

Ario Pardee and the Pardee Lumbering Company

by Emily Burlingam

Lumbering: a Way of Life at Pardee, by Jonathan Bastian, details the operations of the “Pardee Lumbering Company,” and its environmental and social impacts.

Ariovistus “Ario” Pardee (1810-1892) began his career in the coal industry in the Hazelton area, starting A. Pardee & Company in 1840. Transportation was modernizing from slower canals to railroads, leading to a boom in the coal industry. Pardee's success allowed him to support the Union Army during the Civil War, Lafayette University, St. Luke's Church in Troxelville and other organizations.

In the mid 1800's, Pardee moved to central Pennsylvania where the lumbering was exploding at the same level as the coal industry throughout the rest of the nation. Pardee bought large tracts of timberland in the middle Susquehanna Valley, and by owning his own lumber mills, was able to supply his mines with mine props instead of purchasing these elsewhere.

Although there is ample evidence that the Pardee Lumbering Company existed and that Pardee provided the company with monetary means, there are not actually any records of a “Pardee Lumbering Company.” The Company may have been synonymous with the Lichtenwalter Lumbering Company with Albert Lichtenwalter owning the equipment and handling legal matters. The lumber company left behind plenty of physical and natural evidence of its existence, including areas where the logs were likely stored and washed before cutting, a blacksmith shop north of the mill site with large amounts of remaining coal ash, nails and metal fires, and a pond that would have provided a constant supply of freshwater to the mill boiler. The large level area between the mill and bank of Penn's Creek is covered with fruit tree and grape vines, indicating prior human activity. A settlement of houses and shops were once in the area.

Due to the mountainous landscape of the lumbering region, Pardee faced difficulties transporting lumber in and out of sites. This initiated the construction of 80 miles of tram roads, which allowed logs and supplies to be transported to mills and lumbering sites. Pardee upgraded to the Class A Climax Engine, which was able to transport empty cars upgrade and haul loaded cars uphill. As a result of both the tram roads and the modernized engines, Pardee expanded the company in 1889. After Ariovistus Pardee's death in 1892, ownership went to his children while Lichtenwalter maintained control over lumbering operations. Lichtenwalter faced many financial and legal issues throughout 1894 and 1895, a time of economic depression in the US.

Over the course of about fifty years, the Pardee operation was responsible for stripping over 24,000 acres of land from the village of Penns Creek toward the village of Siglerville in Mifflin County. The lumbering company's rapid and unsustainable clear-cutting of Pennsylvania forests was a main reason for its eventual collapse.

Lumbering companies in the 19th century viewed forestland as an endless resource. However, by removing the forestland at a rate that prevented natural replenishment, lumber companies in the 1800's turned Pennsylvania's once lush and thickly forested landscape into a vast wasteland.

The Pennsylvania Legislature finally took notice of the harm that deforestation was having on the environment in 1893 and established the Pennsylvania Forestry Commission. The 20th century saw further developments in environmental restoration, as the state began reforestation projects, and made efforts to protect natural resources and endangered species.

The lumbering industry of the 19th century severely damaged Pennsylvania's landscape; the environmental movements in the 1900's were able to restore forestlands that were once thought to be irreparably damaged.

For a complete history of this subject, read *Lumbering: A Way of Life at Pardee*, available for sale at the Union County Historical Society.



Ario Pardee bought vast tracts of forestland in the 1870s to supply mine props for his anthracite mine operations. The logs were shipped on the PA RR to the Shamokin area.



The Climax locomotive is at the Pardee station c. 1888.



Logging tramways and narrow-gauge railroads reached deep into the mountains to haul mine props. Ruthless clear-cutting of the virgin forest left bare soil and waste, with no thought of restoration.



The Reforestation and Relief Act of President Franklin Roosevelt in 1933 created the Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC Camp at Weikert was built c. 1934 where men worked to restore the devastated forestland.