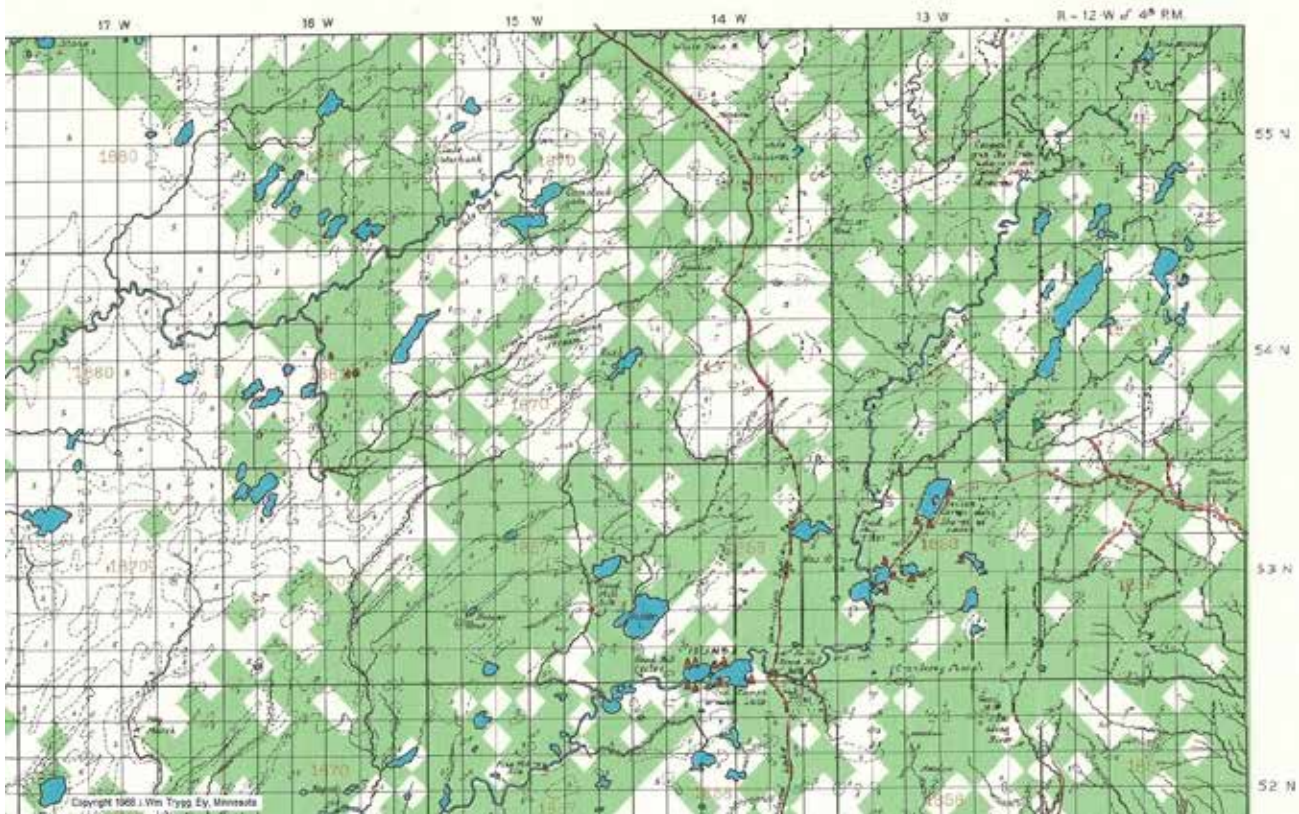


Early Logging in the Three Lakes Area

The pine-forested areas surrounding the Three Lakes neighborhood were highly sought after by all of the major lumber companies from the region, beginning in the 1880s. Recent investigating has turned up records that show *when* specific land descriptions were cut, and *by which company*.



