor. In the kitchen, there was a black iron wood stove that was used for cooking. There were five bedrooms, and I remember at one time we had 16 people sleeping in the house. The interior had beautiful carved oak woodwork, but it didn't appear that anything was built square. In the living room, there was a small hill that descended into the kitchen. As you ascended the stairs, there was a diamond shaped window that looked out into the yard. At the head of the stairs, there was an open bedroom that was closed off by a curtain.



The master bedroom was large, with two queen-sized beds. Next to that was a smaller spooky bedroom we called the "bat room" because it was painted dark green and had a door to the attic where on occasion bats would get into the house. In the living room there was an old mission style writing desk and a library of books dating to 1863. A smaller bedroom was next to the kitchen. The parlor had a double bed and a pot-bellied stove. On the back porch, there was a hand pump for water and through the kitchen, a breezeway connected the garage to the house. Behind the garage, there was an outhouse. A bathroom was built next to the kitchen.



My memories of vacations there are filled with the scent of pine, the crystal-clear water from the tap, drives into the woods with my grandparents looking for deer, fishing in Gee Lake using the boat my great-grandfather made from the gas tank of a World War II bomber and the mile-long hike to the beach on East Twin Lake. I remember that we spent a small fortune playing miniature golf at the ice cream stand east of town. I'm glad to see

that it is still there. Also, I fondly remember the comic books, gags and tricks, glider airplanes, records, and milk shakes we bought at Orwick's drug store and the village gift shop. Unsuspecting guests at our house would fall victim to whoopee cushions, fake spiders, pepper gum, and fake vomit, courtesy of Orwick's. The trees suffered the indignity of having balsa wood airplanes land in them, and being probed with a cane fishing pole until they would finally drop into the waiting arms of a crying kid.

Fourth of July fireworks was always a tradition at Bingham Park. We probably saw the fireworks there more often than we did at home. We spent a great deal of time at the lake, and especially enjoyed the slides that went into the water. That is where I learned to water ski. I remember buying 5 cent Big Time candy bars at the little store at the beach next to the bait shop. And, I recall they used to have the best hamburgers which tasted so good after a nice swim. I would buy the latest color flatfish at the bait shop and spend all day fishing at Gee lake or McCormick lake. As usual, my brother was the one who caught all the fish.



My dad told stories about Uncle Elmer, who was a road construction engineer during the Good Roads project. He saved a [photo album](#) of his road crew along with his hunting and fishing pictures. He also owned a cabin in the woods near the K-B camp and McCormick Lake where he dammed up a stream and had a waterwheel that generated electricity for his cabin.



He also rented cabins on East Twin Lake. That lake wasn't all that good for fishing, so he would go to neighboring lakes, catch a mess of fish and put them in his fish cage by the dock. People would ask him where he caught the fish, and he would tell them, "Oh, out by that island out there."

Once he was skinning a deer in his front yard out of season, and the game warden lived across the street. A passerby asked him, "Aren't you afraid he's gonna catch ya?"

"Nah, he's out in the woods looking for violators!"

My grandmother sold the house in 1972. Mrs. Sachs bought the house to store her antiques. Later we found out that the house had been torn down. The house Mrs. Sachs owned is now the home of the Lewiston Historical Society, and the land where our house used to be is part of that property.

In 1991 we were on our way back from Florida and we met a lady at the motel pool who told us that she had grown up in Lewiston and lived there her entire life. Her name was Arleta Klein. We asked her if she knew Elmer Thompson, and she said, "Oh yes, we were neighbors."

Her house was near his cabin with the waterwheel. She arranged for my brother, father and me to meet with her at her house, and she had invited members of the Lewiston Historical Society who had written books about the lumbering history. One was Herman Lunden Miller, whose grandfather Herman Lunden ran one of the lumber camps back in the day. His book was

*Lumbering in the Early Twentieth Century Michigan: The Kneeland-Bigelow Company Experience*

History of a large lumbering company operating in northern Michigan from 1901-1929. The company's methods of moving logs from the woods to the sawmills is described in detail with illustrative photos and drawings. Written by the founder's grandson and drawing upon family papers, the book provides a clear look at how a lumber company worked in the early 1900's. 80 pages with index, bibliography and appendices. (from Amazon)

Herman Lunden was born in Sweden in 1859, the son of a lumberman. In 1877 as a young man still in his teens, he immigrated to the United States to seek work in the lumbering camps and sawmills of Michigan.

During the 1890s Lunden was company scout for Michelson and Hanson Lumbering Company. Because the company would not exploit hardwoods and thus lengthen the life of the operation, Lunden decided to strike out on his own. Needing capital for his venture, he approached David Kneeland, the supervisor of Michelson and Hanson's general office in Lewiston, Michigan. In turn, Kneeland went to Charles Bigelow, a successful Bay City lumber salesman. The two men decided to provide the necessary capital and in 1901, the Kneeland-Bigelow company was formed.

