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The Great Northern Paper Company, Chapter 05: As It Was in the Beginning

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CHAPTER V

AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING

The report of a commission appointed in 1869 in accordance with the recommendation of Gov. Joshua L. Chamberlain contains this engaging description of the Penobscot River:

"The Penobscot is the only great fluviatile district in Maine which illustrates, in its actual configuration, the geographical idea of the river basin; appearing as a mere point at the mouth of the stream, thence interiorward expanding symmetrically on both sides of the central channel, presently branching into subordinate basins, themselves yet further breaking up into still smaller basins, located upon still smaller tributaries, until the whole takes on the similitude of a mighty tree, that from one trunk ramifies into innumerable branches, and from one grand aorta divaricates into numberless arteries and veins, by which, upon occasion, its entire volume of fluids is conducted to and poured into a common channel of circulation and discharge."

The Penobscot River, following its windings from source to mouth, is about 300 miles in length. Its basin holds one-fourth of the area of the State of Maine; is 160 miles long and 115 miles wide, extending from the St. John River watershed in the north to the Atlantic Ocean in the south, and clear across the State, from the valley of the St. Croix on the east to the Height of Land between Maine and Quebec in the west. Its most important "subordinate basin" is that of the West Branch, which flows from west to east, meeting the East Branch at Medway. All along the
valley of the West Branch lie the big lakes and ponds -- Penobscot Lake, Dole Pond, Long Pond, Loon Lake, Caucomgomoc Lake, Poland Pond, Umbazooskus Lake, Harrington Lake and Sourdnahunk Lake on the north; Lobster, Ragged, Caribou, Rainbow, Nahmakanta the Debsconeags and the Jo Mary Lakes on the south; and on both sides the complex of smaller ponds, lakes, brooks and streams that go to make up the "similitude of a mighty tree".

Twelve miles below Medway, the Mattawamkeag River flows in from the east at the town of the same name. Here the Penobscot turns south, and at Howland, thirty miles further down, the Piscataquis enters from the west. These waters together form the main river, a number of minor tributaries, the largest being the Passadumkeag and the Kenduskeag, entering between Howland and the sea.

The water power that made Bangor the lumber capital of the world is located in the last twenty miles above tidewater, where, near Old Town, the river divides into two channels, the westerly, called the Stillwater, re-entering at Orono. Here, between Old Town and Bangor, the "entire volume of fluids", in these two channels, drops a total of 90 feet, and it was here that there was the great concentration of mills previously described.

Back-tracking up the river from Old Town, there were a great many places where the small amounts of power necessary to run the early sawmills could be generated. However, in terms of present-day requirements, there was no substantial water power on the main river which could be economically developed until we come to the site of the Company's Roy V. Weldon station at
Mattaceunk Rips. The great power on the Penobscot is on the West Branch, and the West Branch has been Great Northern country since the turn of the century. It seems worth while, therefore, to take a little space to become familiar with some of the geography and history of the Penobscot, and of the West Branch in particular. A whole book could be written about the West Branch alone, but we can discuss here only superficially what it was like when the Company was founded, some of the things that had happened to make it that way, and some of the things that resulted from these events. At the same time, we will consider very briefly a few other pertinent aspects of the conditions of the times.

The area of the basin of the West Branch is approximately 2,012 square miles, almost all timberland and water surface. From its source to Medway, following the thread of the river, it is about 130 miles long, and in this distance drops a total of 1,174 feet. The greater part of this drop, 678 feet in a distance of about 70 miles, occurs between Chesuncook Lake and Medway; and of this, some 405 feet is presently harnessed to furnish power to the Great Northern Paper Company -- this in addition to 39 feet developed at the Roy V. Weldon station on the Main Penobscot.

When the lumbermen came to the West Branch, the features of the river itself which were important to them were the lakes, ponds and deadwaters on which logs could be landed, and the falls and rapids that made driving difficult. To these places they gave their own names, or adopted corruptions of the tongue-twisting Indian appellations. These names have been spelled in many ways. In the days of the early logging operations, Katahdin was "Ktaadn"; Debsconeag was "Katepskenegan"; and what is now plain Abol was "Aboljeckameguscook". In between, there have
been almost as many spellings as there were people who had occasion to write about these places. We use the ones that have come down to us.

The North and South Branches of the West Branch have their sources in the Height of Land, and it is approximately 28 miles from any of the headwaters to where these two branches unite near what has long been called the Pittston Farm. The course of the river, as it was in its natural state, was from this point marked by the deadwaters, falls and lakes -- Seboomook Deadwater, Seboomook Falls, Moosehorn Deadwater and Rips, the Fox Hole rips, Pine Stream Falls, Chesuncook Lake, Chesuncook falls, Ripogenus Lake, Ripogenus Falls, through the great gorge a mile long, with walls in places 75 feet high -- "Rappogenus" to the old-timers -- Ambejamackamus Falls, also known as Gullifer Pitch; the Horse Race, Sourdnahunk Deadwater, Sourdnahunk Falls, Abol Deadwater and Abol Falls. Down to this point, the deadwaters and the falls below them were given the same name. Below Abol, for some reason, the sequence was reversed. So then came Big and Little Pockwockamus Falls, Pockwockamus Deadwater, Debsconeag Falls and Deadwater, Passamagamoc Falls and Deadwater, and Ambejejus Falls, which brought the river into Ambejejus Lake. This was the first of a cluster of lakes -- the Lower Lakes -- separate bodies of water, lying close together, connected by short, shallow "thoroughfares". The flow of the river was through Ambejejus Lake and Ambejejus Thoroughfare into Pemadumcook Lake, thence into North Twin Lake, from which the Elbow ran off toward the east, and South Twin Lake toward the west. Just below the foot of North Twin Lake was a falls which curiously seems
to have had no name, followed by a short stretch of fast water running into Quakish Lake, a point particularly important to our story.

Thoreau, in "The Maine Woods", describing the West Branch in 1846, says of Quakish Lake: "It is a small, irregular, but handsome lake, shut in on all sides by the forest, and showing no traces of man but some low boom in a distant cove, reserved for spring use. After two miles of smooth rowing across this lake, we found ourselves in the river again..."

