

Began as a lumber mill in a cedar swamp

Midland's growth spurred by industrialists, and businessmen

by Shirley Whittington
From the beginning Midland's growth has been spurred by the energy of industrialists and businessmen.

In 1859, the town was a little settlement called Mundy's Bay, named for a family which ran a store in the area. An early entrepreneur, H.H. Cook, built a lumber mill in Mundy's Bay, and it was the principal industry in the little settlement which was located in a cedar swamp on the shore of Georgian Bay.

A railway tycoon named Adolphe Hugel was the next business man to inject life into Mundy's Bay. Hugel and George Cox (president of the Midland railway) bought up acres of local property and formed the Midland Land Company.

Capital from the sale of this land was used to finance the extension of the Port Hope, Lindsay, and Beaverton Railway to Georgian Bay. The Midland railway was completed in 1879.

In 1875 when Adolphe Hugel and the Directors of the Midland Railway chose Midland Bay (then called Mundy's Bay) as the terminus of their railway, they found a collection of half a dozen shanties on little plots of land carved out of the surrounding bush.

The settlement was then called Aberdar, after a town in Wales. Hugel, whose railway lumbered along with the cumbersome name of "The Port Hope, Lindsay and Beaverton Railway" changed its name to "The Midland Railway," and also changed the name of the little village to Midland.

Travellers to the town at that time would have found a village with two hotels - the Queen's at the corner of Bay and King Streets, and the American, also on the shore of the Bay. They would also have found a corduroy main street, which had a disconcerting



"A harbour second to none on the Great Lakes . . . is of easy access and well protected on all sides."

tendency to drop away into sink holes every spring.

With a sawmill in operation, Midland began to emerge as a lumber village, and three masted schoolers carried out loads of lumber for Saginaw and other American ports.

Then the Chew brothers arrived on the scene and built a grist mill and one could foresee the beginnings of a grain trade. By 1869, Midland had a town hall, a school with three teachers, wagon shops, and a weekly newspaper, *The Argosy*, edited by M. McFarland. The permanent population approached 1,300, increasing by a couple of hundred in the summer months.

The village was incorporated in 1879, and Samuel Fraser was the Reeve with L. McFarland clerk. H.S. Ruby treasurer, and George Chew, Samuel Chew, Thomas Hartley and Francis Hurdon as councillors. These gentlemen raised the money

for the expenses of incorporation out of their own pockets.

There was a lot of activity on the other side of Midland Bay. It was here that the Drummond Smelter opened in 1898. About this time, plans were laid for the town of Everton. Nobody seemed interested in settling there at the time, but the name remained.

Meanwhile, back in Midland, H.H. Cook's Mill was still operating, and the folks who worked there lived in an area called Slabtown - which was east of the main street.

The King Street area was known as Uptown. According to oldtimers, there was many a donnybrook between the Uptowners and the Slabtowners.

Dollartown is another geographical nickname which persists to this day. John Dollar was an American who operated the Ontario Lumber Company from 1879 to 1890. He's also remembered for having built the

first board sidewalk in 1887 so that he could walk from his house at Hugel to Knox Presbyterian Church without getting muddied.

John Drummond, of the Drummond smelter, and Dr. R. Raikers, dismayed by the yearly outbreaks of typhoid and growing numbers of industrial accidents, encouraged the building of a 12-bed hospital in Sunnyside.

This Midland-Penetanguishene Marine Hospital (Penetanguishene built its own hospital in 1910) served the populace until James Playfair bought the Manley Chew residence on Dominion avenue and gave it to the town for use as a hospital.

In 1881, Cook's Sawmill became the British Canadian Lumber Company and it was the first building in Ontario to have electric lights installed. They were feeble flickering affairs, but people came from miles around, by boat and by train to see the twinkling miracle.

In 1890, Midland was incorporated as a town and its first mayor was John B. Horrell. The population was 4,000 then, and the stage was set for the entrance of two of the most influential businessmen to shape Midland's history.

James Playfair took over H.H. Cook's sawmill and surveyed a local industrial scene that included Canada Iron Furnace Company, Georgian Bay Shook Mills, Georgian Bay Engineering Works, Midland Engine Works, Mid J. Hill and Sons, Peter McKay's Woolen Mill (later O'Hare), Hind's Bottling Works, Hacker Boatworks, Midland Brick Company, Midland Pump Works, Palace Houseboat Company, and Lockhart Rogers Carriage Works.

Playfair began his shipbuilding operation in 1910. Later, he and D.L. White took over the management of the Midland Machine Shop, Midland Wood products, Georgian Bay Tourist

Company, The Midland Coal Dock, and the Copeland Flour Mills.

The beginning of the twentieth century in Midland saw another surge of growth. Many new homes were built in this period, most of them by contractors Wallace and Cook.

Shipbuilding continued until 1928. In 1941, operations began again under different management, producing corvettes and trawlers for the Canadian Navy. Shipbuilding in Midland came to an end in 1957. There was little industrial activity in the 30s except for the Midland Foundry and a firm known as Fine Silk, which eventually became Bay Mills.

In 1939, the grain elevators were in full swing and greatly contributed to the economy.

