

## Logging Tools

by *Deborah J. Larsen*

While Michigan's timber industry supplied the nation with millions of board feet of lumber during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the small town of Evert in Osceola County earned the title of "Logging Tool Capital of the World."

Lying on the Muskegon River and surrounded by prime forest land, Evert was an ideal location for sorting logs as they rolled in from the lumber camps. At the peak of the logging era, the town was ringed with camps that helped push more than 240,000,000 board feet of lumber down the Muskegon annually.

Whether a lumberman worked in Michigan's forests or elsewhere, a specific set of tools was essential to his trade. Besides saws, axes, and wedges, he also needed peaveys, cant hooks, pike poles, and log dogs. Those tools were used to grab, control, and direct the huge lengths of timber as they traveled down the rivers to the mills.

In 1876, a French immigrant named Magloire Belanger settled in Evert and began making logging tools of his own patented designs. Belanger's designs were later acquired by his partners: Frank Postal and brothers



A cant hook was one of many tools used by lumbermen. (Photo courtesy of Evert Historical Museum.)



Champion Tool & Handle Works foundry in Evert, Michigan, circa 1910.

Benjamin and David Wolf. The new owners transformed the business into the Champion Tool & Handle Works about 1885.

By 1893, Champion Tool billed itself as the largest manufacturer of logging tools in the United States. However, with success came competition. A few blocks away in the modest village, the newly formed Evert Tool Company soon challenged Champion for a slice of its market share. Both firms became major suppliers to the industry.

By 1906, just seven companies made virtually all logging tools manufactured in the United States. Two of the leaders were Champion Tool & Handle Works and Evert Tool Company. Because lumbering in the Great Lakes region was winding down as the industry shifted its focus to the southern and western states, the seven companies decided to combine in the interests of long-term survival. They joined forces and called themselves the American Logging Tool Company.

American Logging Tool received product orders at its main office in Chicago and then filled them through one of its seven foundries. Unfortunately, that arrangement ran afoul of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. To satisfy federal law, the company dissolved in 1911 and re-incorporated under a government stipulation that it would use only one manufacturing site. The stakeholders chose the Champion Tool & Handle Works foundry in Evert as the firm's sole factory location, and production went on.

By that time in its history, American Logging Tool claimed

to be the largest company in the world devoted exclusively to the production of tools for the lumbering trade. The Evert foundry continued to operate until February 1993, when it closed permanently after more than a century of dominance in its specialized market. Although the foundry building has since been demolished, the city of Evert recently dedicated Cant Hook Park to commemorate the landmark business that played an important role in Michigan's lumbering industry. 📍

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Michigan lumbermen at work. (Photo courtesy of the Library of the Congress, LC-DIG-det-4a03923.)

