

CHAPTER XVITRIBUTE TO TWO MEN

On a beautiful Indian Summer afternoon, October 19, 1947, an impressive event took place on a hillside in Edmundston. Here, overlooking the vast panorama of industrial activity comprising the Edmundston mills, the yards with their huge wood piles and the pulpwood filled river, several hundred people gathered to view the unveiling of a Memorial Cairn, erected to honor two men, Archibald Fraser and William Matheson. This signal honor, usually accorded to cultural and civic leaders by the Rotary Club, was being paid these two great industrialists because of their great contribution to the welfare and progress of the Province. Attending the ceremonies were prominent Provincial and civic Government officials, industrial associates, members of the families, lifelong friends, business employees and associates of the two men. Principal speaker was Chief Justice J.E. Michaud of the King's Bench Division, Supreme Courte of New Brunswick. In speaking of Archibald Fraser and William Matheson he said, "How did these two men, modest and unassuming, quiet, almost reticent, come to reach the top of an enterprise such as Fraser Companies, Limited? I think I can assert without hesitation that it was through their vision, their courage, their hard work, their honesty and their thrift. No doubt, both benefited by their own experience and that of their parents, gained through the lessons learned in old Scotland, where the struggle for life was keen, and opportunities not as common as in this Canada....." It was an inspiring afternoon for all who attended. Many tributes were paid the two men, many incidents recounted, relating to their early and untiring efforts,

including a speech by Mayor R. A. Nadeau of Edmundston, who pointed out that the Cairn had been designed by Dr. P. C. Laporte. Then he introduced Lieutenant Gov. D. L. McLaren who said:

"We are assembled here today to pay tribute to the memory of two men who contributed so greatly to the industrial life of our province, Archibald Fraser and William Matheson. Born in Scotland, they came to New Brunswick in 1873 bringing to the land of their adoption the vision, courage and energy so characteristic of the Scotch race, which resulted in the development of the Fraser interests, which today is one of the most important enterprises of its kind on this continent.

I wish to congratulate those responsible for the erection of this cairn. Thus the memory of these two men will be perpetuated down through the years, an example to the youth of our province what can be accomplished by hard work from a very small beginning. As lieutenant governor I feel honored to be present on this historic occasion, representing the people of New Brunswick and to have participated in today's ceremonies. To Donald A. Fraser and Cecil M. Matheson, eldest sons of these illustrious pioneers I extend a welcome to New Brunswick and now call upon them to unveil this beautiful memorial."

The last speaker was Aubrey Crabtree, President of Fraser Companies Limited and subsidiaries. He said:

"This afternoon we have witnessed the unveiling of a memorial to the late Archibald Fraser and the late William Matheson, and I have the honor of representing Fraser Companies Limited and subsidiaries, Fraser Paper Limited and Restigouche Company Limited, their directors, officers and employees. First, on behalf of those whom I represent and myself, I wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Rotary Club of Edmundston and all of its members for their undertaking to erect, and to Dr. P. C. Laporte who designed, this well merited memorial to two great men, the late Archibald Fraser and the late William Matheson. These two men who arrived in this province as young children of Scottish immigrants worked their way, mostly unheralded, by unselfish devotion and untiring effort to the leadership, not only of a great industry, but of the community at large. Their achievements contributed greatly in the development of this community as well as in the development of numerous other places in which operations were carried on under their able management and that of their associates. Outstanding among these associates were Thomas Matheson, A.W. Brebner and the late Donald Fraser. Their vision and judgment has resulted in the development of the largest industry in this Province of New Brunswick and one that is numbered among the most outstanding in the Dominion of Canada. The products of this industry are shipped to and used in every continent of the world. The founding of Fraser Companies Limited and subsidiaries, Fraser Paper Limited and Restigouche Company Limited, by these two able men, has resulted in giving direct employment to many thousands of persons today, in the Dominion of Canada, principally in New Brunswick."

