

46

ALEXANDER FRASER

Alexander Fraser was one of the pioneer lumbermen of the Ottawa Valley born in Goulborn Township, Ontario in July 1830, son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Fraser. His father was a noncommissioned officer in a Highland Regiment of the British Army. Early in the 19th century, they came to Canada with the sappers and miners who were brought out to work on the construction of the Rideau Canal.

On severing his connection with the Armed Forces, Sgt. Fraser went up the Ottawa River as far as Pembroke, locating himself on land that later became a valuable and extensive farming property. As a boy, Alexander Fraser grew to know the ways of woodsmen, the ways of rivermen, and in fact acquired a knowledge of the lumbering industry, which being as it were a second part of his nature, contributed largely to his successful career as a lumberman.

While still quite young, he left the parental roof and was employed as a clerk in the general supply store of Hiram Chamberlain in the village of Pembroke. Being of a shrewd and canny businessman, and at the age of 18, he was made manager. Later he married Miss Sarah E. Chamberlain. Supplies were brought to Pembroke by canoes in summer and by sleds in winter. Through his training, he became thoroughly versed in many factors dealing with supplies for lumber camps, and in the business of bringing out logs and rafting them for transportation to Quebec City. Following the death of his father-in-law, Fraser continued to conduct the supply store with the same business acumen.

Although only 24 years old, Quebec lumbermen had a profound respect for this shrewd young Scotsman. James Ross of Québec, one of the largest operating lumbermen, was ready to render financial aid to Fraser at any time, as he was trustworthy. In a short time, Fraser was one of the powers in the lumbering industry on the Ottawa River. Fraser's lumbering operations were not confined entirely to the cutting of logs and hewing of square timber. He also dealt extensively in timber limits. His practice was to purchase good stands of timber, holding them for several years. During the time that elapsed between the purchase and sale of his timber properties, their values had increased several times in value. He was far-sighted in his speculative enterprises, seldom investing money where he could not see a fair fighting chance for realizing a fair profit from such purchases.

There was a steamboat the "Alex Fraser" sailed on the lower Allumette Lake and the boat was used for carrying passengers on certain days and also for towing logs on the Ottawa River. It was in service from 1891 to 1915, when it was dismantled and rebuilt at Quyon. In his later years, Fraser embarked on other enterprises such as the Lachine Power Co., the Ottawa Trusts and Deposits Co., and was greatly interested in the Hull and Aylmer Electric Railway. His sons, John B. Fraser and W.H.A. Fraser assumed lumbering operation and management, forming the firm of Fraser and Co. and built a sawmill at Deschenes. His daughters were Mrs. J. Daw, wife of Rev. S. Daw; Mrs. J. Fee and Miss Madge Fraser. He was a Methodist and when in Ottawa, was a member of the board of trustees of Dominion Church. He was a Conservative in politics. He was buried in Beechwood cemetery, Ottawa and many of the pallbearers were dignitaries and associates of the lumbering industry.

Taken from the Pembroke Observer  
by Evelyn Moore Price  
February 1983