Fred S. Davenport, of Bangor, in his story "Some Pioneers of Moosehead, Chesuncook and Millinocket", written as the result of several West Branch trips around 1865, and published in "The Northern", says: "Quakish was a swamp (I know not what it is now). Called a lake, it has none of the qualities of a lake, neither length, breadth or depth. A muddy stream, two miles long and perhaps 20 rods wide, with innumerable small coves all boom-ed across to keep the logs out, a continuous line of booms from one end to the other". Of course, this was twenty years after Thoreau, but take your choice.

At the outlet of Quakish Lake began the great series of falls, later developed into the Millinocket water power -- Rines Pitch, Island Falls and the Grand Pitch; all together referred to as the Grand Falls; a total drop of some 112 feet into Shad Pond. Here Millinocket Stream flows in from Millinocket Lake, a few miles to the north. There followed another quick succession of rips all the way to the junction of the East and West Branches at Medway -- Ledge Falls, Dolby Rips, Burnt Land Rips and Rockabema Rips. These
too are important to our story. Within these various main falls are innumerable smaller rips and pitches, some named, some not.

All of this was potential water power, but it is unlikely that in the early days any of it was considered in that light. It was all too far from civilization. It was not until the railroad reached it that the development of power on the West Branch became feasible. By the 1930's, practically all the head below North Twin had been utilized for power, but it was another 20 years before the big fall at Ripogenus was developed, and then only partially. No very serious consideration has ever been given to the development of water power above the head of Chesuncook Lake, where the flow of the river is limited, although thimbles for penstocks were built into the Seboomook Dam when it was reconstructed a number of years ago, just in case. However, the potential between Chesuncook Lake and the Lower Lakes has been studied and re-studied, with a view to development, and it may be desirable here to provide some figures on the available heads for the record.

Different figures have been arrived at in different studies, depending upon the purpose and plan, but the following are close:

- Chesuncook Falls 22 feet
- Ripogenus Falls 214 feet
- Ambejamackamus Falls 29 feet
- The Horse Race 24 feet
- Souldnahunk Falls 25 feet
- Abol Falls 13 feet
- Pockwockamus Falls 21 feet

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Debsconeag Falls 28 feet
Passamagamoc Falls 10 feet
Ambajejus Falls 10 feet

A tabulation of distances, following the course of the river, from Pittston Farm to some of the points mentioned may also be of interest, and will help to relate these features to the incidents and events covered in other parts of the story.

Seboomook Falls 12 miles
Head of Chesuncook Lake 37 miles
Chesuncook Falls 54 miles
Head of Ripogenus Gorge 57 miles
Ambejamackamus Falls 61 miles
Abol Falls 68 miles
Pockwockamus Falls 69 miles
Debsconeag Falls 72 miles
Ambajejus Falls 77 miles
Outlet of North Twin Lake 88 miles
Head of Rines Pitch 91 miles
Shad Pond 94 miles
Dolby Rips 98 miles
Burnt Land Rips 99 miles
Medway 101 miles

While there were sawmills on or near tidewater at an early date, the history of the Penobscot in connection with the forest products industries began with the building of the first sawmill on the river itself, at Orono, in 1774. In the early 1800's, as the lumbering industry grew rapidly, large numbers of mills were built between Old Town and Bangor. By 1825, the settlers had
pushed north, and there were mills as far up as Lincoln. (1) The mills fed first on the pine. The Passadumkeag, the Piscataquis and the Mattawamkeag were in turn cut over, these streams being logged heavily before Maine became a separate state. The date that lumbering began on the East Branch is not known, but it was before 1820. The first logging operation on the West Branch was in 1828. By 1832, the cut on the Penobscot was nearly 40,000,000 feet, and a few voices began to be raised questioning the duration of the supply of pine. However, nobody paid much attention. Ten years later the cut was over 100,000,000 feet, and the pine was getting scarce. There was not a great deal of pine on the Penobscot anyway, as compared with the vast stands that had been removed from the southern and western parts of the state. By 1850, the cut was 111,000,000 feet, and between this time and the outbreak of the Civil War ran from 150,000,000 to 210,000,000 feet. (2) For those who are more familiar with cord measurement, 1,000 board feet is equivalent to about two cords.

The first spruce was cut for lumber on the Mattawamkeag branch of the Penobscot River in 1845. By 1850, small operators were cutting it on the East Branch, and in that year the amount of spruce taken from the Penobscot was 50,000,000 feet. This would have been only a little less than half the total, just a short five years after the first spruce was cut. In 1861, the spruce first surpassed the pine. In 1862, the spruce cut was nearly 100,000,000 feet; by 1866 it was over 150,000,000 feet, and in 1872, when the total cut was over 245,000,000 feet, the largest of the century, more than two-thirds of it was spruce. (3)
Some idea of the magnitude of the mill operations around Bangor may be gained from composite figures of the annual shipments of lumber and lumber products from that city, taken from Penobscot County statistics for different years in the period 1872 to 1882.

- 171,000,000 feet of long lumber
- 148,000,000 shingles
- 86,500,000 laths
- 4,500,000 clapboards
- 1,270,000 fence pickets
- 7,400,000 barrel staves
- 420,000 barrel heads
- 2,400,000 barrel hoops

This in addition to a tremendous volume of such items as box shooks, cant dog handles, brush, broom and tool handles, oars, sash, doors and other millwork, spool wood, last blocks, poles, posts, ties, ship timbers and spars.

By the time Maine became a state, and even before operations on the West Branch had started, regulation and cooperative effort on the river had become essential. The great mass of wood being put into the water by so many lumbermen, destined for scores of mills at the extreme lower end of the river, with no other possible means of transportation, was resulting in utter confusion.

