

Rathbun

EARLY DAYS IN THE LUMBER INDUSTRY OF ONTARIO

by James Ruxton

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



FAMOUS names are legion. A much overworked saying reads, "Can't see the forest for the trees."

The lumber industry was perhaps the most important feature of the economic fabric of Upper Canada in its primitive and adolescent days, and many famous names linked to our lumber industry come to mind.

Amongst these, stands out the old and respected name Rathbun; while the accessible timber lasted, the Rathbun enterprise—which developed into a corporation capital-

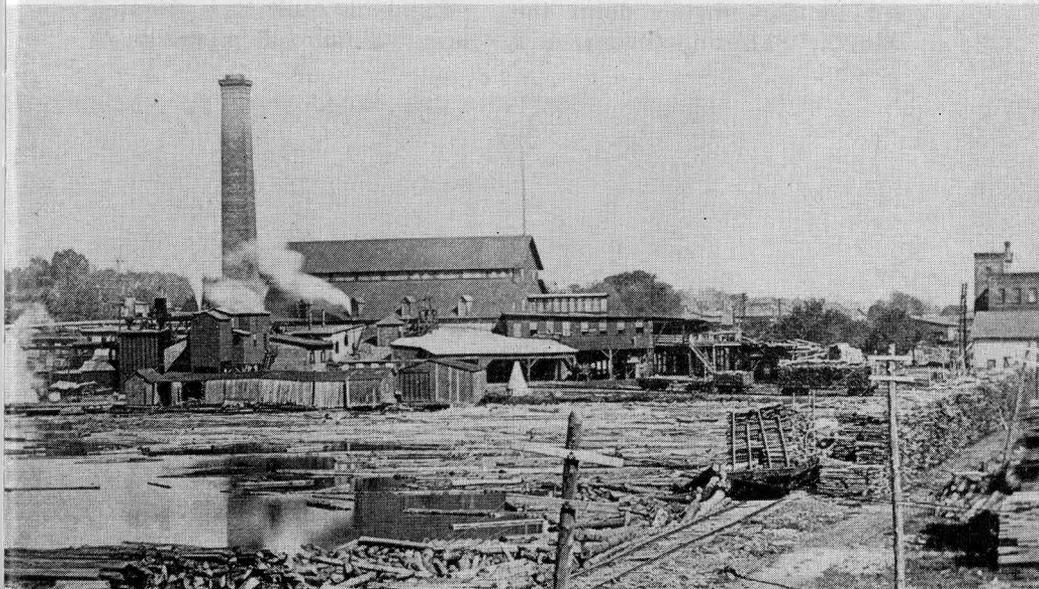
ized at \$2,000,000—prospered, and exerted an important influence in the economy of the Province.

It is a romantic story, told all too briefly here.

Known in turn as Culbertson's Wharf, Mill Point, Bowen, and Deseronto (named after a famous Mohawk Chief loyal to the British Crown), H. W. Rathbun selected Deseronto as the site for his sawmill in 1848.

Thirty-five years later, Mr. Rathbun's business had grown tremendously, with both domestic and foreign markets, and his

Stone Mill—built after original mill was destroyed by fire.





*Site of Stone Mill
—as it appears
to-day. Mill and
logs all gone—
canning factory
on site.*

family likewise; so with his sons, E. W. and F. S. Rathbun, he incorporated the whole as "The Rathbun Company Limited."

During the years of expansion, additional acreage was purchased—as the original site had been—from the Mohawk Reserve, which, when first granted, contained 90,000 acres.

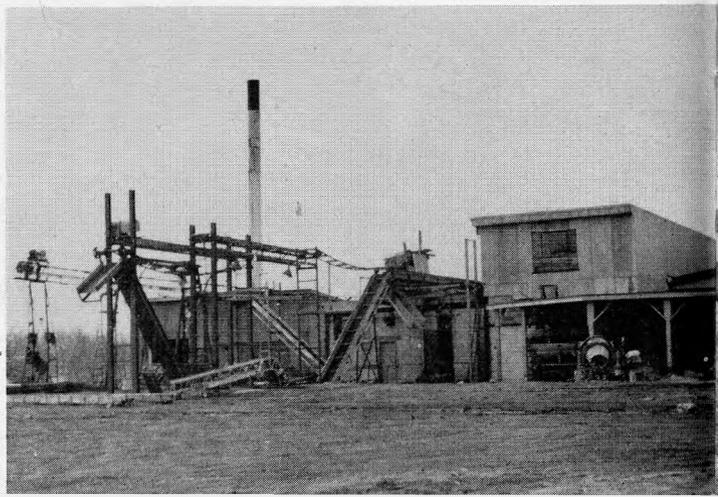
Commencing with the sawmill, fed by logs driven down the Moira, Salmon, Trent and

Napanee rivers, the company in due course operated two saw-mills; sash, door and blind mill; a flour mill, using the first roller mill in Canada; a railway with maintenance shops; cement factory; store and printing office.

