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TOWARDS A HISTORY OF THE KAWARTHA-
OTONABEE SECTOR OF THE TRENT-SEVERN
WATERWAY

by Daniel Francis

1980

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Abstract

During the summer and fall of 1979 a series of oral history interviews were carried out in the Peterborough area of the Trent-Severn Waterway. The aim of the interviews was to gather information about the historical development of the Kawartha-Otonabee sector of the Waterway in the modern period. This report is a brief history of the sector based on information contained in the interviews.

The Kawartha-Otonabee sector of the Trent-Severn Waterway was opened to through navigation in 1904. Since that time construction has been limited to the updating of existing structures and the occasional replacement of deteriorating structures. Commercial use of the corridor has been minimal and after World War II thought was given to closing the Waterway to navigation while retaining its water control function. The sudden increase in pleasure boat use and recreational activity about 1960 gave the Waterway a higher profile and caused the federal government to initiate a program of improvements.

In the first decades of the twentieth century logging was still an important activity north of the Kawartha Lakes. By the 1930s, however, loggers were depending less on the watercourses to transport their wood. Hydroelectricity and mining were two other activities engaged in along the Waterway in this period. Other commercial activities related to recreation and tourism. Steamboating lasted on Stony Lake into the 1940s and the famous Peterborough canoes were being manufactured up until the 1960s.

Tourism and recreation remain the most important water-related commercial activities in the sector.

In the second part of the report the methodology employed to conduct the oral history interviews is described. The methodology is assessed, along with the value of the information gathered.

Preface

This report is based primarily on information contained in forty-three oral history interviews conducted during the summer and autumn of 1979. Primary documents and secondary sources were consulted only to prepare for the interviews. This report is not meant to be a definitive treatment of its subject. It is meant to provide a context for the interviews so that they will be more fully understood. In a sense the report is an introduction to the interviews.

Part 1 A History of the Waterway

Introduction

The Kawartha-Otonabee sector of the Trent-Severn Waterway begins in the south at the point where the Otonabee River empties into Rice Lake and runs northward up the Otonabee and through the eastern Kawartha Lakes to Bobcaygeon. In the prehistoric period this area was inhabited by a sequence of native cultures, all primarily nomadic though agriculture was practised from about AD 1000. These people hunted, fished and gathered wild rice and other wild plant foods. They used the waterways for transportation, communication and as a source of food. Archeological activity at several locations in the area has given evidence of their occupation.

By the time the first Europeans entered the Kawartha-Otonabee region in the seventeenth century the corridor had become a route used by Iroquois war parties moving north to attack the villages of the Huron people beyond Lake Simcoe. Following the destruction of Huronia in 1649 the area was largely vacated. Toward the end of the century the Mississauga, an Algonkian group living along the north shore of Lake Huron, began to drift southward into the region.¹ The Mississauga still occupied the area a century later when the first European settlers arrived.

The first British colonists to occupy Upper Canada settled along the shore of Lake Ontario. Only after this land was taken up did colonists penetrate north of Rice Lake. In 1818 the British government purchased from the Mississauga almost two million acres of land in the Newcastle District, including the Kawartha-Otonabee area. Subsequently

the Mississauga were granted reservations at Hiawatha and Curve Lake and British settlers began to populate the territory. The most significant event of the settlement period was the arrival in 1825 of almost 1900 Irish men, women and children brought by Peter Robinson to take up land around Scott's Plains, soon to be renamed Peterborough. The arrival of so many settlers signalled the beginning of a period of population growth and economic expansion.

As settlement spread slowly northward, villages grew up at locations along the waterway where falls or rapids provided power for the necessary grist and saw mills. Lakefield, Young's Point, Burleigh Falls, Buckhorn and Bobcaygeon were all established in the fifty years between 1825 and 1875. Later development confirmed the strategic location of these villages. As the timber trade expanded north of the Kawarthas in the last half of the century, timber chutes and slides were built at the village sites to facilitate the movement of logs down the lakes. Boat travel between the lakes was made possible with the construction of locks and dams were built to ensure adequate water levels for navigation. During the same period the extension of rail service to Peterborough and on to Lakefield opened the Kawartha Lakes to tourists, sportsmen and summer vacationers. Cottages began to dot the shoreline after 1870 and resort hotels were built to cater to the influx of visitors. A fleet of steamboats circulated through the lakes carrying passengers and cargo. By the turn of the century the Kawartha-Otonabee sector, and especially Stony Lake, had become a well-known recreation spot for both Americans and Canadians.

From the beginning of European settlement north of Lake Ontario the prospect of a navigable waterway linking this lake with Georgian Bay had been discussed. Construction of such a through system got underway in the 1830s but in a short time the original conception was altered and

construction continued in a piecemeal fashion, responding to local demands from timbermen and settlers rather than conforming to an overall plan. Indeed, the Trent-Severn Waterway can be seen as a series of quite distinct waterways, each serving local purposes and having its own history of construction.

The first lock in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector, indeed in the entire system, was built at Bobcaygeon in the years 1833-1835. In the next decade a lock was constructed at Whitlas' Rapids below Little Lake at Peterborough, so that by mid-century navigation between Peterborough and Rice Lake and through the central Kawarthas was unimpeded. For the next thirty years no further progress was made with the Waterway in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector. Then, in 1872 the provincial government had a lock constructed at Young's Point linking Lake Katchewanooka to the more northerly lakes. In the 1880s locks were built at Buckhorn and Lovesick and two locks in flight were put in at Burleigh Falls. But it was really in the 1890s that a concentrated effort began to complete the system. Between 1895 and 1904, the Otonabee River was made navigable from Peterborough to Lakefield by the construction of six locks and the mammoth Peterborough lift lock. With the opening of the lift lock it became possible for a vessel to navigate the entire sector from Rice Lake to Bobcaygeon.

The rest of the Waterway was pushed to completion by 1920 in the hope that it would provide a viable commercial link between the Upper Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence system. This hope was never realized. Instead the Trent-Severn Waterway has become a busy recreational corridor for boaters, cottagers and other vacationers. Perhaps no part of the Waterway has proven as attractive for recreational purposes as the Kawartha-Otonabee sector.

Operating the Waterway

Construction and Maintenance

The opening of the Waterway to through navigation in 1920 had no significant impact on activity in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector. This sector had been completed in 1904 with the opening of the lift lock at Peterborough and had a well-established pattern of recreational and commercial use. The completion of the Waterway did not result in a surge of through traffic, as originally hoped, and the main work during the 1920s and 1930s continued to be the maintenance and occasional replacement of existing structures, both locks and dams.

Perhaps the major construction project in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector in the years following World War I was the replacement of the five dams on the Otonabee River between Peterborough and Lakefield and the dam at Young's Point. These dams dated from before the turn of the century and were rock-filled, timber cribwork structures. By the 1920s they were leaking water badly and in some instances the operators of nearby hydroelectric power facilities were complaining that leakage was affecting their generating capacity.¹ The old dams were replaced by concrete structures. The first one was completed at Lakefield in 1922 and by 1932 locks twenty-two through twenty-seven all had new side dams. During the same period the locks at Bobcaygeon and Young's Point were rebuilt.

Labour and materials were provided for these projects through a system of patronage described by James McGrath,

who was a canal overseer in this period.² Each major political party acknowledged a person who was in charge of patronage appointments in the region. Depending on which party formed the government of the day the Waterway superintendent would have to approach the appropriate patronage broker for a list of "approved" suppliers and employees. The procedure was occasionally amended. For example, there was an official policy favouring the hiring of former servicemen, no matter what their political stripe. Nevertheless, the Waterway continued to be a valuable political spoil at least until the 1950s.³

The Waterway between the Wars was not heavily travelled by boat traffic. The boom in recreational boating was in the future. Most vacationers still reached the resorts and cottages of the Kawartha Lakes by rail, steamboat and, latterly, automobile and only the wealthiest owned steam yachts and the gasoline-fueled launches which began to appear on the lakes in the early years of the century. As for commercial traffic, since the Waterway did not become a major thoroughfare, it was limited to vessels serving local purposes. Several steam tugs were used to haul logs, scows of cordwood and miscellaneous freight. Sawmill operators sometimes had their own tugs to tow logs and other freight vessels hauled farmers' produce from riverside wharves maintained by the Waterway to the market in Peterborough. Larger steamboats, of course, carried passengers through the Kawartha Lakes and along the Otonabee River. By the Second World War even this limited commercial use of the water had all but ended. People and goods travelled by road and the sole freight-carrying vessel left in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector was the tug Wauketa hauling ore from the head of Stony Lake to a mill in Lakefield.

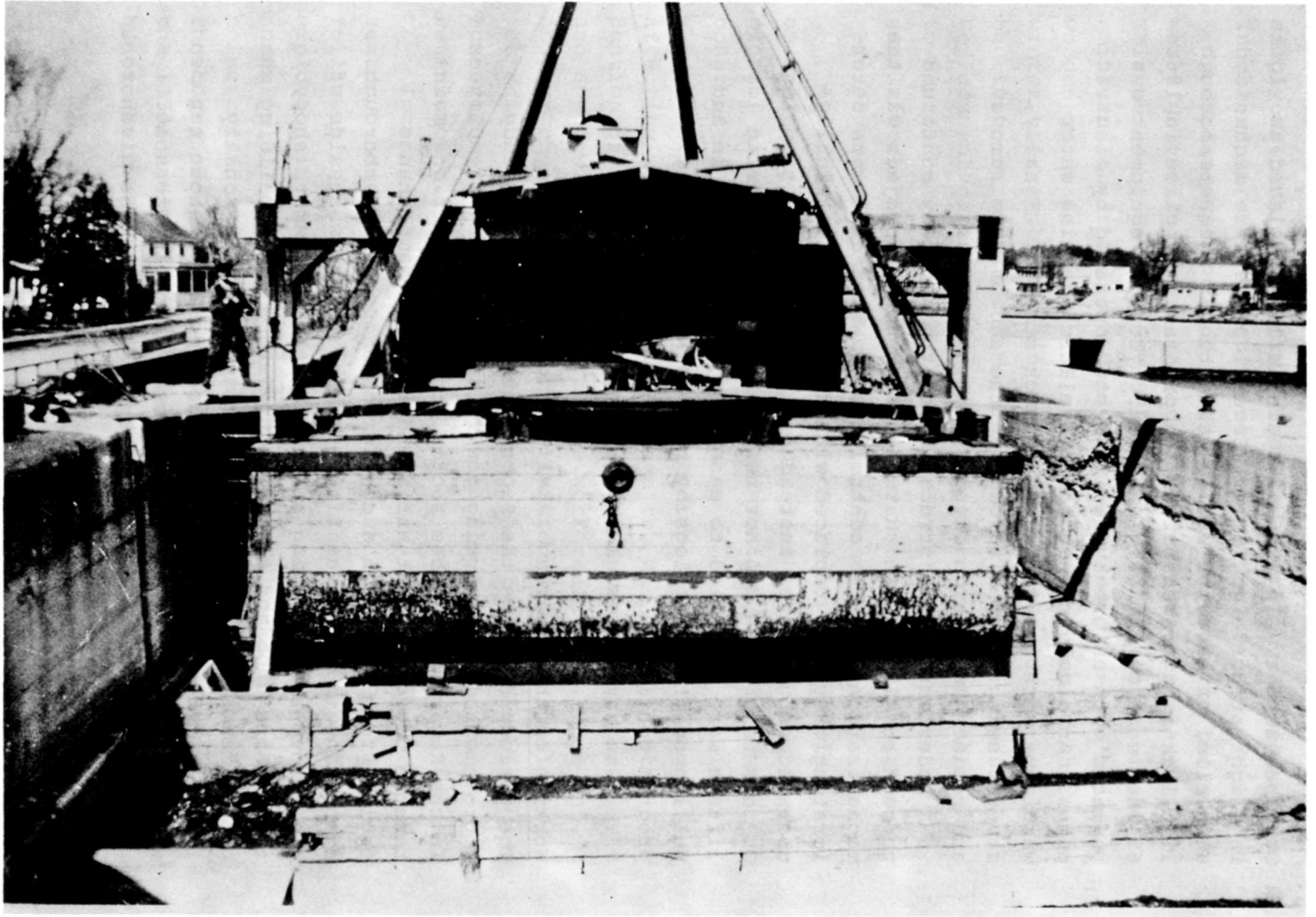
The government itself owned several vessels which were used in maintenance and operation of the Waterway. Three steam tugs - Bob Hall, Bessie Butler and J. B.

McColl - were kept busy placing buoys, towing scows, tending the dredges and delivering supplies to the lock stations. In the 1930s the J. B. McColl was succeeded by another tug, the Katchiwano. The dredges were the Fenelon and the Auburn (see Figure 1). These bulky craft kept the channels clear of silt and rock. Each carried a crew of about six men to operate the winches, the anchors and the scoop, and to cook meals. Other government vessels included scows for hauling equipment and supplies and a gatelifter, the W. H. Pretty, used to install and remove lock gates.

Following the Second World War the maintenance of the Trent-Severn Waterway was neglected in favour of other canals and waterways in Canada. The result was that the system began to deteriorate. Boat traffic, either recreational or commercial, was minimal and in the 1950s serious consideration was given to closing the system to navigation and maintaining only its water control function.⁴ This proposal proved unacceptable, one reason being that the cost of water control was such a high percentage of the total operating cost that the savings would not be large enough to justify the change.⁵ At any rate these calculations became irrelevant as the decade progressed and the volume of pleasure boat traffic increased dramatically. Suddenly the Waterway was catering to thousands of recreational boaters each season and it could no longer be treated with benign neglect.

As a result of the increase in boat traffic the federal government announced in 1962 a ten year program to update and improve Waterway structures. The first major construction to be undertaken as part of this program was at Fenelon Falls where two locks in flight were replaced by a single lock between 1961 and 1963. In 1965 the marine railway at Swift Rapids was replaced by a lock. During the same period a number of renewal projects were carried out in the Kawartha-

- 1 The dredge Fenelon in drydock at Bobcaygeon, 1949.
(Original photograph owned by Fred Tobey,
Peterborough)



Otonabee sector. In 1966-67 a single lock replaced two locks in flight at Burleigh Falls. Several locks were mechanized and walls, or parts of walls, rebuilt. At the Peterborough lift lock a major rehabilitation program took place in 1964-65 when some of the original water hydraulic equipment was replaced with an oil hydraulic system operated by electric pumps. As a convenience for travellers, running water washrooms were provided at each lock station. Finally, several swing bridges throughout the sector were removed and replaced with high level spans.

