Lumber Industry

Kawartha Lakes Heritage Inventory

Historic Context Statement

Kawartha Lakes

The Lumber Industry Historic Context Statement examines resources related to the lumber trade which began in the former Victoria County in the mid-nineteenth century. At its height in the late nineteenth century, this industry was the major employer in many of the northern townships and communities in Kawartha Lakes and had an important impact on the local landscape with a variety of different type of historic resources related to it. These resources primarily date from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century and include features such as homes, offices, camps, and transport routes and relate to a wide cross-section of the local population, from businessmen to government officials to lumberjacks.

Resources which relate to the lumber industry are both architecturally and geographically diverse and may not be preserved as well as other heritage resources in the municipality due to their often remote locations, the transient nature of the industry, and the fact that this industry is no longer a key economic driver in Kawartha Lakes. The geographic range of these resources covers the entirety of the municipality, although there is likely a higher concentration in the northern townships because of their importance within the industry. Because of the vast distances that this industry covered and the fact that it was not limited by jurisdictional boundaries, there is the potential that key resources related to the lumber trade in Kawartha Lakes may be identified outside of the City, particularly in the County of Simcoe, County of Haliburton, and the County and City of Peterborough. Any protection of these resources would be the responsibility of the jurisdiction in which they are located.

Context Summary

Summary Statement of Significance: The lumber industry was a major economic driver in Kawartha Lakes beginning in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Throughout the second half of the century, it was the largest industry and employer in Kawartha Lakes and had significant social, demographic and environmental impact on both local communities and the municipality as a whole. The impact of this industry was particularly important in the northern townships of the former Victoria County where timber was both harvested and processed and where the lumber industry was the sustaining industry for many communities until the twentieth century. Resources related to this theme include buildings, structures and landscapes directly related to the harvesting and processing of timber products in both urban and rural areas, as well as those resources associated with individuals related to this industry. Many resources outside of towns, villages, and hamlets related to this context are no longer extant or are in ruin form due to the transient nature of the industry.

Primary Period of Significance: 1820-1950

Period of Significance Justification: The harvesting and milling of lumber began with the earliest settlements in Kawartha Lakes which were established in the early 1820s. The industry grew into a major business operation throughout the second half of the nineteenth century before experiencing rapid decline in the early decades of the twentieth century. By about 1950, the major harvesting operations and mills were closed and the manufacture of timber products became more integrated into the wider manufacturing landscape of the municipality.

Geographic Location: Citywide, with higher concentration of resources in the northern half of the municipality

The Lumber Industry in Canada

Lumber was one of Canada's most important industries throughout the nineteenth century and had a profound impact on the growth of the country during this period, particularly in eastern Canada, both its economy, and environment. In central and eastern Ontario, the harvesting, processing and transporting of timber was a major economic driver and led to the creation of new communities and transport routes throughout this area of the province. It also had a profound environmental impact through the removal of huge amounts of timber from large geographic areas which fundamentally altered the natural landscape. Although timber was harvested and processed in specific local areas, its value as an export product made it both a regional and national industry with little limitation based on municipal or provincial boundaries.

Although lumber was used extensively in nineteenth century Canada as the building material of choice, the industry was driven by demand for abroad. In particular, conflict in Europe and the Napoleonic Wars beginning in the late eighteenth century had rendered a massive appetite for timber in Britain for the construction of ships; timber was also required for other construction projects during this period. In the eighteenth century, the majority of lumber used in Britain came from the Baltics, as its North American colonies were too far removed geographically to make large scale lumber extraction economical. However, with the institution of the Continental System by Napoleon in 1806, Britain no longer had access to European products and turned instead to its North American colonies for a steady and high quality supply of timber. By the time the Continental System officially ended in 1814, the lumber industry in Canada was well established and favourable tariffs allowed it to continue its dominance.

Prior to 1850, the majority of lumber was in the form of squared timber. The biggest demand was for pine, although other types of trees including spruce and various hardwoods were also harvested. The earliest operations were small and cut and shipped on an ad hoc basis. Many of these early lumbermen were farmers who either

Lumbering Scene c.1917

cut lumber from their own farms and sold it directly to mills or who cut lumber in the winter in lumber camps before returning to their farms in the spring. However, as the industry grew, this small scale model was no longer sustainable, and larger, more organized operations took the place of local, family affairs. By the second half of the century, the industry was dominated by a handful of larger companies which organized the cutting, transport and sale of the timber and employed larger numbers of men throughout the process. The consolidation of the industry also included the regularization of its bureaucratic side, with lumber companies now required to purchase land or timber rights in order to log; new regulations regarding licensing made it more difficult for individuals and smaller operations to participate in the industry.

The cutting and sale of lumber had a number of distinct stages. First, the timber had to be cut and shaped. This process was done by men in lumber camps, also known as shanties, which were set up in the harvest areas, to serve as a base for the lumbermen who would live in there throughout the winter. The work was done in the winter as it was the best time to harvest when the wood was easiest to cut and transport. The cut and squared timber would then be transported over the snow to the nearest waterbody by

oxen or horses; the maximum distance to transport to water was around 6 kilometres before it became impractical and too expensive. The lumbermen would then wait for the thaw and the timber would be transported in rafts on the spring waters through the regional system of rivers and lakes and, eventually to port, generally Montreal for timber coming from Ontario.

Life for the men working in the lumber camps was difficult. The working conditions were not easy with long hours doing hard labour in the bush in winter and a significant amount of danger involved in both the cutting and transport of the lumber. River driving, in particular, was extremely dangerous and men were not infrequently killed. The pay was also poor, although the more highly skilled men who shaped the logs and the river drivers who navigated the rafts of timber down the waterways received a premium. However, there was never a shortage of lumbermen to power the industry as many men who undertook seasonal work in other industries, such as labourers on farms, came to the camps to seek extra wages in the winter months.

