

The Mill Brings Prosperity to Thompson

The early 1880's brought tremendous change to the Thompson area. The abundance of nearby virgin timber and the natural harbor attracted the interest of the Delta Lumber Company of Detroit. Under the leadership of company president E.L.Thompson, a lumber mill was built on the shore of Lake Michigan, just south of where you are standing. If you look carefully you can see the remains of the brick and concrete foundation on which the mill engine was located.



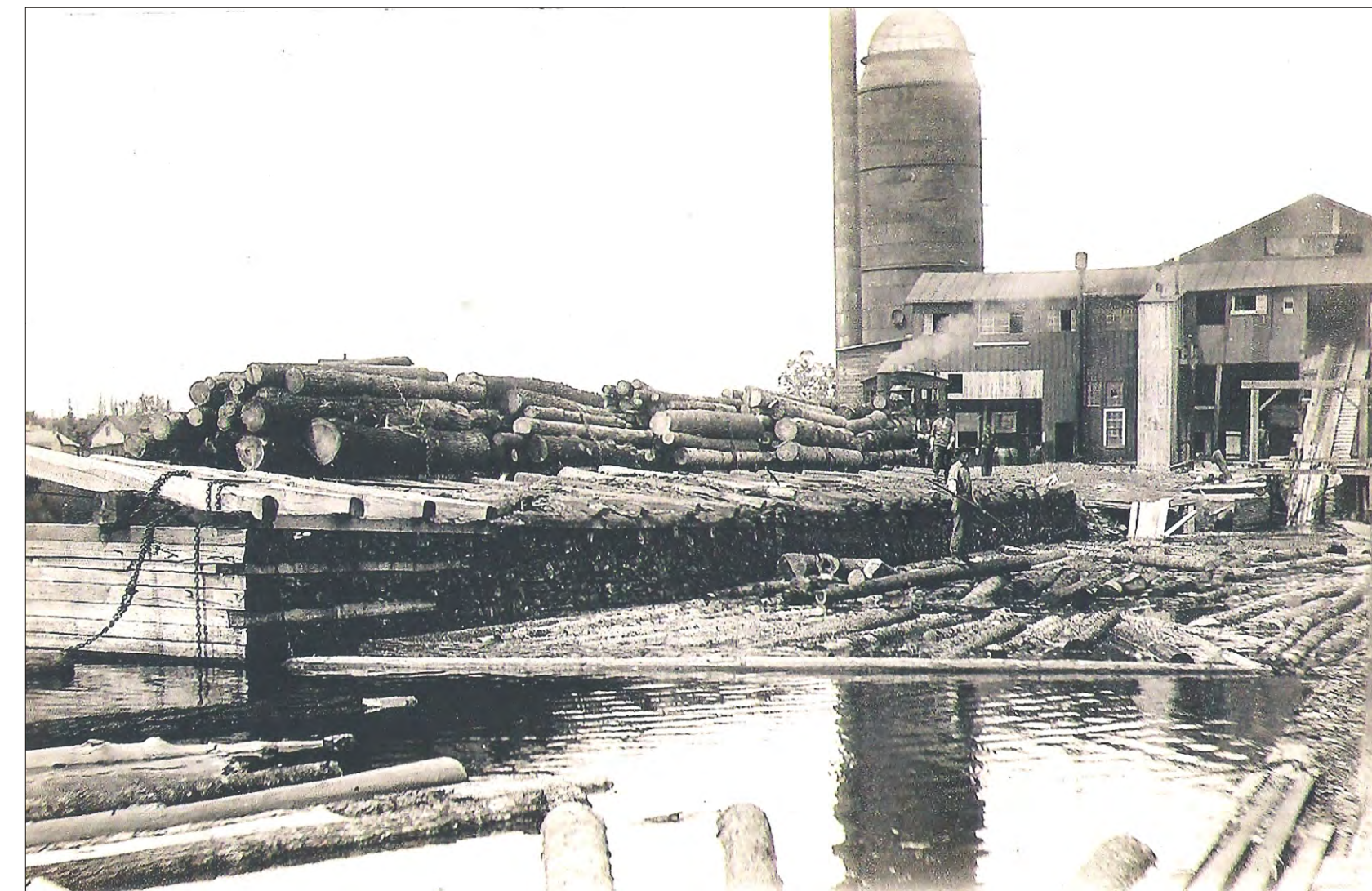
One of the few remaining signs of the Mill is the crumbling foundation of the power plant. In the spring dock pilings can also be seen along the old shoreline and out into the lake.



The Mill at Thompson produced an amazing amount of lumber each year. Much of this lumber was used in the building boom in Chicago.



Lumber was stacked by hand on the docks to await loading on ships.



Timber bought to the Mill by rail was dumped into the mill pond to begin the process of milling.



Men came from all over the U.S. and Europe to work at the Mill. Descendants of some of these workers still live in Thompson today.

As the Mill grew and prospered so did the company town of Thompson. Businesses necessary to keep the Mill and its employees supplied with goods and services sprang up. Population increased, roads were created and improved, and rail lines once used only for hauling logs were extended. They now transported passengers to local attractions and outlying communities.



As seen here, the village of Thompson was transformed from a small settlement to a busy company town.



Logs were cut into lumber and sent to big cities, like Chicago. Slab wood (bark edges) was sold to residents for \$1.25 a cart load for stove wood.

By 1885, the Mill was one of the best steam mills in this part of the country. Additional circular saws and boilers increased production. The mill required 20,000,000 feet of timber to operate for the season. Expansion of the dock was necessary to accommodate loading lumber on ships bound for large cities to the south. The landscape changing 'burner,' one of the largest of its class was used to dispose of dust and waste from the mill.

The Mill operated continuously for 42 years under several different owners. In 1893 F&F Company (Frank and Friant) took over from the Delta Lumber Company, followed by the Thompson Lumber Company, North Shore Lumber Company and finally A.M. Chesborough Company.

In 1924, with timber resources used up, the saw mill and much of the town was dismantled and shipped away. While the village of Thompson still existed, it was to slowly become what you see today.