Modernization of structures on the Waterway continued through the 1970s. In that decade the major project was the mechanization of water control dams. Where dams were deteriorating they were replaced with dams with electrically-operated sector gates instead of the traditional stop logs. On some dams which did not need rebuilding, hydraulic log lifters were installed to ease the job of putting in and pulling out the stop logs by hand. This modernization program continues.⁶

Working on the Waterway

The period following the Second World War saw a steady improvement in the working conditions of Waterway employees in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector, both lock staff and maintenance personnel. At War's end the main maintenance facility was housed in a complex of shops in Peterborough straddling the canal at Little Lake. On the west side of the canal was a building containing the blacksmith shop, the machine shop and the carpentry shop. This building was poorly heated, had no indoor plumbing and occasionally flooded in the spring. During the late 1940s about ten men worked in this facility, their tasks depending to some extent on the season. In the summer priority was given to

simply keeping the Waterway open and operating smoothly. In the winter months equipment was overhauled.⁷

On the eastern side of the canal, across from the shops, was a galvanized iron structure housing the gate-plant. This building dated from 1929. Here a carpenter, a blacksmith and their helpers used adze, saw and planer to build wooden gates for the locks (see Figure 2). During the winter the temperature in the plant was so cold that tools had to be warmed in the morning before they could be used. Replacement gates were assembled timber by timber, then towed to the lock and put in place by the steam-operated gatelifter. In 1959 the gatelifter was retired and gates were assembled on site using a land-based crane.⁸

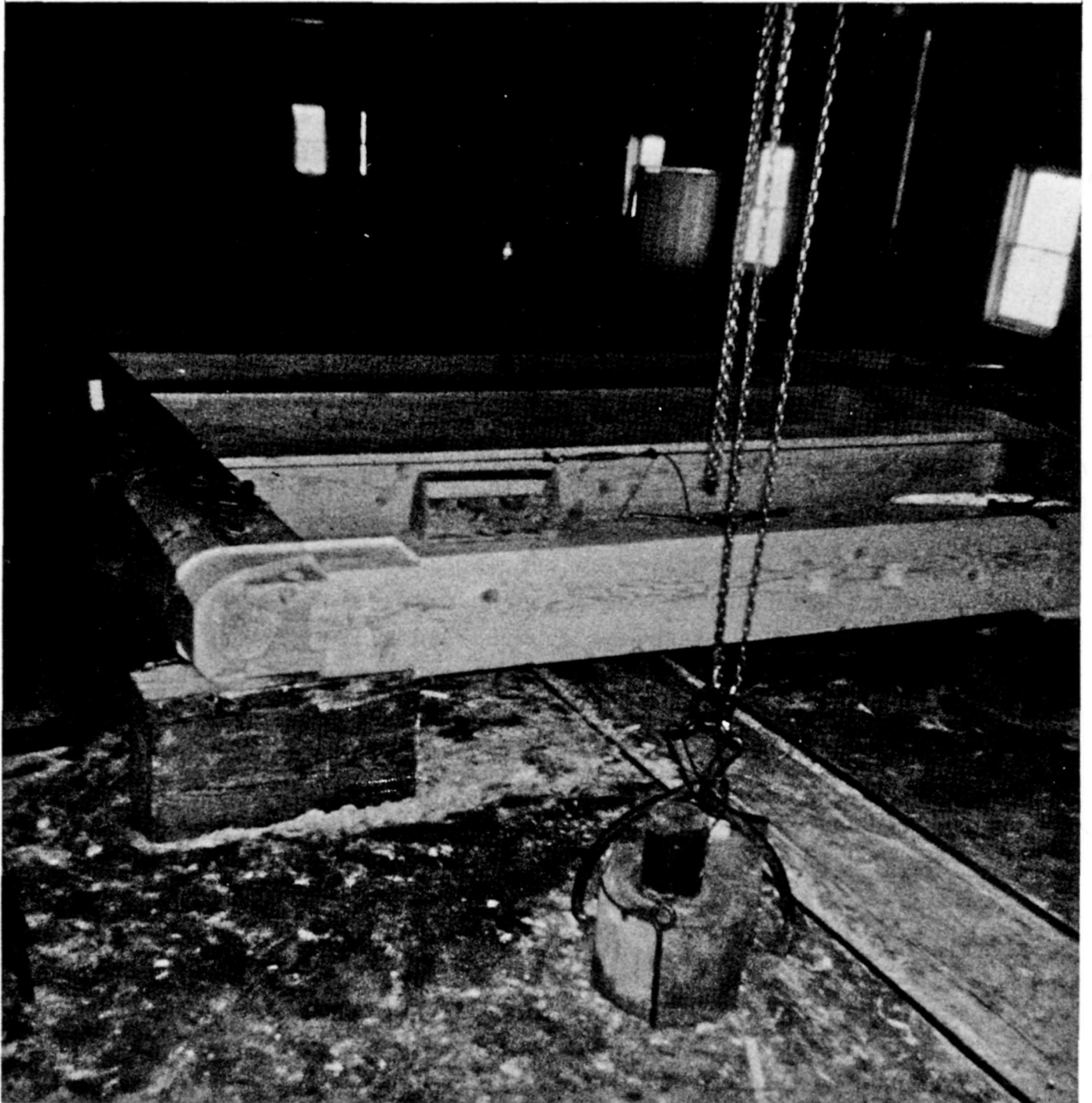
In 1965 all the shops were combined in one complex on the east side of the canal just south of the old gate-plant. At the same time an administrative building was constructed nearby.⁹

Informants agreed that the most significant change affecting working conditions since the War was the introduction of mechanical equipment which increased the ease and speed with which maintenance work could be carried out. Another change was the decentralization of responsibility for maintenance to area offices so that less of the burden for maintaining the system lay with the main shops at Peterborough.

Increased boat traffic in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector transformed the work of lock staff in the years following the Second World War. In the years before the explosion in pleasure boat usage the lockmaster's job was normally a leisurely one, with about ten lockages a day being considered an average day's work. At the same time the hours of work were longer for a lockmaster. Prior to the 1950s navigation was open 24 hours a day and the master had to be prepared to let a vessel through his lock at any

- 2 A lock gate under construction in Peterborough.
(Original photograph owned by Fred Tobey,
Peterborough).

View of the bay at night from the observation post



Observation post on the shore of the bay, showing the bay and the observation post

time of the day or night. At the same time as consideration was being given to closing the Waterway to navigation entirely the system closed on weekends and opened only until 10 pm. during the week. Later in the 1950s the system once again opened on weekends, though it began to close earlier in the evenings. As the volume of traffic increased, more alterations in the hours of operation occurred.¹⁰

Increased use of the Waterway made the lock staff's job more onerous. Yet at the same time electrification of locks and water control dams did away with much of the physical labour formerly required. At some lock stations gates and valves were electrified and dams were supplied with hydraulic log lifters. Nevertheless, some locks continue to be manually operated, for instance the locks along the Otonabee River between Peterborough and Lakefield.

Prior to the 1960s houses were provided for lockmasters and their families at a nominal rent. These houses were built close by the locks and were especially necessary when the stations were open 24 hours a day (see Figure 3). However, by the 1960s these residences were becoming costly to maintain. At about this time Central Mortgage and Housing ruled that renters of government-owned accommodation should pay the current market rate and employees living in these dwellings along the Waterway were encouraged to leave the lock houses and buy their own homes. Some of the older houses were demolished; newer ones were turned into lock offices.¹¹

Most lock stations in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector were readily accessible by road and presented no special problems when it came to maintenance or reconstruction. The single exception was lock 30. This lock, linking Lovesick and Lower Buckhorn Lakes, is located on an island and since its construction in 1888 has been accessible only by water. A house was provided for the lockmaster and he

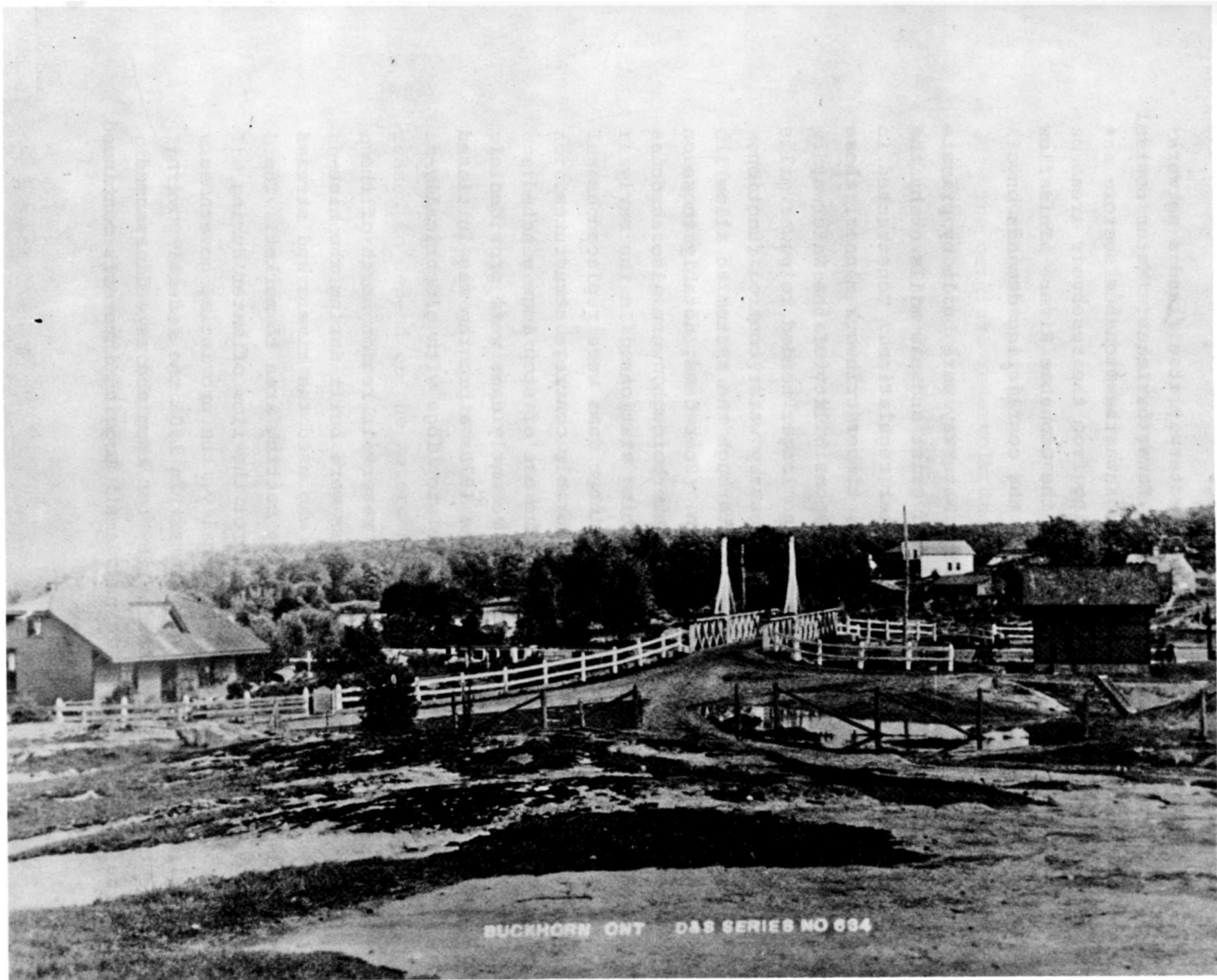
and his family generally took up residence at the opening of navigation and remained until the season ended. The house was heated only by a stove and had neither indoor plumbing nor electricity. The only other building was a makeshift shack built by a lockmaster to function as a lock office.¹² Telephone service was not installed until the 1960s and the lockmaster communicated with the nearest town, Burleigh Falls, by boat. The house was demolished in the 1960s in accordance with the policy already mentioned and a modern lock office was built beside the lock to replace the shack.¹³

The isolation of the lock at Lovesick presented unique problems when construction became necessary. A series of seven dams control the flow of water through the islands dividing Lovesick Lake and Lower Buckhorn Lake. Early in the 1950s a program of dam reconstruction was inaugurated and during the decade all of the dams, formerly timber cribwork construction, were replaced by concrete structures. Equipment and heavy supplies had to be transported to the site on scows. Bunkhouses and cookeries were erected and work crews lived at the site. On the southern shore of the mainland an old dirt road was used to transport supplies by truck to the top of a cliff overlooking the islands where they were dumped down a wooden chute built especially for the purpose.¹⁴ Similar difficulties were experienced in 1965 when the floor of the lock at Lovesick was renewed. This work dragged on into the winter and an "icebreaker" had to be improvised to transport materials to the site.¹⁵

Water Control

As well as a recreational corridor, the Trent-Severn Waterway is a complex water control system which comprises a

- 3 A view of the swing bridge in Buckhorn c. 1910. The house on the left is the lockmaster's house.
(Original photograph owned by Frank Cody, Buckhorn.)



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series of dams along the main waterway itself and a network of reservoir dams north of the Kawartha Lakes. Water control is especially important in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector since most of the water draining from the reservoir area flows into the lakes and down the Otonabee River. This flow must be managed to coordinate the conflicting demands on the system.

The earliest dams on the Waterway were built by private interests to provide power for grist and saw mills or by the government for purposes of water regulation. Constructed in the once familiar rock-filled, timber cribwork manner, these dams eventually became the responsibility of the Waterway authorities. When they were no longer needed to power mills they continued to serve a necessary water control function, regulating the flow of water through the system to allow safe and continuous navigation. Some dams, notably those on the Otonabee River north of Peterborough, were also associated with hydroelectric generating stations. In the early decades of this century the timber dams were replaced as they deteriorated with more durable concrete structures. Water was regulated through the use of stop logs winched into position by hand. More recently dams were provided with loglifters and during the 1970s a program was initiated which eventually will replace stop logs with electrically-operated radial sluice gates.

In the 7200 square mile reservoir region north of the Kawartha Lakes, the first dams were built during the nineteenth century by timber men who used the rivers and streams to move their logs out of the cutting area to market. The dams allowed loggers to control the flow of water during their spring drives. Originally, the provincial government helped to maintain these dams. In 1906 the federal government took over responsibility for them and as well assumed the authority to build new dams. Logging interests continued

to enjoy certain privileges but the dams now were used to serve the water control purposes of the Waterway. Water was stored in the reservoir lakes and discharged gradually so as to guard against the possibility of spring flooding and at the same time insure the availability of a sufficient flow during the navigation season on the Waterway.