A specific lumber camp culture also arose due to the isolated and male-only nature of the camps. The men worked six days per week, except for Sunday, and developed a reputation for hard drinking, gambling, and lively antics on Saturday nights and when they were able to come into local communities. Their antics were well known and a stereotype of the lumberman developed, with John Langton, of Blythe Farm on the north side of Sturgeon Lake, writing of them in 1849: “they are a lighthearted set of rascals and thieves withal that ever a peaceable country was tormented with.”[1] They were certainly viewed as rough and ready men, but it was also noted in contemporary publications, such as by Colonel Samuel Strickland of Lakefield that they were generally law-abiding and could be characterized as being more rowdy then criminal.

The harvesting and transport of lumber was a complex and expensive endeavour, allowing larger, more organized firms to thrive over their smaller rivals or to consolidate with them. In Ontario, as areas closer to the St. Lawrence River were harvested out, the industry moved further inland and further north to more remote forests and waterway. The ability to access these forests, particularly in the back townships away from Lake Ontario, required significant logical power and resources making them all but impossible for smaller firms to access and further consolidating the power of the big players. These firms had mostly begun as small family affairs and gradually expanded into a more substantial business, but still operated primarily by its founding family. In Ontario, this included firms such as those owned by Mossom Boyd, John Thomson, J.R. Booth and D.D. Calvin. These families often owned and operated the lumber business as an integrated business model, including harvesting, transport and sales. Most of them also

[1] John Langton, *Early Days in Upper Canada: The Letters of John Langton from the Backwoods of Upper Canada and the Audit Office of the Province of Canada,* ed. by W.A. Langton (Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1926), 208.

Lumbering Scene c.1917

were involved in the production of dressed or sawn lumber for the domestic and American markets and owned large sawmills in a variety of communities across Ontario.

By the late nineteenth century, the need for squared timber in Britain was diminishing, but the industry was able to shift to serve the American market which was rapidly expanding with westward settlement and exponential urban growth. Instead of squared timber, however, the primary export to the United States was sawn timber, which Ontario businesses were able to produce in mills across the province and ship, often via train, south of the border. This product was also in demand in Canada, for similar reasons as cities and towns expanded and settlement continued in the Prairies where there were fewer trees to use for construction. This urban and western growth also corresponded with the development and subsequent rise in popularity of balloon framing as a construction which required large amounts of dressed lumber. Demand for wood continued, despite the different product, and the industry and its supply chains shifted to accommodate it. The culture and the business of it, however, remained more or less the same as it had since the beginning of the century. For those companies which already owned and operated sawmills, they were at a significant advantage to serve this market by further integrating the mills into their production system. This

change saw the development of significantly larger sawmills to process the majority of the timber coming out of the bush, as opposed to begin taken directly to port for shipment overseas or going to smaller mills for more localized use. The smaller size of the exported product also meant that the use of the waterways for transport was diminished as trains took on a more prominent role in getting lumber from mill to customer as this was a more practical, and also more economical, shipping method for dressed boards.

The lumber industry, in its nineteenth century form, shifted again in the early twentieth century. The introduction of mechanization in the early twentieth century had profound effects on the industry as trucks replaced horses and chainsaws replaced axes and crosscut saws and completely changed the geographic pattern of the industry. Mechanization continued throughout the twentieth century with new innovations, such as skidders, designed to make the harvesting process and the transport of timber more efficient. One of the biggest changes was that the new methods of harvesting and transport allowed loggers to access areas further from rivers and lakes because they no longer relied on water to transport their products to the mills and new interior areas were opened up for cutting. At the same time, the centre of the lumber industry shifted to the west, with British Columbia becoming the primary lumber producer within the first decades of the century. Ontario and Quebec, meanwhile, transitioned in a large part to the production of pulp and paper and helped make Canada the world's largest exporter of pulp and paper by the end of the First World War. The companies undertaking this work – both lumber and pulp and paper production – continued to consolidate with larger and larger firms controlling the market. By mid-century, the logging culture of the nineteenth century was effectively gone and replaced by the more modern mechanized industry that exists today.

Lumbering in Kawartha Lakes

At first glance, the Trent River Valley, the area in which the majority of Kawartha Lakes is located, of the early nineteenth century was prime lumber territory with ample and unsettled forest and significant waterways throughout. It has been estimated that, prior to settlement, approximately two-thirds of the forested portion of the wider region, including Hastings County, Haliburton County, Peterborough County and the former Victoria County, now the City of Kawartha Lakes, was comprised of virgin pineries. However, the lumber industry in the region remained limited and localized for much of the first half of the nineteenth century with little participation in the larger export market. Timber was certainly harvested in the region by both local settlers and smaller logging operations, but it was also used almost exclusively in local communities, where it was sawn at the nearest mill and used for construction projects in the villages and farms within the area where it was harvested. Local lumber, particularly the high quality hardwood found in the mixed forests, was also used for other products such as furniture or interior fittings.

Lumber Shanty, n.d.

In these early days, timber harvesting was often a by-product of agricultural settlement. As settlers cleared their lands, they were cutting timber which they would use themselves or, depending on the amount of good timber they were cutting, would sell it locally. Similarly, sawmill owners traditionally took half of the lumber they cut as payment and this lumber was sold, both within local communities and slightly further afield. Mills were oriented to the needs of the local market, and were not equipped to as major businesses or exporters.

From an business perspective, the major drawback of the region was that it was extremely difficult to move logs out of the backcountry to Lake Ontario because of the significant number of rapids and waterfalls along the route. Although the first lock on what would become the Trent-Severn Waterway was constructed at Bobcaygeon in 1833, water travel and transportation of goods remained limited to within the region as there was no accessible outlet to Lake Ontario. Similarly, the early nineteenth century lumber market in Ontario was dominated by operations near the Lower Ottawa River which were easier to access and quicker to transport their lumber to port in Montreal, making the development of the backcountry for timber extraction not financially feasible.

At the same time, many of the townships in the former Victoria County had not yet been surveyed until well into the 1820 and 1830s and there were few settlers in the area; many townships that were surveyed in the 1830s did not receive significant settlement of any kind until the 1850s because they were remote and difficult to access. Therefore, as the lumber industry grew elsewhere in the first several decades of the nineteenth century, it remained small and localized in Kawartha Lakes until the middle of the century.