When the shipbuilding business closed, however, things looked pretty bleak, and there was a great effort made to attract more industry to the area. Bausch and

Lomb, Ernst Leitz (Canada), and the Midland Footwear were the first to accept the Chamber of Commerce's invitation to locate in Midland. Canadian Nameplate was the next big investment, and it was followed by Pinecrest Products, headed by Midlander R.B. Holt.

In the 1950s, Pillsbury Canada purchased Copeland flour Mills. In 1967 Pillsbury sold its Midland Mill to Ogilvie Flour Mills Company Limited, but continues to operate a plant in Midland.

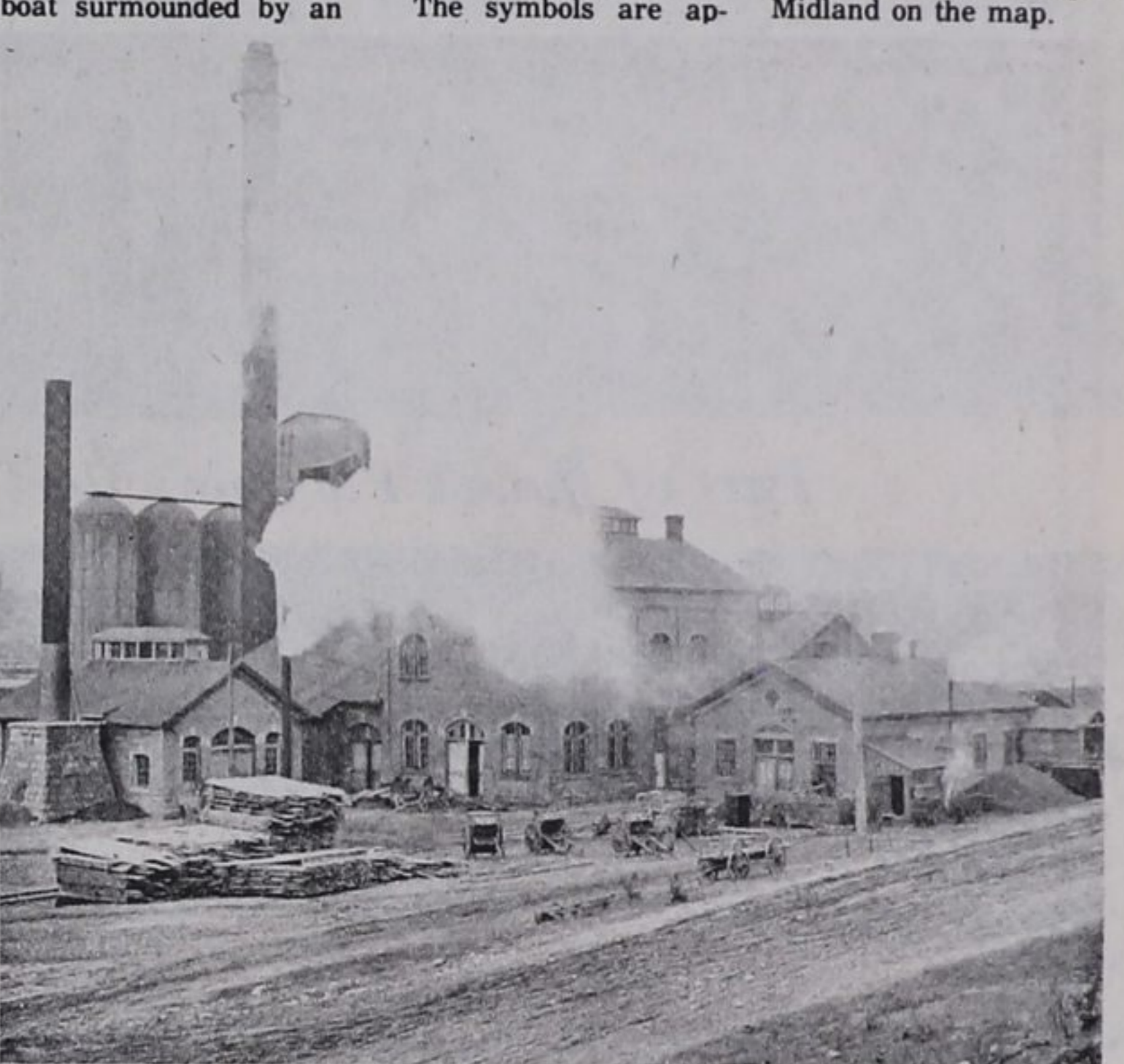
Now, after a few uncertain years, Midland has a solid and varied light industrial base. Among the plants which have located here are Pinecrest Products, Bay Mills, Greening Donald, KIL, Arthur S. Keitch, Rowika Industries, Lembo Corp., Motorola, (Ontario) Ltd. RCA, Day Specialties, and Bay Trim and Accessories.

Midland's official crest

depicts a grain elevator, a steam engine, and a lake boat surrounded by an

Indian paddling across the sparkling waters. The symbols are ap-

propriate. Industry and tourism have joined to put Midland on the map.



Canada Iron Furnace Company plant



Products from Silica

Indusmin Limited has been processing Silica at Midland since 1970. You may ask what is made from Silica? It is an important raw material in the manufacture of many products we use everyday. Countless glass bottles, like the ones in the picture contain Silica. In addition, this valuable industrial mineral is used in fibre glass, ceramics, concrete and construction, and also in the foundry and abrasive industries.



Midland, Ontario.