1. Lumber Locomotives: The Origins of Stevens Point

Thesis: Stevens Point was created and developed by the lumber industry. It was created to capitalize on its ability to transfer lumber down the river, located close by, and developed so trains could transport lumber more efficiently.

1. **Mike**

***Load in with a pano of the river***

1. “*My first experience in rafting was in 1868, when I went down with Homer Chase of Stevens Point as pilot - a first class man. Being a sucker, I was unfortunately hired to make the trip on a flood-trash fleet, belonging to Walter D. McIndoo.*

**Tom**

1. -Lumber was Transported in cribs (grub planks) that were 12 by 16 feet until a Railroad was installed. It took 8 men to work each crib but there was a delay in getting to the markets. This delay pushed the industry towards others sorts of transportation. (mcglachin)

Mike

* 1. *The ice went out of the river April 17, and the next day we started with five men at each oar, to run the Stevens Point dam, near which the lumber had lain throughout the winter. The first trip for a sucker made his hair stand on end, and brought to his mind all the misdeeds of his past life.*

Christian

-Wages of a bowsman running the river from Stevens Point got about $90 for the trip (<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-027/>)

Mike

* 1. *We ran down the centre of the river, until within twenty rods of the dam. There the current drew off to the right and came in between two piers, about thirty feet apart; between these piers was the slide, constructed of long logs (called “fingers”) fastened with chains to the dam; on either side of the slide, the water dropped about fifteen feet. Below the dam, the river boiled and rolled into whitecaps. If one was fortunate enough to make the slide properly, he could make his landing in the right place; otherwise, there was great danger of saddlebagging one of the piers and breaking to pieces. Sometimes the raft turned a complete somersault, and the men who did not leap for the pier were drowned. Even when going over the slide, our rafts generally sank until we were standing waist-deep in the water, bumping along on the rocks.*

Shane

-George Stevens, whio Stevens Point was named after, was one of the many who floated lumber down the Wisconsin River. He had a well known stopping point, the distance was too long to do in a day afterall, which people eventually called “Stevens Point” after the man who so frequently used it. This gave the town its name upon its founding in 1858, to take advantage of the vast amount of lumber in the area and the convenience of being able to float the lumber down the river. (https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2382)

Mike

* 1. *Our fleet was made up of twenty-seven rapids pieces, which when coupled together, three abreast, made nine Wisconsin River rafts. It took twenty-seven trips to get out fleet over over each dam and rapids, fourteen for each crew of twelve men, and made a great deal of gigging. After running over some of the rapids we had to walk, or rather go on a dog-trot, five miles with our clothes wet and our shoes full of sand, and be there on time when the piece was set loose.*

Tom

1. -A survey done by William L. De Witt in 1851 made Point famous and drew many to the rich lumber industry (McGlachin)

***Logging mural fade shot***

* 1. *The next obstacle below Stevens Point was Conant Rapids. There the river makes a big double turn to the right. At the second bend is a large red rock, projecting out of the water about a foot. To make the run here, the bow oar must be pulled several strokes to the right, while the steersman pulled the reverse, and as the raft turned, the tail would just slide over the rock. As soon as you passed this rock, the raft dove through the “hog hole” -- a place where the water draws between rocks and dives down ten feet or more and then rolls back. These were fearful-looking places to run. The men usually stepped back behind the oars and grabbed the sucker line, and the pilot and steersman held down their oars to keep them from striking on rocks, and being knocked from their hands. Often a wave caught them, and swung them sideways, sweeping some of the men into the river. This was a place where many lives were lost.”*

