

With a twinkle of pride in their eyes and a touch of nostalgia in their voices, George Bigge and E. O. "Dell" Woodbury recalled the history of the oxen in the area surrounding Ontonagon.

Records show that the early mining industry, as well as the timber industry in this area, were among the last to use teams of oxen. Union Mine, Nonesuch, Hollowell, Silver Mine and White Pine Mine all used this massive beast of burden for hauling machinery, fire wood and building timbers.

Dell's own father, Charles Woodbury, owned a team of oxen that weighed over 1900 pounds. They were used to haul spruce piling for an early timber contract with the Diamond Match Company.

Even the Diamond Match Company itself had three teams at their Camp 18 located 18 miles north of Matchwood, where they were used to skid logs to the banks of the Ontonagon River. From there, the logs were floated down-river to Ontonagon.

Oxen yokes, shoes and equipment can still be seen in several of the local amusement places and at the Historic Center in Ontonagon, Michigan.



Typical Logging Scene in Northern Michigan at the Turn of the Century

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