

6-1-1984

Timber Down the St. John: A Study in Maine-New Brunswick Relations

Richard W. Judd
University of Maine

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal>



Part of the [Canadian History Commons](#), [International Business Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Judd, Richard W.. "Timber Down the St. John: A Study in Maine-New Brunswick Relations." *Maine History* 24, 1 (1984): 195-218. <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol24/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

RICHARD W. JUDD

TIMBER DOWN THE ST. JOHN
A STUDY IN MAINE-NEW BRUNSWICK RELATIONS

Expansion of the North American lumber industry in the nineteenth century generated a fascinating set of international financial arrangements.¹ Lumbermen shifted from the United States to Canada and back again following the distribution of resources and markets and the flow of transportation systems. In no other industry was the international mix of men, capital, and techniques so fluid or the cooperation so intense. Owing to their early start in the lumber trade, Maine's lumbermen, particularly those operating on the boundary rivers in the eastern and northern sections of the state, were among the first to confront the complications of this international trade, and their frustrations and solutions were echoed throughout the nineteenth century as the industry moved west.

Lumbering on the St. John River, which flows out of northern Maine to the Bay of Fundy on the New Brunswick coast, offers an exceptional opportunity to explore this important political aspect of the North American lumber trade. Throughout the nineteenth century the annual cut of pine and spruce in Maine's Aroostook County was driven downriver to mills in the provincial cities of Fredericton and Saint John. With no alternative means of reaching markets, Maine lumbermen had little choice but to operate in this international context. Their industry was shaped to accommodate a geographical and political reality, but in more important ways lumbermen shaped politics to accommodate their industrial needs. So doing, they took a first step in internationalizing the lumber industry in North America.

Maine's political "logging frontier" emerged out of the boundary dispute known as the Aroostook War. This brief confrontation took place along the Maine-New Brunswick

border and was part of a series of inflammatory incidents that tested the uneasy peace between the United States and Great Britain in the 1830s and 1840s.² The Aroostook War resulted from the inadequacies in the Treaty of Paris of 1783, which secured independence for the United States but left important sections of the eastern border – in this case the northeastern boundary of Maine – in question. The immediate cause of the dispute was the convergence of lumbermen from Maine and New Brunswick upon the disputed Aroostook territory in the 1820s, the former moving north from the Penobscot watershed and the latter migrating upriver from the lumber centers of Fredericton and Saint John. This additional pressure on the northeastern boundary situation brought international tensions to a head in 1839. The dispute climaxed in a muster of state, provincial, British, and finally federal troops along the Aroostook and St. John rivers in what is now Maine's Aroostook County. The standoff brought the two countries to the brink of war, but also forced a resolution to the long-standing dispute and thereby laid the basis for easier exchange of raw materials, capital, and men once the troops had been withdrawn.

The Aroostook war has been typified as a “lumberman's war” – a struggle between Yankees and provincials for the legendary Aroostook pine. To a certain extent this is accurate, but at the local level battle lines were never clear. Even during the height of the international incident lumbermen from Maine and New Brunswick were forging economic links that would provide the basis for rapid expansion of the industry once political issues were resolved.³ Beginning with the first commercial operations on the upper St. John, the flow of trade had followed the flow of the river; transboundary financial connections naturally resulted. By 1825 an estimated fourteen thousand tons* of timber were being cut on the banks of the Aroostook River alone. New Brunswick permits

*A ton – equal to a stick of timber one foot square by forty long – was the standard unit of measure for British squared, or semiprocessed timber.

listed sixteen operators; of these, four were clearly partnerships between provincial merchants and American settlers.⁴ Finished wood products were also part of this exchange. At the height of the boundary crisis in 1839 Woodstock businessman James Seger traveled across the line to buy two hundred feet of clapboards from Houlton lumberman Shepard Cary. Another Woodstock firm contracted for several shipments of shingles from Cary's mill, trading the items for "such articles as would sell" in Cary's store.⁵

The trade in illegal or "trespass" timber assumed this international cast as well. As reports from frustrated land agents in the 1820s and 1830s repeatedly indicate, Yankee settlers teamed with New Brunswick lumberers to cut public timber and drive it out of the territory. Although Maine politicians protested the loss of Aroostook timber to New Brunswick, it was indeed the Maine settler who provided much of the manpower that sent it to the mills and docks at Saint John. On the other hand, concern for the trespass problem generated a system of informal cooperation among government officials in the territory. With the acquiescence of the Maine land agent, New Brunswick assumed major responsibility for timber regulation in the territory in 1824. Provincial officials appointed a full-time agent for the region and placed income from the sale of seized timber in a "disputed territory fund" to be distributed among Maine, New Brunswick, and Massachusetts (which held Maine lands even after Maine became a state in 1820) according to the final disposition of the contested timberlands. Land agents from the three governments exchanged information about trespass operations and discussed strategies for keeping illegal timber out of downriver markets.⁶ Cooperation across the boundary – between various officials protecting the pine and between lumbermen stealing it – was as typical as conflict. At the local level the situation involved state and provincial officials attempting to save an important source of government revenue, settlers of mixed nationality defending their allegiances to rival governments, lumbermen from Maine and

New Brunswick struggling to free their season's cut of timber from the jurisdictional snarls of three competing land agencies, and finally trespassers, ranging from settlers hoping to get out a few sticks of pine to operators logging for some of the largest firms on the East Coast. National allegiances blur in this complex mixture of conflict and cooperation.

