

LYNDHURST - NIGHTMARE, DREAM OR VISION?

"Where there is no vision the people die." Prov 29:18.

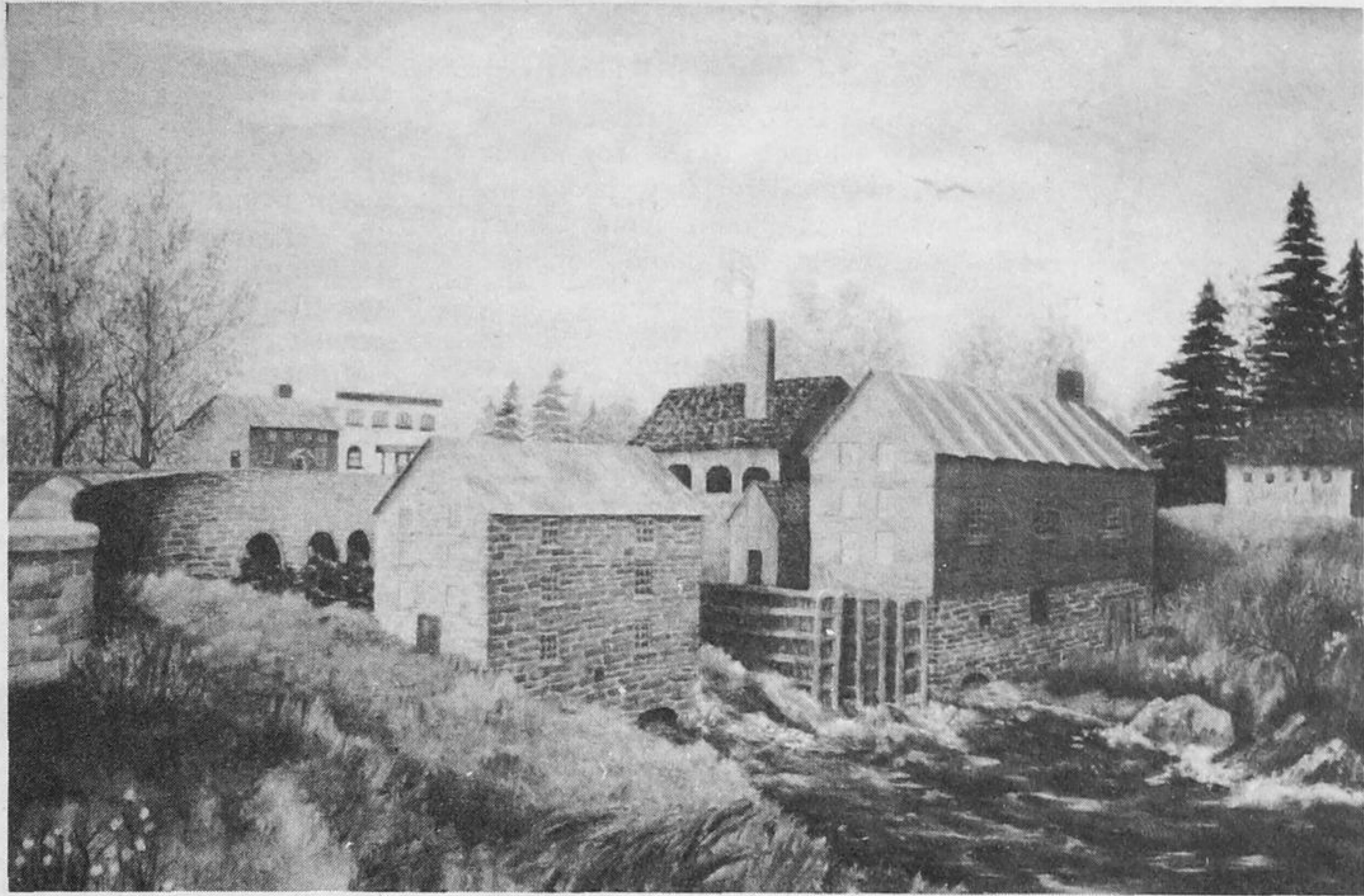
It is a well known fact that some people, given a set of adversities to face, struggle out from under them by seeing opportunities that can be realized into reality through self-motivation, some help, and sheer hard work. Others look at circumstances and see nothing but difficulties, hopelessness, despair and gradually die.