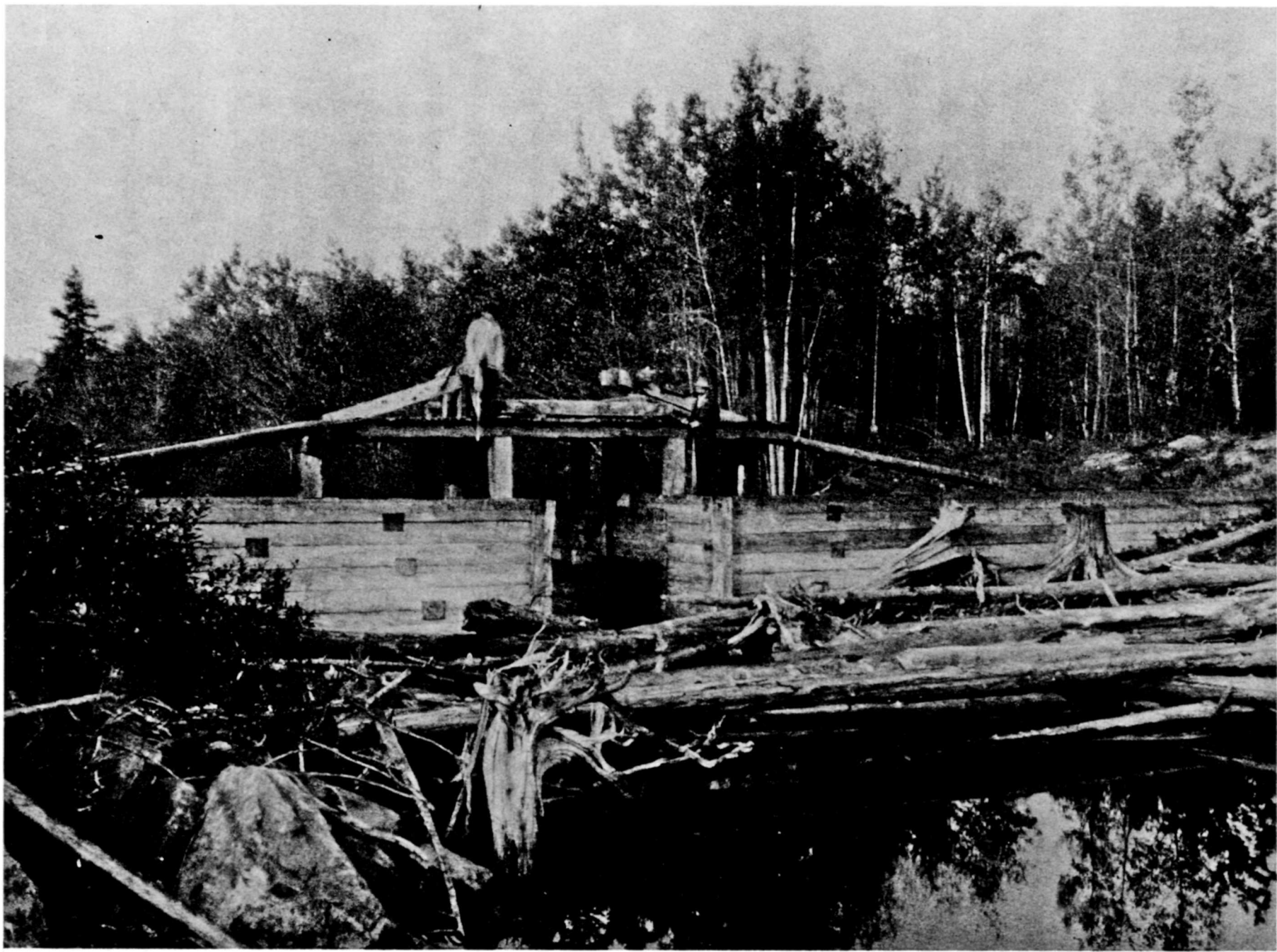
The original reservoir dams were, again, rock-filled, timber cribwork structures, many built out of materials obtained in the immediate neighbourhood (see Figure 4 and 5). Gradually they were replaced by concrete, though the isolation of some of the sites made this improvement impossible. Water levels were maintained by mobile crews.

The water control system in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector historically has had to meet the needs of several different interests, none of which necessarily complemented one another. In the early years of the century both logging and hydroelectric companies competed for water. In the reservoir area the loggers used the water to flush their logs down the rivers each spring, a practice which left the northern lakes depleted by mid-summer. Power companies operating generating stations on the Otonabee River complained that the loggers were depriving them of the constant flow they required to keep their facilities working at peak efficiency.¹⁶ This conflict solved itself as loggers ceased to depend on the watercourses to move their timber but after World War II the growing number of cottagers in the reservoir area created another conflict, this time between hydro needs and the desire of cottagers to maintain high water levels in their lakes for recreational purposes. The need for sufficient water to insure safe navigation has usually enjoyed top priority along the Waterway but early in the 1960s the needs of cottagers became the second priority and hydro dropped to third place.¹⁷ In the 1970s an extensive evaluation of the water control system was

- 4 Reservoir dam at Hawk Lake, 1913. (Original photograph owned by Fred Tobey, Peterborough.)



- 5 A view of the reservoir dam at Hawk Lake, 1913.
(Original photograph owned by Fred Tobey,
Peterborough).



carried out, known as the Acres study. Its recommendations were implemented and modified as experience dictated.¹⁸

Resource Development

Logging

Logging has always been a significant element in the history of resource exploitation in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector. Operations began with the original settlers and lobbying by timbermen led to many improvements to the Waterway in the form of dams, timber chutes and timber slides. The last half of the nineteenth century is generally acknowledged to be the highwater mark of the industry.¹ A large number of small millowners had given way to larger, heavily capitalized "timber barons" whose operations produced each year tens of millions of board feet of lumber and hundreds of thousands of pieces of square timber. Cutting activities extended well north of the Kawartha Lakes toward Haliburton. Logs were driven down the major creeks and rivers to Stony, Lower Buckhorn and Pigeon Lakes where they were gathered into booms and cribs and towed to mills at Lindsay, Lakefield and Peterborough. The climax to many a drive was the running of the Otonabee River when the logging men rode their cribs over the timber slides and through the boiling rapids between Lakefield and Peterborough.

After about 1900 the production of timber from the Kawartha-Otonabee sector fell off dramatically as the stands of valuable pine were depleted. Nevertheless, logging continued on a smaller scale north of the Kawarthas and during the first decades of this century the industry was an important source of seasonal employment and revenue for communities such as Buckhorn, Bobcaygeon and Burleigh Falls.

- 6 A lumber camp in the 1930s showing the sleeping quarters in the centre and the cookhouse on the right. (Original photograph owned by the Peterborough Lumber Company.)



- 7 Interior of a dining hall at a lumber camp, 1930.
(Original photograph owned by the Peterborough
Lumber Co.)



- 8 A log jammer, used to lift logs onto sleighs.
(Original photograph owned by the Peterborough
Lumber Co.)



- 9 Icing a road for hauling logs. (Original photograph owned by the Peterborough Lumber Co.)



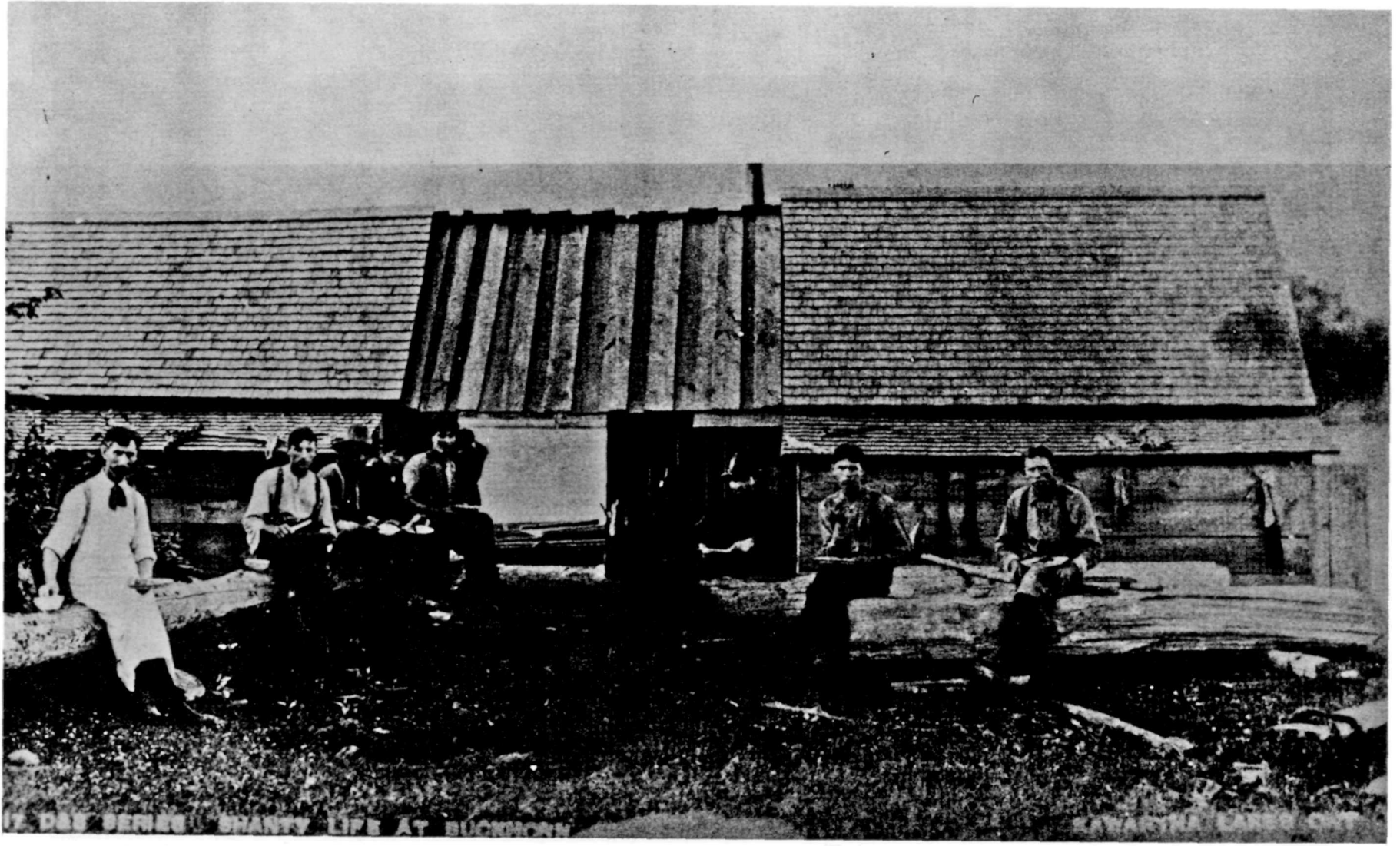
- 10 Hauling logs down an iced road. (Original photograph owned by the Peterborough Lumber Co.)



11 At the skidway. (Original photograph owned by
the Peterborough Lumber Co.)



- 12 Floating cookhouse at Buckhorn. (Original photograph owned by Frank Cody, Buckhorn.)



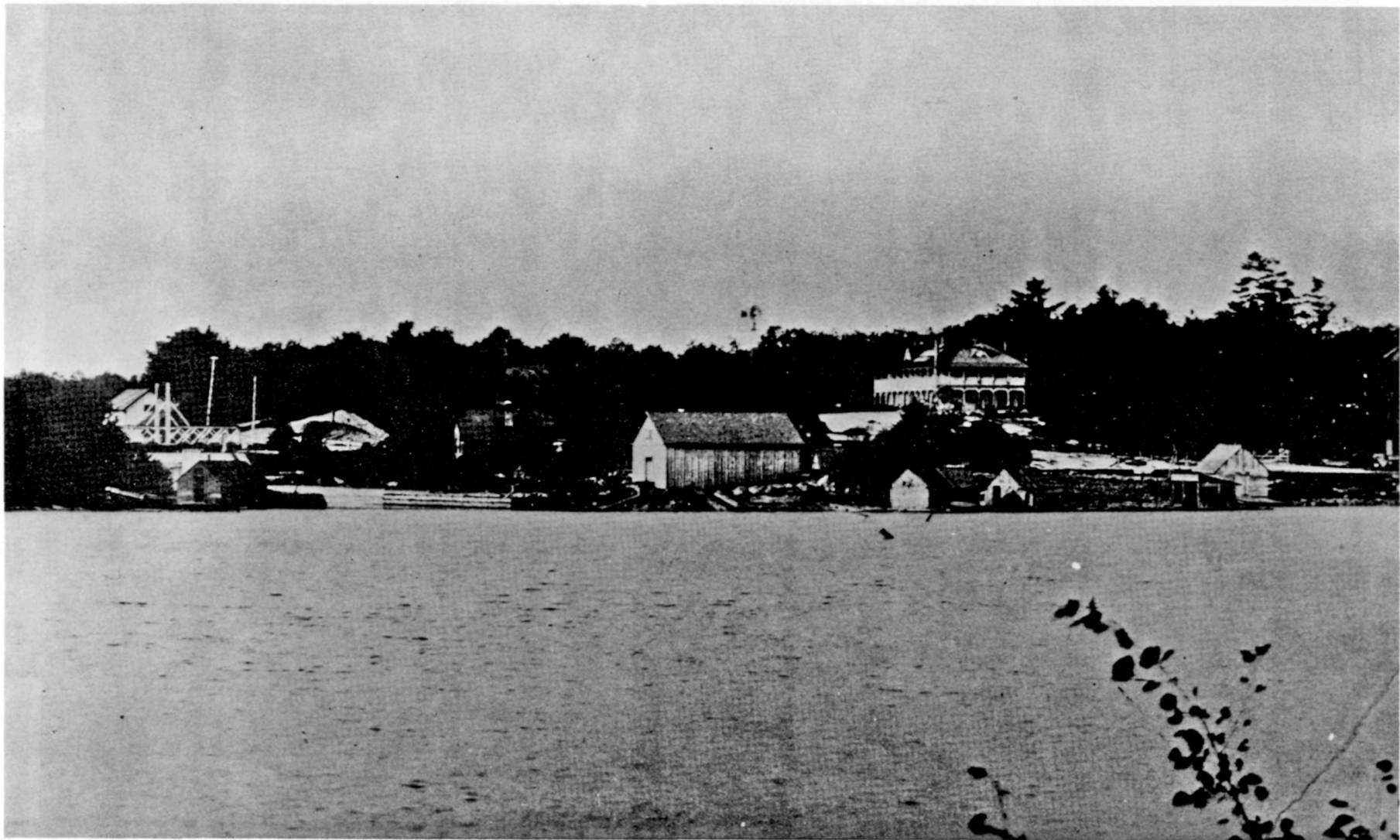
13 Driving the river. (Original photograph owned by
the Peterborough Lumber Co.)