There were other starts toward an international economy during the dispute as well. The rival claims of New Brunswick and Maine to the Aroostook watershed enhanced public awareness of the virgin territory. Initially, the state responded to provincial land claims by dispatching explorers to the terra incognita. Subsequent reports of a surprisingly fertile land covered with valuable timber stirred widespread interest in prospects for settlement. Whig politicians highlighted the doing-nothing policies of the incumbent Democratic administration by dwelling upon the charms and the fertility of the far-off Aroostook region. When the dispute escalated, Maine and the federal government cut roads into the area, first for troops and then for settlers who, the Maine Land Office felt, could substantiate the state's claim to the territory and help protect the state's timber from provincial trespassers.⁷ The roads, built largely to secure Maine's claim to the territory, were of inestimable value to lumbermen from both Maine and New Brunswick. Previously, supplies for winter logging operations were either procured from the six hundred or so scattered farms in the Aroostook and upper St. John valleys or boated up the river from the coast.⁸ The new overland routes to Bangor – the Military Road, completed in 1832, and the Aroostook Road, grubbed out a decade later – drove down the cost of supplies and attracted settlers able to supply precious hay, oats, and beans from their newly cleared fields.

Even before the dispute was formally brought to an end by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, a consortium of Maine and New Brunswick lumbermen operating on the Aroostook River had established an important infrastructural element of the growing timber trade. In 1839 lumbermen bought a log boom erected earlier by Maine officials to regulate the

flow of timber through the lower Aroostook River. They dismantled the structure and moved it downriver several miles to be used as a sorting works. Timber rafts were brought ashore above the Aroostook Falls near the present boundary. They were loaded on timber wheels to be carried to the flats below the falls. There, at the sorting works, the rafts were reassembled and floated to Fredericton. In the years immediately following the Ashburton settlement, as much as seventy-five thousand tons of square timber passed through the sorting works annually. The boom was the focus of a number of squabbles over rates, sorting delays, and methods of rafting, but unlike the earlier troubles these animosities took the form of business rivalries rather than international incidents.⁹

The cross-boundary flow of timber was legitimized by the provisions of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, which was concluded in 1842. The treaty established the St. John and St. Francis rivers as the boundary of northern Maine and proclaimed the St. John an international waterway; timber from northern Maine was to be treated "as though it were a product of the province" when floated from the upper waters to the port of Saint John. The agreement gave provincial loggers access to timberlands in Maine's Aroostook County and offered Yankees a means of driving their product to market. In the years immediately following the conclusion of the treaty, the port of Saint John exported an average of one hundred thousand tons of squared pine and birch timber annually; about two-thirds of this amount came from the Maine side of the border.¹⁰ The Ashburton treaty broadened Aroostook Valley horizons immeasurably as Yankee loggers fell heir to the worldwide markets of the British Empire. Timber cut in northern Maine traveled to Britain, Africa, South America, the West Indies, or the United States as prices dictated. In accordance with British colonial policy, most of the timber from the Aroostook territory was simply cut and squared in the woods, to be finished in the mills of Liverpool and Glasgow. But in addition to the raw wood, the port city's

exports included boards, planks, deals, staves, shingles, lath, and box boards, many of these products going to eastern ports of the United States. Shipbuilding in Saint John added another significant dimension to the trade. The provincial port city welcomed Aroostook's forest resources and offered in exchange goods from all over the world.¹¹

The border situation gave the lumber industry in Aroostook County a cast entirely different from that of the rest of Maine. A contract drawn by prominent Saint John merchant Alexander Seeley best expressed the complexity of this emerging international trade. The Canadian owned timberland in Aroostook County. In 1866 he sold stumpage to Maine lumberman Samuel W. Collins. The American cut timber on the provincial merchant's Maine lands and hired a crew of mixed nationality to drive the logs into New Brunswick to a mill owned by an American and staffed with Canadian mill hands. The lumber was probably repatriated to the eastern seaboard of the United States.¹²

Blessed with a rich and extensive timber hinterland and marketing advantages in both British and North American markets, the milling industry in the port city of Saint John expanded rapidly, and Maine millowners gained a significant place in the city's economy. As the flow of timber increased in the 1840s mill capacity was enlarged, leaving the city hungry for capital. In 1843 the *Kennebec Journal* noted several steam mills under construction in Saint John belonging to "American gentlemen of capital." The correspondent remarked that this was the "beginning of what we anticipated would be the issue of the Treaty of Washington," and predicted with near accuracy that American capital would "soon become paramount at St. John."¹³

Maine lumbermen were indeed quick to see the combined advantages of Aroostook County's vast timber resources, Saint John's ideal milling opportunities, and the virtual free-trade situation on the river. Typical of the American millowners to arrive in the second half of the nineteenth century was Andre Cushing, originally from Frankfort, Maine. In

1851 Cushing and his brother Theophilus bought and modernized the so-called Tide Mills of the defunct St. John Mills and Canal Company, an earlier unsuccessful Yankee venture. Initially the mill concentrated on pine lumber for American wholesalers, but Cushing later diversified into fruit-box shooks for the British West Indies trade. By 1867 the mill at Union Point was running day and night, employing over a hundred men sawing planks, deals, and box shooks. Taking advantage of the Ashburton treaty provisions, Cushing shipped the products of his mill to the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, the West Indies, the Canary Islands, and Britain. No firm in the province was more cosmopolitan in its outlook.¹⁴