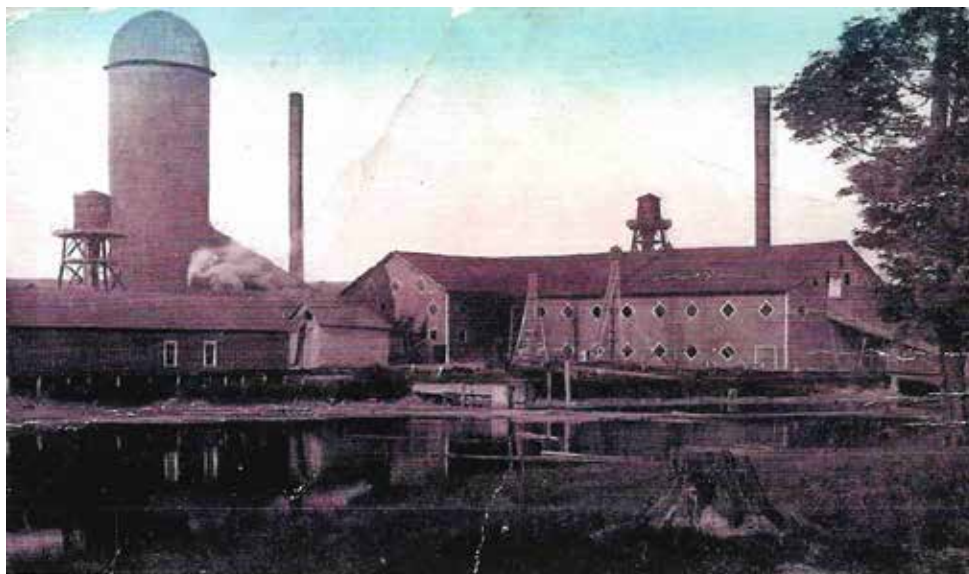


The green shaded areas in the map above indicate the extent of the pine lands as described by the original government surveyor's notes. See the Three Lakes area in left center of map. Note the markings indicating Bug Creek as a "good logging stream". (Portion of Minnesota/Wisconsin Sheet #14, Composite Map of the United States Land Surveyors' Original Plats and Field Notes, © 1966 J. Wm. Trygg, used with permission from Trygg Land Office, P.O. Box 628, Ely, MN)

The **C.N. Nelson Lumber Company** began operations in Cloquet in 1880¹, with a large sawmill located along the St. Louis River (at the current USG site). In 1889 they built a second large mill, upstream from the first². The firm was purchased by the Weyerhaeuser interests in 1896, and the name was changed to **Northern Lumber Company**³. These mills remained in operation until the big Cloquet Fire of 1918, which destroyed both mills⁴. They were not re-built.