14 Booming the logs. (Original photograph owned by
the Peterborough Lumber Co.)



- 15 The waterfront at Buckhorn, about 1910. From the left, the cookery of the McDonald Lumber Company; behind it the wooden swing bridge crossing the lock; lockmaster's house; shed owned by the Peterborough Lumber Company; cookery owned by Peterborough Lumber; and Nat Pearson's boat house. (Original photograph owned by the Peterborough Lumber Co.)



16 A timber chute on Jack Creek. (Original owned by
the Peterborough Lumber Co.)



Prior to 1930 logging techniques did not change significantly. Men entered the woods in the fall of the year and built a shanty close to that season's cutting area. Each man generally had a particular job, either felling, loading and unloading logs, driving team or icing roads. Wages varied according to the job. After the trees were felled and trimmed they were loaded onto sleighs and drawn by horses to the dump, situated on the shores of a lake or beside a river (see Figures 6 to 13). At spring breakup the logs were driven down several rivers and creeks in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector - Jack Creek, Eels Creek, Mississauga River, Squaw River and Nogies Creek. Each of these water courses was dammed at strategic points and as water spilled from one dam to the other the logs were carried downstream. Drivers were posted on the shore with pike poles to make sure that stray logs did not become hung up or cause jams. These men were followed by a portable camp hauled through the woods by horse and wagon.²

At the mouth of the river the logs were either cribbed or boomed. The Carew Lumber Company cribbed their logs so that they could be towed through the locks and on to the company's mill at Lindsay. Companies whose mills were located in the Peterborough area simply boomed their logs (see Figures 14 to 16). When the booms approached a dam they were opened and the logs floated individually over the dam on the current to be collected in a new boom below. In the early days towing was done by horse capsule. A long cable with an anchor attached was rowed out ahead of the boom and dropped. The cable ran back to the boom where it was attached to a capstan driven by a horse. As the horse walked around in a circle the capstan turned, pulling the boom toward the anchor. And so the logs made their sluggish way down the lakes. By 1900 steam tugs were doing the hauling in the Kawarthas but in the interior lakes which

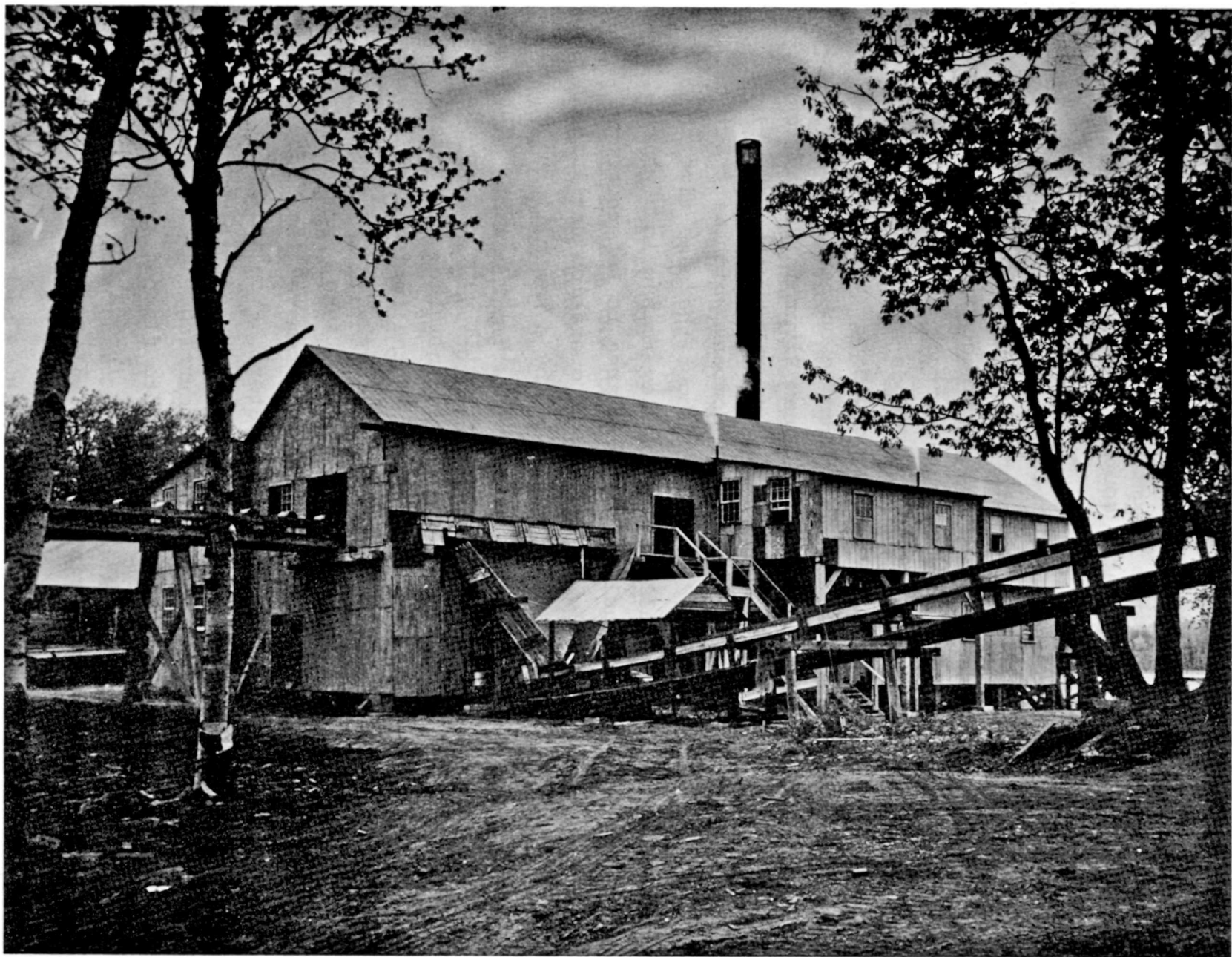
were inaccessible to tugs horse capsules continued in use.

As roads penetrated the northern woods trucks superseded the river drive and the tug boat. The use of the water to haul logs ended at different times in different parts of the Waterway. On Upper Stony Lake informants recall that booms disappeared sometime in the 1920s.³ The last drive down the Otonabee River belonged to the Peterborough Lumber Company and took place about 1930.⁴ In the central lakes Robert Dixon remembered the Carew Company towing cribs of logs through the lock at Buckhorn for the last time in 1948.⁵ Smaller millowners, of course, like the Blewetts at Bridgenorth, continued to draw logs by water whenever it was convenient.⁶

From the point of view of employment, logging consisted of three phases. The first was the actual cutting which took place in the woods in the winter. The second was the river drive which took place each spring. The third was towing the booms of logs down the lakes, a job which lasted most of the summer. Depending on his other prospects, a resident of the Kawarthas might sign on to work for any or all of these phases so that during the first third of this century logging continued to be a significant employer of labour.

One of the most important lumber companies active north of the Kawartha Lakes in this century has been the Peterborough Lumber Company. An examination of how this company made the transition to modern logging techniques will throw light on the impact of these changes on the region as a whole.⁷ Since its creation in the early years of this century, the Peterborough Lumber Company has been taking logs out of five townships north of the Kawartha Lakes - Galway, Harvey, Burleigh, Anstruther and Cavendish. Most of this activity centred on the territory around Anstruther, Gold, Catchacoma and Mississagua Lakes. Logs were floated

- 17 Saw mill on Mississagua Lake owned by the Peterborough Lumber Company, 1947. (Original photograph owned by the Peterborough Lumber Co.)



View of the mill building at the mill site, showing the tall chimney and the wooden ramps leading to the entrance.

down the Mississagua River to Lower Buckhorn Lake, then towed to the company's mill at Peterborough. It was during these drives that the needs of the logging company sometimes came into conflict with the canal authority's attempts to regulate the flow of water south out of the watershed into the Kawarthas.

The Peterborough Lumber Company stopped transporting their logs to the mill by water in about 1930. By this time it had become possible to construct roads to the cutting areas and to bring the wood out by truck. Furthermore, most of the pine had been cut and hardwoods such as hemlock, which were now in demand, did not float. The result was that in the 1930s the company began to operate a steam saw-mill on the west branch of the Squaw River in Galway Township. This mill had been purchased, along with some timber limits, from the McDonald Lumber Company which went out of business during that decade. At about the same time the company opened a small mill at Apsley to saw logs which formerly had been hauled from this area to Peterborough.

The mill in Galway remained in operation until the Second World War. It was succeeded by a new mill built at the southern end of Mississagua Lake in 1946 (see Figure 17). For a few years logs for this mill were cut in the usual manner. Winter camps were established; trees were piled beside the frozen lake; and in the spring the drive brought the logs to the mill where they were cut into lumber and trucked south. Then, about 1950, another change in logging techniques occurred which removed the industry from any reliance whatsoever on water. From this point the Peterborough Lumber Company engaged contractors who bulldozed roads directly to the site of the cutting. Front-end loaders were brought in to load the logs onto flatbed trucks which brought the wood to the mill. This innovation saved many logs formerly lost during a drive. It also reduced the

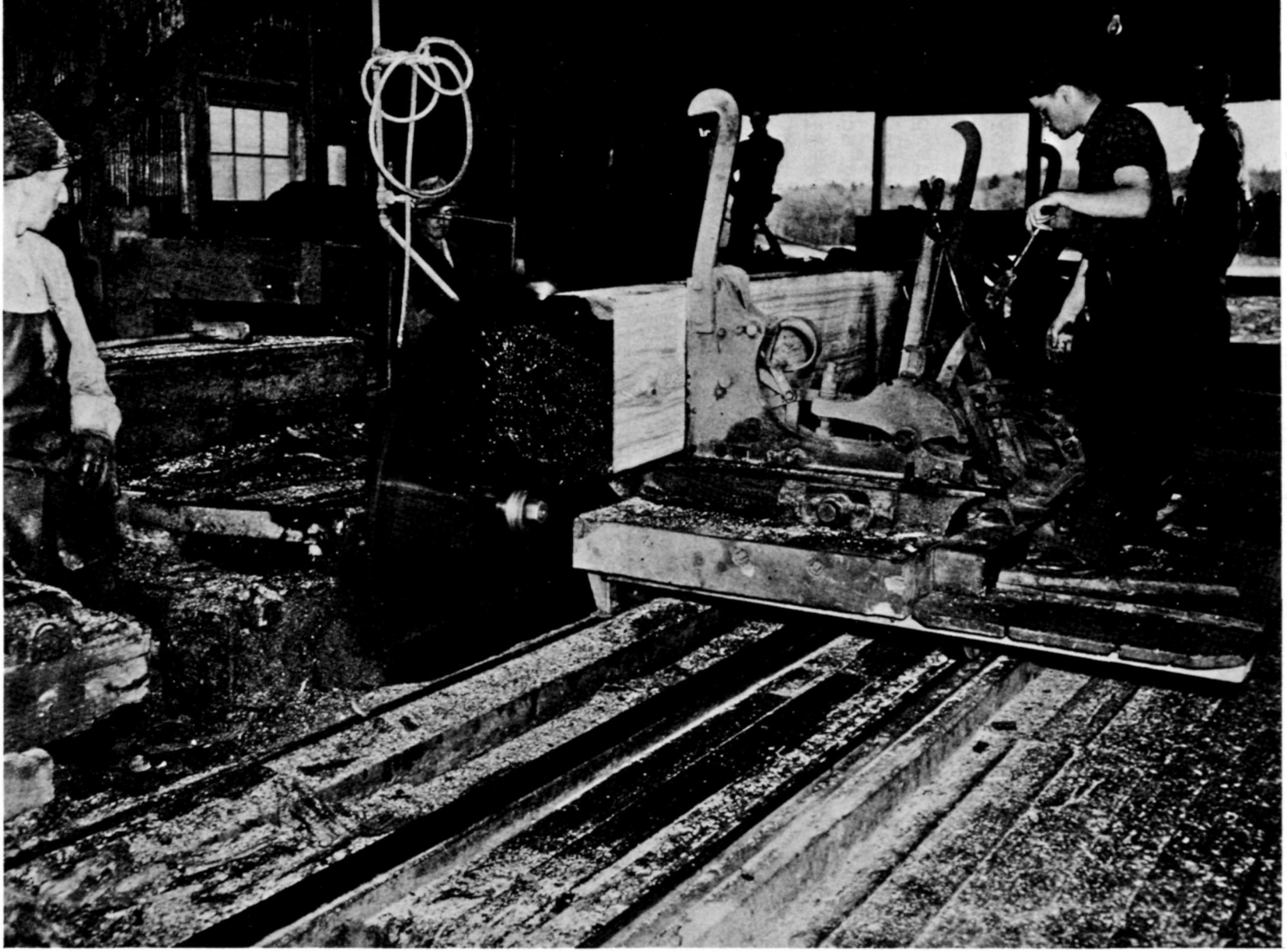
number of men required in a logging operation. The long association between the Trent-Severn Waterway and the logging industry might be said to have ended at this point.

The Peterborough Lumber Company closed its two mills in the mid-1960s. High operating costs, depletion of forest resources and the difficulty of finding labour have been given as the reasons for the mill's closure. At present the company's allowable limit of timber is cut on contract. In 1978 it required six men to log two and a half million board feet.

Of course, not all logging operations were as large, as successful or as durable as Peterborough Lumber. One of the smaller operators was a man named Linburner who logged inland from the northeast end of Stony Lake during the 1920s and 1930s. Linburner opened a road from his cutting area to the shores of the lake, a distance of about 16 kilometres, and hauled the logs to the water by tractor. At the lakeshore, not far from the mouth of Jack Creek, he built a mill where the logs were sawed. The lumber was then carried by truck to market. Several local residents found employment at Linburner's but he only remained in business for something less than ten years.⁸

Not all sawmill operators were loggers, or vice versa. Milling by itself was always an important activity in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector (see Figure 18). Often it was the millowner who pioneered the development of communities along the Waterway. This was certainly true of Thomas Need of Bobcaygeon, Adam Scott in Peterborough, Francis Young at Young's Point and John Hall at Buckhorn. In the beginning, at least, these mills sawed lumber for local residents and while the larger logging companies such as the Mossom Boyd Company and Peterborough Lumber came to dominate the timber industry, smaller mills catering basically to a local market continued to function. The sawmill in Bridgenorth operated

18 Working in a saw mill in the 1940s. (Original photograph owned by the Peterborough Lumber Co.)



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES H. HARRIS FOR THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE

by the Blewett family is a good example of this type of operation.