1. ***Put the thesis here***
2. *-Ceylon Childs Lincoln. ‘Personal Experiences of a Wisconsin River Raftsman.’ 1911*
3. **Lucas**
4. “Stevens Point May 26/54
5. Respected Cousins It is with pleasure that I sit down to answer your letter hoping these few lines will find you in as good health as they have me. Though they do not leave me in as good health as I wish for. I have a cold and have had ever since I came to Wisconsin and shall have if I was to stay here for ten years for the weather is so changeable. It changes very sudden though it is generally healthy. There is no fever nor ague here. Now about the country, it is level and very beautiful. The timber is principally Pine but we have all kinds of hard wood that grows in this part of the country, except Beech. There is over 70,000,000 of sawn lumber run and to run down the river Wisconsin this season which brings from 15 to 20 per 14, and wages on the river is $1.25 to 2.00 per day and pilots get from 3 to 5 per day just according to how hard they work. I live in this little village which 5 years ago there was 2 dwellings and now there is 200 acres nearly that is laid Out in village lots. There is 4 taverns, 14 or 15 stores, 2 saloons, a printing office, brokers office and lawyers offices any quantity and the land office here to, 2 blacksmith shops and 3 or 4 carpenter shops. One is a steam shop. Cabinet shop and 2 or 3 shoe shops, 3 saw mills, a lath mill. o yes and a bakery. And there is a steam saw mill going to be put up in this summer and there is a steam boat building now. There is not much prairie land here or none very near here. Though there is some openings the soil is very sandy. But there is heavy timbered land and there is plenty of land not far from here to be taken up yet. There is such a noise in the shop that I cant write anything scarcely. I work at the Carpenters trade for 1.37½ per day and if I was master of the trade I could get 25¢ more a day. I would write this sheet all over if I could write in such a noise. There is one church and another building and 3 schools and plenty of other things accordingly. David C. Bailey” (<http://www.pchswi.org/archives/communities/stevenspoint/viewstpt1854.html#top>)

**Christian**

1. -The first settlers viewed Point as a “rough lumber camp” (McGlachin)
2. -Point became known as the “northern gateway to the pineries” (51)

-The desire for more efficient transport of lumber would carry on, until the arrival of the Railroad

***Load in footage of trains chugging along***

**Jared**

1. -"The whole city was out in great numbers to welcome the first locomotive ever seen here,"- Caleb Swayze, about Nov. 15, 1871 (<http://www.pchswi.org/archives/rrhist/RR_StevensPoint/RR_SP_pt1/rr_stpt_part1_1.html>)

**Shane**

1. -In the 1870s Federal Government offered free land grants to attract railroad development in WI. and surrounding states
2. -Wisconsin established the “Wisconsin Central Railroad Company” on Feb. 4, 1871.
3. The original goal following its establishment was to run a 260 mile route from West Menasha (present day Neenah) to Ashland, Stevens Point was 63 miles into the journey and made for a natural stop along the way
4. It was built in record time, taking only 120 days over the course of 1871. ([https://www.american-rails.com/wisconsin-central-railway.html#gallery[pageGallery]/2/](https://www.american-rails.com/wisconsin-central-railway.html#gallery%5BpageGallery%5D/2/))
5. City of SP contributed $30,000 ($546,733.28 in today’s money) to finance railroad’s construction.
6. From 1872 until 1887, Stevens Point had the only shops and one of the few yards on the entire railroad
7. 1872, WC moved its operating headquarters to SP

***Old train depot footage at this point***

**Tom**

1. **Train Whistle:** “As the story goes, the three-foot-high, 15-inch diameter whistle on the shop roof was the pride of the railroad and could be heard on a clear day in Waupaca 25 miles away. Signaling shift changes, the thunderous blasts from the whistle became the despair of neighbors, interrupting the peace and composure of the residents. It rattled windows and even shook plates off of cupboard shelves. Thus, Stevens Point became one of the first Wisconsin communities to field complaints about railroad whistles.”

**Christian**

1. **Death of a Railsmen: “**The country’s economic downturn that began in late 1893 continued for a number of years, and WC business diminished accordingly along with that of many other railroads. The WC tried to reduce the impact to its employees as much as possible. At Stevens Point Shops, the employees’ work days were reduced from ten-hour days to eight hours in an effort to keep as many employees as possible working.
2. The WC was reorganized in July 1899, and once out of bankruptcy, money was allocated for major improvements. A massive mainline grade and curve reduction project between Stevens Point and Neenah was implemented, and in 1900 WC President Whitcomb instituted longer divisions as a part of the major changes being made on the railroad. Waukesha and Stevens Point would no longer be division points; in their place were Fond du Lac, Abbotsford, and St. Paul. Abbotsford replaced the Stevens Point division-office duties in mid-September 1900. After employees transferred to their new terminals, the WC further reduced Stevens Point employment in December 1900.

**Shane**

1. Stevens Point had a healthy economy at the time. Many businesses were doing well, including a furniture company and a paper mill which were doubling their capacities. Yet, the City of Stevens Point was quite upset with the closing of the car shops and took legal action to attempt to reclaim the land it had given the railroad for the shop facilities; however the City dropped its legal action when it realized that it could not win. Nonetheless, it took some time for ill feelings to subside.”
2. The railroad was leased out by Soo Line in 1909 due to troubles.