The worst snarls occurred on the lower river, just above the mills, where the various operators with logs in the drive had to keep boats and crews on the job day and night, with great fires burning on the shores to provide light so that the men
could see the marks on the logs as they floated past. In 1825, a group of eighteen lumbermen formed the Penobscot Boom Corporation, charted by the Legislature, to build and operate a sorting boom on the main river somewhere between Greenbush and Sunkhaze, and to charge tolls for sorting and rafting the logs, as a controlled operation. The first boom was built at Argyle. In 1827, the company was purchased by Rufus Dwinel, a Bangor lumberman. He obtained a new charter, which provided for additional booms on the Stillwater branch, and built a boom at Pea Cove in 1832. The following year, he sold the company and its property to General Samuel Veazie, who constructed a new boom at Argyle in 1837. (4)

General Veazie (1787-1868) was something of a character. He was a general of militia during the War of 1812; a trader, shipbuilder, shipowner, lumberman, mill owner and banker. He came to Old Town from Topsham, where he owned and operated the Androscoggin boom, in 1826, and purchased the Jackson Davis mills. He gradually enlarged his holdings until it was said that he was the largest mill owner in the state, having a total of 52 sawmills between Old Town and Bangor, including all those on the west side of the river at the former place. He moved to Bangor in 1832, and to Veazie, which was separated from Bangor and named for him, in 1854. He was the sole owner of a number of corporations, and, holding stockholders' meetings in his own home is said to have solemnly gone through the actual motions of electing himself Director, President and Clerk.

The Bangor & Old Town Railroad Company was chartered in 1832, organized in 1835, and constructed a right-of-way from Bangor to
Veazie, but running into difficulty with the landowners, never laid rails. This right-of-way was sold to the European & North American in 1868, and they built on it. In the meantime, in 1833, another road, the Bangor & Piscataquis Canal & Railroad Company, was chartered, and in 1837 opened for traffic a branch from Bangor to Old Town by way of Upper Stillwater. In 1850, this road was extended toward Milford, across land in Old Town owned by General Veazie, who instituted a series of lawsuits which so harrassed the railroad that it sold out to him in 1852. He renamed it the Bangor, Old Town & Milford, and operated it very profitably until his death, when it too was sold to the European & North American. Another venture into transportation on the Penobscot River was the Penobscot Navigation Company, chartered in 1845, which put the "Governor Neptune", named for an Indian chief, into service the following year. General Veazie immediately muscled in with his "Governor Dana", bringing on another lawsuit, in which this time he was on the receiving end. This case went to the Supreme Court, and as a result of its decision, the "Governor Dana" was dismantled and shipped to California, where, with the gold rush just beginning, she made more money for the General than she ever would have on the Penobscot. Eight or nine different steamers, shallow-draft paddle-wheel types, served the river at different times, between Old Town and Winn, and on high water got up as far as Medway. The European & North American followed the valley of the river as far as Mattawamkeag, and the boats went out of business not long after it was built.

General Veazie apparently ran the boom pretty much to suit himself, and this did not suit the lumbermen, who in 1838 got an
act through the legislature appointing a commission of three men with authority to control the management of the boom, after which things went more smoothly for a while. (5)

On the West Branch, no logs were cut above Chesuncook until after 1830. The first drive through Ripogenus Gorge is said to have been made by Nicholas Norcross, whose men were all equipped with life preservers. (6) Apparently no improvements of consequence were made on the West Branch until the Chesuncook Company was chartered in 1834 to build toll dams at the outlets of Chesuncook and North Twin Lakes, and to make improvements between these points. The date of the first dam at the foot of Chesuncook is uncertain, but as we will see shortly, there must have been some kind of dam there by 1833. The Chesuncook Company's 1834 charter to build dams on Chesuncook and North Twin Lakes does not necessarily mean that there was not already some kind of structure at the foot of Chesuncook. If there was, it was probably replaced by the Chesuncook Company's dam, at one time called the John Ross Dam, some time between 1834 and 1840, and it is said that it was owned by the pervasive General Veazie in 1846, indicating that he controlled the Chesuncook Company at that time. (7)

The backwater from this dam flowed Chesuncook and Caribou Lakes together, and the shores were surrounded with a fringe of drowned trees, which travelers described as "dismal" and "desolate". A charter was granted to the West Branch Boom Company in 1835 for a permanent boom at the head of Ambajejus Lake for rafting logs to be towed across the Lower Lakes to the outlet of North Twin. The dam at North Twin was built some time prior to 1846,
but in 1847 the Chesuncook Company's rights were revoked and
given to the apparently short-lived North Twin Dam Company, under
a special charter. (8) The flowage from this dam extended to
the head of Ambajejus Lake, and made one body of water out of
North Twin, South Twin, Elbow, Pemadumcook and Ambajejus Lakes.
A low dyke on the eastern arm of this flowage prevented water from
running over into Millinocket Lake. This dam provided only a
very shallow flowage between Ambajejus and Pemadumcook Lakes,
where a long tongue of land, Ambajejus Point, extended out from
the east shore, leaving only a rock-filled thoroughfare, between
the two lakes. This was a difficult place to get through, and
an extra crew was stationed at a boomhouse built on Ambajejus
Point.

It is said that as early as 1833 there was some sort of
loose association for driving the Penobscot River. (9) As a
matter of fact, while it seems to be little-known, there was a
Penobscot Log Driving Company, chartered in 1833 (Ch. 331 Private
and Special Laws of Maine, approved February 20, 1833) which had
the right to drive from Chesuncook Dam to the Penobscot Boom. This
is the evidence of the probable existence of a dam at the foot of
Chesuncook in 1833. However, this Company could drive only logs
put into the West Branch between the foot of Chesuncook and Medway,
and apparently individuals could drive their own logs if they
wished. This arrangement does not seem to have been successful,
and the impossibility of controlling the water for many small
drives resulted in the formation of the better-known company of
the same name, under a charter approved August 10, 1846. The in-
corporators, in case anyone is interested, were a large group;
Ira Wadleigh, Samuel P. Strickland, Hastings Strickland, Isaac Farrar, William Emerson, Amos Roberts, Leonard Jones, Franklin Adams, James Jenkins, Aaron Babb and Cyrus Clark, all well-known lumbermen of those days. The famous "P.L.D." was a mutual organization, handling the drives of all the lumbermen landing logs on the West Branch from Chesuncook Dam to Medway, and the delivery of these logs to the booms above Old Town. Everyone owning timberland on the West Branch was eligible for membership, and was entitled to one vote. Those persons conducting lumbering operations on the West Branch had one vote for each six-ox team in use. Later, in 1866, it was agreed that a team of four horses would be considered equal to a team of six oxen for voting purposes. (10) As far as anyone knows, it was never determined how many teams of horses were equal to one tractor, but by the time this question arose it was of little consequence to anybody except the Great Northern Paper Company. The drive was let by bid each year, one of the men having an operation on the river usually bidding, but if the bids were not satisfactory to the Directors, the company hired a master driver and ran the drive itself.

