

## CHAPTER VII

### CABANO - KEYSTONE TO SUCCESS

The story of the acquisition and establishment of the Cabano mill and properties at Cabano, P.Q. at the turn of the century is one of the most important and ambitious acquisitions in the Fraser early history. For more than any other activity, the Cabano mill was from the very beginning, a highly profitable and successful project, and it continues to be so today. The financial success of this operation was made possible many of the important expansions which followed its start, and which formed the cornerstone of today's extensive operations.

In 1898, Donald Fraser heard of an offer to sell interest in a large block of Crown Timber Land on the headwater of the Madawaska River in the Province of Quebec, in Temiscouata and Rimouski counties. The properties consisted of 400 square miles. Donald Fraser's son Archie cruised the properties and was convinced that this was an excellent opportunity for the manufacture of lumber.

The manner in which Donald Fraser arranged to finance the purchase of this valuable property illustrates his vision and the confidence he inspired. Requiring by far, the biggest investment to date, he turned to the Royal Bank of Canada, where he had previously received financial aid on various occasions. A special directors meeting was held for the purpose of discussing the arrangement of the requested financing of the project. The decision of the directors was a high tribute to the integrity of the man, and the success he had attained during those early years from 1877 on, when the first small sawmill was purchased at River de Chute. It is reported that in voting the loan in that meeting, the President of the bank said "We have followed Mr. Fraser for 20 years in his lumbering activities and we have found his judgment has always been correct. He tells me this is the best buy he ever had ..."

has ever had the opportunity to make. He needs \$125,00 to buy the property and another \$125,000 to get the mill started. I propose that the loan be granted." And it was. A contemporary lumberman of the early days and a good friend of both "Donnie and Archie" said " the lumbering world was amazed at the courage of the Fraser's to take over Cabano at an investment of a half million dollars." The bids for the sale of the Cabano property were sealed bids, the sale being held in St. John. Donald Fraser and his two sons went down for the sale, but only Archie staid on until the sealed bids were opened. Finally the bidding reached a deadlock between Archibald and another bidder. In order to conclude the sale, the sellers asked the two competitive bidders if either would be willing to include in the purchase, some equipment not covered by the sale. The other buyer declined, but Archie said he was willing.... a decision which turned the scales in his favor and obtained for him this property which became so valuable for ~~the Fraser's~~ Donald Fraser and Sons and so significant in the building of the cornerstone of their success.

The previous owner of the timber limits at Cabano was a Mr. James Miller who had commenced operations by constructing saw mills at Notre Dame du Lac in Temiscouata County before his demise. This district, too, had been the scene of early Glasier lumbering operations. After Fraser's purchased the properties they moved this mill to Cabano, six miles northwest of Notre Dame du Lac on Temiscouata at the outlet of the Cabano River, since this location would be more practical from an operating standpoint, being nearer to the rivers on which logs for the operations would be sawed. Sawmill operations for Cabano were started in the fall of 1898 with the logs cut the previous winter by Miller, Archie moving to Cabano to take over the management of the mill. Fast-growing Cabano operations also brought to that mill both William and Tom Matheson, the former, from Fredericton, to handle the accounting activities

involved in this extensive operation, - the later as a yard foreman and time-keeper during the summer, and in the winter, scaler in the woods and in charge of the camp. To Cabano, too, came Andrew Brebner, like the Mathesons, also destined to play an important part in the success of the Fraser story. A Scotsman, like the other five, the three Frasers and two Mathesons now active in the company, - Andrew Brebner, like the others during his lifetime was to make great contributions to the communities in which he lived, as well as to the companies. When he joined Frasers at the Cabano mill in 1900 he was twenty three years of age. He had come to Canada two years before, from Kincardineshire, Scotland, where he had been brought up in Aberdeen and graduated from Gordon College. His first work in Canada was in Ottawa, and his first Fraser work was during a brief interval in Fredericton at the Aberdeen mill, before joining the Canadian Pacific Railway to work in Winnipeg for them, for a period of the next two years. Then he rejoined Frasers in 1900 at Cabano, first as office manager, then superintendent of the Cabano mill. However in 1907 he left to go to Baker Brook to take charge of the mill and operations there. He lived in Baker Brook in the summer and spent the winters in Cabano supervising the woods operations and the mill. Then in 1910, when Archibald Fraser moved to Fredericton, Andrew Brebner took over the management of Cabano and continued in this capacity until 1920 when he moved to ~~Fredericton~~ <sup>Edmundston</sup> Fredericton.

From conversations with Donald Fraser, grandson of the founder, Mr and Mrs V J Jackson (the former an old time employee of the company still living in Cabano) and Marie Fatcherol, retired, who as a girl worked in the Fraser store, in the early days, the writer gathered a good picture of this village in the Province of Quebec in those early days, at the turn of the Century.