Wilson Blewett built his first sawmill in Buckhorn about 1900. Using a small steam tug, the Pearl, to haul the logs, Blewett sawed lumber for local farmers. Some time during World War I fire destroyed this mill. Wilson Blewett moved to Peterborough and took up another line of work. In 1930 the senior Blewett and his two sons, Earl and Karl, bought a steam-powered sawmill in Bridgenorth. Twice the mill burned in the next decade and twice the family rebuilt it. Once again most of the wood was purchased from local farmers who used the mill to obtain their lumber for construction. Karl Blewett can recall looking across Chemung Lake on a bright winter's day and seeing a line of fifteen sleighs making for the mill bringing in logs for sawing. The Blewetts owned a boat called the Merrimac which in the summer towed booms of logs down Pigeon and Buckhorn Lakes to the mill. By 1954 Earl was the sole Blewett still involved in the business. In that year he converted the operation to a marina.⁹

Trapping

Trapping fur-bearing animals, especially muskrat and beaver, has been a commercial activity in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector since the beginning of the fur trade in the seventeenth century. European settlers copied native techniques and trapping continued into the modern period. Each spring and fall residents of the Kawartha Lakes put out their traplines along the marshy shoreline and supplemented their incomes by selling their catch to furriers in Peterborough, Toronto and smaller centres. Some of the trappers have complained that since the Waterway authorities began draining the lakes each winter in preparation for spring run-off the

muskrat population has declined.¹⁰

Most trappers in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector worked individually on a seasonal basis. However, on at least one occasion a company was formed to exploit the fur resources of the area. Immediately following World War I a group of Gores Landing residents purchased the marshland at the mouth of the Otonabee River and formed the Rice Lake Fur Company. This marsh had long been a favourite haunt of local residents, native and white, who had trapped muskrat there freely. The new owners hired a watchman to guard against poachers and engaged professional trappers to harvest the muskrat each year. Resentful of being denied access to one of their most productive trapping grounds, some local people launched legal proceedings against the Rice Lake Fur Company but the rights of the company were upheld. Apparently the company still owns the property, though no trapping currently goes on there.¹¹

An interesting footnote to the operations of the Rice Lake Fur Company involves the burning of the hotel at Jubilee Point. This famous recreation spot at the mouth of the Otonabee River was part of the property belonging to the company. By the 1930s the hotel was no longer open for business but it provided living quarters for the company watchman. The story goes that one night during that decade the watchman left a pile of wet life preservers in the hotel and set off by canoe for Gores Landing. When he looked back across the lake he could see a pillar of smoke rising from the point. The life preservers had ignited spontaneously and the Jubilee Point Hotel was completely destroyed.¹²

Hydroelectricity

At the beginning of the twentieth century Ontario entrepreneurs

and engineers recognized the great potential for the development of hydroelectric power in the province. The "white coal" of water power was expected to give a stimulus to Ontario's manufacturing sector and bring about a provincial industrial revolution.¹³

The Peterborough area took part in the rush to develop hydroelectric resources. The Otonabee River between Peterborough and Lakefield boasted several possible sites for generating facilities and in the first decade of the century three power companies were organized in the area - Peterborough Light and Power, Otonabee Power and Auburn Power. About 1910 these companies became subsidiaries of the larger Electric Power Company, a firm which owned utilities and generating stations throughout central Ontario. In 1916 the facilities of the Electric Power Company were purchased by the Hydro Electric Power Commission, the forerunner of Ontario Hydro.¹⁴ At that time generating facilities on the Otonabee included a power plant at Auburn Mills and another at Nassau Mills. The former still stands today but the latter was torn down in 1961.¹⁵

As well as these establishments, several other generating stations were built on the river to supply the needs of particular industrial concerns. In the first decade of the century the Lakefield Portland Cement Company (later Canada Cement) constructed a plant at Duoro. This plant was purchased by Ontario Hydro in 1936 and continued in operation until 1944. It was removed in 1961.¹⁶ A second plant at Young's Point enjoyed an identical history.¹⁷ Later, in the 1920s, Canada Cement built yet another power facility, this time at Lakefield. Like the others it was taken over by Ontario Hydro in 1936 but it remains in operation.¹⁸ At Nassau Canadian General Electric constructed a plant early in the same decade. In 1969 it was donated to Trent University and also continues to function.¹⁹

The construction of electrical generating plants in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector placed new demands on the water control system. Waterway authorities had to satisfy the needs of the logging companies, which required rapid run-off in the spring to carry their logs out of the northern watershed, while at the same time satisfying the needs of the power facilities, which required a constant flow of water. This conflict became less urgent as logging declined north of the Kawarthas. But after World War II the number of summer cottages in the reservoir area grew rapidly and vacationers wanted water held for longer periods in the northern lakes for recreation purposes. Once again Waterway authorities were faced with the need to resolve conflicting interests. On the Otonabee a similar situation developed. The power stations would draw off water for their own needs and property owners along the reaches above the plants would complain that water levels in the river were dropping drastically. Eventually Ontario Hydro agreed that in the summer its plants would have to be content with the excess water that was flowing through the system and when not enough water was available to generate electricity the plants would simply not generate.

Mining

With one exception mining has not been an important activity in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector. The exception is the successful nepheline syenite mine located at Nephton, inland from the northeast end of Stony Lake. This site has been producing ore since the 1930s and for a period of ten years the Waterway was used to transport raw material to milling facilities in Lakefield.

The American Nepheline Corporation began mining operations after a prospector found syenite ore in the vicinity

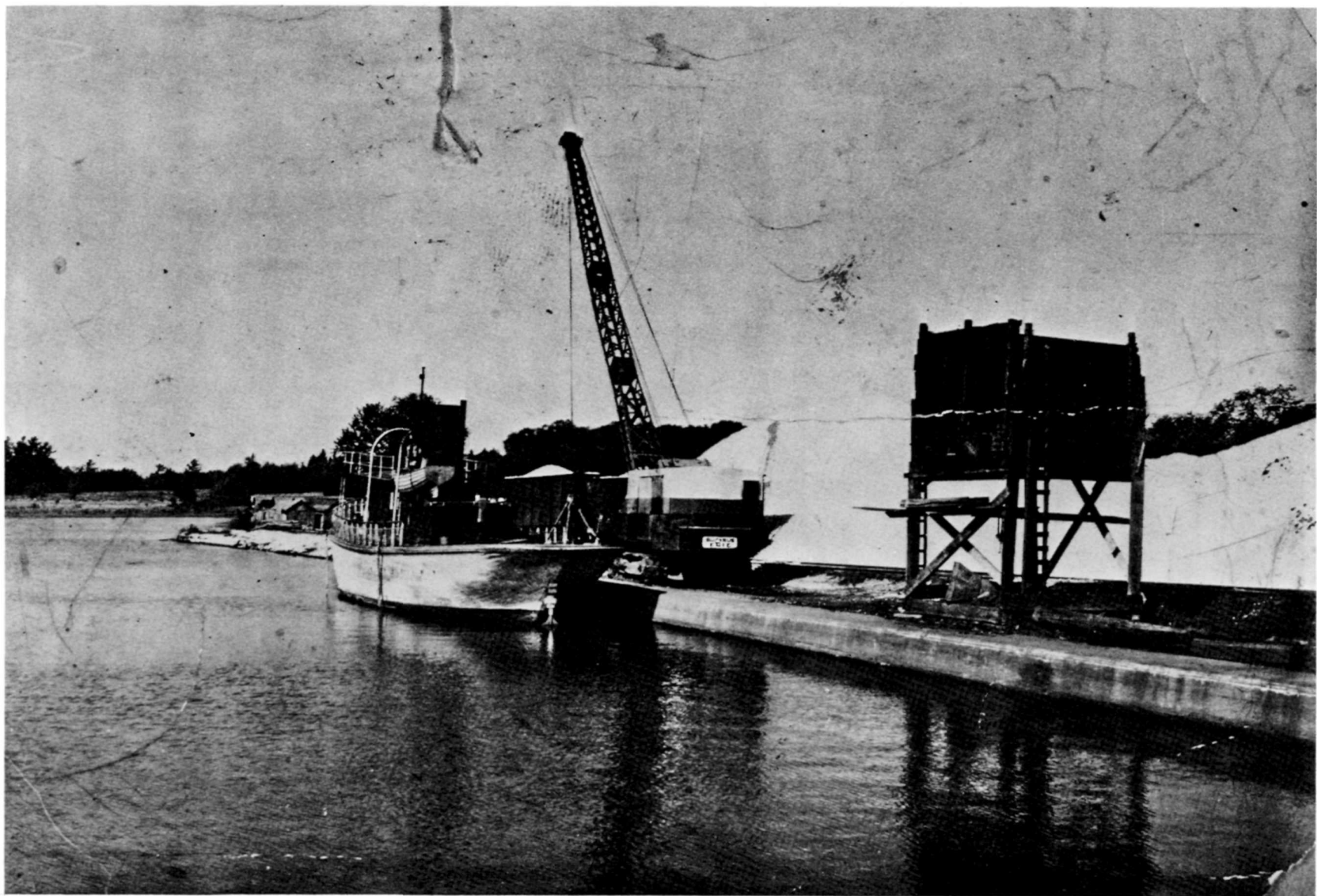
of the Blue Mountains in the mid-1930s.²⁰ The mineral was used in the production of glass products and was sold to glass companies in Canada, the United States and Europe. Ore was brought from the mine site to Lakefield where it was processed through a crushing mill, then shipped by rail. Originally the material was trucked to Lakefield but the road was in poor condition so in 1936 the company purchased a tug called the Wauketa and the next year began hauling by scow down Stony, Katchewanooka and Clear Lakes. Docking facilities were built at the head of Stony Lake where truckloads of ore from the nearby mine could be dumped directly onto the scows. At the Lakefield end the mineral was unloaded by crane (see Figures 19 and 20). During its years of operation the Wauketa and its scows were the only freight-carrying vessels using the Waterway in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector.

The story of the Wauketa is not an uneventful one. On one occasion a loaded scow sprang a leak and sank to the bottom of Clear Lake, almost pulling the tug down with it. On two occasions scows grounded on a rock in Stony Lake not far from Kawartha Park and were refloated only with the aid of the Waterway vessel, Bessie Butler. In fact, the accident prone nature of the operation contributed to the decision to discontinue water transport in the mid-1940s. By this time the mine had new owners who preferred to improve the road and resume trucking the ore to Lakefield. The Wauketa was retired. Early in the 1950s a railroad line was built into the mine site from Havelock and even the milling operations at Lakefield were shut down. The mine continues in operation.

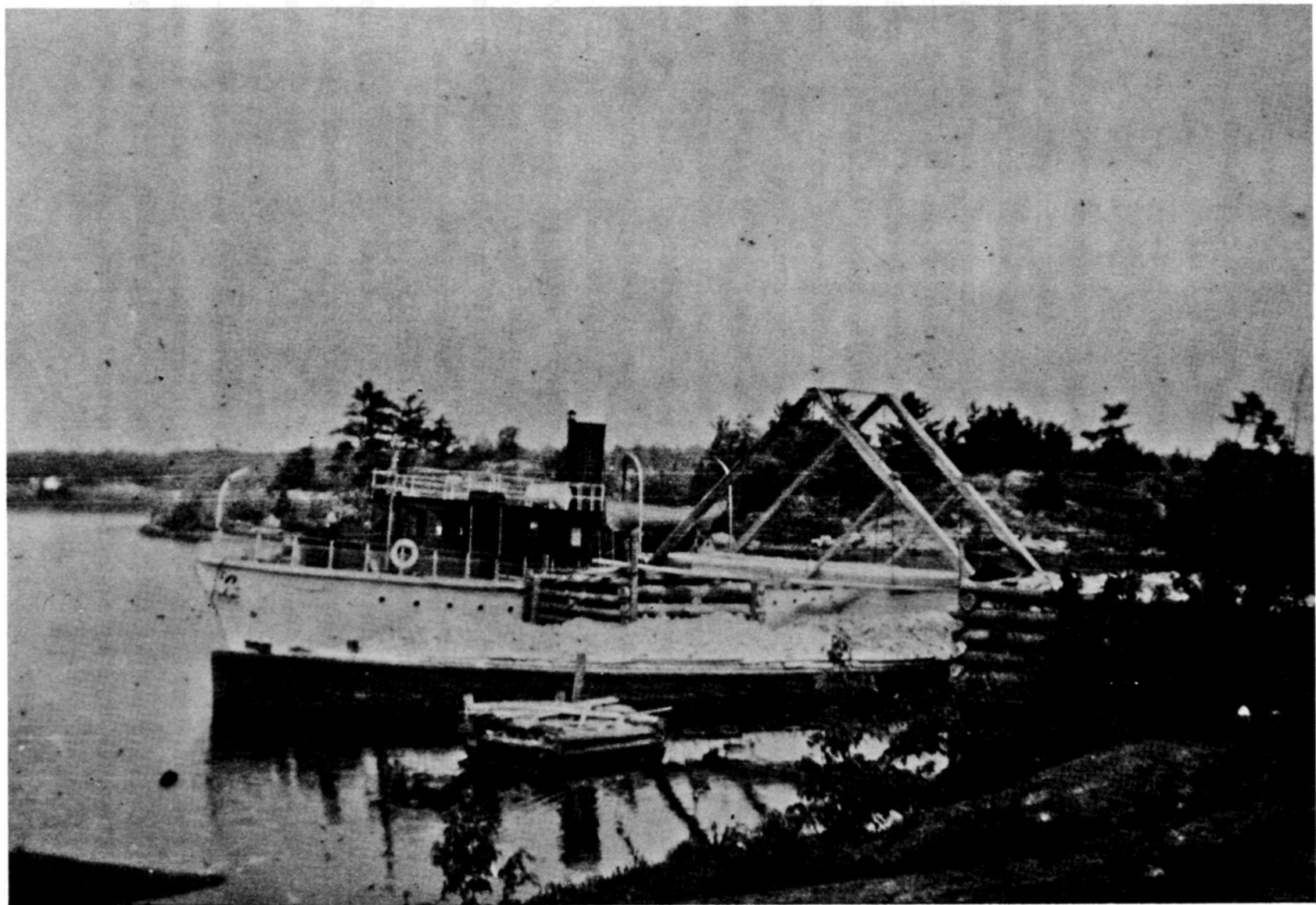
In addition to the nepheline mine, quarrying has been the only other mining activity in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector. Two quarries have operated in Stony Lake in this century, though details are scant. On Quarry Island near

the north shore a man named John Lloyd quarried granite which was apparently used for tombstones.²¹ The second quarry was on Eagle Mount Island. It opened in 1889 but has not been in operation for many years.²²

- 19 The Wauketa at the wharf in Lakefield, about 1940.
(Original photograph owned by Eric Holmes, Lakefield.)



