



River-riding

— A test of skill

by Harry Hinchley

Long pointers were the boats commonly used on the drives in the old days of lumbering. Most of them were made by a Pembroke boat builder and they had the special design that was best suited for the work they had to do.

With a steersman at each end and a crew of rowers on the seats in the middle the pointers were able to go through some very fast and rough water.

The safety of the passage depended largely on the judgement of the steersman. One wrong move at a critical

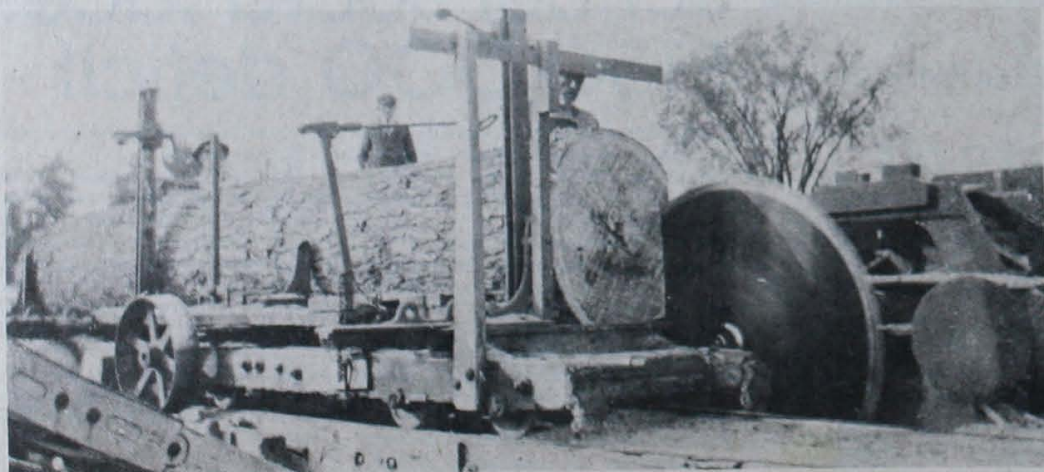
moment and the boat might easily overturn and spill the crew into the rolling waters. It was a test of nerve to ride a boat through some of the swift rapids when the water was high in early summer when most of the driving was done.

Some of the men who specialized in this kind of work would study the rapids in summer when the water was low. Then they could better find out where the bad rocks were and learn what course to follow when going through the next spring.

The work of driving the river

was a job for healthy young men with strength and courage. Such men gloried in their strength and often tried to outdo each other in deeds of daring. Tales are still told of the feats that had been done, often on a dare.

Taking logs or square timber down a river was at best a very hazardous occupation. Many a man lost his life when the boat over-turned or the logs jammed and the pile-up had to be broken. Along the rivers are many unmarked graves which are the last resting places of victims of forgotten tragedies of long ago.



Big Pine on the Bonnechere