Shortly after operations started in Cabano, there were about thirty or forty English

families living in Cabano, most of whom Donald Fraser had brought in from the River de Chute or Kincardine. Mr. Fraser built a hall in which church was held upstairs, school downstairs. Later when a schoolhouse was constructed, and two churches were built, Dr Gordon Pringle, beloved minister of the Melville church in the Kincardine colony came for many years, to baptise the young children and conduct services. Dr. Pringle, now an elderly and benign man, still living in the colony has a close and intimate memory of those early days in the then growing village of Cabano. In the summer a student minister who came to Cabano was Dr — Hamilton, of Montreal, also acting as a missionary in the colony to earn money to carry on his education in medicine. ~~Today~~ <sup>He became a</sup> He is a prominent physician, and was the one to attend Donald Fraser at the time of his death. ¶ The Fraser store in Cabano, one of many general stores the company operated at its various centers of activity, was a typical old time country grocery store, with a wide variety of merchandise, from men and ladies furnishings, woods clothes, children clothes, hardware groceries etc, to writing paper and household supplies. School children of the day were <sup>made</sup> happy by the generosity of Marie Patcheral who was in charge of the ladies department in the store in those days, who scooped up generous portions of candy when the young ones selected their precious "penny-of-this- and-penny-of-that"....barley candies, sugar-filled chocolate jugs and all of the favorites <sup>gone but not</sup> long since forgotten, ~~then~~ then carried out in the striped candy bags of the day.

Families were supplied with books of coupon tickets, which were like script, and were charged against the wages of the head of the family when he was away at work in the mills or woods, particularly between sawing seasons, if the men were temporarily hard up, these tickets were precious for they were honored at the store anyway, and charged against future wages. This system was used throughout all of the Fraser stores at Plaster Rock, etc.

Today Cabano has a section around the mill called Fraser Village as it was in the early days. Most families and workers were drawn from the Scotch colony, and as the years marked the great growth of activities there, it soon employed hundreds in the mills and woods from the surrounding countryside.

During the years, there were many loyal employees who made great contributions to the welfare of those in the company and community. Such people as Herbert Rossignol, for years a yard foreman, Miss Patcherol, still living in Cabano, and others deserve special mention. The man in charge of woods operations in the early days, Jim Boyd, was to become prominent in woods operations. He was known far and wide for the fairness with the men who worked for him. A big, powerful man, mild tempered under everyday conditions, he could mete out bodily discipline, if need be, if any man didn't do the right thing. Main woods-man for years, he lived to the age of 87, respected and known far and wide. On his recommendations in cruising the woods, the operations for the season on the limits were programmed. Another person, who indirectly was associated with Frasers in Cabano, was Joseph Viel, who homesteaded at Squawtak in those early days. He built up a very prosperous community around him. Joe Viel, as he was known, used to guide for Donald Fraser when the two went moose hunting in the early days. Because of the good influence of this man to his community and those who worked for him, in later days, he was accorded an honor by Pope Pius.

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The mill at Cabano, built in 1899, manufactured wide and varied products. While the main purpose was to manufacture deals for Trans-Atlantic trade, other products were long lumber, lath, singles and railway ties, four foot clapboards sawed for some of the early homes in the United States and Canadian markets. The deals for overseas were shipped by Temiscouata railway to Riviere du Loup on the St. Lawrence River, where they were loaded on barges, taken to midstream, reloaded on

steamers and sent on their way for the Trans-atlantic markets. During the early years at Cabano, a small spoolwood operation was carried on at the head of Temiscouata lake, for shipment to Scottish thread factories. For this purpose, the company used a boat that has become legendary for its activities. The real name of the boat was the Storm Hero, but as Ernest Ross said recently she was always referred to as The Weary Willie. He tells of how she was powered by a woodburning boiler and run under the mill to supply power during the winter when spoolwood was made. The last venture in this respect was a cut one winter for the usual purpose, and it was sent to Riviere du Loup to be loaded on a steamer bound for England. The boat was wrecked in the St. Lawrence and the spoolwood was scattered far and wide on the river,

The Weary Willie, which was also used for towing booms 28 miles the length of Lake Temiscouata, was finally "retired" in 1905. By 1922 these old boats which had been built right on the premises, were replaced by Russell all steel diesel boats put in use for towing booms.

Another interesting operation at Cabano in the early days was the manufacturing of sounding boards for pianos. For this special purpose choicest spruce wood was required, free from knots and imperfections. These sounding boards were shipped to the United States market, where Steinway had first choice and took their places in this necessary guise, in some of the concert halls and fine homes of the day.

During the first World War, the government took some of this same clear spruce, which had been selected for the sounding boards, for the manufacture of oars for the navy lifeboats. In the early operations of Cabano, most of the lumber was shipped by way of Riviere du Loup for England, Scotland and Ireland, but later most of this

the lumber was shipped to the New England states. The period of 1905 to 1925 were eras of greatest activity at Cabano. There are today from 320 to 325 men working in the summer right at the mill on operations. In the olden days, methods of getting supplies to the woods used were, to portage across the lake, then turn supplies over to horse or oxen drawn teams to go to Half Way Camp up Touladi River or <sup>be</sup> transferred to stern wheelers and pushed up to the depot. In those days, when men went to the lumber camps for months at a time, the traditional and colorful life of the lumbercamp was in full swing....today, with modern secondary highways built into the woods, it takes but three or four hours to get to camp, as compared to the three or four days of yesteryear. The men at Cabano <sup>were</sup> brought in from River de Chute for winter woods operations. In those olden times, it used to be a days drive from Edmundston to Cabano. In those early days grass grew in the road between St. Jock and St. Rose. Now Cabano is but two and a half hours by car from Edmundston, over a smooth concrete highway.

Archie Fraser was first manager of Cabano mill. When he moved to Fredericton in 1910, Andrew B rebner took over as Manager and continued in this capacity until 1920, when he moved to Edmundston. Ernest Ross succeeded him and when he was transferred to Edmundston where operations were growing Leroy Saunders succeeded Mr. Ross as Manager. Then Jack Wheeler was the next Manager at Cabano until in 1941, when Darrell Larlee, today's manager returned from World War II, he succeeded Mr. Wheeler and is in charge at this time.