Middlemen between the Aroostook logging industry and the downriver consumers were the powerful merchants in Fredericton and Saint John, who bought timber and advanced lumbermen credit for supplies, taking payment when the timber was driven to Saint John. The established merchants in Saint John reigned over the trade of one of Canada's greatest timber ports and were accordingly important elements in the trans-Atlantic economic community. The impressive Gilmour & Company, for instance, handled lumber on the St. John, the St. Lawrence, the Mirimichi, and even the Mississippi at New Orleans. Such firms financed provincial lumbermen operating on the upper St. John in Maine or extended credit and supplies to smaller merchants in Aroostook County, who in turn outfitted local Yankee lumbermen. Equally at ease on either side of the line, the merchant community forged a vital link in the international economy of the St. John Valley.¹⁵

Aroostook County's internationalized trading situation had its disadvantages however. Federal authorities too treated Aroostook timber milled in Saint John "as though it were a product of the province" and subjected it to a stiff tariff when it was returned to the eastern seaboard of the United States.¹⁶ More galling to Aroostook lumbermen was a new provincial duty on timber exported from New Brunswick. Frustrated

by widespread circumvention of timber licenses, provincial authorities had been casting about for an alternative method of collecting revenues for some time. An export duty on the province's major commodity seemed to be an appealing substitute for stumpage sales, since shipping was easier to regulate than remote woods operations. However, since the Ashburton treaty stipulated that Aroostook timber on the river was to be treated "as though it were a product of the province," Maine operators felt the bite of the new export duty as well. And because the rates for provincial stumpage were dropped when the duty went into effect, the new means of collecting revenues favored provincial loggers at the expense of those in Aroostook County. In May 1844 a proposed exemption for Aroostook lumber was struck from the draft, and the bill went into effect – over strenuous objections from both Yankee and provincial lumbermen operating in Aroostook County.¹⁷

The duty revived not-so-distant hostilities in Maine and New Brunswick. Maine loggers perceived the legislation as a devious attempt at international one-upmanship. The Ashburton treaty was labeled a "delusion"; the *Bangor Whig & Courier* pointed out that New Brunswick not only cut Maine timber, milled it, and exported it, but collected "stumpage" on it as well: "What more could she do if the territory were hers?" Aroostook lumbermen flooded Washington with petitions asking for redress, yet the timber export duty remained in effect for a decade, increasing the cost gap between lumber marketed in Bangor and that sent to Saint John.¹⁸

Protests from northern Maine brought the touchy matter of imports and exports to the United States Senate in 1848, but intense pressure from Penobscot lumbermen prevented either a remission of the American duty or action on the provincial export tax. Ostensibly the Penobscot lobby felt that methods of distinguishing timber cut on the American side of the river would be ineffective or cumbersome and that the value added in provincial mills would escape taxation. More

fundamentally, downstate lumbermen feared that opening the timber resources of the vast upper St. John watershed – American or foreign – would depress already unstable markets on the eastern seaboard of the United States.¹⁹

The matter was resolved to the advantage of the Aroostook County lumbermen in 1854 by the United States-Canadian Reciprocity Treaty, which, among other things, put an end to all duties on Canadian lumber coming into the United States and, as an added bonus, exempted Aroostook from the provincial export duty. Over the occasional protests from lumbermen on the Kennebec and Penobscot, Aroostook lumber collected at the Fredericton Boom after 1854 was placed under certificate of origin and rafted to Saint John, to be readmitted to the United States or sent to Great Britain, purely as markets dictated. The county's favorable market situation was threatened again in 1866 when the Reciprocity Treaty lost favor in the United States. As expiration approached, New Brunswick statesmen expressed hopes that the treaty could be renegotiated, and their sentiments were echoed across the border in Aroostook County. Opposition throughout the United States, however, was determined, and in March the treaty was allowed to expire. Northern Maine lumbermen again faced the prospect of a double duty on lumber shipped to American ports.²⁰

Northern lumbermen could do little to salvage reciprocity but shortly after abrogation of the treaty Congressman Frederick A. Pike of Calais introduced a bill in Washington to "further secure American citizens certain privileges under the Treaty of Washington." The bill would have allowed timber cut on the American side of the St. John and St. Croix rivers and milled in New Brunswick to be returned to American ports duty free. Because it exempted agricultural as well as forest products, the bill united the interests of Aroostook County, and in Washington this northern Maine consensus prevailed. The Pike Law passed in March 1866, legitimizing the unique international economy that had

developed in the St. John Valley and confirming a trend in exporting Aroostook County resources that has lasted to the present.²¹

By midcentury the international economy was firmly established along the St. John River. The milling industry had stabilized, capital had become concentrated into larger mills with more widespread woods operations, and American capital had become thoroughly mixed with that of the province. Seven so-called American mills manufactured lumber in Saint John, most of them primarily interested in American markets. In the 1840s mills in the port city had exported only 11 million board feet of lumber annually; in the 1870s they shipped over 300 million. This lively trade in Aroostook wood shipped to American ports peaked in 1872. Combined with the product of the mills on the American side of the St. Croix, shipments to American ports that year reached 414 million board feet of long timber, 317 million pieces of short lumber (lath, pickets, clapboards, and such), and 35 million shingles (see table 1).²²

New developments at the end of the century broadened the trading opportunities for Aroostook lumbermen and once again altered the composition of the industry on the St. John River. Earlier, the river itself had been the only means of marketing Aroostook County's forest products, and lumbermen accepted the higher costs and various complications attendant upon shipping through a foreign port. In the 1870s provincial rail systems were extended over the border in several places in the Aroostook and St. John valleys in an attempt to boost freights by tapping northern Maine markets and raw materials. While the lines did offer a route to American markets via New Brunswick, high shipping costs placed a ceiling on new mill development in the still-remote Aroostook towns.²³ In 1893, however, Aroostook County completed a rail system that linked the region directly with lumber wholesale markets in Boston and New York. Marketing possibilities generated by the new Bangor & Aroostook Railroad spawned several new mills in Aroostook County.