Lunden served as the coordinator for all of the company camps in Montmorency County. The first camp was about five miles north of Lewiston. A permanent headquarters was later established at K-B valley, nine miles west of Atlanta, Michigan. All K-B timber was shipped by the Michigan Central Railroad to Bay City where the main office and two sawmills were located. During the next few years, Lunden gradually shifted his base of operations into Otsego and Cheboygan Counties.

Eventually Kneeland-Bigelow had camps spread throughout Montmorency, Otsego, Presque Isle, Cheboygan and Crawford counties. The company owned approximately 27,500 acres of land, carrying about 700,000,000 board feet measure, and timber rights on about 15,000 additional acres.

Herman Lunden, in addition to his business interest, was active in various public service endeavors. He served on the State Conservation Commission during the early 1920's where he championed the cause of reforestation and fire prevention. Lunden was also involved in various county road commissions and the Michigan Association of Road Commissions and Engineers, where he argued that "good roads" were essential to the development of the business and recreational potential of the upper and northern lower peninsulas. A booster to his home region, Lunden served on the Upper Peninsula Development Bureau and the Tri-State Development Congress, and was a supporter of the Northeastern Michigan Development Bureau. Lunde was an active Republican, serving on the Republican State Central Committee.

Herman Lunden died January 11, 1929 after having given a talk before the Bay City Chamber of Commerce about the paving of M-76 from Standish to Roscommon.

The other author we met was Roberta Hanna, who wrote a book about growing up in Lewiston. Her book was

*The Lewiston Story and Montmorency County Notes*

Her book showed the map of Lewiston about 1910, and who owned the houses. In that book, it showed our house was owned by Otis Kneeland. It also told the story of his four children dying of diphtheria all within days of each other.

The sawmill was near East Twin Lake near where the public beach is today, and the railroad yard where logs were brought to the mill. If a saw hit a nail or a stone while sawing a log, it would create a spark that would ignite the sawdust. That is why Kneeland Street in the business district of Lewiston is so wide. They did that in case a fire broke out at the sawmill, there would be a fire break if one side of the town caught fire. Our house was one of only three homes that survived three different fires that burned down the town during the lumbering years.

The lumber camps were usually run during the winter so that the logs could be loaded on sleds that could be pulled by horses; otherwise they were hauled out in the spring using the big wheels. The

railroads were narrow gauge, and they would deliver the logs to a spot on the Au Sable, Manistee, Tittabawassee or Muskegon Rivers. This was called a “siding” and there they would roll the logs off the railroad car into the river.

On US 127 north of Clare, there is a road called Mannsiding Road where a Mr. Mann ran the siding there. The logs would be floated to Muskegon, Manistee, Oscoda or Saginaw. Each log would be branded with the logo of the company that owned it on the end of the log. On occasion, logs would be stolen by someone who would cut off the end and put their own logo on it.

The lumber boom in Michigan began after the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. That was a dry summer, and at the same time the towns of Alpena, Holland, Manistee and Port Huron in Michigan burned. The port town of Singapore burned and was subsequently buried by the Saugatuck sand dunes. Fire also spread all the way across Michigan’s Thumb area. These events triggered demand for Michigan lumber to help rebuild these cities. Many towns in northern Michigan were built around the logging industry. Deward, north of Grayling, was built by developer D. E. Ward who owned a tract of land there and had it clear cut. An entire town grew up around the project, but died out in 1912 when all of the trees were cut. Another rollicking lumber boom town was Meredith, between Gladwin and Houghton Lake.

Among the documents we found in the Lewiston house was an old ledger from one of the logging ghost towns in Lake County called Summitville. Summitville was on the Flint and Pere Marquette Railroad. The Summitville ledger was from my 3x great grandfather Samuel G. Randall who ran the train station. Entries in the ledger were from 1839 to 1859, and interspersed between the pages were newspaper clippings, poetry and drawings from earlier and later.

### **The Ghost Town of Summitville**

<https://www.rae.org/essay-links/summitville>

We also found a handwritten doctor’s home remedy and recipe book dated 1846, with the names of Jerome, Lucy, Benjamin and Wallace Hale in it. That book is a treasure trove of the way life used to be over 150 years ago. Just a while ago, I was able to trace the descendants of the author of this book to a mid-Michigan family.

### **Dr. Hale’s Home Remedy and Recipe Book**

<https://www.rae.org/product-page/dr-hale-s-home-remedy-and-recipe-book>

Both of these documents will be available for people to look at in the State of Michigan Archives.