20 The Wauketa and its scows taking on a load of nepheline syenite ore. (Original photograph owned by Eric Holmes, Lakefield.)



Transportation and Recreation

Steamboating

One of the ambitions held for the Trent-Severn Waterway in its early years was that it would become an important commercial thoroughfare in the continental transportation system. This ambition was never realized. However, for many years the Waterway was an important commercial highway in a local context, carrying people and goods from the hinterlands to the marketing centres. As long as roads were poor and automobiles unreliable, water provided the cheapest, fastest means of transportation within the Kawartha-Otonabee sector.

Inseparably linked to the issue of transportation has been the development of the Kawartha-Otonabee sector as a recreational centre. This development began in the mid-nineteenth century when the first hunters and fishermen recognized the virtues of the region and it continues today. Recreation and tourism were made possible by a reliable means of transportation and nothing combines these two themes - recreation and transportation - more completely than the history of steamboating.¹

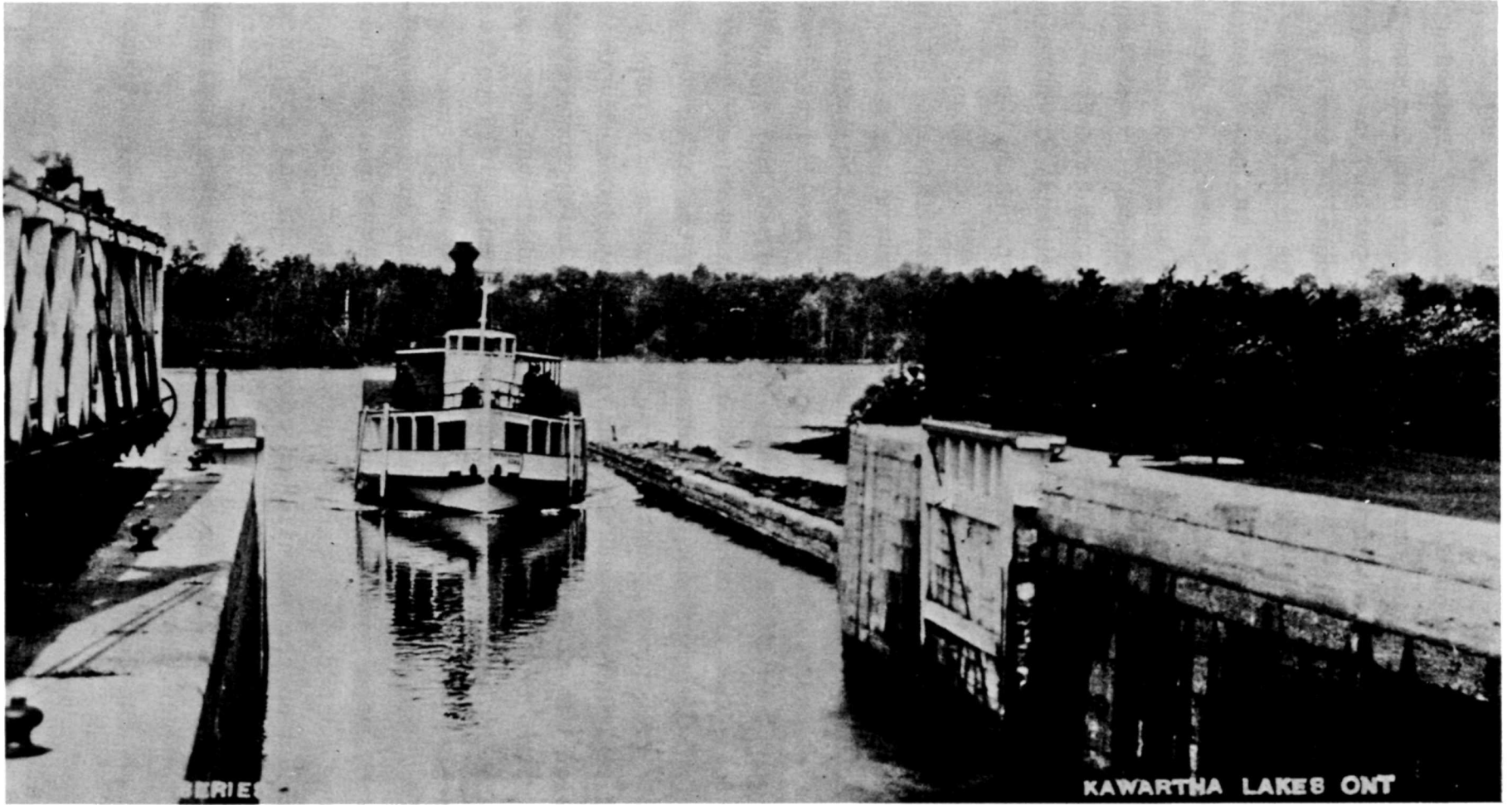
The first steamboats to ply the waters of the Kawartha-Otonabee sector were intended primarily as cargo carriers linking Peterborough to the south shore of Rice Lake and the road leading to Lake Ontario. The Pemedash inaugurated steamer traffic in 1832, running between Harwood and Peterborough and stopping at smaller centres on Rice Lake as well. In the decades which followed boats were launched throughout the system and by the 1880s a network of shipping fleets criss-crossed the inland lakes.

While there were dozens of steamboats owned and operated by private individuals, three companies eventually came to dominate boating in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector. On Rice Lake a Peterborough brewer and businessman, Henry Calcutt, ran a fleet of boats which travelled between Peterborough, Gores Landing and Harwood. Calcutt purchased his first steamer in 1871 and soon he owned a resort hotel in Rice Lake and was running day excursions and moonlight cruises. His boats were the primary link between the lake and Peterborough, carrying farmers' produce, hardware and lumber as well as passengers. Along the shores of the Otonabee, wharves were built where local farmers could deposit their grains and vegetables to be shipped on to market. On the central Kawarthas the logging entrepreneur Mossom Boyd formed his Trent Valley Navigation Company in 1883 to run a fleet of passenger and freight steamers on Sturgeon, Pigeon and Buckhorn Lakes. And on Stony Lake the enterprising Young family of Young's Point bought a steamer in 1871 which they parlayed into the Stony Lake Navigation Company, the most durable of the steamship lines (see Figure 21).

Steamboating is associated with the increased recreational use of the Kawartha-Otonabee sector. Toward the end of the last century summer cottages were spreading along the lake shores and onto the many islands which dotted the lakes. The steamboat companies contributed to this explosion through their advertising and by providing cottagers with access to once out-of-the-way places. Initially the railway complemented steamboat travel. The railway reached Lakefield in 1870 and with the completion of the lock at Young's Point in 1872 travellers could transfer from the train to the boat at Lakefield and tour Stony Lake, stopping at the important towns and cottages if requested.

Steamboats serviced the resort hotels of the Kawartha-

- 21 The steamer Ogemah II enters the lock at Buckhorn in 1905. (Original photograph owned by Frank Cody, Buckhorn.)



Otonabee region as well as the cottages. Indeed, the resorts would have been impossible if it were not for the regular steamship runs which brought their patrons and supplies. The oldest of the hotels was the Mount Julian on Stony Lake. The Mount Julian predates the tourist boom; it may have been catering to logging men as early as the 1850s.² At any rate, it had become a summer resort by the 1870s. The proliferation of resorts really occurred in the 1890s. That decade saw hotels open at Viamede, Crowes Landing (Victoria House), Bridgenorth (Chemong Park Hotel), Gannon's Narrows (Oak Orchard) and Buckhorn (Windsor House). Eventually every town boasted at least one hotel catering to tourists.³ (see Figures 22 to 24).

Aside from regular passenger traffic the steamboats carried special excursion parties for a day's outing at one of the popular recreation spots around the lakes. In Rice Lake excursions from Peterborough travelled to Idyl Wild Point and Jubilee Point. In Stony Lake the excursions might visit Viamede or Juniper Island. Passengers would disembark with their picnic lunches and spend the afternoon swimming, playing games, dancing or just admiring the view before returning home at the end of the day. One favourite excursion was to take the day-long boat trip from Peterborough around to Lindsay, returning by rail in the evening. Another was the annual cruise from Lakefield to the Bobcaygeon Fair.

Not all the steamers were passenger boats, of course. Many were workboats and tugs of various shapes and sizes. The most common cargo was wood, either logs which had to be towed to the sawmill or cordwood which was cut around the northern lakes and scowed to Peterborough for winter fuel. Even the passenger steamers did some heavy towing when they were not busy with tourists.

The commercial steamboat was rendered extinct by a

number of factors. As roads were built around the shores of the lakes, cottages and hotels became accessible by car and vacationers no longer used boats to ferry themselves and their supplies. Similarly, storeowners and farmers found it cheaper to ship their goods by land. Roads were also used by logging companies to bring out their wood so that boats were no longer needed to tow booms. At the same time more and more people could afford their own small pleasure craft and the pattern of recreational activity became more personal and less oriented to large excursions.

Steamboats disappeared from different parts of the Kawartha-Otonabee area at different times. On Rice Lake and the Otonabee River Henry Calcutt retired from the business in 1906 but the Harris family of Gores Landing continued to operate boats. The Geneva made a daily run from Gores Landing, leaving early enough in the morning to reach Peterborough before noon. In the afternoon it would make the return trip.⁴ The Geneva was Rice Lake's last steamer. It ceased operating in 1923. In the central Kawartha Lakes the Trent Valley Navigation Company sold its boats about 1910 but again an independent operator continued to run a boat. This time the operator was Captain Charles Gray of Sturgeon Point in Sturgeon Lake. His boat, the Lintonia, was the last steamer on the lakes, retiring after the season of 1931. On Stony Lake the Young's outlasted all their competitors. The flagship of their fleet, the Stony Lake, continued in service right through the depression but finally, in 1944, it too had to be retired.

Men for All Seasons

The increase in summer residency and tourist activity provided a livelihood for many of the permanent residents in the small towns around the Kawartha Lakes. Vacationers who

- 22 The original Windsor House hotel in Buckhorn as it looked in 1900. (Original photograph owned by Frank Cody, Buckhorn.)



- 23 The Windsor House, later the Cody Inn, in 1916.
(Original photograph owned by Frank Cody, Buckhorn.)



24 The Buckhorn Lodge, c. 1906. (Original photograph owned by Frank Cody, Buckhorn.)



612 DAS SERIES Y EASTWOODS

came to visit the area were attracted mainly by the fishing (see Figure 25). Lakes were teeming with bass and muskellunge and in the 1930s the Ontario government added stocks of pickerel. Being strangers to the local waters the vacationers needed an escort so every hotel furnished their guests with fishing guides. These men would call for their parties early in the morning, guide them through the best fishing spots all day and deposit them back at the hotels in the evening. The highlight of a day's fishing was the "shore dinner" of bacon, eggs, potatoes, onions, fresh fish and pie cooked over an open fire by the guide on some secluded promontory (see Figure 26). Jack Fulton, a guide at Buckhorn, recalls when noontime saw a pillar of white smoke climbing lazily from every point of land on Buckhorn Lake.⁵

Guides worked out of Bobcaygeon, Buckhorn, Burleigh Falls, Crowes Landing and McCrackens Landing. Most of the male members of the Metis community at Burleigh Falls were guides and at Buckhorn a group of families from the Curve Lake Indian reserve camped behind the Buckhorn Lodge for the duration of the fishing season while the men went guiding. It may be estimated that in the first three decades of this century well over one hundred men made their summer living as fishing guides in the eastern Kawartha Lakes. In the 1920s in Bobcaygeon alone there were about fifty guides regularly employed.⁶

Guiding was, of course, a seasonal occupation. In the fall the guides found other ways to make a living. Some practised trades, others left home to work in larger centres, but apparently most found jobs in the logging camps north of the lakes. Work in the shanties stretched from October to spring breakup when the men returned home to prepare for another summer's fishing. This cycle of guiding in the summer and logging in the winter, with

perhaps some trapping in the spring and fall, was the pattern of employment favoured by many of the local residents.

Along with new opportunities provided by increased tourist activity, the proliferation of cottagers around the lakes at the turn of the century gave additional employment to local residents in a variety of ways. Electricity did not reach much of the region until the 1930s and so there was no refrigeration. Each cottage had an icehouse and local people were engaged to fill the house during the winter. Parties of men armed with special saws cut the ice in square blocks on the lakes in mid-winter and hauled it by sleigh to the cottages where it was stacked in the icehouses. Similarly blocks were cut for the hotels and for general stores in the lakeshore towns. Another job was cutting firewood and, for a fee, piling it at the cottages for use in the spring.⁷

During the summer months the cottage population provided a ready market for a host of vendors who paddled along the lakeshore hawking their wares. For the fishermen, baitmen arrived in the early morning with freshly caught minnows. Local farmers sold fresh produce, eggs and butter. Native and Metis women from Burleigh Falls and Curve Lake brought woven baskets and boxes and on Stony Lake there was even a milkman who made his deliveries by boat, the bottles of milk kept fresh in a washtub of ice in the bow.⁸

The result of all this activity was a society characterized by a great deal of interaction and interdependence. Seasonal residents relied on the local people for a variety of goods and services and in turn provided local residents with at least a portion of their livelihood. It was possible for local people to earn an independent living by following a seasonal pattern of employment.

By the middle years of the century this seasonal

- 25 A group of American tourists in Buckhorn in 1901. The three men on the left in the rear are local fishing guides. (Original photograph owned by Frank Cody, Buckhorn.)



- 26 Two fishing guides cooking a shore dinner in Stony Lake, c. 1930. (Original photograph owned by Clarence McIlmoyle.)



economy had all but disappeared. As people began to purchase their own boats they did not need fishing guides. The pattern of recreational activity changed. Facilities now included golf, swimming, tennis and other activities and vacationers no longer spent the entire day on the lake fishing. Guides found it difficult to find work in the summer and their numbers declined dramatically. In Bobcaygeon in 1979 four guides were employed; at Burleigh Falls a couple; at Crowes Landing, the same. Since logging has long ceased to provide winter employment for local residents it is now impossible for anyone to make a living in the manner of the traditional fishing guides. Cottage life changed as well. Improved roads provided easier access to goods and services once delivered by water. More important was the arrival of electricity. With refrigeration, ice was no longer a necessity and fresh foods could be kept longer. Cottagers no longer relied on the labour of local residents. In a subtle sense the fabric of social relationships came unwound.