TIMBER DOWN THE ST. JOHN

TABLE I

FREE IMPORTATIONS OF PRODUCTS OF
MAINE FORESTS FROM NEW BRUNSWICK*

Year	Lumber (MBF)	Shingles (M pieces)	Year	Lumber (MBF)	Shingles (M pieces)
1869	58,344	78,076	1886	250,779	36,059
1870	68,850	60,152	1887	102,628	43,754
1871	157,205	44,524	1888	107,513	71,436
1872	413,824	34,577	1889	103,921	79,173
1873	69,300	42,820	1890	23,806	27,454
1874	42,458	44,275	1891	122,729	114,398
1875	44,765	28,981	1892	104,144	120,807
1876	30,811	23,123	1893	117,567	122,750
1877	33,870	25,471	1894	96,261	124,989
1878	25,689	15,713	1898	48,694	76,614
1879	42,813	20,942	1899	75,275	97,379
1880	76,542	31,116	1900	45,244	107,685
1881	118,115	31,972	1901	47,896	114,869
1882	64,954	29,753	1902	62,397	114,648
1883	71,825	22,230	1903	33,457	85,243
1884	85,600	23,102	1904	30,034	54,287
1885	85,530	34,620	1905	40,495	75,331

*Includes products from the St. Croix and St. John rivers.

The largest of these, the St. John Lumber Company at Van Buren, consumed 25 million board feet of timber in its inaugural season, a figure that doubled in the next few years.²⁴

The railroad also opened a new chapter in the county's relations with neighboring provinces. The big mills brought changes on the rivers – new dams, sorting works, booms, and channel improvements – and reopened issues that had never been adequately settled by the Ashburton treaty of 1842. Absorbing more than half the annual drive of timber on the main St. John, the big mills at Van Buren signaled the beginning of the end for the American milling industry in the city of Saint John. Thus as it had in the 1830s the increase in lumbering activities after 1893 upset the balance of international relations and touched off a new round of controversy on the river.

In one sense, the renewed battles over timber and water rights duplicated a general controversy brewing throughout the Northeast between older, established mills at tidewater and the newer mills, which responded to better transportation facilities by moving upriver closer to the timber source.²⁵ But on the St. John the situation was complicated by the interplay of four governments – state, provincial, federal, and dominion – and the negotiations were confined within the framework of the half-century-old Ashburton treaty.

On the American side of the border, the new railroad was heralded as a means of keeping Maine's wealth in the pockets of Maine citizens. "No longer will the money paid by United States citizens . . . go to . . . Canadian laborers for manufacturing, Canadian traders and merchants for supplies, and Canadian river drivers for piloting The money will be put in circulation among the people to whom it belongs."²⁶ Owners of the older mills at tidewater in New Brunswick, on the other hand, argued that the booms, dams, sorting gaps, and railroad bridges for the new upriver mills restricted the flow of logs and thus violated the Ashburton accord, which stipulated free and open navigation on the river.²⁷

Troubles began as early as 1902 and continued through the next decade. Much earlier, in the mid-1840s, Bangor lumbermen had devised a means of directing the flow of water from Chamberlain Lake, at the head of the Allagash River, into the East Branch of the Penobscot. Despite the loss of Allagash water through the Telos Canal, northern river drivers maintained an uneasy peace with those on the Penobscot throughout the nineteenth century. As woods activity increased along both watersheds at the turn of the century, water issues on the upper Allagash became more contentious. In this instance, lumbermen from the port of Saint John united with those on the upper river to protest the theft of Allagash water, which was an important source for the St. John drive.²⁸ The Saint John men cited the Ashburton treaty, claiming that the dams at the Chamberlain outlet violated the provision mandating "free and open" navigation



Breaking landings on the St. John
(Courtesy of the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History)

of the waters of the St. John. To punctuate this argument, a contingent of river drivers dynamited the offending dam, bringing repercussions from Fredericton and Augusta.²⁹

While the Chamberlain Lake Dam incident passed without further complications, new conflicts arise at Van Buren, where the extensive booming and sorting works of the St. John Lumber Company brought critical delays in the drive of timber going to the mills on the lower river. But again, nationalities were less important than economic interests. The most vociferous downriver millmen, in fact, were the Americans operating in Saint John under the Pike Law. On the other hand, upriver lumbermen on both sides of the border resented the tight concert of port city businessmen who fixed prices for logs and established grading scales according to their own interests. The upriver mills offered a means of breaking the monopoly enjoyed by Yankee and provincial millowners in the city of Saint John. As in the Aroostook War, national interests blurred in the battle over a resource that spanned the international border.³⁰

Lumbermen took their appeals to Augusta, Fredericton, Washington, and Ottawa. On the Canadian side, attorneys sued for an injunction to dismantle the upriver sorting booms, while Aroostook lumbermen lobbied in Augusta to revoke charters for the log-driving companies that supplied the port city mills. A series of aggravations – dynamitings, sabotaged log drives, delays in sorting, confiscations – once again brought tensions along the river to a peak and brought development of the industry to a standstill.³¹ The provisions that had freed Aroostook lumbermen from the limitations of political boundaries in 1842 locked them into a legal situation that by the end of the century clearly worked to their disadvantage.