Of the various speakers, none conveyed a message more eloquently than the beloved Rev. Gordon Pringle of Kincardine and early spiritual advisor of the colony. The very simplicity and sincerity of his words and manner touched all present. His brief message follows:

"The good ship Castalia, Anchor Line, left Glasgow, Scotland on April 25, 1873, and the 545 immigrants aboard landed at Saint John May 10th and to the skirl o' the pipes arrived on the River Boat at Kilburn on May 13th and 14th. It was not a corporation but a wonderful combination of personalities aboard that ship.

Among many others equally deserving of mention were the two men this day honored in the unveiling of this cairn sponsored by the Members of the Rotary Club and citizen friends of Edmundston. This was not a combination of men only but a galaxy of talent strangely assembled on one ship. Amongst other things, I remember the garden with its perennials, many years afterwards still blooming, and the hop vines intertwined amongst the branches; and the whip saw and sawpit operated by Donald Fraser, Senior, well supported by fellow pioneers. But these limitations had to give way to something larger. Such is the eruptive force of enterprise. The first move was Donald Fraser, Senior at River de Chute mill where he soon gained reputation in the Boston market for his quality of clapboards. It is interesting to observe that a man of his responsibilities walked five miles to inform me of the death of a neighbour killed in an accident. The next move was to Victoria Mill, Fredericton. About that time there occurred the death of his beloved wife. With him in business were his sons, Archibald and the late Donald Fraser of Plaster Rock.

I saw Archie on a stream drive and the impression of a pent up energy bound to find outlet is unforgettable. The sight of the huge saw being erected at Cabano was prophetic of the oncoming industrial era and the "mechanical brain".

Equally striking was the invaluable assistance of William Matheson with his inseparable adherence, and complete identification with the aims of the company. Like the aforementioned he and his parents of Highland strain and other members of the family associated with the company were original settlers of the Colony. There are deep, tender and abiding memories associated with the names of these people who through blending of head, heart and hand so cooperated. "If a man love...."

There stands that noble pile, the mill! There night and day voices glad and sad, the sound of human feet, and the hum of machinery intermingle. And here, friends, the Cairn and the unseen hand; the gentle breeze helping us to unveil; and the falling leaves forming a carpet. Forms change, the essence remains. The wire which is the form sustains the climber, but the life is in the vine.

\*(which, symbolically, drifted down during the ceremony from trees Wm.Matheson had planted)

"I shot an arrow into the air,  
It fell to earth, I knew not where;  
So swiftly it flew, the sight  
could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,  
It fell to earth, I knew not where;  
For who has sight so keen and strong,  
That it can follow the flight of a song.

Long, long afterward, in an oak,  
I found the arrow, still unbroke;  
And the song, from beginning to end  
I found again in the heart of a friend."

And the song is found again in the hearts of their families and in the hearts of us all today!"

Inscribed on the memorial cairn, below the bronze likenesses of the two men, are the words:

Archibald Fraser  
1829-1932  
Pioneer Planner, Builder  
Founder of Fraser Companies, Limited  
and President from Its Inception to His Death

and on the other side of the cairn, under the likeness of William Matheson are the words:

William Matheson  
1867-1936  
Administrator - Worker  
Friend  
Co-Founder of Fraser Companies, Limited  
and Principal Officer from its Inception until His Death

The inscription at the base of the cairn reads: "Si Monumenta Requiris Circum Spice," translated "If you seek their monuments, look around."

Today, the erection of a memorial Cairn, in Plaster Rock, to similarly honor the late Donald Fraser, the other son of the pioneer lumberman, Donald Fraser, is being given consideration.

On March 31st, 1948 Andrew Brebner, one of the original six Scotsmen to contribute so materially to the Fraser development, as well as to New Brunswick's early lumber industry of which he was one of the outstanding men, died in Edmundston. At the time of his death he was vice-president and director of Restigouche Company, Ltd. and a director of Fraser Companies, Fraser Paper Limited and Snowflake Lime Limited. Born at Inchmarlow, Kincardineshire, Scotland, May 29, 1877, a son of the late John Low Brebner and Lillias Cranston White Brebner, he was brought up in Aberdeen and graduated from Gordon College. Coming to Canada in 1898 he had worked in Ottawa for a time and entered the employ of Donald Fraser and Sons at the Aberdeen Mill in Fredericton, during the early part of the century. After an interlude of two years with the Canadian Pacific Railway, he later became in 1901 superintendent of the Cabano mill and the mill at Baker Brook, N.B. In 1921 he came to Edmundston and held various executive positions related to the mills. From 1925 on he was Manager of the Madawaska Mill as well as the Edmundston Mill, until 1929 when he went to Campbellton as general manager of Restigouche Company Limited.