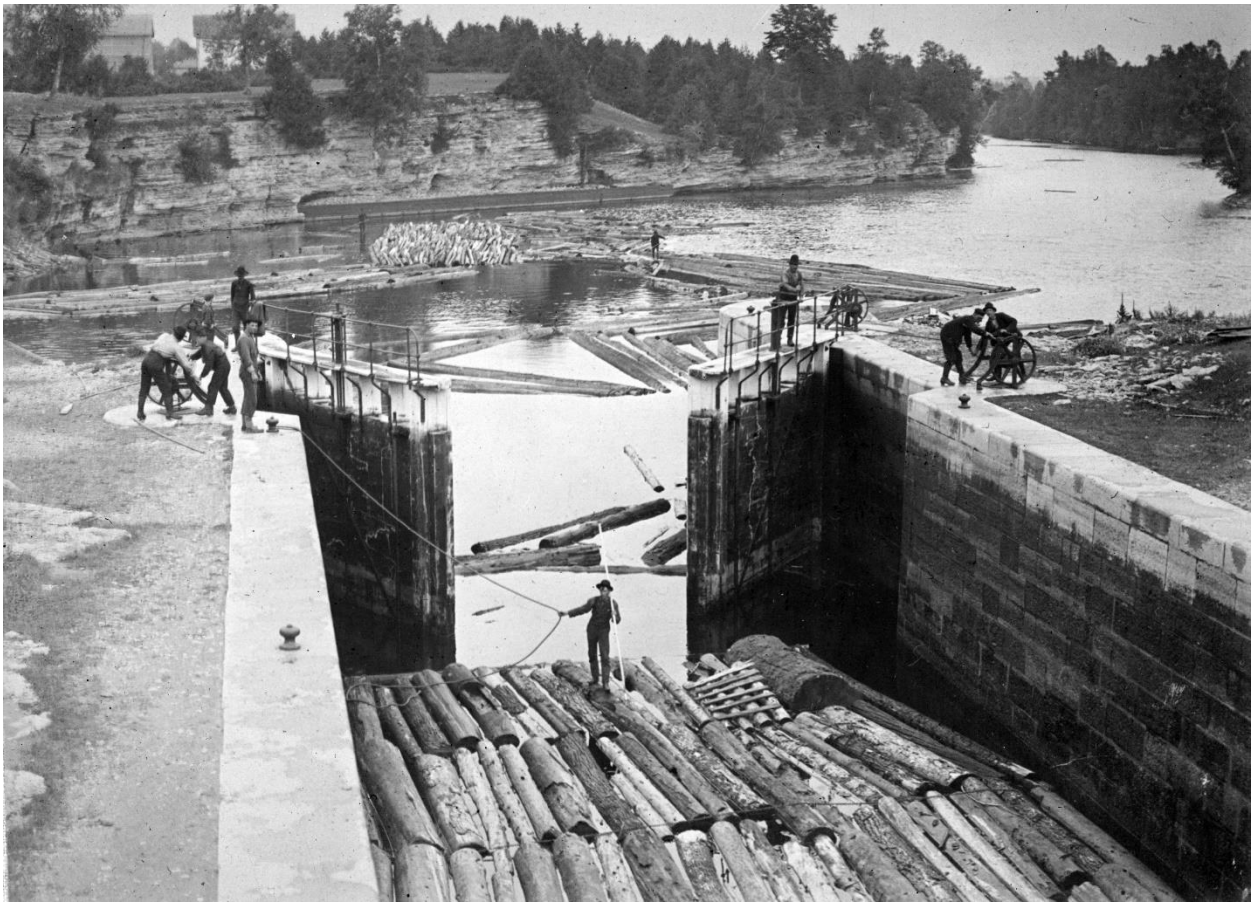
The landscape changed significantly in the 1840s. A system of locks, dams and timber slides along the Trent Severn Waterway was complete enough by 1844 to allow for logs to pass from Bobcaygeon to Lake Ontario, although it did not yet allow for boat transit. At the same time, the areas near the Lower Ottawa River which had been heavily logged in the early decades of the century were played out and the most profitable forests now lay further inland. The areas which were now prime lumber county included the Trent River Valley and the surrounding region in and around Kawartha Lakes.

By the end of the 1840s, there were around 40 lumber operators with ventures around the Trent system; in Victoria County, which contained two main river systems, this was the more developed area, both with regard to the lumber industry and access in general. These were primarily small operators with limited timber limits on various lots in Verulam and Somerville; many of these operators would eventually fold as the larger players took an increasing share of the market and their better resources gave them access to more remote timber stands, more men, and better markets.

Of the operators who began cutting in the region in the 1840s and 1850s, Mossom Boyd is by far the most well known and most successful. Boyd began his career in the industry at Thomas Need's mill in Bobcaygeon which was established in 1833. Boyd had emigrated to Canada from Ireland and taken 100 acres in Verulam Township to clear and farm. However, when Need returned to England in 1837, Boyd took the opportunity to take over the mill, which he eventually leased and then purchased from Need.

His entry into the lumber trade as a larger business concern than just the mill came in the late 1840s when he purchased the timber limits for a number of lots in Verulam Township, floating his first raft of squared timber to Quebec in 1848. Over the next several decades he expanded his cutting throughout the northern townships in Victoria County and into the land owned by the Canadian Land and Emigration Company in Haliburton, producing both squared timber and sawn lumber. Eventually, the Boyd Lumber Company would evolve into one of the largest lumber operators in Ontario.

Boyd's success, in part, came from the fact that his business was completely integrated from acquiring timber limits, to cutting, to transport, to processing, to sales. Effectively, Boyd controlled the entire supply chain, from harvesting the lumber to getting it to market which gave him a significant advantage over others in the lumber business at this time who often undertook either harvesting or processing, but not both. The location



Locks at Fenelon Falls

of his business in Bobcaygeon also placed him in a prime physical location to access both high quality pine forest, particularly in the mid-century when Verulam, Fenelon and Somerville Townships were as of yet mostly still forested, and the transport routes to get his product to market.