With the huge mills on the upper river already at work, resolution of the multifaceted problem came largely from long-term economic forces that eroded the tidewater mill-owners' monopoly. Still, the legal legacy of 1842, the many overlapping jurisdictions, and the long-standing international

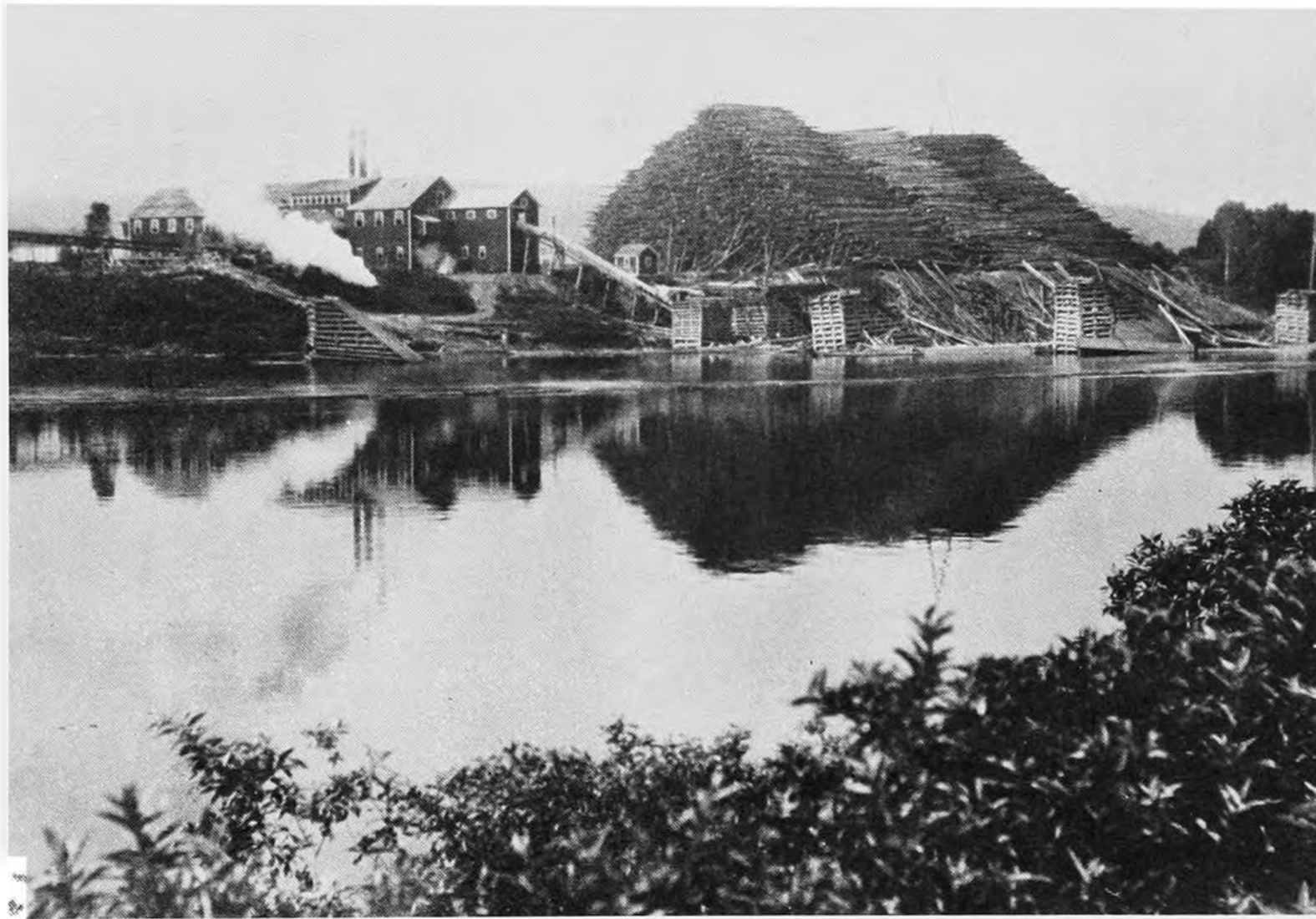


The sorting and holding works at Van Buren
(Courtesy of the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History)

animosities mandated formal arbitration. An international commission appointed by Washington and Ottawa convened in 1909, and over the next seven years the commissioners held hearings at various trouble spots along the river. In 1916 the commission issued a brief report summarizing the difficulties on the river and suggesting steps to correct them. It sanctioned the upriver improvements but proposed a series of water conservation measures to ensure downriver millowners a continuing supply of logs. For all its efforts, however, the commission had little actual impact upon the situation. The World War intervened, and the subsequent decline in lumber manufacture in Maine and across the country left many of the commission's recommendations unnecessary. The commission did establish an important precedent for friendly arbitration along the St. John, but the question of who was to get the timber was merely postponed; it still remains a matter of dispute in Aroostook County.³²