During his long and active life, hundreds of men worked under his direction, and his integrity and zeal won and maintained the respect of all. Outside of his work, his chief interest was in his home. A member of the United Church of Canada, his kindly spirit and generosity were proverbial. He was a cultured man, and one whose wide circle of friendships extended far beyond the boundaries of New Brunswick. In his unassuming way he made many a contribution to the progress of his community and his province. Like his late contemporaries, Archibald Fraser, William Matheson and Donald Fraser, while his life was devoted to work, he contributed much as a person and personality to those about him, and his loss was keenly felt. Surviving him was his wife, Cecilia Mackay Matheson, four sons, Alex, William, Andrew and Walter, the two latter presently engaged in Fraser activities, two sisters, Miss



Lillias Brebner and Miss Mary Low Brebner and a brother, John; all of Aberdeen, Scotland. At the time of his death he was vice-president and director of Restigouche Company, Limited, and director of Fraser Companies, Fraser Paper Limited and Snowflake Lime Limited.

Mr. Brebner was succeeded as Director by John A. Niell of Fredericton, whose father had been a friend and early business contemporary of Donald Fraser. On July 14, 1948 occurred the death of the Hon. R.B. Hanson P.C. K.C., Member of the Board of Directors of Fraser Companies, Limited and subsidiaries. His passing was a great loss to the Province where he had filled so many prominent parts of leadership both in business and Government. Succeeding him as a member of the Fraser Board of Directors was Mr. George E. Barbour of Saint John, New Brunswick. Other Directors today, all of whom have long been prominent in New Brunswick are: Hon. F. Phillipe Brais, CBE, KC; Arthur H. Campbell and H.P. Thornhill; and Harold Crabtree, CBE, Chairman of the Board and member of the Executive Committee, other members of which are A.F. Duncan and A.M. Irvine, Directors. Aubrey Crabtree, President and General Manager of Fraser Companies, Limited and subsidiaries is also a member of the Executive Committee, and L.M. Sherwood, Vice-President and Controller is a Director. Other officers are H.H. Henderson, Treasurer and G. G. Gillies, Secretary.

\* \* \* \* \*

With the passing of Andrew Brebner, Thomas Matheson, Edmundston is left as the sole surviving member of Fraser Companies, Limited when it was first formed in 1917 by the consolidation of all of the companies owned by Archibald Fraser, Donald Fraser, William Matheson and A. W. Brebner. And Thomas Matheson remains today, as a symbol of those early days. An alert, pleasant man in his seventies,

with a quick mind, keen humor and interest in everything contemporary, while remembering those other early days, he is enjoying an active retirement at his home in Edmundston, where daily he sees and hears of the ever-growing scope and progressive activities of the company to whose early establishment he contributed so greatly.

\* \* \*

And now it is interesting to pause and review the status of Fraser Companies, today, after more than seven decades of successful and continued operation. Headed by outstanding top executives who are supported throughout every phase of the organization by trained, capable executives and personnel, Fraser Companies stands today, seventy two years after the first early mill at River de Chute, as one of North America's important pulp and paper producers.

Today, Fraser Companies and its subsidiaries have some 2,500 regular employees in addition to which are employed around 4,000 men in seasonal woodland operations. The timber holdings are in excess of 3,500,000 acres of forest land, a substantial portion owned outright, the balance held under license from the Provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec. The timber areas are located in all but two of New Brunswick's fifteen counties and in the counties of Temiscouata, Rimouski, Matapedia and Bonaventure, Quebec. These timberlands are managed under long term forest management providing a measure of protection from both forest fires and insects as well as engaging in cutting programs designed to supply a continuous source of raw forest products for the mills for years to come. Fraser Companies work in constant close cooperation with forestry staffs of both Provincial and Federal Governments in collaborating on various research projects for the development of better conservation methods, research and protection against insect infestation.

