



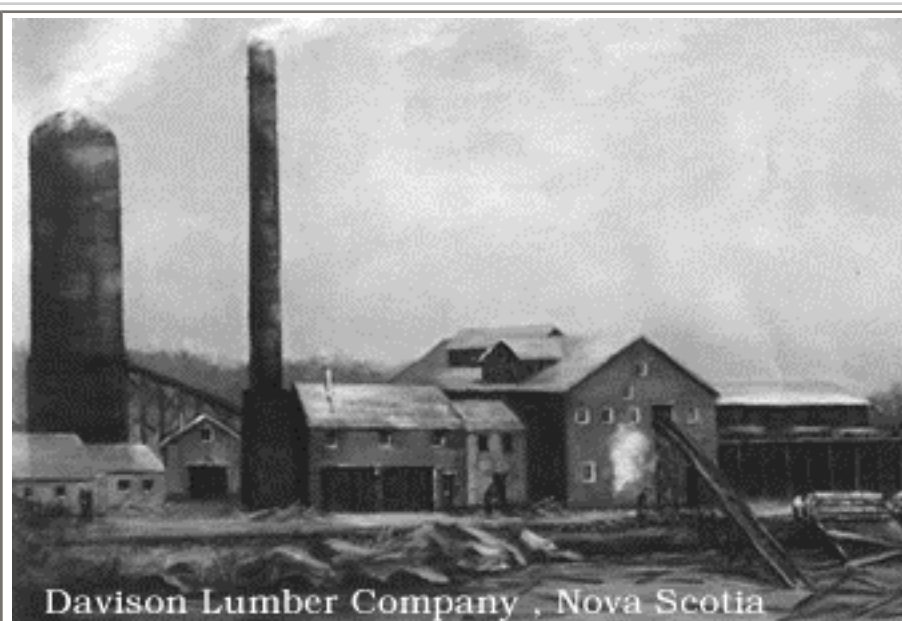
Davison Lumber Company

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The story of the Davison Lumber Company -by Philip Spencer

The following is a brief history of the Davison Lumber Company Mill of Hastings , Nova Scotia. This is a story close to my heart since my grandfather worked there as a locomotive engineer, machinist and finally master mechanic from 1905 until 1921 when the mill closed.

The Davison Lumber Company



(From a painting by Nola Mailman)

In 1902, Frank Davison and other family members sold the firm of E.D. Davison & Sons along with the woodlands and mill to the American Lumber Company which then changed its name to the Davison Lumber Company. The head office was in New York with a local head office near Bridgewater.

The Davison Lumber Company continued to operate the existing mill operation but within a short time had built it up to become the largest lumber mill operation east of Montreal until recent times. To move the wood to feed the mill as well as take the dressed lumber to a hungry market, several miles of new track were laid from the mill in Hastings to Springfield, N.S. , then connected to The Nova Scotia Central Railway which ran to Bridgewater and joined with the Halifax and Southwestern Railway. Eventually, the company obtained running rights on the entire Halifax and Southwestern line. In addition, the company laid more than 40 miles of track which wormed its way through 325,000 acres of company-owned woodland.

The company owned many conventional rod-type steam locomotives but also had 2 Shay locomotives with its unique gear-driven side shaft and vertical mounted steam pistons. These were more capable at pulling heavy loads up steep grades.

The presence of this large company caused the small community of Springfield to grow and 2 new communities were created. Hastings was named after the company president , J.M . Hastings and Crossburn named after J.W. Cross who was logging superintendent at the time.

By 1913, there were 45 houses built in Hastings which then had a warehouse, store, doctor's office with 2 hospital rooms, a 2 room schoolhouse handling 72 students by 2 teachers, a large 3-story cookhouse and a large clubhouse. The clubhouse had a bowling alley, 2 pool tables and a large dance hall which hosted weekly dances. In the winter of 1909, it was estimated that the company cookhouse served over 18,500 meals to the almost 500 men working out of several camps.

A company large enough to spawn 2 new communities and cause an existing one to grow, understandably did things in a big way. The sawmill was designed to saw 250,000 board-feet of lumber in a 10-hour shift. During WW1, the mill produced tongue and groove lumber at 300 feet per minute and surface planed lumber at 15,000 board-feet an hour. The 2 machines used in this work averaged 170,000 board-feet per 10 hour shift. The lath mill produced 50,000 laths per day.