Timber limits were also purchased by operators from outside of Victoria County, mostly from the Peterborough area. This included mill owners such as Samuel Dickson, who began milling in Peterborough with a mill on the Otonabee River in the 1830s who exported both squared timber and sawn lumber, mostly to the American market. Individuals such as Dickson, who owned mills in other communities, were, by the mid-century looking to the townships further to the north, in Peterborough, Victoria and Haliburton Counties as the more accessible pineries were depleted of timber. This was the regional nature of the business, that required lumber businesses to move as needed to find good quality pine to cut.

The north eastern townships into which Boyd and others lumbering in the area expanded – Somerville, Laxton, and Bexley – had, by the mid-nineteenth century, been surveyed but were extremely sparsely settled, in part because they were difficult to access with limited transportation links and also because the land was extremely poor. The real value of these properties lay in the forest cover and many of them, or their

timber rights, were bought as speculation by lumber businesses, cleared, and sold again to settlers once the prime timber was extracted. In this way, the industry was highly transient and moved quickly through the region. By the later decades of the century, even the most heavily wooded portions of Victoria County were nearly completely cleared and many of the larger operators had moved their cutting operations, although not their mills, out of Kawartha Lakes. Boyd, for example, had significant operations in Haliburton County as early as the 1860s.

However, Boyd was not the only large operator in the county, and his operations focussed primarily on the eastern townships. The north western townships – Dalton, Digby and Longford in particular – were also heavily forested with pine and highly valuable for their timber resources. Numerous operators working in this area of the county harvested the pine beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, following a similar pattern to their contemporaries working in the eastern townships. Harvesting in this area commenced slightly later than in the easterly part of the county, as it was more difficult to access, but followed a similar pattern of development.

By far the largest, and most well known, operator, in the north western townships was John Thomson, the owner of the Longford Lumber Company. Thomson immigrated to Peterborough from Scotland in 1855 and worked in the lumber industry in the city, which was at its height at that time. In 1867, he purchased the rights for Longford Township from the Canadian Land and Emigration Company at auction because of the significant amount of high quality pine there. By the end of the decade, he has constructed a mill at Lake St. John, in Simcoe County, and was actively harvesting timber from the township.

While Boyd's business was oriented east on the Trent system and towards Peterborough, Thomson's was oriented west on the Black River system towards Orillia. The Black River flowed into Lake St. John, via a canal cut by the Rama Timber Transportation Company, and was connected with Lake Couchiching by a steam powered tramway to allow product to be transported west; the lumber industry in the western part of the county was always oriented this direction due to its proximity to Orillia and the direction of the waterways which flowed towards Lake Simcoe. The two men never competed against one another as they were working in completely separate areas, although they did compete against smaller operators working in the same regions and watersheds.

By the late 1870s, the Longford Lumber Company was one of the largest timber operators in Simcoe and Victoria counties, with Thomson operating two large mills at his new settlement of Longford Mills at Lake St. John to process the lumber coming out of Longford Township. The infrastructure required for an operation of this size was significant. In addition to the mills, houses and other structures at Longford Mills, he had up to five shanties within the township itself to house the lumbermen as well as an office and supply depot at Uphill. Dams along the Black River helped control the water to aid the flow of logs and trails and paths were cut through the forest to facilitate the

Boyd Lumber Yards

movement of men, horses, supplies and the timbers themselves. The operation also included the canal between the Black River and Lake St. John and the tramway between Lake St. John and Lake Couchiching which were major construction endeavours. This was typical of the infrastructure required to harvest and process lumber but on a much larger scale than other operators, likely rivaled only by Boyd within Victoria County. The industry could only operate because of these huge and sprawling networks of infrastructure to facilitate the harvesting, transport and processing of lumber and came to include shanties, supply depots, dams and canal works, trains, and the mills themselves, all directly supporting the timber harvest.

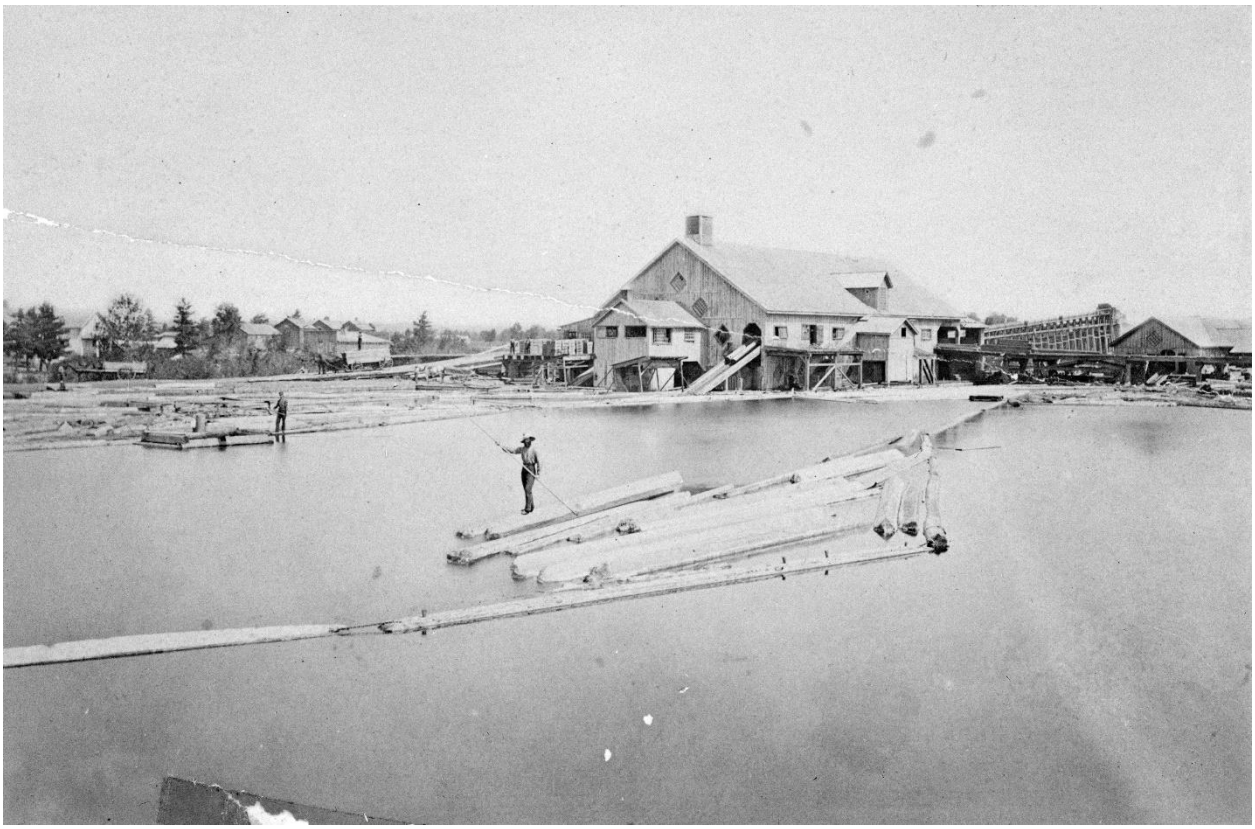
Although his lumber all came from Victoria County, all of Thomson's processing was done in Simcoe County. This was highly typical for this period where the industry was not confined by administrative boundaries and harvesting and processing were done at separate locations, particularly with the increasing trade in sawn lumber in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Harvesting in Victoria County and processing elsewhere was very common; for example, Samuel Dickson, who purchased rights in Somerville Township in the 1860s, owned a sawmill in Peterborough which is where the timber his company harvested was sawn and dressed. Similarly, Boyd harvested significant amounts of timber in Haliburton County, but processed them at his mill in Bobcaygeon.