In 1849, the charter of the Penobscot Log Driving Company was amended to allow it to drive from the head of Chesuncook, but there was a little-known company, the West Branch & Chesuncook Boom Company, which apparently had the right to boom on Chesuncook Lake, and the P.L.D. did not drive the Lake until 1856, when another amendment to its charter allowed it to take over this company. After 1856, the Penboscot Log Driving Company handled the booming of logs down from the head of Chesuncook Lake.
using the headworks equipment previously described. Additional legislation in 1883 gave it the right to build dams at the outlets of Caucomgomoc and Millinocket Lakes, and these dams were built in that year. It made other improvements on the river. A dam was built across the Ripogenus Dry Way -- the channel to the right below the present dam -- in 1865. The first real dam at the foot of Ripogenus Lake was erected in 1887. This had a sluice, but no gates, the water being controlled from the Chesuncook dam. (11)

While a steamboat was put into use for towing logs on Moosehead Lake by 1836, (12) the P.L.D. continued to bring logs down from the head of Chesuncook by "brute strength and ignorance" until 1890. In that year, it built a towboat, named the "John Ross", at Northeast Carry, a few miles below Seboomook, and floated it down the river to Chesuncook Lake. The "John Ross" was a clumsy side-wheel scow, to which a false bow was at some time added. The machinery was too heavy for the bottom, and was partly supported on chains hung from stanchions, this being fairly common construction for lake towboats of that time. She was replaced in 1902 by the "A.B. Smith", also a side-wheeler, in which the engine from the "John Ross" was installed. The "A.B. Smith" remained in service until 1927. There was another, smaller steam towboat, the "Caribou", on Chesuncook in 1903. It is possible that she antedated the "A.B. Smith", but we have no other information than the fact that she was in service in that year. A side-wheel steamer named the "F.W.Ayer" was built at the North Twin Dam in 1892 and 1893, and put into use on the Lower Lakes. Her machinery was moved from the railroad at Mattawamkeag

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to Medway over the dirt road, and from Medway to where Millinocket is now by the tote road. From there to North Twin Dam a new road had to be cut for the purpose. The moving of the ten-ton boilers, two of them, was a monumental job, requiring the use of eight-horse teams in some places.

In 1903, the operations of the Penobscot Log Driving Company above Shad Pond were taken over by the West Branch & Reservoir Dam Company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Great Northern Paper Company, the P.L.D. retaining the driving rights on Millinocket Stream and on the river below Shad Pond. This story will be told in another place. The "F.W.Ayer" was eventually replaced by a boat built by the Company but was in service until the early 1920's.

Back at the boom, things did not go as the lumbermen wished, in spite of their commission, and in 1854, encouraged by the success of the P.L.D., they formed the Penobscot Lumbering Association, which forced an amendment of the Boom Company's charter requiring it to rent its property to the Association. This body maintained the property, made capital improvements, paid the taxes, and paid the owner a toll. The actual job of sorting and rafting at the boom was originally done by contract awarded to the lowest bidder. "The boom" was really a series of booms, where men stood at gaps, separating the logs of the different owners, distinguished by their marks, and pushing them gradually toward the shore. Here the logs of each owner were made up into rafts, about thirty logs to a raft, each log having a hardwood peg driven into it, by means of which it was attached to its neigh-

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bor by light marline "rafting rigging". As each raft was made up, it was anchored in the river. Twice a day, separate crews took these small rafts ashore further downstream and made them into larger ones, which were floated down to the mills if the logs had already been sold, or were tied up to await a buyer, who put a scale mark on each log to denote its new owner, before the raft was sent down to his mill. (13)

The figures showing the quantities of logs rafted at the Penobscot Boom do not represent exactly the amounts of timber cut on the river. In the early days, Kenduskeag Stream and the river below the boom accounted for a lot of logs. In later days, there were sawmills at various points along the river above the boom, and the pulp mills had also entered the picture. However, the figures below do show most clearly the rise and fall of the lumbering industry on the Penobscot:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Logs Rafted (F.B.M.)</th>
<th>Average F.B.M. Per Log</th>
<th>Four-foot Pulpwood Sorted-Cords</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>25,906,000</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>74,215,000</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>129,192,000</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>109,590,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>216,841,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>138,524,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>126,281,000</td>
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<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>134,152,000</td>
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<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>131,165,000</td>
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<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>46,322,000</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>25,917,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>51,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>4,597,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41,816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1928  958,000   -   -   63,017
1929  None       -   -   58,254
1939  "          -   -   31,115
1949  "          -   -   22,820
1953  "          -   -   20,771

Figures are from the records of the Penobscot Boom Corporation.

Pulpwood, as small logs, was driven with the sawlogs, starting in the early 1880's, and was sorted for the mills at Lincoln, Montague, Great Works, Old Town and Orono. In 1907 the bidding system was dropped, and a salary was paid to a superintendent to take charge of the job. In 1908 a corporation, the I. W. Bussell Company, was formed to carry on the work of sorting and rafting under contract. (14)

The first four-foot pulpwood came to the boom in the drive of 1917, mixed with the logs. There is no record of the amount, however, until 1920, when 29,673 cords were received. The I. W. Bussell Company, was purchased in 1918 by the Penobscot Development Company, a subsidiary of the Penobscot Chemical Fibre Company and while short pulpwood had been being sorted for several years, the legislature gave the Penobscot Development Company specific authority for this activity in 1921. The last drive of long logs was in 1928. The incomplete figures on the size of the logs arriving at the boom tell the story. It would take nearly seven of the puny 1919 logs to make one of the big sticks that were being cut in the pine days. The Penobscot Boom Corporation technically continued to handle pulpwood until 1953, when the last drive was received. In 1956, it was decided that it would not be necessary to drive any more wood on
the lower Penobscot, and the Penobscot Boom Corporation, the Penobscot East Branch Log Driving Company, the Penobscot Lumbering Association and the Penobscot River Dam & Improvement Company, organized some time in the later years to make improvements on the lower river, with any other related organizations that may have been in existence, with the exception of the Penobscot Log Driving Company, were dissolved. The P.L.D. lived on, and there will be more about it.