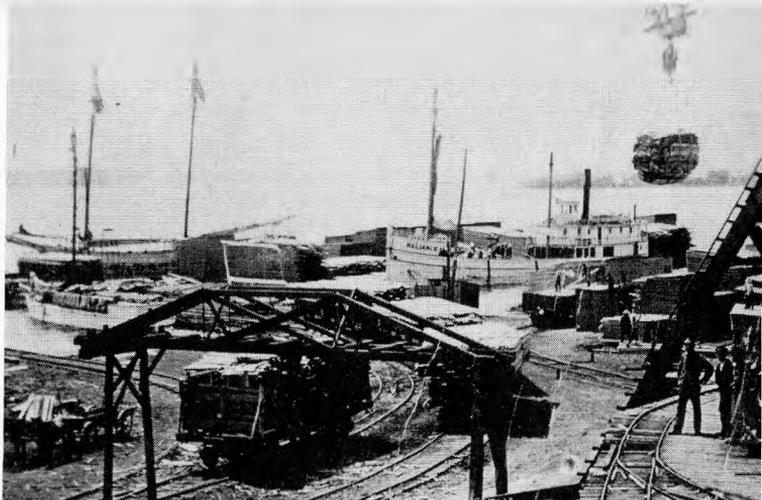
Sales agencies were maintained in foreign cities; 5,000 people found employment with the Rathbuns.

Rathbuns built and operated their own railroad, primarily, to

*Canning factory
which now
stands on site of
old Stone Mill.*



*Freighter
Reliance—
loading at dock.*



haul logs to the mill. For towing log-booms, they owned the tugs *Rescue* and *Ranger*. For the economic benefit of water haul they operated the lake freighters *Resolute* and *Reliance* (see photo) and the fleet was completed by the passenger steamers *Ella Ross* and *Deseronto*.

One hundred years ago, the foundations of an industrial empire were laid with the building of a sawmill, and it was created

basically by Ontario sawlogs and Rathbun brains and enterprise.

The names of four at least of the ships in the marine end of the business are indeed significant.

Contemplating the volume of logs driven down the four rivers, one must keep in mind that the logging railway penetrated as far as Maynooth, which was a long way to go in those days to find feed for a sawmill.



*Same dock above
as it appears
now.*

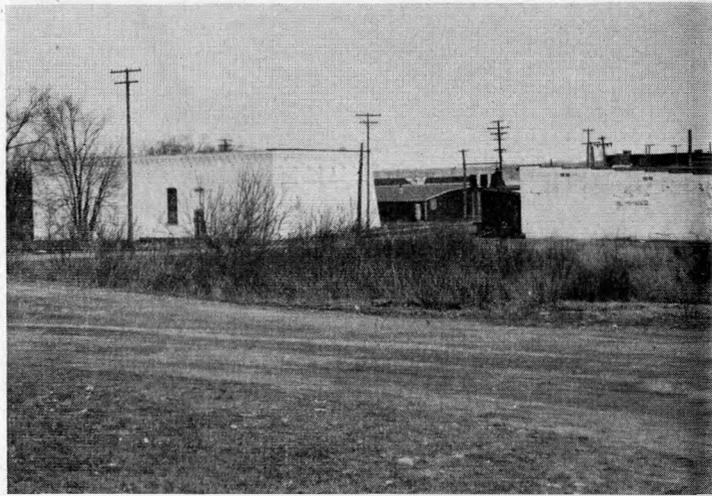


*Old Rathbun
Company
Office Building—
now occupied by
several small
industries.*

Among their various enterprises, Rathbuns operated a farm, basically because of the large number of horses they used; but, apart from that primary purpose, they operated it in an experimental way to establish the best crops for the climate and local conditions.

The cement factory was located at Marlbank, a few miles from Deseronto, for obvious reasons.

When Rathbun built his first mill, the highways were for the most part waterways. The railways were in the immediate future; but, under the conditions as they existed, Deseronto was ideally situated to bring the logs to the mill, and ship the variety of finished products to their sometimes distant markets economically with a water haul. The rivers by which the logs came in,



*Old Repair Shops
used to repair
logging railway
rolling stock.*

all drained into the sheltered waters of the Bay of Quinte, and the Crown Timber Agency was in Belleville.

Time, however, is inexorable in its effect. As the settlement of the land proceeded, and the log harvest diminished and became ever more remote, profitable operation ended in so far as the wood products were concerned; but the Rathbun payrolls made a handsome contribution to the development of the Province and the

penetration of its hinterland.

From such beginnings a great nation grows.

The accompanying photos provide the contrast between to-day and the closing chapters of the romantic Rathbun story.

If you look at the trees, you will see the forest.

Sic transit.

NOTE: "SYLVA" gratefully acknowledges assistance received from Miss B. A. Rixen and Mr. Leonard Arney of Descronto in obtaining copies of old photographs and information about the Rathbun Company. ●

Ontario's Mountain Goats

Who would have thought that a person could come close to running into a rocky mountain goat in this part of the country? The other day, Chief Ranger Selwood and Protection Supervisor Fawcett had this experience while driving through a mining property in Methuen Township, Peterborough County. Fortunately, Mr. Walter Lindhorst of the company was with them, and explained that while these were wild goats, they were not the Canadian variety.

It appears that several years ago there were four Himalayan Thar goats released in this rugged piece of country, and they have been wandering around the mine property ever since. They appear quite tame, and we are advised by the mine official that the company sets out oats for them during the hardest part of the winter.

They are a magnificent looking beast, with the two males that were evident standing three feet to four feet at the shoulders, with brownish, long hair around the neck and shoulders and a shiny darker brown, short-haired back and hindquarters. Both males had a sturdy set of horns which curved back over the head about eight or ten inches. The female was a much smaller, inconspicuous animal with shorter horns.

Our records indicate that originally four goats were released, three being females. Shortly after, the male died and another male was released. We were advised that at this date there are two males and one or two females, the one young male being the only offspring.

It was interesting to see these goats climbing around the crags close to the open pit mining operations. While they do not seem to be multiplying, the animals remaining appear to be healthy and active.—(D. R. Wilson, District Forester, Lindsay District). ●

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