While operators like Boyd and Thomson were extracting vast quantities of timber from large timber stands in the northern part of the county, smaller operations continued throughout Kawartha Lakes. Mills existed in most communities to serve the local

population and even as the industry expanded and became much more focussed on the export market, these continued to operate to serve the local market. Mills had existed since the earliest days of settlement and continued to operate even as the large lumber companies exponentially expanded their businesses in the second half of the century. These operations were not producing squared timber, but rather sawn lumber for use primarily is residential, agricultural and commercial construction; they were also more likely to process a variety of hardwoods, as opposed to the heavy focus on pine, that were used for a variety of purposes in growing communities. For example, the first mill in Omemee opened in 1825 and operated in the village until the early 1890s, although it was rebuilt following a fire in 1877. Logs were generally brought into the mills by farmers harvesting from their land, as had been the practice in the early decades of the century prior to the centralization of the big lumber companies. However, smaller lumber camps still existed to feed these mills, such as one that opened near Cowan's Bay in 1897, where the timber harvested was not for export and squared logs, but rather mostly for the local and sometimes regional market.

As with elsewhere in the province, the demand for squared timber from Britain was ending by about 1870 in favour of sawn lumber to be exported to the United States. The decline in the squared timber trade in the 1870s necessarily brought with it substantial changes to the industry in Kawartha Lakes, particularly in the north where large white pine were still being harvested. The previous reliance on the region's expansive network of lakes and rivers diminished with the rise of sawn lumber as the preferred export; while river and lakes were still used to transport timber out of the bush, it now required processing into sawn boards before continuing on to cities, towns and the United States, and an alternate mode of transport post-processing. The expansion of regional railways throughout Kawartha Lakes in the later decades of the nineteenth century was vital for the industry to remaining a significant economic driver in the county's communities, both those in the north closest to the timber stands, and more southerly towns, such as Lindsay, where a large amount of lumber was processed.

The arrival of the Port Hope, Lindsay, and Beaverton Railway, later the Midland Railway, in Lindsay in 1857 had already been a major boon for the industry. This train was the first to arrive in a major centre in Kawartha Lakes and was intended, in part, to transport lumber out of the county to southern markets, as it allowed the mills in Lindsay to sell their product outside the community. Over the next several decades, the continued expansion of regional railroads further allowed for the transport of processed lumber by rail and the ability of the industry to adapt to the new realities of the market. In fact, the transition to the export of processed lumber facilitated by the railway had, for many communities, a much bigger economic impact than the earlier squared timber trade. The processing of lumber, into sawn lumber for export but also for local products such as shingles, barrels and staves, was the largest industry in Lindsay in the late



Boyd Sawmill

nineteenth century, despite its distance from the primary timber harvesting areas. It was Kawartha Lakes' first big commercial industry and dominated the local economy in the second half of the nineteenth century.

An excellent example of the impact of the railway on the industry is the arrival of the Toronto and Nipissing Railway in Coboconk in 1872. Coboconk was established in 1851 with the construction of a sawmill by John Bateman, the first in the county north of Cameron Lake. The sawmill was used primarily to supply local needs with timber from the surrounding area as there was effectively no way of taking sawn boards out of the area. That being said, squared timber was being floated down the Gull River from northern Victoria County and Haliburton into Balsam Lake and the Trent system from the 1850s and the lumber industry, specifically working in the logging camps, was the main occupation in the community and surrounding area from the middle of the nineteenth century. However, the opening of the railway changed how the industry in the area operated; in fact, the purpose of the railway was to facilitate the production and shipping of cordwood to the Gooderham and Worts distillery in Toronto with the added, secondary aim of bringing sawn lumber south from Victoria County. Soon, the local sawmill was processing millions of feet of lumber, allowing the industry to continue even as demand for squared timbers decreased, and open up areas further to the north, mostly in Haliburton, for harvesting. The late nineteenth century, after the arrival of the railway, was the heyday of the industry in the community and caused a substantial boom in population and economic output.