While all this was going on, other interests had been active on West Branch waters, mostly in the building of toll dams under special charters from the Legislature. The Nahmakanta Dam Company was chartered as early as 1837, and made some improvements, but apparently this charter lapsed. Another company of the same name was chartered in 1867, and built dams on Nahmakanta Lake, Rainbow Lake and Pollywog Pond (15) and made improvements along the streams connected with these waters, as they were particularly difficult to drive.

It was not possible to drive anything but the lower end of Sourdnahunk Stream until substantial dams were built, although logs were cut in the valley and landed on Telos and Cuxabexis Lakes, and on Soper Brook. The Sourdnahunk Dam & Improvement Company was chartered in 1878, and the original dam, called the "Toll Dam" was built by this company in 1879, at which time there was only a trail from Medway into this country. The construction crew walked in over this trail, but supplies, including what is said to have been the first dynamite ever used in the Maine woods -- "rent-rock" -- it was called then -- were taken up the river by boat. The dam at the outlet of Sourdnahunk Lake was
constructed in the same year, and the Slide Dam the year following. (16)

The Seboomook Dam Company was chartered in 1893, and the first dam at Seboomook Falls, also called Henderson's Pitch and Grand Falls, was completed in 1894 or 1895. (17) The first drive through this dam went down the West Branch. An effort had been made in 1839 to obtain legislation to permit the diversion of water from the West Branch into Moosehead Lake in order to take logs from the Penobscot watershed down the Kennebec River. (18) This was blocked by Bangor interests which were at the same time getting ready to divert St. John River water into the Penobscot. When the dam was built, however, two of the incorporators, J.S. and F. T. Bradstreet, who had a sawmill at South Gardiner on the Kennebec, took advantage of the fact that water from it backed up into Carry Pond, to a point within a very short distance of the high land between the two watersheds. From this point they built a conveyor, in two sections, each 600 feet long, which lifted the logs floated into Carry Pond over the rise, and deposited them in a wooden sluice, some two miles long, supplied with water from a dam on Carry Brook, which is on the Kennebec watershed and has no connection with Carry Pond. (19) One account says that water for the sluice was taken from near the mouth of Carry Brook in buckets on an endless chain. The sluice discharged the logs into the brook close to the point where it empties into Moosehead Lake. This outfit was in existence when the Great Northern Paper Company was formed, came into its possession with the purchase of Seboomook Township, and was dismantled.

Another venture in transportation in this area was the
Moose Head Railway Company, incorporated by the Sticklands, the Coburns and other lumbermen under a State charter granted in 1947, giving them permission to "construct and maintain a railway with materials of wood or otherwise, with one or more tracks, from the head of Moose Head Lake to the Penobscot River," and another from Umbazookskus Lake to Mud Pond. These were not to be logging railroads, but were for the purpose of portaging, from one watershed to the other, boats and supplies brought up the lakes by water. The original railway from Northeast Carry to the Penobscot had hewn pine rails, and a single small flat car, originally on wooden wheels made of discs cut from pine logs, but later on cast iron wheels. The "engine" was a single ox, which could be hitched to either end of the car. This road was operated for some years, but was in disuse and partly destroyed by fire by 1865, when F.S. Davenport, from whose account this description is taken, walked over the portage which followed the line of the old roadbed. We are quite sure, however, that there was never any such "railroad" at the Umbazookskus-Mud Pond carry.

A charter was granted in 1874 to the Ragged Lake Dam Company for dams at the outlet of Ragged Lake and at other places on the stream. The Pine Stream Dam & Improvement Company, a relatively modern corporation, was chartered in 1913. It built several dams. The Russell Stream Dam Company was formed in 1870, and built a number of dams. The Penobscot Lake Dam Company was chartered in 1887, and the North Branch Dam Company in 1893, both allowing improvements in the Penobscot Lake-Dole Pond-Long Pond region.

The South Branch was a difficult stream to drive, being
sluggish and winding, so that head winds were almost always encountered somewhere. The Canada Falls Dam Company was chartered in 1870 and built two dams on this stream, the locations of which are in the flowage of the present dam. (20)

Over the years, literally hundreds of driving dams, large and small, were built on ponds and on the falls and ledges of dozens of streams in the West Branch watershed. Most of them were under special charters from the legislature, but many substantial structures were just built. Many of them were long gone by the time the Great Northern Paper Company came into being. Most of the dam corporations were formed by people who owned land in the area served by the dam, and whose interests were represented by their proportionate land ownership. As the Company acquired land, it also acquired the dams, and in this and other ways, obtained total or controlling interest in most of the important dam corporations. Dams built and rebuilt under these old charters are today an important part of the Company's water storage system on the West Branch. In the same way, driving dam companies were acquired with properties and rights on the St. John River and its tributaries, on the Aroostook, the Kennebec and the East Branch of the Penobscot.

It might be of interest to examine more closely at this point one of these developments, the Telos Cut, which, while having nothing to do with the West Branch, did eventually bear on the affairs of the Great Northern Paper Company, and is an especially dramatic illustration of the conflict and bitterness which could and did arise in the conduct of river driving operations. There are several versions of different parts of the story.
A typed copy of an able study, "The Telos Cut", by Myron H. Avery, is the basis of this account; although we have used some other sources as well, notably the Company's old magazine "The Northern" and especially the issue of September 1924.