The Canoemaking Industry

Given the importance of recreation in the history of the Kawartha-Otonabee sector it is not surprising to find that a water-related industry like canoemaking flourished there. It is generally conceded that the wood plank canoe was first developed in the Peterborough-Lakefield area. Under its generic name, the Peterborough canoe, it gained worldwide fame and distribution. Though the Peterborough Canoe Company has become synonymous with the industry in the region, there were actually three major companies which developed variants on the plank and rib canoe and several smaller manufacturers who shared in the local market.

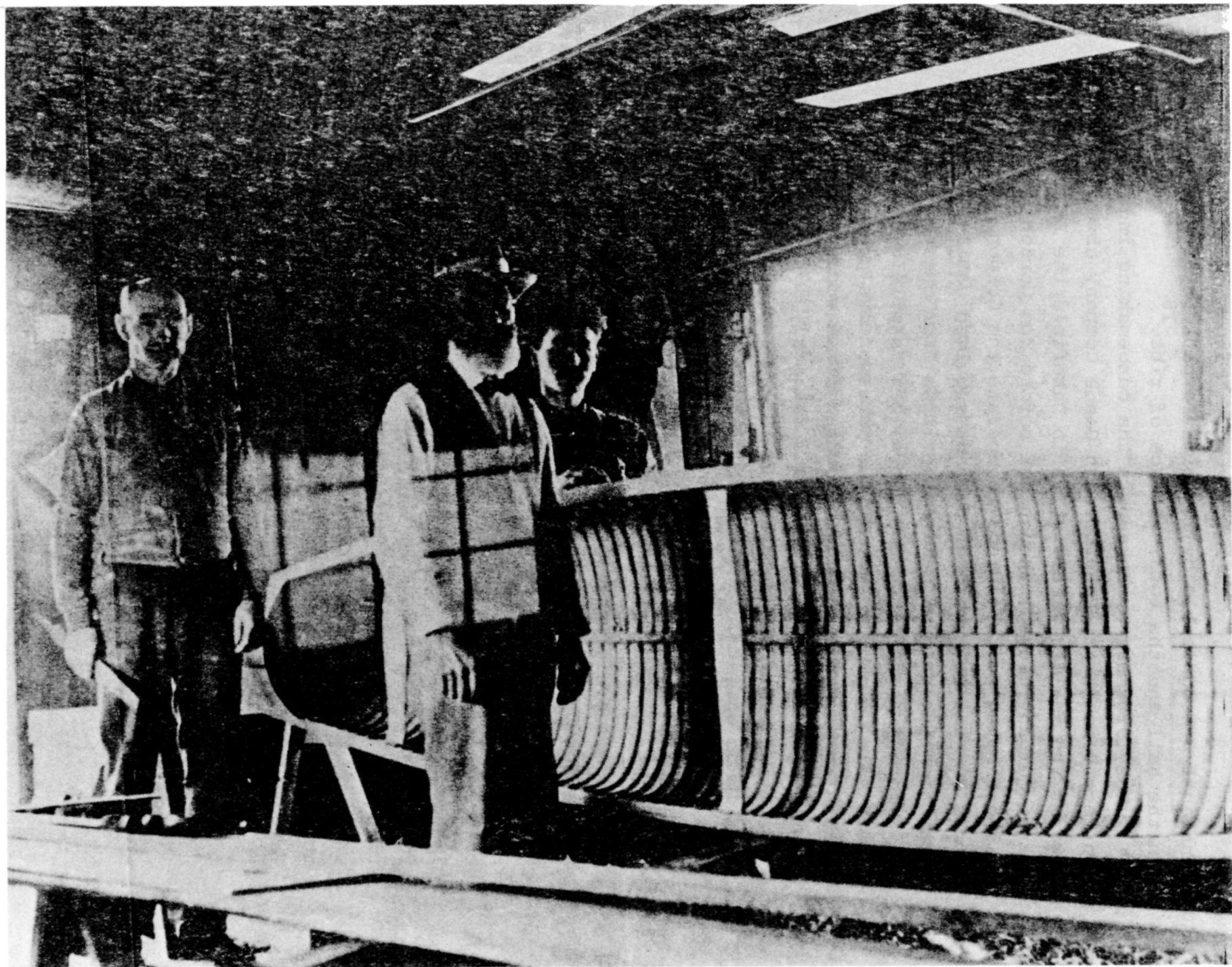
Two men are credited with being the originators of

the board canoe. John Stephenson was a planing mill operator in Peterborough who turned his hand to canoemaking and was involved in the formation of the Ontario Canoe Company, a firm which became eventually the Peterborough Canoe Company. Stephenson's friend and rival was Tom Gordon, a Lakefield boat builder who founded the Lakefield Canoe Company (see Figure 27). One or other, or both, of these men built the first plank and rib canoe in the 1850s. By the next decade the canoes were being manufactured for sale and an industry was born.⁹

Wood canoes were made either of wide planks, usually basswood, or narrow strips, usually cedar. The hulls took shape on a mould which resembled an overturned canoe. Ribs were steamed until they were flexible, then bent over the mould and fixed to the gunwales. Once the entire hull had been ribbed, the precut planks were applied, running the length of the mould. Small nails were driven through the planks and ribs and when the hull was removed from the mould the nails were bent over, or clenched, on the inside. After that the bow and stern posts, keelson, thwarts and seats were added and after a coat of varnish the canoe was ready for use.

Lighter than a dugout and more durable than birchbark, the wood plank canoe was sold the world over and won several prizes for its manufacturers. A third manufacturer who developed his own variant on the familiar styles was Daniel Herald of Gores Landing on Rice Lake. In the 1860s Herald was co-founder of a company which became the Rice Lake Canoe Company. After his death his sons managed the company successfully for several decades until it closed in the 1960s or 1970s. Herald's innovation was to conceive a double-skinned, plank canoe. On the inside the planks ran across the hull while on the outside a second set of boards ran lengthwise. Between the two layers Herald placed a sheet of cotton treated with white lead. The canoe was

- 27 Thomas Gordon (in the centre), a Lakefield canoe-maker, c. 1903. (Original photograph owned by Donald Cameron, Peterborough.)



instantly recognizable by its bizarre pattern of nailheads on the hull and the total absence of ribs.¹⁰

The 1920s saw a shakeup in the canoemaking industry. In Peterborough the Peterborough Canoe Company absorbed two of its smaller rivals while in Lakefield the Lakefield Canoe Company closed, though not before Tom Gordon's son Gilbert moved to Bobcaygeon to operate the Gordon Boat Works.¹¹ The Peterborough company survived until 1962 when high labour costs and competition from cheaper materials forced it to close its doors. In Lakefield the Lakefield Boat Company rose from the ashes of its predecessor during World War II and manufactured first wooden, then fibreglass boats and canoes until the early 1960s. At that time the factory was purchased by Rilco Industries which kept it in operation until 1966.¹²

Houseboating

Another commercial enterprise which combines transportation and recreation in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector is the houseboat rental business. As land available for recreational purposes became scarce and increasingly expensive, the houseboat appeared to be an idea whose time had come. The pioneer in houseboat rental was Jim Egan. In the late 1960s he had four of the craft built and launched an experimental operation near Gores Landing. During the 1970s the business grew until by the end of the decade Egan was managing a fleet of thirty houseboats from his headquarters in Pigeon Lake, the largest rental operation in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector.¹³

Conclusion

Since its completion in 1904 the Kawartha-Otonabee sector of the Trent-Severn Waterway has served two purposes. First of all it has provided a water corridor which opened the Kawartha Lakes area to through navigation, both recreational and commercial. Secondly, it provided a water control system which allowed safe navigation while at the same time prevented flooding around the lakes and down the Otonabee River. The value of the water control function has never been questioned but after the Second World War the value of the Waterway as a navigational corridor was very much in doubt. There was no longer any significant commercial use of the Waterway. Resource exploitation had ended; freight carrying was done by road and rail; recreational boating was minimal. Then, during the latter part of the 1950s, an increase began in the use of small pleasure boats and in recreational activity generally. Rapidly the Waterway in the Kawartha-Otonabee sector became a busy thoroughfare and the federal government embarked on a program of reconstruction and repair to bring the structures up to adequate standards. Annual increases in the amount of boat traffic continue to the present and the Trent-Severn Waterway is now one of the major recreational and tourist areas in Ontario.

Part 2 Doing Oral History

Project Methodology

The preceding historical narrative was based primarily on information gained from a series of interviews done with longtime residents of the Kawartha-Otonabee sector of the Trent-Severn Waterway. This information may be better understood if the method used to conduct these interviews is clearly stated.

After the subject area is determined, the initial step of any oral history project is to identify the people with whom it would be worthwhile to talk. In the case of the Trent-Severn project an obvious starting point was the group of men who had worked for the Waterway for many years. This included lockmasters, maintenance men, engineers, contractors and supervisory personnel. Many of these men had retired; others continued to be employed by the Waterway. From these men further contacts were made with individuals who had some connection with the history of the Waterway. Tourism is an important activity in the region so the oldest resort hotels were identified and contacted. Major commercial and industrial activities, such as logging, mining and milling, were also identified and individuals with a knowledge of their history sought out. Finally it was found useful simply to visit the smaller towns and villages in the subject area and ask after older members of the community who had had experience making a living in water-related activities.

Once a list of possible interview subjects was prepared, the individuals were contacted, the project was explained

to them and a pre-interview was conducted. The pre-interview is a short meeting aimed at discovering more precisely what information the interviewee possesses and whether a more formal interview would be productive. The pre-interview also familiarizes the interviewee with the type of questions he or she is likely to be asked. The pre-interview was followed by a period of research in the written sources relevant to the experiences of each interviewee so that useful questions could be framed.

The actual interviews were carried out using a Sony TC-105 portable reel to reel taperecorder and a Sony ECM-150 microphone. It was the opinion of technical advisors that, while bulkier and perhaps more intimidating, the reel to reel machine still produces tapes with greater longevity than the cassette model. The interviews lasted anywhere from thirty minutes to 1¼ hours. The conversations proceeded by questions and answers. As much as possible questions related to a biography of the interviewee. A permission form was signed by the interviewees waiving any objection to the reproduction of part or all of the taped conversation.

Following the interviews a written index was prepared for each one so that researchers can discover what subject is being discussed at any point on the tape. As well a general summary of the subject areas covered during the interview was prepared, along with a biography of each interviewee. Each interview was then professionally transcribed. Both the transcript and the index were keyed for easy reference back and forth between tape and text. All these steps were taken to make the interviews as accessible as possible to researchers.

Some Words of Warning

The procedure for carrying out oral history interviews is a straightforward one. Success or failure depends rather on how well the procedure is carried out. It may be useful to make a few recommendations based on experience gained during the first phase of the Trent-Severn Waterway oral history project.

Oral history is no occupation for the temperamentally impatient. It is a time-consuming and often frustrating enterprise. Many kilometres are travelled in pursuit of false leads. Crucial informants prove inarticulate or draw complete memory blanks. Interviews which took days to arrange are forgotten about or the interviewee is stricken with influenza at the appointed hour. All of these disappointments, and more, are going to be met with, and the oral historian must not be discouraged by them.

Like boy scouts and ducal families, oral historians should have a motto and that motto should read: Be prepared. Very little is gained from an interview unless the interviewer has a clear idea what he or she wants to know and what questions will best elicit the information. This does not mean that the answers to questions should be known before they are asked, but almost. One is reminded of the oral historian who made so many visits to her informant's home in preparing for the interview that when she finally arrived with the taperecorder he had died. Overzealousness obviously has its own pitfalls. Nevertheless, extensive preparation is imperative.

The best preparation for an interview is the pre-interview. If long distances make more than a single encounter impossible then a phone call must suffice. Otherwise, a personal meeting is extremely useful. From the interviewer's point of view the pre-interview answers the crucial questions - whether the subject has anything to say and what exactly it is. The middle of an interview is no time to discover an entirely new aspect to the informant's career about which the interviewer had no inkling. From the interviewee's point of view the pre-interview establishes exactly what the purpose of the project is and what kinds of questions are going to be asked. Most people do not believe their lives have been historically significant. They are surprised and confused when asked to talk about themselves. The pre-interview should be used to dispel the confusion and make them comfortable with the notion of themselves as an interesting historical source.

After the pre-interview the historian should go away and bone up on the subjects which will be covered in the interview. This is why pre-interviews conducted immediately before the main interview are almost useless. Individuals, no matter how polite, will usually not be interested in enduring several interviews. The interviewer should be prepared the first time. However, the amount of information in the written sources may be limited. After all, the point of the project is to gather information unavailable anywhere else. The best background for interviews may well turn out to be other interviews done previously. And later interviews may uncover subjects which should have been touched on, but were not, earlier in the project. In this case return visits become necessary.

Experience indicates that the formal interview should be kept to about an hour. In that length of time most people get tired of talking about themselves. Or worse,

they do not. If there is still material to cover then return for a second visit.

The elderly are commonly believed to be extremely garrulous but experience indicates the reverse. Most people are shy or reluctant and need encouragement before they will give any but the most perfunctory replies to questions. Here again the pre-interview is crucial in breaking down this reserve. One useful practice is to suggest that the individual draw up some notes before the interview. This stimulates the memory and provides reference points during the interview.

The interview should be clearly focussed on a particular subject. Little hard information is obtained when the individual is allowed to ramble. Focus is the interviewer's responsibility and once again is possible only through preparation. It is sometimes necessary to forsake accuracy in favour of a coherent conversation. A case in point is dates. Few informants have a good memory for dates and even when they seem to be, the dates often turn out to be wrong. A constant harping on exact dates may confuse and frustrate certain individuals until they retreat into a sullen silence. They feel they are being made to look stupid. A more useful practice is to establish beforehand certain reference points - for example, the year of the informant's marriage or a world war - and then to relate other events to the reference points.

Remember that the taped interview is not the final word on any subject. If the interviewer detects a mistake he or she may want to correct it for the record but the interviewer should never be drawn into an argument with an informant.

Its practitioners learn quickly that, when doing oral history, psychology is as important as "book larnin'". Often strictly historical values must be surrendered

briefly in order to preserve the good will of the informant. To coin an analogy, oral history is a kind of fishing expedition. In an interview situation, the informant is hooked but if he is not played skilfully he will get away.

Assessing the Results

It seems appropriate to conclude by pointing out some of the strengths and weaknesses of the material gathered during the first phase of the Trent-Severn Waterway oral history project.

