

## Lumbering on Dividing Ridge

*(Information contributed by John Oester - taken from the book, "The Berlin Area-Published by the Berlin Area Historical Society 1977".)*

Forests covered most of the land the pioneers settled. Therefore, lumbering became a leading industry. The first sawmills were very crude compared to the modern mills.



Sawmill owned and operated by Frank and John Scheller, 1905

The farm of Oliver Deeter was located two miles from Dividing Ridge. In 1900 he owned and operated an up-and-down sawmill. The pictured steam-operated, wood-fired sawmill was located on the Oliver Deeter farm in 1905. This mill was owned and run by Frank and John Scheller. The land is now owned by Harold Deeter, Jr.

A tram road or wooden railroad ran from this mill to the farm of Edward Coughenour now owned by John Deeter. Sections of the tram road are still visible. The horse-drawn tram car hauled the logs to the mill to be sawed. Lumber was then loaded on wagon and taken to the railroad at Fairhope.

Some of the workmen pictured are George Core on the ladder, Sam Deeter on the pony, Jackson Ware, Wil Ware, Ed Coughenour, Oliver Deeter, Frank Barkley, and John Scheller.

The B & O Railroad built a tram road of wooden rails and ties at Fairhope. It is known to have existed at least one hundred years ago, as it is pictured in the Beers Atlas of 1876. At one time it is believed to have been from seven to ten miles long. It eventually ran to sawmills located in Fairhope, one on the Joseph and later Henry Miller farm, now owned by Regis Wolff; the Oliver Deeter farm, now owned by Gilbert McQuade. A sawmill was also located on the Fred Kern farm, now owned by Julius Kern.

A water-powered sawmill was operated by Joseph Miller on his farm along Hillegass Run. In 1923 his son, Henry Miller, owned and operated a sawmill powered by a steam engine at the same location. This mill was then converted to gasoline and used until 1945 or 1946, when it was then converted to gasoline and used until 1945 or 1946, when it was sold to Ed. Grimm and George Zimmerman.

Henry Miller also had a shingle mill on his farm where he sawed and packed shingles. This mill was moved from place to place as shingles were needed for barns and other buildings. This shingle mill is now in a museum at Lancaster, Pa.



Doc and Sam, the two horses pictured, were owned by George and Charles Scheller. A sawmill owned by the Schellers was located down Burk Hollow on the John Bower farm in 1908. They also had a mill operation at the Henry Hoppert farm.

The loaded wagon was on its way to the railroad at Fairhope. Irvin Robb, Millard Coughenour, and Elmer Glesner are the workmen.

Breastwork Run, a favorite resort of fishermen on account of the large number of brook trout which it contains, derives its name from breastworks thrown up at its source during the Revolutionary War. "Breastworks" is defined as a low, defensive wall of earth or stone, often temporary. The head of the stream is on the farm owned by Henry Wolfhope, a mile north of the Pittsburgh Turnpike. The pictured cannonball was found by John Restly along Breastwork Run several miles below Forbes Road. Supposedly, it was used during the war.

The Babcock Lumber Company built a standard gauge railroad which extended from Babcock Mill at Ashtola through Breastwork to New Baltimore in 1907. Logs were taken off the mountain with horses or were slid down the mountain and loaded onto the railroad. Several camps were provided for the lumbermen who were mainly Austrians.

Diminishing timber resources forecast the closing of the mills after 1910. The logging railroad was working along Breastwork Run in Allegheny Township and over the summit of the Allegheny Mountain. As cutting continued the quality lessened, and this factor, along with increasing transportation costs, forced the company to discontinue cutting. The present Breastwork road follows much of the same route as the logging railroad from New Baltimore to Route 30.

About 1920 McNeal Lumber Company bought the Pugh tract of land located along Route 30 in Allegheny Township. A large lumbering operation was established. Logs were hauled by truck from various areas into this mill. A village, mainly employees of McNeal Lumber Company, was soon in evidence. As was to be expected this was known as "McNeal Town." A one-room school was built for the education of the children. This little town flourished only as long as the timbering flourished. Today there is very little remaining of this "lumbering town."

Over the years other sawmills in Allegheny Township were the Cooper Lumber Company, Lawrence Housel, and many other locally owned mills.

Reformatted: 21 March 2022

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