



Old sawmills between Müritz and Feisneck



The sawmills around 1910

„... that on the way to the gauntlets at Ecktannen, one must run between the large sawmills of Strubelt-Steinborn-Mauck? Such mills may not be all that alluring to those seeking beauty, but who does not adore the smell of freshly cut wood? I love this smell as much as I love the scent of tar,“ wrote the author of an elegy to the Town of Waren in 1927. This enthusiasm was shared by Theodor Fontane who described the „enduring pleasure“ of observing the cogs turning in the sawmills when he summered in Waren in 1896 and who saw these mills as a symbol of progress.

The first Waren steam-powered sawmills were established in the second half of the 19th century on the spit of land separating Müritz from Feisnecksee lake in order to work the timber felled in the municipal forest.

Prior to this, efforts to establish cutting mills had been hampered by a lack of usable water power.

The use of steam was an important step for Waren on its journey to becoming a commercial centre by Müritz lake.

The first steam-powered cutting mill, built on the small watercourse between the lakes, housed a large gang saw and a circular saw in a wood shed. An enormous building was constructed for the 8 BHP locomobile. Around 1880, a joiner's workshop was added to the wood cutting mill. A second steam-powered sawmill was established in 1895.

These sawmills were expanded on more than one occasion due to the wealth of timber in the region and the high demand for sawn wood. Electric motors were installed to assist the steam-powered machines, before replacing them entirely. New gang saws were purchased.



Working in the sawmill around 1960

In addition to being transported by road, the waterways were also used for rafting logs right up until 1958. Later, the waterways were used for wet timber storage and for washing raw logs.



Timber raft around 1960

The political revolution of 1989 onwards signalled the end of more than 100 years of sawmill history on Müritz lake.



Working in the sawmill around 1980

Difficult transport connections and questions over cost effectiveness led to the closure, relocation and demolition of the industrial plants at the old site, starting in 1990. Today, the old chimney stack still remains as a reminder of the steam-powered mills.

The history of rafting

Rafting has likely been around ever since the first permanent settlements were established and would have been frequently used to provide the timber for these settlements. A lack of roads across the whole of Central Europe (and the poor quality of those that did exist) prevented people from transporting logs long distances by land, and so rafting was not only the only way to transport raw timber, it was also the cheapest. This method saw a further boom from the middle of the 18th century with the regulation of the rivers and the building of canals. Rafting in Germany reached its peak in the second half of the 19th century. The need for timber and firewood grew exponentially during the period of industrialisation. The situation only changed when the road network was expanded and timber trucks were introduced. By the early 20th century, rafting had all but disappeared on many rivers. The railway network, in particular, now allowed people to transport timber fast – including to areas that were not connected to a body of flowing water suitable for rafting. By the end of the 1960s, rafting had vanished entirely. Attempts to revive the industry in the 1980s did not enjoy any noticeable success, including on Müritz lake.

Source: Jürgen Kniesz, Waren History Museum (Müritz), June 2015