It is a commonplace that oral history produces unreliable information which cannot be trusted unless doublechecked. This seems an insult to informants but it is simply a recognition of the frailty of memory. Written documents and accounts enjoy no inherent superiority. It is just that they were usually recorded a lot closer to the time of the actual event than the recollections of informants interviewed several years, if not generations, later. Obviously, then, the first thing to say about the usefulness of the material gathered during the project is that the interviews should not be treated as if everything said during them is completely accurate.

Accuracy can be checked both internally and externally. Matters of fact can be compared to the written record and to information contained in other interviews. For this purpose an attempt was made to interview more than a single informant about the major themes and subjects of interest to the project. If there is no other standard of accuracy an informant may be checked internally by evaluating the accuracy of other information in the interview which is verifiable.

In their own lives people do not always ask the questions to which historians would like answers. For

instance, a woman who regularly spent her summers at a cottage on Stony Lake in the early years of the century was oblivious to the type and amount of commercial traffic plying the Waterway at that time. This only means that individual interviews cannot answer all the questions. Once again, several interviews were done in an attempt to gather information about all aspects of life in a particular place at a particular time.

It is worth noting that male informants provided more useful information than female ones. This is due to the nature of the themes being explored. Generally, the project was interested in the recreational, commercial, industrial and structural development of a particular segment of the Waterway. Women informants seem to have paid little attention to these matters. They were more involved with domestic activities. Another project focussing on other subjects would undoubtedly find women informants just as useful as males.

The interviews which were gathered do not provide a complete history of the Waterway in this century. Almost all the Waterway employees interviewed began their employment following World War II. People from an earlier period simply are no longer living. The information these men provided naturally deals with the period since the War. Information about the 1920s and 1930s is sketchy. Happily this is not true of water-related activities, such as logging and guiding. In these cases informants go back almost to the turn of the century.

Despite these qualifications the information gathered in the interviews is invaluable simply because much of it exists in no other form. To take just one example, the story of the nepheline mine and the tug Wauketa has not been written down. It exists only in the memories of people who were directly involved in the enterprise, some

of whom were interviewed during the project. This points up another value of oral history, it provides access to people and experiences which are not normally included in the written record. Tug boat captains, shantymen, lockmasters, these are not individuals whose experiences are generally included in annual reports, censuses, company records and so on.

Another virtue of oral history is that the results can be used in various ways. The interviews contain not only matters of fact but also they provide colourful anecdote and convey mood. And, of course, the tapes themselves can be used as sound-track material for movies and slide shows.

In summary the material gathered in the interviews is original, diverse and colourful. Supplemented by other sources where necessary for purposes of accuracy, the interviews provide a unique contribution to the history of the Trent-Severn Waterway.

Endnotes

Introduction

- 1 Donald Smith, "Who Are The Mississauga?" Ontario History Vol. LXVII, No. 4 (1976), p.217.

Operating the Waterway

- 1 Trent-Severn Waterway Office, Peterborough, (hereafter referred to as TSWO) Annual Report of Superintending Engineer (hereafter referred to as TSWO Annual Report) 1920-1921, p.35.
- 2 Interview with James McGrath, Peterborough, 26 July 1979.
- 3 Interview with Len Begg, Peterborough, 21 August 1979.
- 4 Interviews with Donald Farmer, Ottawa, 10 August 1979, and Len Begg.
- 5 Donald Farmer interview.
- 6 Len Begg interview.
- 7 Interviews with Sam Wawrykow, Peterborough, 2 August 1979, and Roy Richardson, Keene, 27 August 1979.
- 8 Interviews with Fred James, Peterborough, 21 August 1979, and Fred Tobey, Peterborough, 11 Oct. 1979.
- 9 Len Begg interview.
- 10 Len Begg interview.
- 11 Donald Farmer interview.
- 12 Interview with George Hogarth, Lakefield, 9 Oct. 1979
- 13 Interview with George Hawkins, Warsaw, 25 Sept. 1979.
- 14 George Hawkins interview.

- 15 Interview with Victor Gauthier, Peterborough, 24 Oct. 1979.
- 16 TSWO Annual Report 1913-1914, p.14.
- 17 Len Begg interview.
- 18 Interview with Alf Featherstone, Peterborough, 13 August 1979.

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- 1 Howard Pammett, "A Survey of Kawartha Lumbering," unpublished paper, n.d., p.10.
- 2 Interviews with Stan Nichols, Bobcaygeon, 21 August 1979, Ernie Brown, Burleigh Falls, 29 August 1979, and Jack Fulton, Buckhorn, 11 Sept. 1979.
- 3 Interviews with Stella Grier, Ottawa, 20 July 1979, and Eva Ianson, Viamede, 12 July 1979.
- 4 Pammett, op.cit., p. 37 and interview with V. J. LaPlante, Peterborough, 28 August 1979.
- 5 Interview with Robert Dixon, Buckhorn, 18 Sept. 1979.
- 6 Interview with Earl Blewett, Bridgenorth, 25 Sept. 1979, and Karl Blewett, Bridgenorth, 26 Sept. 1979.
- 7 V. J. LaPlante interview.
- 8 Interview with Clarence McIlmoyle, Crowes Landing, 12 Sept. 1979.
- 9 Interview with Earl Blewett.
- 10 Interviews with Jack Fulton, Stan Nichols and Austin McCue, Curve Lake, 25 Oct. 1979.
- 11 Interview with Ray Pomeroy, 26 Sept. 1979.
- 12 Ray Pomeroy interview.
- 13 H. V. Nelles, The Politics of Development (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), p.216.
- 14 D. B. Campbell, "The Electric Utilities Companies of the Trent-Kawartha Watershed," Trent University, Peterborough, p.8.

- 15 William Beahen, Historic Structures of the Trent-Severn Waterway, Manuscript Report Series No. 283 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1978), pp. 61, 63.
- 16 Ibid., p.48.
- 17 Ibid., p.134.
- 18 Ibid., p.64.
- 19 Ibid., p.66.
- 20 Interview with Eric Holmes, Lakefield, 29 August 1979.
- 21 Interview with Clarence McIlmoyle.
- 22 Richard Tatley, Steamboating on the Trent-Severn (Belleville: Mika Publishing, 1978), p.86.

Transportation and Recreation

- 1 Ibid.
- 2 Interview with Donald Fowler, Mount Julian, 12 July 1979.
- 3 Tatley, op. cit.
- 4 Interview with Ray Pomeroy.
- 5 Interview with Jack Fulton.
- 6 Interview with Stan Nichols.
- 7 Interview with Ernie Brown.
- 8 Interview with George Hawkins.
- 9 Interview with Donald Cameron, Peterborough, 10 Oct. 1979.
- 10 Interview with Donald Cameron.
- 11 Interview with Edward Gordon, Bobcaygeon, 20 Sept. 1979.
- 12 Karl Blewett interview.
- 13 Ray Pomeroy interview.

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This report was based primarily on information contained in forty-three interviews conducted in 1979. Tapes and transcripts of the interviews with the following individuals are held by the History section of Parks Canada, Ontario Region Office. Their names are listed here in the order in which they were interviewed.

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Donald Fowler of Mount Julian
Stella Grier of Ottawa
Gladys and Robert Fulton of Buckhorn
James McGrath of Peterborough
Walter Zirotf of Lakefield
Sam Wawrykow of Peterborough
Hort Nichols of Bobcaygeon
Donald Farmer of Ottawa
Alf Featherstone of Peterborough
Howard Arscott of Fenelon Falls
Len Begg of Peterborough
Stan Nichols of Bobcaygeon
Roy Richardson of Keene
Harry Barrett of Peterborough
V. J. LaPlante of Peterborough
Ernie Brown of Burleigh Falls
Eric Holmes of Lakefield
Jack Fulton of Buckhorn
Russell Graham of Peterborough
Clarence McIlmoyle of Crowes Landing

Timothy Crough of Peterborough
Ray Parberry of Lakefield
Edward Gordon of Bobcaygeon
Roy Whetung of Crowes Landing
Fred James of Peterborough
Robert Dixon of Buckhorn
George Hawkins of Warsaw
Earl Blewett of Bridgenorth
Ray Pomeroy of Gores Landing
Karl Blewett of Bridgenorth
Frances Rose of Peterborough
George Hogarth of Lakefield
Donald Cameron of Peterborough
Max Coones of Peterborough
Fred Tobey of Peterborough
Tom Hatton of Lakefield
Victor Gauthier of Peterborough
William Thibadeau of Bobcaygeon
Hilliard Crowe of Lakefield
Austin McCue of Curve Lake
Harry Morgan of Norwood

The following individuals and companies also loaned photographs: Harry van Oudenaren of Bobcaygeon, Eric Holmes, Frank Cody of Buckhorn, Howard Steen of Woodview, Fred Tobey, Donald Cameron, Clarence McIlmoyle, Howard Arscott, and the Peterborough Lumber Company. The files at the Trent-Severn Waterway Office in Peterborough were especially useful for research, most importantly the annual reports of the superintending engineers. Len Begg and Chris Rutledge were very helpful in assisting the researcher there.

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Appendix B. Photographs Submitted

Portraits

- 1 Eva Ianson, Viamede.
- 2 Donald Fowler, Mount Julian.
- 3 Stella Grier, Ottawa.
- 4 Gladys Fulton, Buckhorn.
- 5 Robert Fulton, Buckhorn.
- 6 James McGrath, Peterborough.
- 7 Walter Ziroff, Lakefield.
- 8 Sam Wawrykow, Peterborough.
- 9 Hort Nichols, Bobcaygeon.
- 10 Donald Farmer, Kanata.
- 11 Alf Featherstone, Peterborough.
- 12 Howard Arscott, Fenelon Falls.
- 13 Len Begg, Peterborough.
- 14 Stan Nichols, Bobcaygeon.
- 15 Roy Richardson, Keene.
- 16 Harry Barrett, Peterborough.
- 17 V. J. LaPlante, Peterborough.
- 18 Ernie Brown, Burleigh Falls.
- 19 Eric Holmes, Lakefield.
- 20 Jack Fulton, Buckhorn.
- 21 Russell Graham, Lakefield.
- 22 Clarence McIlmoyle, Crowes Landing.
- 23 Tim Crough, Peterborough.
- 24 Ray Parberry, Lakefield.

- 25 Ted Gordon, Bobcaygeon.
- 26 Roy Whetung, Crowes Landing.
- 27 Fred James, Peterborough.
- 28 Robert Dixon, Buckhorn.
- 29 George Hawkins, Warsaw.
- 30 Earl Blewett, Bridgenorth.
- 31 Ray Pomeroy, Gores Landing.
- 32 Karl Blewett, Bridgenorth.
- 33 Frances Rose, Peterborough.
- 34 George Hogarth, Lakefield.
- 35 Donald Cameron, Peterborough.
- 36 Max Coones, Peterborough.
- 37 Fred Tobey, Peterborough.
- 38 Tom Hatton, Lakefield.
- 39 Victor Gauthier, Peterborough.
- 40 William Thibadeau, Bobcaygeon.
- 41 Hilliard Crowe, Lakefield.
- 42 Austin McCue, Curve Lake.
- 43 Harry Morgan, Norwood.

Historic Photographs

- 1 Cutting logs on Grand Island, Balsam Lake, c. 1900.
Howard Arscott, Fenelon Falls.
- 2 Islamorado, a pleasure yacht. Howard Steen, Woodview.
- 3 Tug Wauketa, c. 1940. Eric Holmes, Lakefield.
- 4 Tug Wauketa taking on ore. Eric Holmes, Lakefield.
- 5 Sawmill. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 6 View of a logging camp in the 1930s. Peterborough
Lumber, Peterborough.
- 7 Interior of a dining hall at a logging camp, Peter-
borough Lumber, Peterborough.

- 8 Skidding logs with horses. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 9 At the skidway. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 10 A skidway. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 11 Clearing trails in the bush. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 12 A log jammer. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 13 Sleigh hauling logs. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 14 Icing roads in a logging camp. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 15 Packing snow for log hauling. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 16 Log jammers. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 17 Skidding logs with a tractor. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 18 Sleigh and tractor used for skidding logs. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 19 Driving logs downriver. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 20 Booming the logs. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 21 Lumber mill on Mississagua Lake, 1947. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 22 View of the mill. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 23 At work in a sawmill. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 24 Sharpening a bandsaw blade. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 25 Sharpening a saw blade. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 26 Sawing a log in a mill. Peterborough Lumber, Peterborough.
- 27 Portrait of early settlers, Crowes Landing. Clarence McIlmoyle, Crowes Landing.
- 28 Fishing guides making a shore dinner, Stony Lake. Clarence McIlmoyle, Crowes Landing.
- 29 Timber chute on Jack Creek. Andre Dorfman, Crowes Landing.

- 30 Timber dam at Hawk Lake, 1913. Fred Tobey, Peterborough.
- 31 Timber dam at Hawk Lake, 1913. Fred Tobey, Peterborough.
- 32 Camp at Hawk Lake, 1913. Fred Tobey, Peterborough.
- 33 Dredge Fenelon in drydock. Fred Tobey, Peterborough.
- 34 Lock gate under construction. Fred Tobey, Peterborough.
- 35 Assembling a lock gate. Fred Tobey, Peterborough.
- 36 Diver wearing equipment. Fred Tobey, Peterborough.
- 37 Gate lifter. Fred Tobey, Peterborough.
- 38 A view of Lakefield, 1903. Donald Cameron, Peterborough.
- 39 Tom Gordon, canoemaker. Donald Cameron, Peterborough.
- 40 Family portrait, Windsor Hotel, Buckhorn, 1904.
Frank Cody, Buckhorn.
- 41 Windsor House Hotel, 1900. Frank Cody, Buckhorn.
- 42 Windsor House Hotel, 1916. Frank Cody, Buckhorn.
- 43 Group of tourists in Buckhorn, 1906. Frank Cody,
Buckhorn.
- 44 Buckhorn Lodge, 1906. Frank Cody, Buckhorn.
- 45 View of waterfront at Buckhorn. Frank Cody, Buckhorn.
- 46 Logging cookhouse. Frank Cody, Buckhorn.
- 47 Wooden swing bridge at Buckhorn. Frank Cody, Buckhorn.
- 48 Wooden swing bridge at Buckhorn. Frank Cody, Buckhorn.
- 49 Steamboat Ogemah. Frank Cody, Buckhorn.
- 50 Bridge construction at Buckhorn, 1907. Frank Cody,
Buckhorn.
- 51 Dam and bridge at Buckhorn. Frank Cody, Buckhorn.