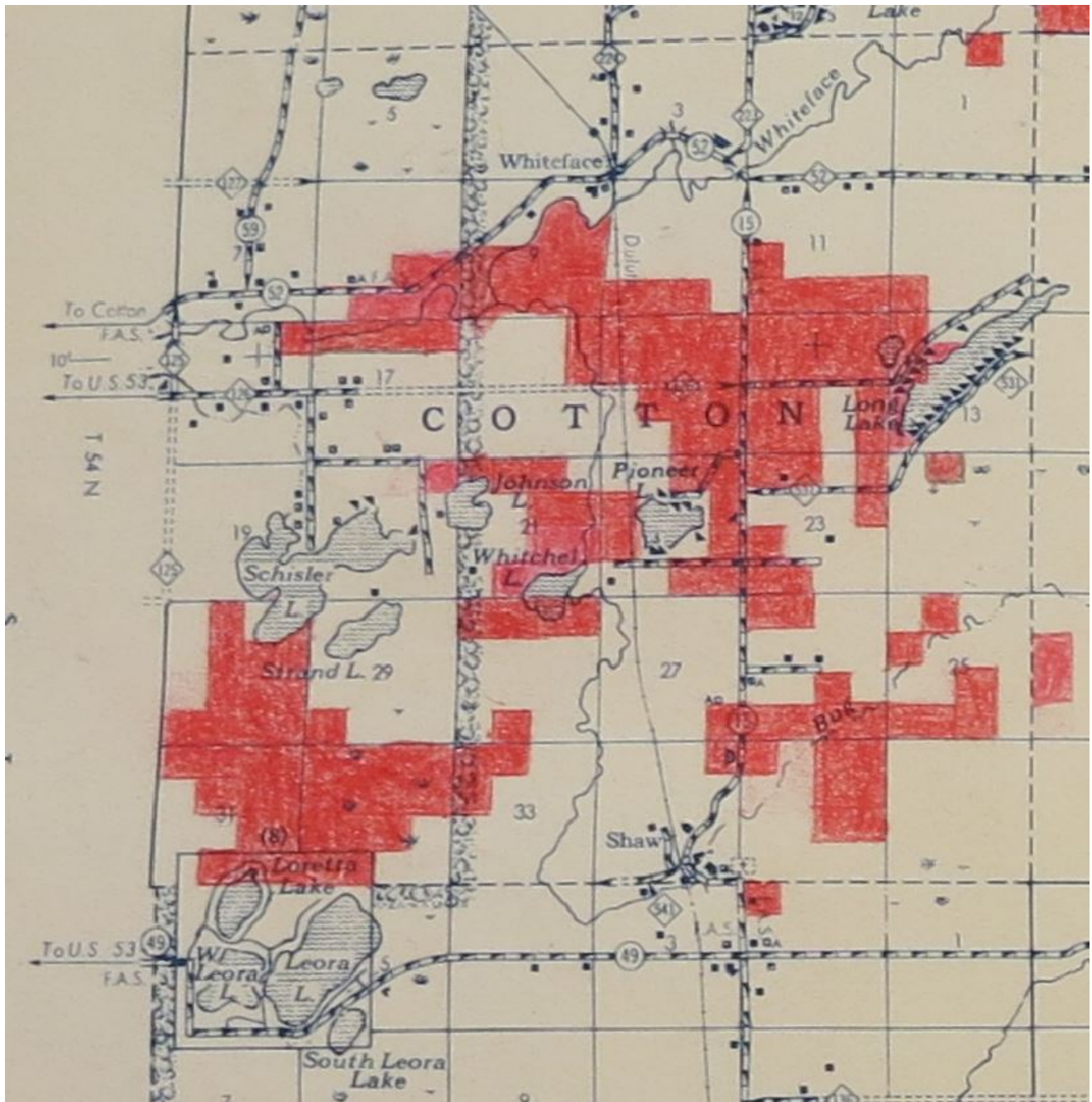


Sawmills and yards of the Northern Lumber Company, view looking upstream to the NW; Lower Mill in center of photo, Upper Mill further upstream. Note logs in river. West end of Dunlap Island is showing, area of modern Hwy 33 bridge is just off the photo to the right. Photo courtesy Carlton County Historical Society, Cloquet MN.



Northern Lumber Co., Cloquet, Minn.

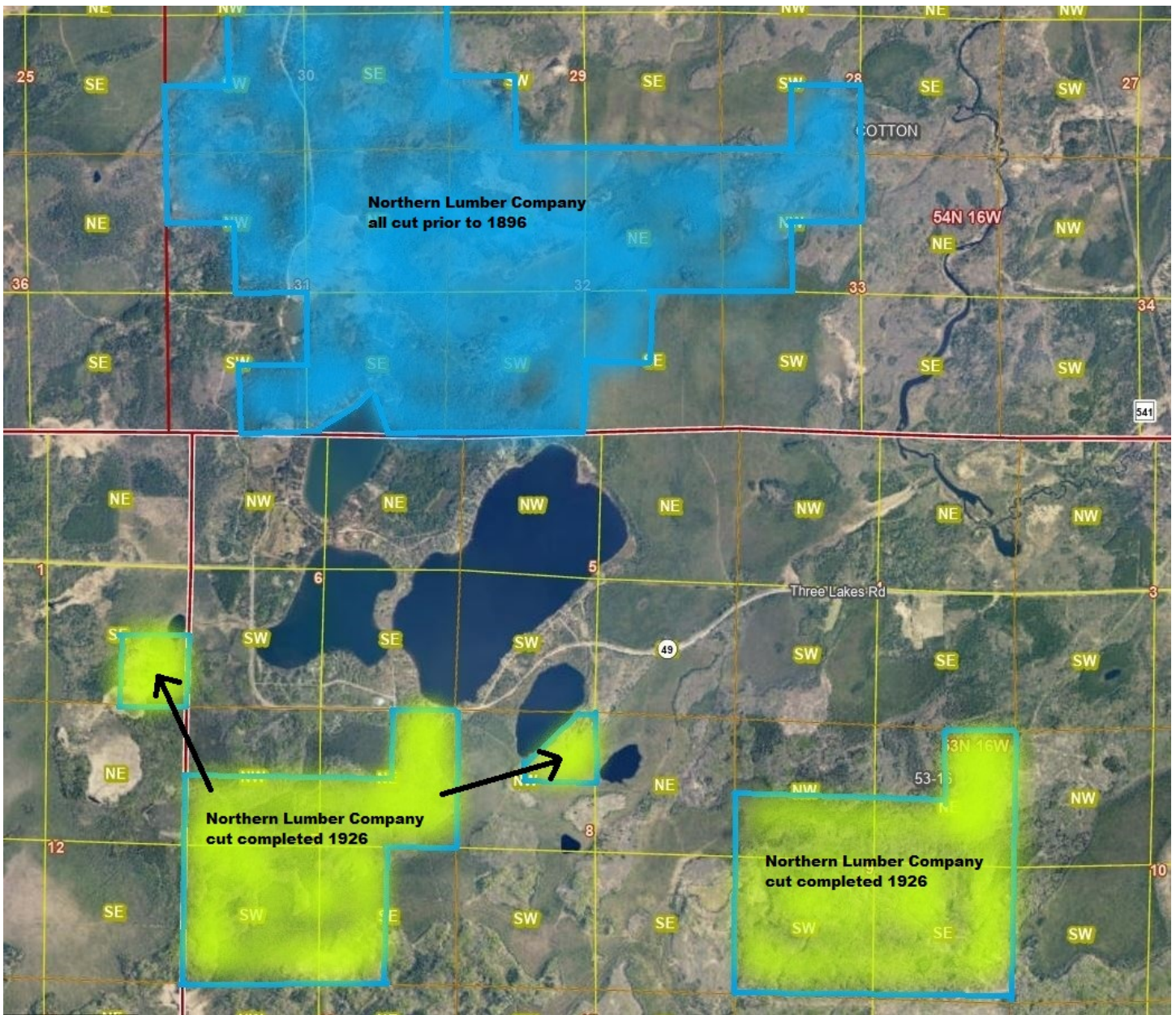
Northern Lumber Company Lower Mill, viewed from Dunlap Island, looking SW. Photo courtesy Carlton County Historical Society, Cloquet MN.