The Edmundston mills now have an annual capacity of approximately 100,000 tons

of sulphite wood pulp of which 80 percent is bleached and 35,000 tons of groundwood pulp and 20,000 tons of paperboard.

The Fraser Paper Limited mills in Madawaska have an annual capacity of 75,000 tons of bleached chemical pulp papers and 45,000 tons of groundwood papers.

The Atholville pulp mill has an annual capacity of 60,000 tons of bleached sulphite wood pulp, part of which is for fine paper and part of which is dissolving pulp for the manufacture of rayon and cellophane.

The new Newcastle mill will have an annual capacity of 40,000 tons of sulphate pulp, for further processing in Edmundston. In addition, the sawmills of Fraser Companies, Limited have an annual capacity of 25,000,000 feet of long lumber and in addition, manufacture shingles and railway ties.

Concerning the plants and equipment, their building and continual modernization of existing plants has previously been described. Extensive research programs are constantly carried on for the product improvement and the advancement of the industry.

Industrial relations with employees and with various representative labor organizations are on a high level which has marked the dealings with employees since the earliest years.

In addition to the Retirement Pension Plan already described, the company has a contributory Group Life Assurance Plan, Group Accident, sickness and surgical Medical Plans <sup>the latter</sup> being carried out with the company assuming the administrative cost.

Accident prevention programs are engaged in competitively among the various mills to reduce accidents and this vigilance has achieved a high record of safety. The Edmundston, Madawaska and Atholville mills have each recently been awarded certificates of achievement by the National Safety Council for reduced accident frequency on the



basis of million man hours worked. Modern first aid rooms are maintained at all mills and employee health and well being is under the deriction of a Medical Doctor and Nurse employed full time ti give guidance in efforts to raise the standard of fitness and cut down on absenteeism from illness. The Company also has a program of Woods Labour Training which was instituted during wartime shortages of experienced wood workers. This has continued and as in the previous years is resulting in improved efficiency among woodlands personnel and a notable awarensss of accident prevention that maintains a high degree of efficiency. The adoption of these various important modern factors in industrial welfare and economic security make Fraser Companies and Subsidiaries a highly desirable organization with which to be connected, and have been the means of maintianing the loyalty and good will of all, - which is in direct line with the early traditions of the founder of the original Fraser mill, - Donald Fraser.

Although operating today in a fast-moving, modern industrial age, there is still much in Fraser activities today that stand as a living tribute to the early ideals and concepts of the founder.

CHAPTER XVIILOOKING FORWARD

And so you have the Fraser Story. It is a story of more than seven decades and several generations. It is a business history - and more. It is the record of a man with an idea and an ideal - and those who have followed after him, in concept as well as in years of carrying on his original activity. For in writing the record, through it as the years have brought their changes and their points of progress, their setbacks and their successes, you see running the threads that retain the integrity of the original pattern and plan on which Donald Fraser, in his simple and single-handed, straight-forward way, built the cornerstone - with a concept of faith in the future, a desire for continuous growth, and the strength of purpose through hard work, honesty and fairness to those with whom he worked and who worked with him that assured the ultimate success of all he did even though deterred, at times, through temporary setbacks and at times faced what must have seemed almost unsurmountable difficulties.

The Fraser story records the growth and changes of several eras, it continues through two wars, it spans three quarters of a century, it parallels three phases of progress, - the horse and buggy age, the beginning of the machine and mass production era and on into today's period of rapid technical development and inventive progress. It reflects the changing developments of the first industry from its early lumbering phases to this ever growing Age of Paper.

And finally, the Fraser story is a continued story - for even as you read this, the next chapter is being written - by more than three thousand men and women, some bearing the same names as the early founders who will continue to carry on the original concept today and tomorrow, as they have in the past and even now as in that earlier era.