

## The Forest Industry

For more than a century, lumbering plays a major role in the economic development of the Madawaska region. The intense exploitation of our forests and the number of jobs it generates bear witness to that fact. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, temporary employment in lumber camps during the winter months often allows farmers to balance their budget. Gradually, with the establishment of sawmills and a pulp mill in Edmundston, lumbering becomes more and more important. Many farmers prefer to abandon their land and get work at the mill.

According to some authors, the coming of the James Murchie & Sons company and the opening of their sawmill in 1888 mark the beginning of the industrialization of the town of Edmundston. Located near the Madawaska river, that sawmill provides employment, for nearly 75 men by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lumber is brought to the mill by river-driving or by railway. The local woodlot owners benefit from this small business where they can sell their lumber or have it sawed.

In 1911, Fraser Company Limited buys the Murchie sawmill. That company then operates lumber camps and sawmills in eastern Quebec and in New Brunswick. Fraser decides to keep the Murchie sawmill in operation until 1977. The following year, the Company begins the production of chemical pulp. A new bisulfate pulp mill is built in Edmundston. About 500 employees, including many residents of Madawaska County, are hired.

In the following years, Fraser keeps expanding. In addition to acquiring new woodlots, the Company invests substantially in the construction of chemical pulp mills in Newcastle and Atholville, in a mechanical pulp mill and a cardboard plant in Edmundston and in a paper mill in Madawaska, in the state of Maine. All those new developments create jobs.

Fraser Companies Limited will therefore be, in the 20th century, one of the economic pillars of the region. Its history is closely linked to that of the city of

Edmundston. Even today, Fraser's marked influence and its strategic location in the very center of the city, reminds people that it is part of their living experience.

**Nicole Lang**