

St. George Lumbering History

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The lumbering industry began almost from the day that the first Loyalist settlers came ashore to found the settlement of St. George. It was on Nov. 10, 1783 that Peter Clinch led a band of soldier-settlers from Penobscot, Maine and landed at the mouth of the Magaguadavic River.

After a brief stay, they sailed on to Saint John to spend the winter. Peter Clinch returned in the early spring after receiving a grant of 700 acres from Governor Parr. Peter immediately built a sawmill on the eastern side of the river. Land was cleared and lumber was sawed for the new homes, including one that Peter built for himself on what we know today as School Street. He also donated lumber for a church constructed in 1790, which was used by several denominations. It is now the Presbyterian Kirk, one of the oldest churches in Canada still in use.

Several other members of that original group also turned to lumbering. In 1790, Moses Shaw built a sawmill near the site of the present pulp mill; he also had another at Lepreau. In 1824, Shaw advertised both mills for sale as he planned to erect a larger one on the Saint Croix River near Woodland, Maine.

James Troak, also part of the Clinch-led expedition, soon did a thriving business making wooden articles such as churns, cradles, wagon wheels, and barrels.

In 1790, Peter Clinch deeded land to Anthony Carpenter on the western side of the Magaguadavic where he built a sawmill.

The Gillmor Family had one of the longest and most successful associations with the lumbering industry in Charlotte County. Arthur Hill Gillmor had received large tracts of timberland from King George III and Arthur's son Daniel bought up more large tracts in both Charlotte and York counties. At the time of his death in 1866, his holdings amounted to more than 50,000 acres of timberland as well as dams and water-power rights along the Magaguadavic from its source to its outlet.

Daniel's four sons continued the business along with Francis Hibbard. They had a mill at the "Gully", where the St. George Pulp and Paper Mill still stands. A wooden sluiceway to the left of the mill carried the deals in a rush of water to the Basin, where river drivers directed them to a large wharf located just below the Hibbard property on South Street. Here they were loaded aboard vessels bound for England and the far corners of the world. Besides the sluiceway, teams of horses and oxen were used to haul the finished lumber from the Gully mill to the Red Store Wharf just below the Vaughn Connell farm.

The large Gillmor Company warehouse was located beside the road at the riverbank just below the O'Neill property, now owned by Miss Ella O'Brien. In those early days, the Magaguadavic had to be dredged every few years to accommodate the large vessels at low tide. Several of the original Gillmor Grants are still held by descendants of that family.

Another pioneer member of the lumber merchant group was Isaac W. Bradbury, who came to North America in 1760. He later moved to the Magaguadavic and made a fortune in lumbering. One of

the earliest photographs, taken about 1863, shows the framework of a Bradbury sluiceway. It carried the finished lumber under the lower bridge to a loading area and waiting ocean vessels.

Records show that a Bradbury ship, the barque “*Ada*”, loaded deals or logs from Knight's lumbering operations at New River. We also know that the tugboat “*Saint George*” captained by Joseph Bullock, was used to haul loaded vessels to the mouth of the Magaguadavic, a distance of about five miles. There the cargo would be transferred to larger ocean going ships.

Edwin Robert Armstrong, who came from the northern part of the province in the early 1800's, had a large lumbering operation on the Bonny River Road, which is now called Riverview Avenue. Logs were cut on his property and were sent to his sawmill on the site of the John Dewar mill of 1861. Mr. Armstrong erected one of the first two houses on this avenue, one of which became the property of Frank Trynor in 1923. Lumber from the Armstrong operation was also cut, sawed and sent down the Magaguadavic to Ludgate's Landing and from there to Churchill Gillmor's wharf for loading.

Some lumbermen began merchandising their products as well as shipping it overseas. Thomas Barry lived in St. George in the early 1800's and did a thriving business. His office was in a building near the wharf and from there he imported such things as earthenware, cotton, woolens, and shop-clothing. He also exported pine for masts of Royal Navy ships. Considerable correspondence written on Barry's letterhead survives, showing how Thomas conducted his affairs in the 1840's and 1850's. Some of these records were written by Major John S. Craig, a retired British Army officer who later became a boom-master for St. George lumbering operations. In that capacity he had to know the difference markings used by each lumberman to distinguish his logs - markings that were placed at the end of each log. Major Craig was one of twenty men and four boys employed by Thomas Barry, according to the 1871 census. That same record also informs us that Thomas Barry had a water-powered saw mill; that he had filed capital of \$3,000 and floating capital of \$8,000.

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