

Getting Grain To The Mill

By Daryl A. Bailey

Nankin Mills has a long and colorful history. What follows are accounts written by Melvin D. Osband, the son of an early pioneer, in his "My Recollections of Pioneers and Pioneer Life in Nankin" as published by the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society in 1908.

The First Mill Built on the Site of Nankin Mills.

"In 1835, Noah Hull, agent for General John E. Schwartz, commenced to build a flouring mill on the present site of the Nankin mills. He hewed the timber and raised part of the frame, but after a few weeks the work was abandoned. The work was again resumed in 1841 under the superintendence of Rufus Swift, of St. Clair, and the mill started I think in February, 1842."

How Grain Was Taken to the Mill in the Early Days:

"The threshing and cleaning of wheat were other difficulties the pioneer encountered. They had neither barns nor fanning mills. Threshing floors must be built out of doors, that never could be used except in dry weather, and by the use of the hand fan they separated the chaff from the wheat. When the grain was in the bag, the neighborhood furnished neither horse nor wagon by which to take it to mill. A carriage, then known as a dray, was improvised for that purpose. A pole with two prongs was inserted in the ring of the yoke between the oxen, and stakes put into the upper side of each of the prongs below the crotch, a board nailed on in front of the stakes on which to lay the bags and the carriage was ready for use, and to my certain knowledge it did good service for a whole neighborhood."