As in the case of the West Branch and the upper St. John River, the headwaters of the Allagash Branch of the St. John and those of the East Branch of the Penobscot are very close together. When the lumbermen went into this country, before Maine became a state, they found the division to be between two small lakes, Telos on the St. John and Webster, or Penobscot Pond, on the East Branch. From the former, water flowed north through a series of lakes -- Chamberlain, Eagle, Churchill and Heron, down the St. John River. From the latter, it went southward through Second and First Grand (Matagamon) Lakes and down the East Branch of the Penobscot. The divide between the two watersheds was only a few feet higher than the natural level of Telos; indeed, a ravine, blocked by glacial debris, joined Telos and Webster, suggesting that in times long past the flow from Chamberlain Lake had naturally gone down the Penobscot and not the St. John. The land on which this gully was located, Township 6 Range II, W.E.L.S., and all the other towns around the lakes on the Allagash were heavily timbered, and in 1838 were the joint property of the States of Maine and Massachusetts.

In that year, Amos Roberts, S.P. Strickland and Hastings Strickland, of Bangor, conceived the idea of a canal or "cut" through the divide which would permit logs taken from anywhere along the shores of Chamberlain Lake to be sluiced down the Penobscot River. At that time, most of the timber from that
area was going down the St. John into New Brunswick, only a small amount being hauled over into Penobscot water. They applied to the legislature for a charter, and were refused. However, after making sure of the practicability of their scheme, they proceeded to purchase Township 6 Range 11. The states, in their deed, authorized the building of a canal or sluice between the two watersheds, but reserved the right to take over any such improvement, on payment of costs, and open it to public use. This was the opening gun in what is still known as the "Telos War".

In March, 1841, Hastings Strickland supervised the building of a dam on dry land, barely on the Telos Lake side of the divide. With permission of the state land agents, a dam was built at the same time at the outlet of Chamberlain Lake, some 15 miles down the St. John River to the north. This backed Chamberlain Lake water up into Telos and filled the Telos Dam. When the water had risen high enough, it was spilled out of Telos, to find its way into Webster Lake, permitting the driving down the East Branch of a large cut of logs landed there. In the fall of the same year, a canal, ten to 15 feet wide, between the Telos dam and Webster Lake, was excavated to a depth of from one to four feet.

The following spring, 1842, the dam at the outlet of Chamberlain Lake went out, and had to be rebuilt. At this time Roberts bought out the Stricklands, and established, without benefit of legislative approval, a toll of 50 cents per thousand feet for using his canal. This he was able to collect without much trouble, for four years. During this time, David Pingree, of Salem, Massachusetts, a shrewd and heavy investor in Maine timberlands, seeing the possibilities of the canal, had bought,
through his agents, five towns around Chamberlain Lake. Roberts, foreseeing trouble about his tolls, tried to sell Pingree his township and the canal development, but they could not come to terms. At this time, the dam at Chamberlain Lake had just gone out again, making the canal useless. Roberts was unwilling to replace it, and Pingree rebuilt it himself, so that there would be water to drive logs from his land down the Penobscot. Roberts, realizing that he was up against a tough customer, sold out to Rufus Dwinel, previously mentioned, who, like General Veazie, was always ready to go to legal war.

In the winter of 1845-46 there were extensive operations on Pingree's lands. Dwinel made efforts to get the lumbermen to agree to pay his toll of 50 cents, but all except one refused. Dwinel took action. In the spring of 1846, when the lumbermen began to tow their logs to the Telos Dam, they found it boomed off, and some 75 men, armed with sheath-knives and clubs, on guard to prevent their passage. The logs had to get to the mills; the lumbermen capitulated, and signed an agreement to pay the toll, plus the cost of maintaining Dwinel's army, when the logs were sold.

This did not by any means conclude hostilities. The lumbermen, who had control now of the Chamberlain Dam, petitioned the Legislature for a charter for "The Lake Telos and Webster Pond Dam & Sluiceway Company", which would have the right to take over Dwinel's operation and reduce the toll to ten cents. The legislature, finding that the 50 cent toll was excessive, actually passed such an act, but made it inoperative if Dwinel, within ten days, would incorporate and petition for a charter, with his
toll reduced by one-half. He put up a vigorous argument, representing the lumbermen as the stooges of the ineffable Pingree -- "this poor man Pingree, worth only one and a half or two millions of dollars....is afraid I shall make or receive half a dollar a thousand on timber growing on five townships of his land." However, he accepted the ultimatum, and chartered the Telos Canal Company, in August 1846. The act gave him the Chamberlain Dam, built by Pingree, so that the whole operation would be under one control, and reduced the toll to 20 cents. At the same time, a charter was granted to the Grand Lake Dam Company for a toll dam on First Grand Lake, to assist in driving down the East Branch. Dwinel was one of the incorporators.

Meanwhile, going both ways at once, the lumbermen refused to honor their agreement to pay the 50 cent toll for the spring drive through the cut, arguing that Dwinel had blocked the Allagash with the Chamberlain Dam, leaving them no choice but to use his canal, and that the agreement was made under duress. He sued, and the Maine Supreme Court upheld him. Thus the toll battle was ended.

The lumbermen were reaching out still further for logs, and in this same year, 1846, a group associated with David Pingree obtained a charter for the Heron Lake Dam Company. This was an interesting project. The Heron Lake Dam Company built another dam at Chase Carry, at the outlet of Heron Lake, some ten miles down the Allagash from the Chamberlain Dam. At the same time a fourth dam, called the "Lock" was built about a quarter of a mile below the Chamberlain Dam, on the thoroughfare connecting Chamberlain and Eagle Lakes. The Heron Lake Dam flowed the waters of Heron,
Churchill and Eagle Lakes together, and backed them up to the Lock. This arrangement allowed the lumbermen to put logs into the water anywhere on Eagle Lake, tow them into the lock, fill the lock with water from Chamberlain Lake, and then tow up Chamberlain to the Telos sluice, and send them on their way to Bangor. The operation was not too successful. The Heron Lake Dam went out several times, assisted on at least one occasion by the judicious use of blasting powder by New Brunswick lumbermen who needed the water on the St. John River, and the Lock was inactive for many years. At a much later date, Marsh & Ayer, cutting logs in the Eagle Lake area, built the so-called "tramway", which carried logs from the waters of Eagle Lake to the head of Chamberlain, at a point about three miles north of the Lock. This arrangement consisted of two narrow-gauge tracks, one above the other, over which steel log cradles were hauled by an endless cable, driven by a steam engine, the loaded cradle running along the top track and the empties returning on the bottom one. It was completed in 1903 by O. A. Harkness, who operated it for six years. Later still, a railroad was built to deliver pulpwood cut around Eagle Lake into the West Branch for the Great Northern Paper Company. This is also an interesting story, and will be told in another place.