In our Three Lakes area, **C.N Nelson Lumber Company** was an early purchaser of much land in Township 54N Range 16W (east half of Cotton Townships) and surrounding areas. The map above shows the land ownership of this firm by 1883⁵.

The lands in Sections 29-30-31-32-33 shown above were all purchased by a group of 8 young fellows from Duluth, who each made a pre-emption claim for 160 acres⁶. Under this method of original purchase from the federal government, a pre-emption claim could be made in areas not yet surveyed (Twp 54N R16W was not surveyed til Jan-Feb 1881), and title could be obtained within 6 months of original filing of the claim, with a payment made of \$1.25 per acre. Seven of these eight claims were originated on the same day in late December of 1880, and after 6 months, they all sold to Nelson, on the same day of July 1881. They weren't all paid the same, the difference probably in the quantity of timber available on each claim. It can be speculated that this pine land north of Rose Lake was very desirable, based on how early C.N. Nelson acquired the property, and on the premiums he paid to those lucky young Duluthians. Questionable 'arrangements' like those described above led to major changes in federal land laws in 1891⁷.

The blue-shaded lands on this airphoto were all listed in the Land and Tax Records Book of **Northern Lumber Company** as cut prior to 1896⁸. It is possible that cutting of these lands began as soon as purchasing these properties in 1881-83. For these early cut areas, the timber was most likely driven down Bug Creek to the Whiteface River. No records have been found on the exact dates or locations of camps responsible for these cuts north of Rose Lake.