The extraction of lumber was not just a business proposition, however, as it came with it a day to day life for those who worked in the industry. Life in the lumber camps and on the river in the region was written about in its time and two important historic sources can be found in the writings of John Langton and Samuel Strickland. Both authors, who came to Fenelon Township in Victoria County and Douro Township in Peterborough County respectively in the first half of the nineteenth century, were well-associated with the major figures in the business and observed and recorded the activities of the lumbermen; Langton was an early backer of Mossom Boyd and was involved with his business in various capacities throughout most of the mid-nineteenth century. Both of these sources speak about how the industry was undertaken, the lives of the lumbermen, and the industry's importance to the local economy; although romanticized to a certain degree, both accounts make public the rhythms of the industry and the life of the lumbermen to the broader public in the nineteenth century and advocated for its continued expansion as a key economic driver, not just locally, but within the wider Canadian context. Langton, who was more actively involved with the trade in its early years in Fenelon and Verulam Townships, was enthusiastic about its potential in the early days of cutting in the area, writing in 1849: "The more I see and learn of the lumber trade, the more I like its prospects. As the lumber is consumed nearer market it must be sought further and further back and we on the spot have many advantages."[2]

Strickland, in particular, was an strong advocate for the expansion of the railway into the interior for the express purpose of supporting the lumber trade. Writing in 1853, he wrote of settlers cutting and burning valuable timber on their land because it was inaccessible to markets but, however, he wrote: "by the construction of railroads, this valuable timber could be exported, either in logs or sawn up into planks and boards, it would add greatly to the prosperity of the country for the timber would become of more real value than the land; so that what before was noting but nuisance and cost money and labour to get rid of would become a real source of wealth."[3] Strickland's observations were certainly prescient and an accurate impression of the state of the industry to come in the later decades of the century.

As Strickland observed, the lumber industry had important auxiliary benefits for the communities where it was a major, or the primary, economic driver and was, in many places, an important source of wealth, not just for the lumber barons but also for the communities that relied on the trade. There were a number of ways in which the industry directly impacted local communities, from both an economic and demographic perspective.

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[2] Langton, *Early Days,* 201.

[3] Samuel Strickland, *Twenty-Seven Years in Canada West; or the Experience of an Early Settler* (London: Richard Bentley, 1853), 276.

Lumbering Scene, n.d.

The most direct beneficiaries from the lumber industry were sawmill owners and operators whose output, business and profits increased alongside the extraction of lumber from the forest. Small sawmills which in their earliest days had served only the local settler population for their own use gradually took on additional lumber for the export market, particularly with the shift from squared timber to sawn lumber in the 1870s. While some mills, such as those owned by Boyd and Thomson, were part of a fully integrated business model, others were standalone operations which purchased their wood from other companies. This included mills both in close proximity to the harvest areas and in other communities, such as Lindsay, where several large mill operations had opened by the late nineteenth century and were supplying vast amounts of lumber to local and external markets. Generally, smaller local mills supplied the local markets while some of the major village mills transitioned into significant industrial operations to supply the export market. By this period, the lumber industry – including extraction, processing, and transport – was the primary direct employer in many communities in Kawartha Lakes, particularly in the northern townships. It should be noted, however, that many of the lumberjacks themselves were not necessarily local to the area as many companies, including Mossom Boyd, brought in their own workers who were experienced and skilled in the timber harvest.

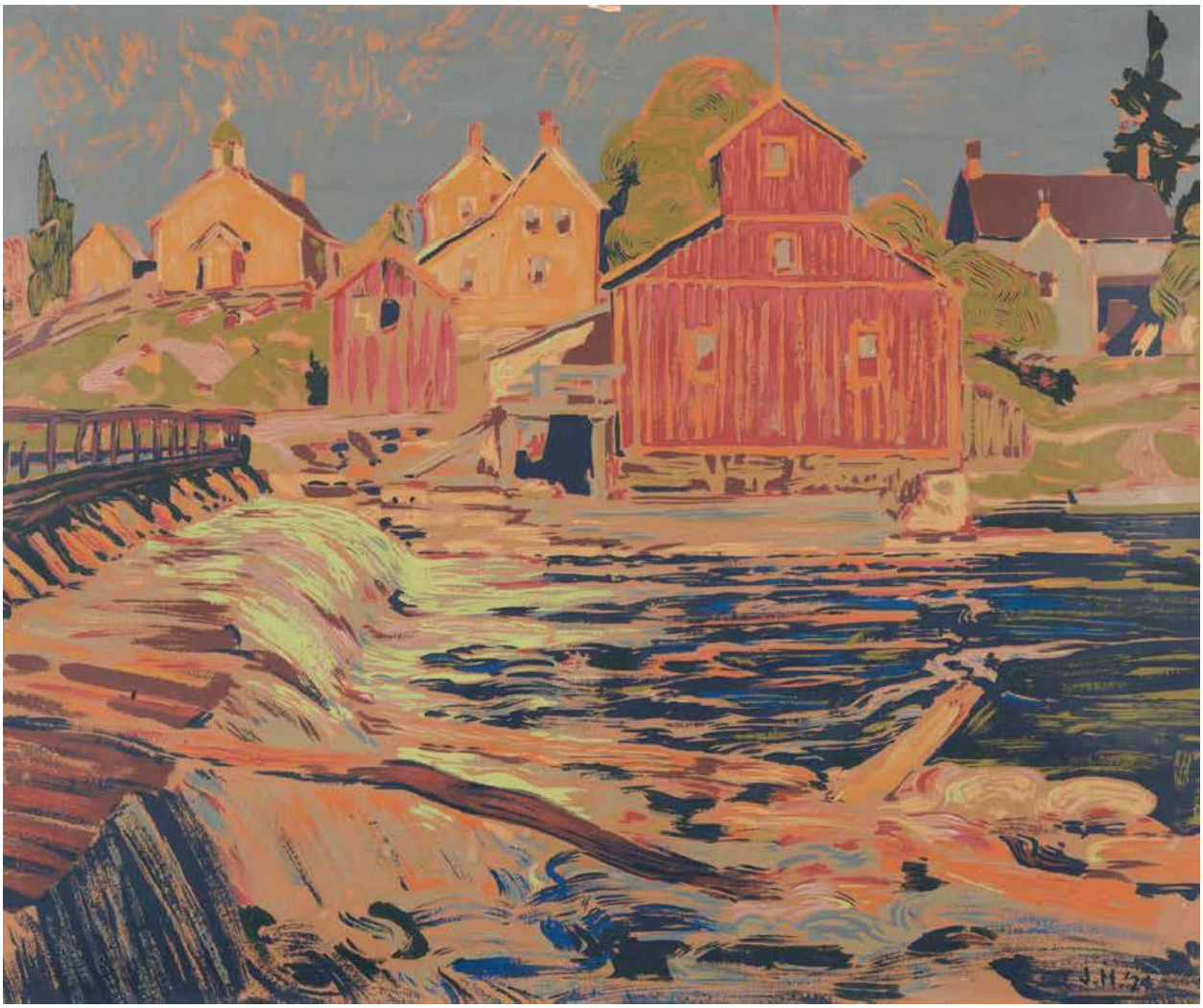
There were also significant auxiliary impacts from the growth of the industry. Other, related industries such as shingle and planing mills and manufacturing which made wooden products like furniture, readily benefitted from the increased flow of lumber. These industries were established and expanded, employing more people and attracting them to the various communities throughout Kawartha Lakes in which they were located. Businesses unrelated to the industry also flourished with people in growing communities able to purchase their products and services. Towns like Coboconk, where the lumber industry formed the backbone of the local economy, experienced massive growth in the later decades of the century because of the importance of the lumber trade in bringing money and people into the community.