The controversy over the Pike Law, however, was resolved decisively in the prewar years. Since completion of the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad in 1893, upriver millowners had objected to the port city's duty-free privileges, and in 1905 Aroostook lumbermen petitioned Washington for abrogation. Echoing arguments presented by downstate loggers forty years before, Aroostook millowners complained that abuses under the Pike Law discouraged domestic industry. The Aroostook delegation cited the recent battles over water and timber and charged that Saint John millowners had "proved themselves ungrateful" for the law's benefits.³³

The controversial act was renewed in 1906 and 1909, but finally allowed to expire in 1911. By then, however, tidewater mills were receiving less than half the logs driven out of Aroostook County, and the era of internationalism was clearly on the wane.³⁴ Some Saint John businessmen viewed the trend philosophically, extolling the need for diversification that had "rather forced itself upon the people by the growing scarcity of their chief asset. . . ."³⁵ When the historic Fredericton Boom on the lower river shut down in 1925, the province



Lumber mill at Van Buren
(Courtesy of the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History)

had already embarked upon an ambitious program to attract pulp and paper interests to its own abundant spruce-fir forests. This industry would not bind the province so closely to the American side of the St. John River.

The Aroostook County experience provides some tentative conclusions about North America's political lumbering frontier. On one hand, the complicated transnational alliances that emerged in the 1830s and 1890s underscore the primacy of economic interests in border politics. Diplomacy merely sanctioned an international economic nexus that would have developed under any circumstances; if the Ashburton treaty had not existed, Aroostook lumbermen would have invented it.

On the other hand, the border exerted a subtle but undeniable influence on the Aroostook lumber industry. Access to British and colonial markets helped sustain lumbermen when American markets failed, and vice-versa. Free access to British as well as American capital also financed a logging infrastructure – dams, booms, and supply roads – that would serve the industry into the twentieth century. Another important infrastructural element – the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad – had been stimulated in no small way by border politics: by the wish to see Maine timber processed in Maine mills. In a more negative way, the British mercantilist legacy placed a premium on semiprocessed square timber, to be milled in Liverpool, Glasgow, or other overseas ports. The act of “siding” or squaring the logs in the woods and rehewing them in the port city persisted well past midcentury; the process was particularly wasteful, even by contemporary New England standards. The trade in square pine timber was costly in terms of Aroostook's resources.

Finally, the Aroostook County experience highlights the fact that markets, capital flows, technology, and labor recruitment patterns were continually shifting. Because political arrangements across the border changed more slowly, accelerated economic developments in the 1830s and 1890s brought new international complications. Economic struc-

tures outgrew their own institutional diplomatic framework.

Further examples of this pattern exist along the Maine-Canadian border today. In the rapidly changing forest situation in present-day Aroostook County, logs are once again moving across the border, this time by truck to mills in southeastern Quebec. The export of Maine sawlogs to the province touches deep-seated feelings among both friends and foes of the so-called border mills, for it raises profoundly historical issues.³⁶ A complaint from one Maine lumberman in 1975 could have been voiced a century earlier:

There are over one million board feet of [timber] cut from our natural resources This [timber] is cut with all Canadian men, . . . hauled to a Canadian mill with a Canadian truck, processed . . . with Canadian labor, then hauled with Canadian trucks . . . back into the United States, flooding our markets.³⁷

Several new Aroostook County mills have been established in the last decade, and county lumbermen are again experimenting with new, more competitive products. They have by no means stemmed the flow of timber westward to Quebec, but as one commentator put it, they have created "an international timbershed in the vast commercial forest of northwestern Maine."³⁸ This timbershed is steadily moving closer to the Quebec border, increasing the share of logs going to northern Maine mills. The fight for the Aroostook timber is far from over, but perhaps the tensions generated by the international processing of this resource can be eased by understanding the problems and resolutions that have come before.

NOTES

¹This article is an expanded version of a paper read at a meeting of the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations – Forest History Group in Portland, Oregon, October 18-19, 1983. The meeting was sponsored by the Forest History Society, Santa Cruz, California, which published the proceedings of the meeting under the editorship of Harold K. Steen.

²See Howard Jones, *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty: A Study in Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1843* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

³For interpretations of the Aroostook War see Lew Dietz, *The Allagash* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1968), pp. 108-13; Charles M. Wilson, *Aroostook: Our Last Frontier* (Brattleboro, Vermont: S. Daye Press, 1937), pp. 73, 92-93. The war has yet to be described from the perspective of the lumberman. For contemporary accounts, see *Correspondence Relating to the Boundary Between the British Possessions in North America and the United States of America under the Treaty of 1873* (London: Parliament, 1840); Maine Land Office Records, 1825-1842, Maine State Archives, Augusta; *Maine Documents and Resolves* (title varies; Augusta, 1838-1842); *Annual Report of the Land Agent* (Augusta, 1838-1842); *Bangor Whig & Courier*, 1837-1842; *Bangor Democrat*, 1838-1842. See also W. T. Ashby, *A Complete History of Aroostook County and Its Early and Late Settlers*, clippings from the *Mars Mill View*, 1909-1910, Bangor Public Library, Bangor, Maine.

⁴George W. Coffin [Massachusetts land agent] to Governor Enoch Lincoln, August 29, 1825; Daniel Rose [Maine land agent] to Nehemiah Leavitt, April 25, 1831; William Parrott to Rufus McIntire, August 14, 1839; Coffin, journal, October 6, 1825, all in Land Office Records; *Annual Report of the Land Agent* (Augusta, 1840), p. 74; Caleb H. Ellis, *History of Fort Fairfield and Biographical Sketches* (Fort Fairfield: Fort Fairfield Printing Company, 1894), p. 32.

