



History of Logging



R.P. Gendreau Sawmill

It is thanks to the watershed from the Upper Ottawa River basin that the logging industry was able to develop in the Témiscamingue region in the second half of the 19th century. The Ottawa River and all of its tributaries gave access to vast stretches of wooded areas and allowed log floating operations over long distances at a time when there was no transportation by route or train in Témiscamingue. The development of the forest industry was done in two stages:

Lumber

Stage one (1850-1910)

The forestry companies go all guns into the huge pine forests around the Lake Kipawa and Lake Témiscamingue areas that they decimated in only a few decades.

1800:

An American by the name of Philemon Wright founded the city of Hull in order to make it a logging center in the Upper Ottawa River District. The companies inched their way up the Ottawa River.

Prior to 1850:

There was very little logging in Témiscamingue and was situated mainly around Lake Témiscamingue (McConnell Logging Camp south of the lake in 1840 and John Egan Logging Camp on the other side of the lake in 1845).

From 1850 and on: logging was done mostly around the Lake Kipawa area

1863: There were 5 logging camps (also known as shantys) in operation on the Kipawa.

From 1880 and on: Concessions and cutting permits for pine were given for areas around Lake Kipawa, Lake Des Quinze and Lake Simard. 2,000 lumberjacks populated the Témiscamingue logging camps. Some of the companies in operation: around Lake Kipawa were Booth, Gillies Brothers, E.B. Eddy and McLaughlin; around Lake Des Quinzes were Fraser and Company, W.C. Edwards, Bryson, Brock and Colonial Lumber. The companies established themselves with their own lumberjacks (the “voyageurs”).



Logging Camps

1873

Olivier Latour opened the first sawmill in Témiscamingue on the Kipawa River.

The first sawmills were built in the southern part of the Témiscamingue region. They were the Olivier Latour Sawmill built around 1873 on the the edge of the Kipawa River and the Alex Lumsden Sawmill (also known as the Lumsden Mill) built in 1888 south of Lake Témiscamingue. To meet the needs of the sawmill, Alex Lumsden put in operation the first steamboat in 1882, the Mattawan.

The beginning of the agricultural development brought about the creation of lumber mills. The pioneers needed boards and beams to build their houses and farm buildings. Throughout 1900-1920, many lumber mills were built in the main parishes. In 1916, there were 19 sawmills and four door and window manufacturers in the Témiscamingue region.

1888: Alex Lumsden built a sawmill in Témiscamingue; Lumsden Mill, in the southern part of Lake Témiscamingue not far from Lake Kipawa.

At this time, the Témiscamingue region was 90% covered with huge pines, since the forests had never been logged. The forestry companies made a fortune and a large portion of the cut lumber was exported to England for the construction of ships and furniture.

For its part, the Quebec Government reaped important revenues from the Témiscamingue forests, thanks to the cutting rights that it awarded to forestry companies. In return, prior to 1900, the Government spent next to nothing in subsidies to support public services in the area.

The rise in the colonization of Témiscamingue created a new workforce. The Témiscamingue lumberjacks were also farmers and forestry work remained their main source of income. These funds were used to finance the development of farms.

Logging helped support colonization by easing the settling of the pioneers (clear-cut land), by providing steady work and offering a market to sell their products. On the other hand, it was also cumbersome since farming activities were not maximized due to farmers spending too many months of the year in the logging camps.

Pulpwood

Second stage (1919 till this day): Logging stretched towards the Northeastern area of Témiscamingue where the abundance of pulpwood warranted the construction of the Témiscaming pulp mill in 1917 and the appearance of the giant paper company by the name of the Canadian International Paper (C.I.P.). This company reigned over the Témiscamingue forests for over half a century.

1910 :

5,000 lumberjacks and 2,000 horses worked arduously in the Témiscamingue logging camps. Other companies that occupied the Témiscamingue territory were: Hull Lumber, Hawksbury Lumber, Ottawa Lumber, Sheppard and Morse and Sherbrooke Lumber.