The industry also had a very specific impact on rural settlement and agriculture in the areas where timber was harvested. In many areas in the northern part of the township, the harvesting of timber went hand in hand with settlement. Often, lands cleared by lumber companies were sold to settlers to facilitate increased agricultural settlement in an area, the fact that many of the lands in the northern part of Kawartha Lakes were not well suited to most type of agriculture notwithstanding. Similarly, many settlers sold the surplus timber from their lands to lumber companies, an arrangement that benefitted both by providing income for settlers and an extra source of product for companies that they did not have to harvest themselves. At the same time, local lumber camps provided an easy and accessible market for farmers to sell their produce. In areas that were not closer to the county's larger centres, this provided a vital income source for settlers who needed the extra money and the lumber camps were always in need of supplies. Although settlers and loggers did not always have the same aims, they existed in symbiosis with each other as they both extended their reach into the forest.

Decline

The last years of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century brought the decline of the industry in central Ontario as a whole, although the harvesting of pine further north in Muskoka and Algonquin continued longer than in the more southerly areas, such as Kawartha Lakes. By this time, not only was mechanization vastly changing the way in which lumber was harvested, the prime logging areas in Kawartha Lakes were nearly completely cut by the turn of the century and there was little left to harvest in many areas.

A snapshot of the state of the industry and the landscape in the early twentieth century can be found in the publication prepared by C.D. Howe and J.H. White for the Canadian Commission of Conservation's Committee on Forests entitled *Trent Watershed Survey: A Reconnaissance* which examined the forests of Victoria, Peterborough, Haliburton and Hastings Counties within the Trent River watershed. Although this report does not address the lumber that flowed out of the region through the Black River system, the



J.E.H. MacDonald, Mill at Coboconk

conditions across the region were extremely similar and followed the same pattern of growth and decline. By the time the report was published in 1913, the lumber industry as it existed in the nineteenth century was effectively finished in Kawartha Lakes, at least when compared to its height in the 1870s and the ecological and economic impacts were becoming very clear. The majority of pineries in the region were gone, having been cleared out in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the authors predicted that, within five years, the industry would be completely done within the region. Forest regeneration, which was vital for the continuation of the industry, was not occurring, as the mass cutting of the region had left little in the way of younger trees for new growth, particularly with regard to pine. Similarly, the increased logging and other related activities, alongside natural factors such as thin, dry soil, had given rise to large forest fires which burnt over huge tracts of land and pushed the land beyond the ability to regenerate pine; in 1913 alone, fires burned through 175,000 acres of land in the region, including 31% of the existing and former pineries.

Examining the impact on business, there were only ten lumber operators working in the region from Hastings to Victoria County by the early 1910s and harvesting only 10% of

what had been harvested in the early 1870s. Of the 1911-12 harvest, about 40% was pine while the other 60% was composed of other woods for a variety of purposes, including hardwoods which were mostly used locally and spruce, poplar and balsam, mostly cut around Kinmount and Gooderham, which was exported for pulp and paper. The majority of the wood was now processed by only five mills, in Marmora, Peterborough, Lakefield, Lindsay and Coboconk, specialized processing for products such as furniture notwithstanding. Cedar, which was also cut heavily for use in rails and posts, was also nearly exhausted. This does not include the operations in Orillia and area which drew their lumber from Dalton, Digby and Longford, as well as the eastern townships of Simcoe County, but a similar pattern was emerging there as well with the over 100 sawmills operating in the county in the 1870s rapidly dwindled, with only the larger operators remaining. Even the Longford Lumber Company had shuttered by 1900, with William Thomson selling the company and its properties to the Standard Chemical Company which shifted operations to produce charcoal, wood alcohol, and acetone, as the pine were depleted through logging and forest fires which swept through the area in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

Howe and White's report covers a significant number of townships outside of the present boundaries of the City of Kawartha Lakes, although the conditions in these townships are very similar to the townships in the municipality which were heavily logged. The report does, however, provide a study of Somerville Township and its comparable neighbours in Harvey, Galway, Snowdon and Lutterworth Townships to the east and north which provides a good snapshot of the conditions in the northern township of Kawartha Lakes in the early decades of the twentieth century. The first timber license in Somerville was issued in the 1862-63 season to Samuel Dickson, the owner of the Dickson Lumber Company based in Peterborough, although it is certain that lumber was cut informally before then. The township continued to be heavily cut throughout the next several decades and, by the early twentieth century, the lumber industry had completely moved on. In 1911, approximately 27.3% of the land was under cultivation, mostly for grazing cattle, while full 61.7% of the township was burnt over, with another 0.2% identified as barren land. Of the small percentage of remaining forest, 4.4% was comprised of mixed forest, 5.1% of conifers and 1.3% of popular and similar trees; this forest was all classified as severely culled.