In 1852, the East Branch Dam Company was chartered to take over the Grand Lake Dam Company, build a dam at Webster Lake and make other improvements. The Telos Canal Company and the East Branch Dam Company were absorbed by the East Branch Improvement Company, chartered in 1903, which in the course of time came to belong 40 percent to the Great Northern Paper Company and 60 percent
to the Bangor Hydro Electric Company. The East Branch Improvement Company rebuilt the Grand Lake, Telos and Chamberlain Dams, the last now still sometimes being referred to as the Lock Dam. There has been no drive of logs of pulpwood for a long time, but the water from Chamberlain Lake, after more than one hundred years, still goes down the Penobscot. The Great Northern Paper Company also acquired substantial interest in the Heron Lake Dam Company, and rebuilt this dam in 1927, to assist in its St. John River operations. We will provide more information about all these log-driving companies later on, also.

As has been noted, the Maine woods had been "opened up" by the time the Great Northern Paper Company had begun to cut pulpwood, but this was in terms of the needs of the lumbering industry. In 1899, horse-drawn and ox-drawn vehicles were the only means of overland transportation on the "highways". From Bangor, the center of Northern Maine activity there were in 1899 publicly maintained roads up the Penobscot Valley into Aroostook County, reaching to Allagash, Fort Kent, Van Buren, the towns along the St. John River and all the important communities in Aroostook. A side road followed the main Penobscot River to Medway, and extended up the East Branch to Grindstone. There was a substantial system of roads in the Pisquataquis valley, connecting with Greenville. On the Kennebec, roads followed the river to The Forks, and on through Jackman to the Quebec border. These were almost universally dirt roads, without gravel, nearly impassable at times. Taking off from these "highways" were the tote roads, intended primarily for winter travel into the woods, but used by teams of oxen, and later horses, drawing tote wagons,
the bodies set high to pass over obstructions, at other times of the year. One who has seen these things, snaking around boulders, skirting the shoulders of hills and wallowing through swamps, find it hard to realize that they were the arteries through which flowed the life-blood of a world-famous industry. They were made by and for the men of the times, inured to hard work and long hours. In 1899, such a road ran from Medway along the West Branch and up into the Sournahunk valley, passing near what is now Millinocket. The Maine Central Railroad, a consolidation of a number of small roads, followed the Kennebec as far as North Anson, connecting with the Somerset Railroad, which extended up to Bingham, and, on the line built by the old European & North American, it ran up the Penobscot River through Mattawamkeag to Vanceboro. The Bangor & Aroostook served the Piscataquis valley and Greenville, and had just opened its new line into Aroostook County as far as Houlton. The Canadian Pacific crossed the state from east to west about 60 miles north of Bangor, using the Maine Central line from Vanceboro to Mattawamkeag, as we have noted. There was no other rail transportation in Northern Maine.

The fact that some of the prominent lumbermen had farms which grew produce and hay for the use of their camps has been mentioned. In addition to these farms, there came into existence, in very early times, isolated hostelries on the ways travelled by the men going into the woods. These places were patronized by the woodsmen in the winter and spring, and by the "sports" fishing or taking canoe trips in the summer. They often developed into farms, or had small communities spring up around them.
The farms at Pittston and Seboomook, the Grant Farm, the Ross Farm, the Rice Farm and others were all established in the long log days, and coming into the possession of the Company, played an important part in its pulpwood operations.

The part of the watershed of the Kennebec River in which we are interested bore no similitude to a mighty tree, but was more like a bush, crowned by one huge leaf, Moosehead Lake, with a few large branches, the Moose River and its string of ponds, the Dead River and Carabasset Stream on the west, and a few smaller ones, Kokadjo and its ponds, Moxie Stream and Austin Stream on the east.

Kennebec conditions were a little more advanced in 1898 than they were on the Penobscot. There was a Kennebec Log Driving Company, which handled log driving in much the same manner as the P.L.D. The Great Northern Paper Company became a member with the purchase of the Madison mill of the Manufacturing Investment Company. There were a great many small driving dam corporations in existence, a number of which came into the hands of the Company through the purchase of land or otherwise. One of these, incidentally, became the source of a legal dispute which lasted for years. The control of stored water had been placed in charge of the Kennebec Water Power Company in 1893. The public road system gave much more convenient access to Kennebec timberlands above Madison than was the case on the upper Penobscot, where there were no roads at all, and there were towns along the river above Madison, all the way up to Greenville, where a settlement had been established in 1824.
The impression has long been abroad that the Millinocket Mill and the town of Millinocket were built in the forest primeval. This was not really the case. The Millinocket area was backwoods, all right, but hardly a howling wilderness at that time. For one thing, there was a farm right where the Millinocket mill was located. Almost as soon as lumbering began, settlers had begun to locate in remote places along the rivers. One such was Thomas Fowler, a farmer and lumberman of Pittsfield, Maine, who in March, 1829, with his wife and five children made his way by road to Brownville, and from there through the woods and across the ice of Schoodic, Endless, East Seboeis and Nolleseemic Lakes to the southern shore of Shad Pond on the West Branch. He travelled with two teams of oxen, and brought with him household goods, some building materials, tools, seeds and a cow -- everything necessary to start a new life in a wilderness. Near the foot of the Grand Falls, he built a house, and cleared land for a farm and hay fields. At this time, there was no settled community on the Penobscot River north of Five Islands (Winn).

