

GNH Lumber, Inc., has been in the lumber business since 1937. Recently, however, we stumbled upon a tangible piece of our history, enabling the Ingalls family to view a fuller picture of our roots. In January of 1937, Stanley L. Ingalls and James M. Freeman formed the Greenville Norton Hill Lumber, Co., staying in business together for three years before the partnership was dissolved and Ingalls became the sole owner of the lumber company.

The business has since its inception morphed from this humble beginning in 1937 into three store fronts in Greene County and a fourth, their newest location, in Latham, NY, which is a design showcase, a step away from their traditional lumber roots.

In the fall of 2014, Len DeGiovine of Balsam Shade razed part of a barn on the Balsam Shade property. What he found during the deconstruction was a unique mortise and tenon beam that had been signed by Truman Ingalls; Truman is the father of Stanley L. Ingalls, the founder of GNH Lumber. This raised some questions within the Ingalls clan: Why had Truman signed the beam? Did he supply the lumber? Did he erect the barn? The family contacted Don Teator, the local historian who has worked with the family to preserve some of the family diaries, etc. In reviewing the transcribed diaries of Truman and Carrie Ingalls, the family, with Teator's help, discovered some new leads about Truman and the history of the lumber business in the Ingalls family.

Truman was a farmer by trade but, as you read through the diaries of his wife Carrie, it came increasingly clear that running the farm was not Truman's focus in the later part of his life. Truman began "lumbering" as early as 1885 based on this summary excerpt: *"Wood plays a major element. Trum and the men cut down wood, draw out logs, get slat lumber, etc., usually buzz saw the wood, split wood, stack wood, take logs to the mill, mark the logs, draw lumber from the mill, etc."*

As the diary continues Truman was seen as an entrepreneur when he bought a teamster business described in the summary: *"Trum becomes an active teamster in late 1887, buying out Attwater Dubois. Before that, he does mention going to Coxsackie a dozen times. After the buyout, he, and his partners (2-5 other men, varying from time to time), go to Coxsackie 40-60 days a year, sometimes with four teams at a time. Loading cars (RR) is mentioned occasionally. To find enough material to draw, Trum must go out to buy up material, or to draw for other farmers in the area."*

Both excerpts talk about the "lumbering" and "teamster" side of Truman's day to day life but it is not 100% clear if this was for sale or trade or to be used in their day to day farming operations. However in 1913 it becomes front and center when the diary alludes to a large contract Truman had engaged in described in this summary excerpt: *"In November 1913, Trum enters into contract with a Mr. Fiero for 180,000 feet of lumber on land just above Medusa, and December 1914 signs for 50,000 more on Cheese Hill just above Preston Hollow. Typically, this means that the men will cut down the trees, skid them out of the woods (often during winter), trim them out, cut into lengths, saw them into boards, and then deliver to Mott of Jefferson, or Hoy of Catskill, or Lenahan of Athens, or into Coxsackie, as well as a local business. Early on, this business started late autumn and continued through to mid spring for the crops. However, by 1914, the lumbering business becomes a year round operation. Eventually, Trum sets up his saw mill, moving it from project to project, utilizing the steam power. Sometimes it would be too cold for*

*the water needed for the engine. Slab wood becomes a side business. So, winter, which used to be a slow time of the year, becomes a tough, dangerous and rewarding part of the year; summer is spent farming and lumbering; and Trum and his boys are filling orders for the river towns as well as supplying their own area. Wagons and sleighs strong enough for such heavy load must be built, bridges must be shored up or fixed, and farm work must be still be done, in addition to the usual hauling Trum has done. Despite the danger, no one ever gets seriously injured during the time of this summary. “*

As we delve deeper into the history we find excerpts in the 1920's that describe the direction the family business was heading: *“The details of lumbering and milling are becoming dominant in the Ingalls family, a clear specialization of labor and equipment, for which this Ingalls family is regionally known, receiving customers from Columbia County to Schenevus, Saranac to Saugerties, while most of their business is done through Catskill, Athens, Coxsackie, Jefferson Heights and New Baltimore. Of course, a substantial business is done locally and through some of the descriptions, one recognizes a building still standing that was built with Ingalls lumber.”*

These summary excerpts show that the lumber business goes further back than we recently believed. Truman's son Stanley L. Ingalls opened the Greenville Norton Hill Lumber yard as a way to provide another avenue to his father's business. Stanley created the centralized retail location, thus allowing family to not only offer lumber but also to expand into selling other building materials to the general public and tradesman.

Truman as the matriarch of the Ingalls family created an entrepreneurial spirit that continues to thrive in his offspring. His son Stanley L. Ingalls started what is known now as GNH Lumber, Inc. and in 1940 opened a saw mill based on Truman's model that was no longer mobile but a fixture in Norton Hill. His two sons, Randall "Buddy" and Walter, expanded their one retail location into two when they bought an existing lumber yard from Welsh & Gray in 1965. His great-grandson, Stanley R. Ingalls, has continued this growth when he purchased Pioneer Lumber in 2008, thus becoming the largest lumber dealer in Greene County. Stanley expanded even further by diversifying the existing business to include the Latham stand-alone design showcase in 2013. With four locations of GNH Lumber, Inc., Stanley took the legacy of his father, grandfather and great grandfather and now has the history to prove that the Ingalls Family has been deeply seated in the lumber and building materials industry for well over one hundred and thirty years.

As the Ingalls legacy continues forward with the fourth generation at the helm, we look back at the newly expanded history with pride. Currently, Stanley R. Ingalls is the President and CEO of the organization, with his nephew Ed McQuillen, daughter Genevieve Hagan and son John Ingalls carrying on the family legacy, striving to mirror Truman's entrepreneurial spirit.

Truman's signature, inscribed on old barn timber, and testimony to GNH legacy and Ingalls industry, will reside proudly in the flagship store in Greenville. Signifying so many ideas, this beam especially attests to the spirit of one man who created a proud legacy which his family continues to honor.