⁵James Seger to Collins Whittaker, September 27, 1839; G & I Monro to S. Cary Company, January 13, 1840; October 9, 1839, Shepard Cary Papers, in possession of Frank Peltier, Houlton, Maine.

⁶George W. Coffin to James Irish, February 24, August 4, 1825; Coffin, journal, October 6, 1825; Coffin, letterbook no. 111, p. 231, all in Land Office Records; "Documents Relating to the North Eastern Boundary," *Maine Documents* (Augusta, 1835), Senate no. 10, pp. 2, 8, 13, 20.

⁷On explorations into the Aroostook territory, see Ezekiel Holmes in *Bangor Whig & Courier*, July 5, 1838; Charles T. Jackson in *ibid.*, May 2, 1838. On political issues, see *Bangor Whig & Courier*, January 28, 1837. On road policies, see George W. Coffin and James Irish to governors of Maine and Massachusetts, December 8, 1826; Coffin, journal, October 23, 1825, Land Office Records; *Bangor Whig & Courier*, August 18, 1837.

⁸George W. Coffin to governors of Maine and Massachusetts, July 10, 28, 1826; Coffin to Daniel Rose, January 5, 1832; Coffin to Governor Enoch Lincoln, June 28, July 10, 1826, Land Office Records.

⁹*Maine Private and Special Laws* (Augusta, 1840), no. 88; *Annual Report of the Land Agent* (Augusta, 1841), p. 2; Ellis, *History of Fort Fairfield*, pp. 35, 98; Agreement, Thomas J. Webster and Francis Gallagher, April 26,

1843, Cary Papers; *Bangor Democrat*, February 21, 1843. For disagreements over the boom operations, see Collins Whittaker to Shepard Cary, June 2, 1843; March 25, 1850; March 1, 1853, Cary Papers, Maine Historical Society, Portland.

¹⁰Thomas Le Duc, "The Maine Frontier and the Northeastern Boundary Controversy," *American Historical Review* 53 (October 1947): 30-41; Daniel Webster, *Speech before the New York Historical Society vis. the Northeastern Boundary* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1843), pp. 63-65; Dudley A. Mills, "British Diplomacy and Canada: The Ashburton Treaty," *United Empire* 2 (October 1911): 691; *Bangor Democrat*, February 21, 1843.

¹¹U.S., Congress, House, *Report on Reciprocal Trade with the British North American Colonies*, H.R. 4, 32d Cong., 2d sess., February 4, 1853, p. 16; *St. John News*, September 4, 1843.

¹²A. McL. Seeley, "Agreement with Samuel W. Collins," October 8, 1866, A. McL. Seeley Papers, New Brunswick Historical Society, Saint John.

¹³*Kennebec Journal*, June 9, 1843. See also *St. John Sun*, April 3, 1889; *Bangor Whig & Courier*, August 4, 1844; *St. John News*, October 14, 1844; Graeme Wynn, *Timber Colony: A Historical Geography of Early Nineteenth Century New Brunswick* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 96.

¹⁴*St. John Times*, February 19, 1867; *St. John and Its Business: A History of St. John* (Saint John: H. Chubb, 1875), p. 95; *The Wood Industries of Canada* (London: Timber Trade Journal, 1897), p. 57.

¹⁵Arthur R. M. Lower, "The Trade in Square Timber," *Contributions to Canadian Economics* 6 (1933): 49-50; Wynn, *Timber Colony*, pp. 113-37.

¹⁶*St. John News*, May 27, 1844; *Bangor Whig & Courier*, April 4, 1848; *Bangor Democrat*, April 4, 1848; Israel D. Andrews, *Report on the Trade and Commerce of the British American Colonies and Upon the Great Lakes and Rivers . . .*, S. Ex. Doc. 112, 32d Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, 1843), pp. 32-35.

¹⁷*Bangor Democrat*, March 23, 28, 1843; *St. John News*, February 24, 27, 1843; Andrews, *Report on the Trade and Commerce*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁸*Bangor Whig & Courier*, April 6, 1846. See also *Bangor Democrat*, February 21, 1843; March 5, 1844; *St. John News*, May 27, 1844; Andrews, *Report on the Trade and Commerce*, pp. 32-35, U.S. Congress, *Report on Reciprocal Trade*, p. 21.

¹⁹*Bangor Whig & Courier*, February 21, March 2, April 1, 1844; April 4, 7, 1848; July 22, 1854; February 15, 1866; *Bangor Democrat*, April 4, 1848.

²⁰W. S. McNutt, *New Brunswick: A History, 1784-1867* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1963), pp. 315-30; Alexander Munro, *New Brunswick, with a Brief Outline of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island . . .* (Halifax: Richard Nugent, 1855), p. 110; *Aroostook Times*, February 2, September 20,

TIMBER DOWN THE ST. JOHN

October 4, November 5, 22, 1861; January 10, 20, 1862; *St. John Times*, January 11, 13, March 10, 20, 1866; June 8, 1867; *Bangor Whig & Courier*, March 2, 1866.

²¹*Aroostook Times*, February 23, March 9, 1866; *St. John Times*, February 25, 1867; *Bangor Whig & Courier*, February 5, 1866; U.S. Department of State, *Annual Report on Foreign Commerce for the Year Ending September 30, 1867* (Washington: GPO, 1868), p. 178.