1917 :

The Riordon Pulp and Paper Company built a dissolving pulp mill in Témiscaming (population of 1,000 people in 1921) because of its proximity to water and the purity of the water as well as the electricity produced on Gordon Creek. The concessionary company (formed by many different small companies) surrounded the basins of Lake Des Quinzes and Lake Expanse (Simard) and ranged right up to the water divide. The forestry operations began in the fall of 1918 and the mill went into operation shortly after. The cutting zones were situated around Lake Des Quinzes and Lake Expanse (Simard). Balsam firs and spruce were the main trees that were cut down to produce the pulpwood. The Riordon Company started up a new administrative site, the Kipawa Woods Division, which housed its office in Témiscaming. It also had a secondary administrative office in Ville-Marie. This office was then transferred to Gillies Bay in 1922 (Riordon Depot)

Layboy, Riordon Co.



The Riordon Pulp & Paper Company in 1920

1920 :

The Riordon Company had 6 or 7 camps with 60 to 85 men in each one along the north coast of Lake Des Quinze and Lake Simard.

1922:

The Riordon Company introduced a new woodcutting system, which involved contract people called jobbers. The Témiscamingue “Jobber” recruited men in his parish and/or in other parishes. The cutting zones were now north of the Sturgeon Rapids and around the Upper Ottawa River area and the Kinojevis River. The company also purchased wood from the pioneers’ properties, which was transported by train to Témiscaming, thanks to the arrival of the new Canadian Pacific Railway company.

1924-25:

All of the forestry work within the Riordon and Témiscamingue limits were now contracted out to the jobbers.

Work contracts or piecework pay slowly replaced the regular salary.

1925 :

The Riordon Company was bought out by the Canadian International Paper Company

The C.I.P. quickly undertook systematic exploitation of the forests in the Témiscamingue and Upper Ottawa River regions. The concessions bought out by the Riordon Company were exploited and regrouped into units – Block A

The new concessions obtained in Témiscamingue were divided into 2 units: The Kipawa and Des Quinze reserves. These concessions were protected until the 1940s.

Many sawmills were built.

1927

Establishment of the Clericy Depot and Clerion Depot. The Riordon Depot began to lose its importance as logging operations progressed towards the north.



Témiscaming Pulp and Paper Mill- where the trains were loaded

1929:

The economic crisis caused a 49% decrease in wood production between 1930. The base salary in 1932 was \$26 per month for 26 days of work.

The Kipawa Division built an administrative centre in Noranda and in 1932, the main office for the Kipawa Woods Division moved to Noranda.

1933: the Clerion Depot was the starting point for the lumberjacks' strike in the Rouyn-Noranda region. (It was due to salary reduction caused by the economic crisis.)

The "voyageurs" lumberjacks (those that came from outside the region) launched the Clerion strike and the lumberjacks from Témiscamingue returned to their parishes and awaited the end of the strike. There were over 700 lumberjacks on strike.

1935 :



Shanty men at dinner time

The Government established a minimum salary of \$37 per month for 26 days of work. The experienced lumberjacks worked by contract and could earn up to \$65 per month.

1938:

The operations center for the Lake Des Quinze and Lake Simard sectors was transferred to the Riordon Depot in Angliers. The Riordon Depot was used exclusively to winterize the boats until 1955. (the Clericy Depot was moved to McWatters)

1950:

The lumberjack trade became specialized. The forestry work became more mechanized and the cutting season was lengthened.

1972 :

Since it was not sufficiently profitable, the C.I.P. closed the doors of its dissolving pulp mill in Témiscaming in the month of May. The people were deprived of their main employer and the local economy was greatly threatened. Something had to be done.

1973 :

This year saw the creation of Tembec and Tembois companies and the purchase of the C.I.P. mill on the first of August.

After 1980 :

The « Boom Years » of wood cutting were over and log floating was ceased in 1976 on the Quebec side of Lake Témiscamingue. A few forestry companies were still in operation in the Témiscamingue region: Tembec Inc. (Tembois, Temfibre, Temcell, Temboard, Bearn Sawmill, Cèdre Fabre and Temfor), Canada Veneers in Belleterre and Commonwealth Plywood in Tee Lake.