

The Heald, Murphy, Crepin Mill at Maple Grove

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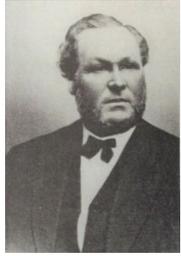
1854 Picture of Heald, Murphy & Crepin Saw Mill at Maple Grove

Duke's Point was the original name for what is now called Maple Grove, where the Montague bathing beach is located. It was named for Walter Duke who lived in a cabin there for a while in the late 1840s or early 1850s. He worked as a surveyor and timber looker for the early lumbermen in the White Lake area, including for himself.

James Jewell bought the land from Duke and built the first mill at that location in 1855. In 1860, Jewell sold his mill to Heald, Avery and Company. They eventually dismantled it and built a new larger mill on the north side of Maple Grove peninsula, about where the marina is now located. This area became known as "Healdtown".

The owners of Heald, Avery and Company were Joseph Heald, Newell Avery and Simon Murphy, Sr – a silent partner who was probably the wealthiest of the three men – all of whom were from Maine. They also purchased the former Ferry Mill at the Mouth in the early 1860s. When Heald and Avery abandoned the mill at the Mouth, they moved the equipment to their other mill in town. By adding those machines to the equipment from the former Jewel mill, it greatly increased their output of lumber. By 1880, the Heald, Avery and Company mill was the largest and most productive sawmill on the lake, producing 150,000 board feet of lumber in a day and employing 63 men.

After Avery's death in 1877, the firm took on a new partner, E. E. Crepin, and the firm operated under the name Heald, Murphy & Crepin until it closed in 1886.



Joseph Heald was born in Maine in 1823. His father was a prominent lumberman in Maine and between the age of 14 and 28 he worked as a laborer at logging and lumber. He worked by rafting and running lumber in the Penobscot River during the Summer, working in the woods in Winter, and driving logs in the Spring. In 1853 he came to the Port Huron area. In 1857 he began to explore the White River and surrounding area, traveling by canoe to the head waters, the first attempt of its kind at that time. He finally moved to Montague and joined the company of Avery & Murphy. He was one of the originators of the White River Log and Boom Company and was its president for several years. He married twice and had seven children. In 1885 he left the lumber industry and moved to Grand Rapids, where he became the President of the Kent County Savings Bank, which later became Kent State Bank. He died in 1889.



Newell Avery was born in Maine in 1817 to Enoch & Margaret Avery. His father was actively involved in lumbering in Maine, so he naturally gained early experience in the field. In 1828, at the age of eleven, his father died leaving him to support his mother and ten young siblings. At the age of fourteen, Newell was working in a sawmill. In 1849 Avery joined his brother-in-law, Jonathan Eddy, and Simon J. Murphy, and they organized the firm of Eddy, Murphy & Company, with Mr. Avery being the silent partner of the firm. They soon began operations in the Michigan pine forests and Avery moved his family to Port Huron. Later they moved their operations to the White Lake area. Newell Avery married Nancy Clapp Eddy in 1843 and they had 13 children. Avery died 13 Mar 1877.



Simon J. Murphy, Jr. was born in Maine in 1851. He joined his father's lumber business and worked his way through the ranks, doing everything from driving teams to all the jobs of the laboring man. He was eventually put in charge of a lumber camp and control of the drivers. Then he became a manager in his father's lumber business on the Saginaw River. In 1878 he became interested in the White River lumber operations, controlled by his father Simon Murphy, Sr., and in 1882, the firm became known as Crepin, Murphy & Sons. At one time Murphy was President of the White River Boom Company. The mill continued to operate until 1885 when all the timber owned by the firm had been cut. Murphy moved on to Wisconsin and was Mayor of Green Bay from 1899 thru 1901. He died in 1926.

Ernest E. Crepin was born in France and came to this country in 1850. He married in New York, moved to Iowa and finally settled in Chicago. He had 2 children. The 1880 Census shows him living in Holton. In 1886 the mill closed and he moved to Chicago, where he worked in banking and real estate. In 1900 he was President of North American Accident Insurance Company. He died in Chicago in 1903.