Lumbering operations had just started on the West Branch, and boats and supplies going up the river had to be carried around the Grand Falls, a back-breaking job, which we have described. The sequence of events is not certain, but some time within the next ten years Thomas Fowler had gone a couple of miles up Millinocket Stream, had apparently cut a road through to Quakish Lake, and had gone into the business of moving this materiel around the falls for the lumbermen. This road must have been somewhere in the vicinity of the road to the Stone Dam, some of it probably where the canal was constructed. He also
built a new house there, on the west side of Millinocket Stream, just north of this road. At about this time -- 1837 or 1838 -- there were rumors of trouble between the Indian tribes using the river, and he moved his family to Bangor for a year or two. Two children had been born in the house on Shad Pond, and another arrived in Bangor in 1840, shortly before the family returned to the Millinocket area. Whether or not the new house where two more children were born, was built before or after this interlude is not clear from the information available, but at any rate, a farm and fields were cleared on the hillside and running down to the stream. Thomas Fowler ran the farm, did some lumbering, and continued to haul boats and supplies over the carry. He is also credited with cutting the tote road from his farm through to Medway, a distance of about nine miles, closely following the old course of the river. He lived well into the 1880's. The farm remained in the family, and in 1899 was occupied by a grandson, Charles T. Powers.

By the time the Millinocket mill was built, there were farms, settlements and some substantial communities all along the main Penobscot River, as far as Medway, where there was quite a little town, built around a tannery which had been established there. There was also a settlement at Norcross, about a mile and a half west of the North Twin Dam. Norcross Cove, named no doubt for Nick Norcross, had been used by the lumbermen for years, and there were habitations of some kind there before the arrival of the railroad in 1893. At that time a sawmill was built by Perkins & Danforth at Perkins Siding, about where the Partridge Cove Marina was later established. At the same time, the railroad built a
station at Norcross, and a post office was opened there. The station agent, a Mr. Atherton, opened a small general store, and anticipating the railroad, W. H. Stratton, of Mattawamkeag, had built a hotel or boarding house at Norcross. He also bought a little steam-driven launch up from Bangor to be operated on the Lower Lakes. Fred Peasley, who succeeded Atherton, enlarged the store and established a moccasin factory. This, together with the store, were taken over in 1897 by Fred Fowler, a grandson of Thomas Fowler. It was Fred Fowler, incidentally, who had built the steamer "F.W. Ayer" at Norcross a few years before, under contract.

There were a few hunters' camps in the area, and some lumber camps a few miles up Millinocket Stream. There was cleared land, and a couple of farms, which will be mentioned again later, between Millinocket and Burnt Land Rips. The Bangor & Aroostook Railroad had a little section house near what was called the Iron Bridge across Millinocket Stream, and while they say that they had no station designated as "Millinocket" until 1899, trains probably stopped at this section house, which shows on old maps, before that time.

In 1899, with the idea of developing a center which would be used by hunters, fishermen and mountain climbers, and that business could be developed from the big new paper company, Fred Fowler bought the hotel at Norcross and prevailed upon his brother Albert, who was about to enter Tufts Medical School, to join him. They built a new wharf, imported several more steam launches, built some scows for carrying supplies, ran a spur track out to the wharf, and incorporated all their holdings into the Norcross
Transportation Company. It was unsuccessful, for a number of reasons, and has no particular place in our story, except to note that some of the facilities were used by the Company in connection with river driving activities on the Lower Lakes, and, in years past, for social affairs.

While the peak of the sawmill industry on the Penobscot River had been reached in 1872, it was still very much alive in 1898 when the first formal move was made toward the formation of the Great Northern Paper Company. At that time there were in operation the Sterns Lumber Company and the Hodgkins & Hall mills in Hampden; F.W. Ayer & Co. and D. Sargent's Sons in South Brewer; Hastings & Strickland's Dirigo mill in Brewer; Morse & Company on Kenduskeag Stream in Bangor; James Walker & Sons at Basin Mills; the Orono Island mill of Adams & Company; William Engels Company at Orono, the Jordan Lumber Company and B. B. Thatcher & Son mills at Milford, and the William T. Pearson mill, operated on lease from the Penobscot Chemical Fibre Company in West Great Works. At Stillwater and Old Town, however, where only a few years before nearly every drop of water had gone through a mill wheel, there were only three mills; the steam shingle mill of George Lewis; the Kimball & Adams sawmill and the so-called Sutton mill (21) operated by the Cassidys. These mills named were capable of sawing in excess of 180,000,000 feet of lumber per year. There were of course a number of other mills scattered about the country in which Great Northern became interested, like the Perkins & Danforth mill just mentioned, and the brand-new steam mill of the Ashland Company in Aroostook County, furnished with the most modern equipment, including machinery for removing the bark from
slabs, which were shipped to the Cushnoc Paper Company's mill at Augusta on the Kennebec River. (22)

As the writer reviews this chapter, which was written some time ago, he has before him a recent copy of the Maine Sunday Telegram, dated July 7, 1974, from which he learns that the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation of the United States Department of the Interior is about to begin a study to determine whether the East and West Branches of the Penobscot should be included in the "wild and scenic rivers" system under the 1968 Wild Rivers law, the intent of which is to "preserve certain selected rivers.... which possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic and cultural values". In the spring of 1899, things were different. Business was booming on the great rivers of Maine, the Kennebec and the Penobscot. The sawmills were heading for a big season; a cut of logs greater than for any year but one of the past twenty-seven was in their waters, and on their banks the Great Northern Paper Company was beginning to take shape in bricks and mortar.
APPENDIX I
NOTES - CHAPTER V

(1) Boardman
(2) Wood
(3) Ibid
(4) Hempstead
(5) Ibid
(6) Boardman
(7) Hempstead
(8) Ibid
(9) Wood
(10) Ibid
(11) Hempstead
(12) Ibid
(13) Ibid
(14) Ibid
(15) Ibid
(16) Ibid
(17) Ibid
(18) Wood
(19) Hempstead
(20) Ibid
(21) Boardman
(22) Ibid
APPENDIX II
REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY -- CHAPTER V


Alfred G. Hempstead: "The Penobscot Boom" University of Maine Studies, Second Series. No. 18, 1931, University Press, Orono, Maine