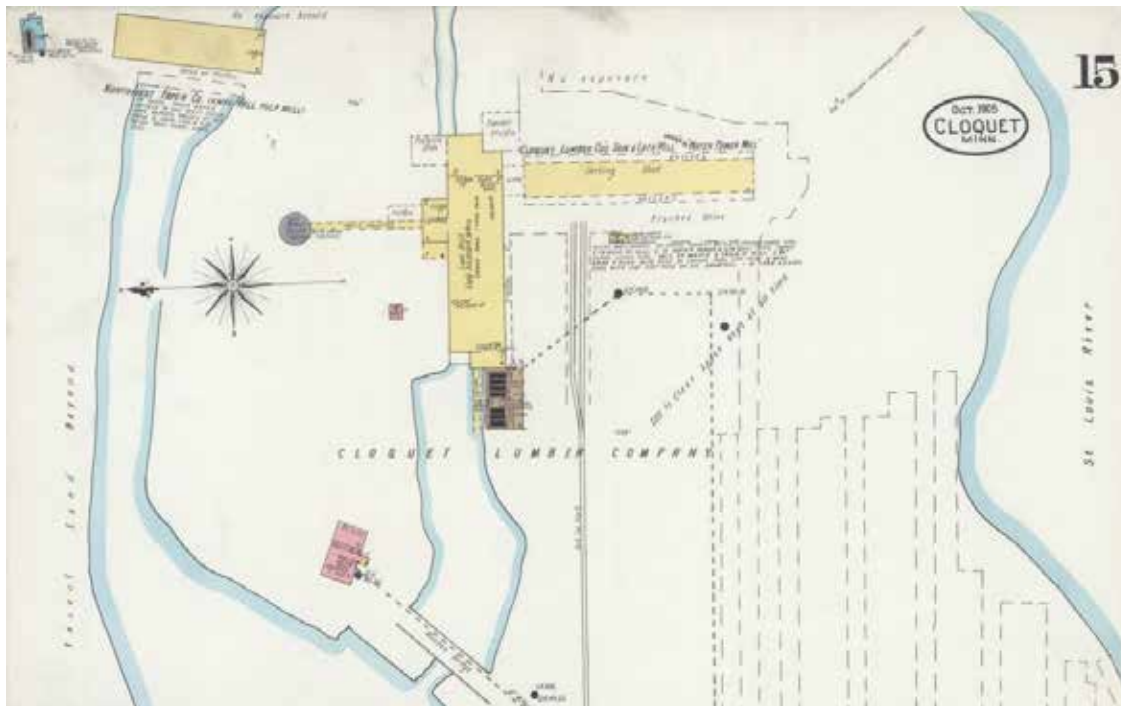


The green-shaded areas south of the lakes were listed in the Northern Lumber Company Acreage Book as cut in the winter of 1926⁹. Many more acres belonging to them were also cut in that year south and southeast of this map view. The timber was likely transported via rail spurs to the southeast to the Duluth & Northeastern RR near Bergen Lake at Taft, where the Duluth & Northeastern tracks crossed the Duluth Winnipeg & Pacific tracks and pointed southwest towards Cloquet.

The **Cloquet Lumber Company** was established in 1886¹⁰. They operated two sawmills, the Big or Steam Mill located just downstream from the Hwy 33 bridge, and the Water Power Mill on the east end of the island downstream from the Hwy 33 bridge. George S. Shaw was the president of Cloquet Lumber Company.



Cloquet Lumber Company Steam Mill, located on the south shore of the river below the Hwy 33 bridge area, roughly where the current Upper Lakes Foods warehouse facility exists today. Courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society¹¹.



Cloquet Lumber Company Water Power Mill, located at the downstream end of the island below the current Hwy 33 bridge. First built in 1883 by Paine and McNair of Carlton, MN¹², it was sold to Cloquet Lumber in 1889¹³. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Cloquet, Carlton County, Minnesota*. Sanborn Map Company, Oct, 1905. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn04276_006/.

