

The Walker Mill

The mill was located on Lot 15, Concession 3. It was built after the great windstorm in 1913. The storm had blown the roofs off many houses and barns which had to be replaced. Bushes had been blown out by roots and the trees needed to be cut into logs and timber. The mill was built by John Davidson who ran it for four years. It was then sold to J. J. Tyson.

A couple of years later the mill was bought by Robert Walker, Allenford. He paid Mr. Tyson \$400 for the mill machinery. Eight to ten men were required to operate the mill. Sid Duffy, Hepworth, was foreman, Jack Reid, fireman, and Tom Reid, Will Chambers, Graham Chambers and Harvey Beirnes were sawyers. Mr. Reid also had a threshing machine and during harvest Bill Askin replaced him as fireman.

The property on which the mill was located was leased first from Jack Davidson, then his nephew Alpine, and later from Jim Davidson, grandson of Jack Davidson.

The mill was run by a steam-powered plant and required ninety pounds of steam to run. The huge furnace was fired with sawdust and edgings. An old log book showed 560M was sawn in 1932. The logs came from wood lots bought in the area and loads of logs purchased on the Peninsula. The logs were cut into timber and the sawn-off edges were used for slabs. A big truckload of slabs sold for \$18 or \$20.

The mill was quite a profitable venture and was a busy place for many years. Lumber from the mill was sold over a big radius. Railway ties (various sizes 8"x8"x10' and 8"x8"x12', etc.) were sawn at the mill and sold through a tie broker to the C.N.R. The ties were loaded onto flat cars at the railway station in Allenford.

Many of the local barns were constructed from timber and lumber sawn at the mill. Lumber was sold to Massey Ferguson, Toronto to be used in the manufacture of threshing machines and other farm machinery.

Elm was trucked to Breslau to be used in making hockey sticks. Knights at Meaford bought hard maple for flooring. Squares (various sized 2" x 4", 2" x 6" and 2" x 8") were sold to the Polymar plant in Sarnia to be used for pipe bridging. The shipyard at Collingwood purchased basswood for patterns. Timber from the mill was supplied for the Lion's Head dock and the Big Bay dock in the Bruce Peninsula.

One contract during the Second World War was to deliver ash to Weston to be used in making airplane wings. The ash had to be of excellent quality and had to pass five tests. The price was \$250 per M, a high price at the time.

Mr. Ken MacKinnon told of going down to Weston on the truck with Robert Walker to deliver a load of ash. Any lumber not passing the five tests was returned. Mr. Walker wanted to see samples of ash that had passed the tests and samples of ash that hadn't passed the tests. The plant manager was reluctant to go to all that trouble and

said it would be of no help in selecting the lumber as you couldn't tell the required quality by looking at the ash. However, Robert was insistent and sure that he knew quite a bit about wood. He was finally taken and shown samples and given the explanation of why one piece was accepted and the other rejected. He must have gained some knowledge from this exercise as no future ash that he delivered was returned.

The main markets for lumber from the Mill were the many furniture factories in the area. National Table, Owen Sound, Fitton & Parker, Southampton and Hepworth Furniture, Southampton, bought maple, ash, elm and birch. Mr. Walker was a Director of Hepworth Furniture for many years.

Another market for lumber was Sauble Beach. Mr. Walker leased a large tract of beach from Indian Affairs. He then leased the lots which ranged in price from \$20 to \$40 in later years to people wishing to build cottages. The same lots now cost over \$700 and \$800 to lease per year.

Gerald, the younger Walker son, worked with his father at the mill and trucked for several years. The mill operated until 1951. There were few days in his life when Robert Walker wasn't up early and out working - often until late at night. He thoroughly enjoyed "doing business". He died in 1954 at 75 years of age.

The George Walker Family

George Michael Walker (1822-1892) came from Minto Township with his family George, Robert and Mary to Amabel Township in 1852. He got a farm on Lot 15, Concession 2 from the Crown, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mizen. His son George continued to live on this farm where he raised a family of ten children. He was married to Elizabeth McKiddie in 1875. They replaced the log cabin with a large cement block house in 1908, the home still occupied by the Charles Mizen family.

George sold the farm to Joseph Blakely in 1923, and received the hotel in Allenford as part of the deal. George and Lizzie lived in the hotel for several years before purchasing a small house on Alice Street (now owned by Marian Shirreff). Their family consisted of:

1. George (1876-1946) who married Ina Gowan in 1908 and farmed for many years. Later he moved to Allenford and was a mail carrier. His children were John and Alberta who were both teachers.
2. Robert (1878-1954).
3. Eleanor (1880-1967) who married John Vert.
4. Mary (1882-1948) who married James McIntosh. (See E Lot 11, Concession D for their family.)
5. Wellington (1896-1933)
6. Mabel (1890-1958) who married Charles Askin.
7. Alberta (1888-1907) who died of pneumonia at 19 years of age.
8. Harold who married Hughena MacGregor in 1925 and farmed north of Elsinore. Their eight children were Roy,