The machines needed to run this mill were huge and numerous. The main boiler room had five 250 horsepower boilers . The 2 main saw engines were 600 and 700 horsepower. The largest of these had a flywheel 20 FEET in diameter with a 46 inch face running at 84 RPM.

Other steam engines used were a 300 HP (gang saw), 60HP (generator), 45 HP (furnace blower), 84 HP(planer-matcher), 30 HP(filing room) and 30 HP (machine shop). A large pump engine (HP unknown) could pump 2000 gallons per minute from a 12 inch intake pipe to the extensive sprinkler system.

The mill's smokestack was 140 feet tall and 8 feet in diameter. The water tank was 110 feet high and the waste wood burner was 120 feet high and 24 feet across with a water jacket around it to heat the water for the boilers and for the hot-pond in the winter.

One of the largest non-rail machines at the company was a Lombard Steam Log Hauler which was used briefly to take lumber to a water-powered mill at Alpena. This was a locomotive style engine that had caterpillar treads under the cab. In the winter of 1916-17, this single engine pulled more than 4 million board-feet of lumber on six sleds coupled in tandem 4 miles through the woods.

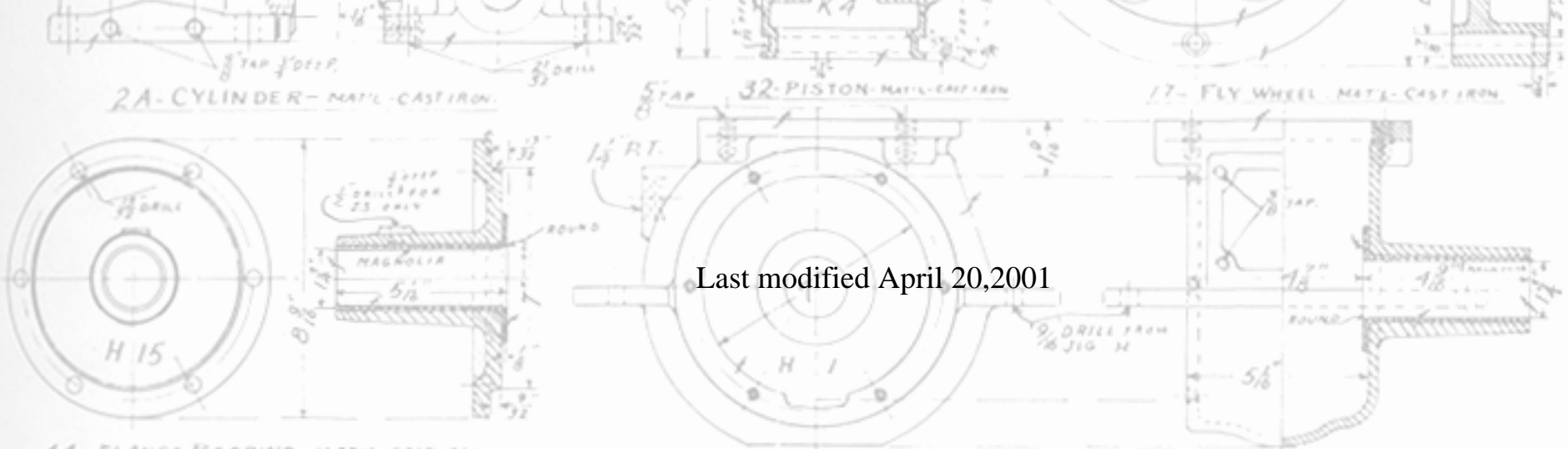
At the end of WW1, wood sales slowed down although 16 lumber camps were still producing lumber for the mills at Hastings and Bridgewater.

The mill had reduced production or was shut down at times over the next 3 years until finally, on July 12, 1921, and with 34 million feet of wood still stacked in 24 foot by 20 foot rows, the last whistle was blown, ending the operation of Nova Scotia's largest wood mill.

The engines were sold or scrapped, the tracks torn up and the usable mill machinery shipped away. The mill buildings all burned down in a suspicious fire in 1928.

Now , 80 years later, you would be hard pressed to find any trace of what was once a spectacular sight.

Last modified April 20, 2001



DETAIL OF 4 1/2 X 5 ENG K
& 5 1/8 X 5 1/2 ENG H MAT B.
LUNENBURG FDY CO LTD
LUNENBURG N.S.
DRAWN BY *DBG* Aug 12 18
CHECKED *DBY* 12 18
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