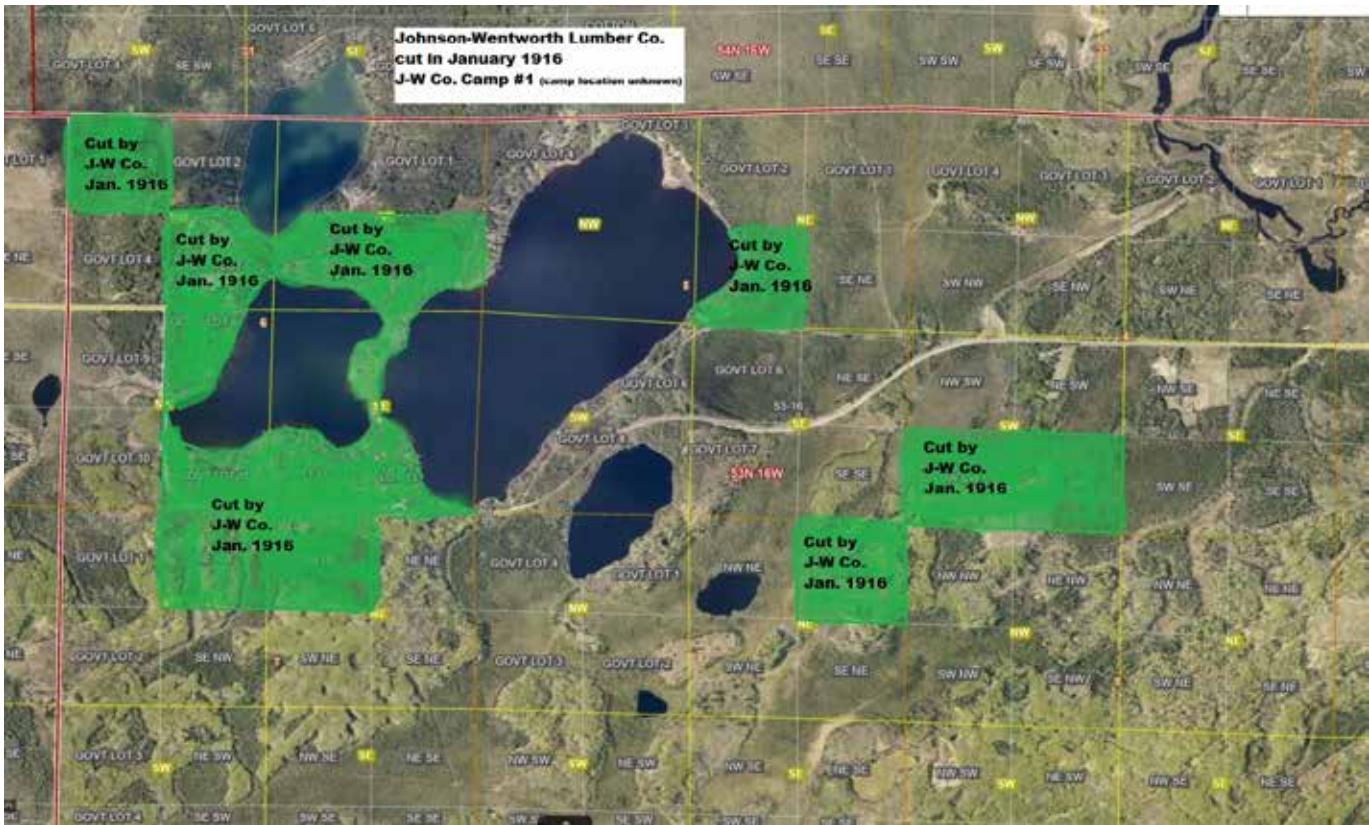


The Land and Tax Record Book of **Cloquet Lumber Company** indicates these lands shaded above as cut during the winter of 1910-1911¹⁴. No indication of the location of the camp responsible for this cut, nor is there any indication of what direction the timber was transported (could be south to RR spurs, or east to Bug Creek?). Three of the four parcels above were listed as relinquished in May, 1911. Their pine timber estimate of Sec. 6 Gov't Lot 4 listed 160,000 board feet, and 110,000 board feet in Sec. 6 Gov't Lot 10¹⁵. No estimates of volume were found for Gov't Lots 1 & 2.

In Sec. 6-53-16, Gov't Lots 1 & 2 (either side of Rose Lake) were purchased from the General Land Office in Duluth in 1882 by lumberman John Prescott Webber of Bangor, Maine¹⁶. He had originally come to Red Wing, MN in the 1850s and began dealing in pine lands throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin¹⁷. The land was sold to various lumber family interests by Webber's son in 1892. Cloquet Lumber Company eventually purchased the timber in 1901, giving them the right to remove the White and Norway pine within 10 years¹⁸, hence the cutting and removal in the winter of 1910-1911.



The Johnson Wentworth Lumber Company sawmill was built in 1894¹⁹, adjacent to the upper dam on the St. Louis River, just west of the current paper mill pulp yard location. The company was sold to the Weyerhaeuser interests in 1902²⁰, retained the name, and operated until at least 1928.



The Johnson Wentworth Lumber Company Land and Tax Records Book indicates these green-shaded lands as all cut during January of 1916, by J&W Camp No. 1²¹. Again, no indication (yet) of the location of this camp, and no indication of which direction the timber was transported, likely connected to rail spurs that took it southeast to the main Duluth & Northeastern RR at Bergen Lake near Taft.

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Notes:

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<https://threelakes.mnlakesandrivers.org/>

by Peter Jongewaard, ad hoc TLDA board, Dodo Lake