The retreat of the industry also had major impacts on local demographics. Because the lumber industry had, for all intents and purposes, facilitated settlement in the northern townships by providing additional income through work, the selling of timber, or the sale of agricultural products to lumber camps, the decline of the industry resulted in a significant drop in the ability of farmers to make a living in the area which was already difficult to farm. Regionally, in the areas of the Trent watershed which had been most heavily logged, the population dropped over 15% between the 1901 and 1911

Sawmill at Emily Creek

censuses, due primarily from an exodus from agricultural properties; although Ontario as a whole was experiencing a decline in its rural population at this time, the percentage decrease for the rural areas of the province as a whole was only 4.2% indicating the hardships that the shifting economy in the region brought to its local inhabitants. Howe and White estimated that nearly 200 farms in the region were subject to tax sales at the time when the report was written due in large part to the interconnectedness between successful agricultural settlement and logging, and the decline of the latter.

Throughout the twentieth century, views towards the forest in Kawartha Lakes generally shifted from its exploitation as a resource to conservation. The majority of the valuable timber had been harvested in the previous century and the economy of the region shifting away from its reliance on the industry. The county was increasingly being seen as a tourist destination and the conservation of the natural environment for urban dwellers to experience when they visited was a major shift in how the forest was viewed in an economic context; the idea of an escape to nature for its mental and physical health benefits was extremely popular in the early twentieth century, but to attract these tourists, natural areas, including forests that were not cut over, were required. The need

to ensure that forests existed to encourage tourism was written about at its time by Watson Kirkconnell in his history of Victoria County, first published in 1921. Kirkconnell understood the need for seemingly undisturbed nature to attract city dwellers to summer in the region and was aware that it was an important new economic stream for the county, writing: “under a system of forestration [sic] and forest protection, every year would add to the beauty and healthfulness of these northern resorts until we could point with pride to what would be not only perennial sources of revenue, but regions of natural paradise where the ailing and overwrought might find rest and healing.”[4]

Kirkconnell also recognized the environmental and economic importance of regeneration and actively promoted it in his writing. For him, the northern townships of the county, in particular, had been laid to waste by the lumber industry and the plantation of managed forests would allow for a more regulated forestry industry focussed on pulp and paper to emerge as a local employer; at the same time, new trees stabilized the landscape and prevented further environmental degradation and the large scale fires that were becoming increasingly common in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

Kirkconnell’s ideas in this regard was consistent with the prevalent trends in Canadian forestry theory at this time. After decades of virtually unregulated timber harvesting throughout eastern Canada, the environmental impacts of the industry were beginning to be understood, particularly the fact that heavily cut areas were at a significantly higher risk of fire and flooding, as were the economic issues associated with it, namely its boom and bust cycles and their impact on other industries and agricultural settlement. Governments at both the provincial and federal level were beginning to recognize the importance of regulating the industry and ensuring that timber was cut in a responsible manner and forests regenerated for future generations. A number of key pieces of legislation aimed at this goal were passed both federally and provincially beginning the late nineteenth century, but for municipalities in Ontario, the most directly important of these was the Counties Reforestation Act (1911) which allowed upper tier municipalities the power to acquire, plant and managed reserve forest land.

The Counties Reforestation Act had little impact until 1922 when Simcoe County purchased 1000 acres of so-called waste land to establish a county forest. Throughout the 1920s, other counties followed suit, including Victoria County which established the Victoria County forest with tracts in both Somerville and Emily Townships. This marked a major shift in forest management in southern Ontario where most of the woodlands and their management had been and continued to be private. It also signalled a major change in how timber harvesting and forest management was done, that corresponded

[4] Watson Kirkconnell. *County of Victoria: Centennial History,* 2nd ed. (Lindsay: County of Victoria Council, 1967), 89.

to other wider initiatives in the province such as the creation of provincial parks beginning with Algonquin in 1894.

By the early decades of the twentieth century, the lumber industry, as it existed in the nineteenth century, was over in Kawartha Lakes. While small scale harvesting continued in certain areas, and various types of processing and wood product manufacturing certainly continued well into the mid-twentieth century, the heyday of the late nineteenth century gave way to a more regulated and smaller industry that was a less dominant force in the local economy.

Types of Heritage Resources

Because of the complexity and large geographic range covered by the lumber industry, the heritage resources associated with this theme are diverse in type, size and location. Unfortunately, due to the transient nature of the industry, many are also no longer extant as they were removed or modified heavily, even during the period in which the lumber industry was a major economic driver in the City. They can be generally categorized into the following types of resources:

- Lumber camps, including shanties and auxiliary structures
- Sawmills and similar lumber processing facilities
- Administrative offices
- Residential properties directly associated with figures in the industry
- Transportation routes and associated structures including roads, trails, waterways, railways and bridges
- Engineering works
- Auxiliary commercial establishments directly related to the industry
- Natural features

Known Pre-Survey Resources

There are a number resources specifically related to this context which have already been identified and protected by the City of Kawartha Lakes through designation or listing on the Heritage Register. Additional information on these properties and their relationship to the lumber industry can be found on the City's Heritage Register.

Trent Severn Waterway (National Historic Site of Canada)

Boyd Office, 21 Canal Street East, Bobcaygeon (Part IV Designated)

Edgewood Dry Stone Wall, 28 Boyd Street, Bobcaygeon (Part IV Designated)

Austin Sawmill, 4 Station Road, Kinmount (Part IV Designated)

Carew House, 155 William Street North, Lindsay (Part IV Designated)

46 Boyd Street, Bobcaygeon (Listed)

M.M. Boyd House and Barn, 3343 County Road 36, Bobcaygeon (Listed)

Coboconk Train Station, 6699 Highway 35, Coboconk (Listed)

Longford Lumber Company Office, 3560 Victoria Road, Digby Township (Listed)

14 Elgin Street, Lindsay (Listed)

Carew Lumber Company Offices, 130 William Street North, Lindsay (Listed)

Lotus Mill, 204 Ballyduff Road, Manvers Township (Listed)

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