²²*St. John and Its Business*, pp. 92-95; *The Wood Industries of Canada*, p. 57; *St. John Sun*, April 3, 1889; *St. John Times*, February 19, 1897; Andrews, *Report on the Trade and Commerce*, pp. 32-50; Wynn, *Timber Colony*, pp. 49-53.

²³G. P. de T. Glazebrook, *A History of Transportation in Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1938), pp. 64-65, 155; Cora M. Putnam, *The Story of Houlton* (Portland: House of Falmouth, 1958), p. 231; S. B. Hugh Foster, *History of Old New Brunswick Railroads*, pamphlet, New Brunswick Historical Society Collections, Saint John. On exports of lumber from the St. John Valley in Maine, see "Report of the Commission to Locate and Survey Bridges Across the St. John and St. Francis Rivers," *Maine Documents* (vol. 2, 1880), pp. 6-7; *Bangor Industrial Journal*, January 30, 1891; *Aroostook Times*, October 22, 1885; November 13, 1890.

²⁴Construction of the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad and subsequent mill development on the upper river are best described in *Bangor Industrial Journal*, 1893-1905; Edward E. Chase, *Maine Railroads: A History of the Development of the Maine System* (Portland: Southworth Press, 1926); Charles C. Hicks, "The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad and the Development of Northern Maine" (M.A. thesis, University of Maine at Orono, 1972); *Annual Report of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad* (Bangor, 1893-1905); *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics* (1910), pp. 31-33.

²⁵Controversies on Maine rivers are detailed in David C. Smith, *A History of Lumbering in Maine, 1861-1960* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1972), pp. 263-331.

²⁶*Bangor Industrial Journal*, May 1906, p. 11; *Aroostook Times*, October 15, 1891.

²⁷For a description of upriver improvements, see William T. Nash, "Report on the St. John River," typescript, Fraser Companies, Ltd., 1938. Downriver lumbermen's complaints are recorded in International St. John River Commission, *Hearings*, 6 vols., 1909-1916, transcript, Bangor Public Library.

²⁸Material on the Chamberlain Lake water situation in the nineteenth century is sketchy. See Telos Canal Company Records, Bangor Public Library; International St. John River Commission, *Hearings*, especially Richard Hand testimony, pp. 2127-41.

²⁹For lumbering activity on the East Branch and the St. John, see *Bangor Commercial*, January 30, March 4, June 29, 30, 1903; March 4, 1904; *Bangor Industrial Journal*, July 2, 1897; *Paper Trade Journal* 55 (August 21, 1912): 18;

Telos Canal Company Records, September 8, 1903. The dynamite incident is recorded in *Bangor Commercial*, August 5, 8, 11, 29, 1905; *St. John Sun*, August 7, 8, 1905; International St. John River Commission, *Hearings*, pp. 2223-31; 2255, 2271-76, 2353-62, 2377-80, 2384-85.

³⁰*St. John Sun*, March 21-30, 1903; *Bangor Commercial*, February 8-10, 1905.

³¹*St. John Sun*, March 27-April 3, 1903; February 5, 1905. The climax of the "Second Aroostook War," as some called it, came in 1905, with a dynamiting and near-shootout at the Van Buren (upriver) booms. See *St. John Sun*, June 1-8, 1905; *Bangor Commercial*, June 14, 1905; Smith, *A History of Lumbering in Maine*, pp. 306-07.

³²Peter C. Keegan, "Report to William J. Bryan, Secretary of State, Regarding the St. John River Commission," typescript, 1914, Bangor Public Library; *Bangor Commercial*, February 10-24, 1905; *Bangor Industrial Journal*, May 1906, p. 6; *St. John Sun*, April 3, 1912; Thalia O. Stevens, "The St. John River Commission, 1909-1916" (M.A. thesis, University of Maine at Orono, 1970), pp. 22, 110, 118. Other summaries of the commission's work are in the *Paper Trade Journal* 60 (April 1, 1915): 22; 62 (February 24, 1916): 14; Nash, "Report on the St. John River," p. 6.

³³*Bangor Commercial*, February 6, 9, 1905; *Fort Fairfield Review*, February 20, 1906; *Maine Bills and Documents* (1905), House no. 92. For earlier complaints from downstate lumbermen, see *Maine Documents* (1889), Senate no. 96.

³⁴*Bangor Industrial Journal*, November 1909, pp. 20-21; Nash, "Report on the St. John River," p. 4; *St. John Globe*, April 29, 1911; *Bangor Commercial*, April 1, 1911.

³⁵I. Gebhard Willrick, *St. John, New Brunswick*, U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor Consular Report (Washington, 1907), pp. 42-43.

³⁶See Jack Aley, *The Export of Maine Sawlogs to Quebec* (Augusta: Maine Department of Conservation, 1981); Bret Wallach, "Logging in Maine's Empty Quarter," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70 (December 1980): 545.

³⁷Wayne Burmingham, in U.S., Congress, Senate, Select Committee on Small Business, *Economic Problems of Small Businesses in the Northeastern United States*, hearings held in Presque Isle, Maine, November 8, 1975 (Washington, 1975), p. 30.

³⁸Aley, *Export of Maine Sawlogs*, p. 19.

TIMBER DOWN THE ST. JOHN

Richard W. Judd holds a Ph.D. from the University of California at Irvine. He recently resigned his position as associate editor of Forest History Journal to join the faculty of the University of Maine at Orono, where he will teach Maine history and edit the Maine Historical Society Quarterly.