The same holds true for towns and villages, as exemplified by Lyndhurst. One can look at its adversities - burning down of its main business block, closing of the bank, not being on a main highway, lack of industry and commerce, limited opportunity for young people, etc.; or one can dream and possibly have this dream turn into a vision. The difference is you and I looking at the assets Lyndhurst has, and from them, establishing a vision of what Lyndhurst can be!

About 100 years ago, Lyndhurst - Iron Falls as it was then called was a prosperous community; a centre of commerce in Leeds County. It had a number of stores, was a transshipment point for iron, and since it was located on a source of cheap water power, had a number of thriving mills. With the advent of road travel, facilitated by the use of the automobile, the improvements of Highways 15 and 42 caused much of the traffic to bypass the village. Gradually, it pined away to its current status. And to add further insult to injury, time, lack of vision and non-appreciation of Lyndhurst's heritage brought about the destruction rather than restoration one of its greatest assets when it fell into disrepair; the mills. Luckily, recent Township Council kept the unique stone bridge when it became weak.

Thus we find present Lyndhurst quaint, but passed by by progress. Does it need to be this way? I do not believe so, hence, this article. Its purpose is to encourage the council, the inhabitants of Frontenac and Leeds Counties, and various government bodies concerned, to look at Lyndhurst as an opportunity waiting to be explored and developed. An opportunity which would benefit not only the Rear of Leeds, but all of Eastern Ontario.

Over the years, studies have shown that our population is aging. With this, more leisure time is, and will, become available



and from this the need arises to provide opportunities to encourage people to pursue crafts, arts and similar finer things of life. Other studies have established that some of the greatest resources Eastern Ontario has to offer are its lakes, parks and similar blessings of nature. Still others show that the area has a rich heritage of unique buildings and almost untouched towns and villages. As a result, it is a part of the Province of Ontario ideally suited for the promotion of tourism. The Government has recognized this by establishing various offices to encourage this. Following, and as a part, of Canada's Centennial celebrations, Canadians have come to appreciate their heritage. We have seen this in the increased number of heritage buildings being restored. The City of Kingston is one good example of this, as is the rise in popularity and greater development of the Rideau Canal and Upper Canada Village. By observing similar phenomena in the United States, it is easy to see that this trend will continue. For instance, I can visualize that Upper Canada Village will develop in a similar set up as Williamsburg, Virginia. As little as 25 years ago, it was a relatively small historical site. Yet today, around its historical core has developed a major history oriented establishment offering not only the old town, but also, good accommodations and restaurants, golf courses, theatres, parks, etc. It has become a place where one can easily spend several days. The place attracts millions of people yearly.

From a tourism point of view, Eastern Ontario has a large potential for growth. With Kingston and its historic flair and attractions as its

base, it can attract numbers of people far in excess of what it currently experiences. Unfortunately, however, at this point in time, the area tends to be a "one or two day visit". In that way it becomes unprofitable and non-appealing for Canadians, as well as foreign tour promoters, to offer, say, week long excursions to the area even though the area, with some development of existing resources, could provide sufficient attractions to encourage longer stays.

It is here where Lyndhurst can play a part! Because of its location central to the Rideau Canal and Rideau Lakes District, with its unique bridge, and IF THE OLD MILLS COULD BE REBUILT AND BROUGHT BACK IN OPERATION, COMPLETE WITH WORKMEN IN PERIOD COSTUMES AND ACTUALLY OPERATING THE MILLS, Lyndhurst could become a major tourist attraction. This would be even more so if the auxiliary mill buildings were used as shops for artisans plying their trade, and crafts people and art shows were encouraged. Already many artists and crafts people are located in the area. By focusing on a centre of this nature and considering population trends, this would only increase. The Lyndhurst creek could be made into a park-like setting where from the photograph of a painting done by Gladys Webb of Seeley's Bay; a painting commissioned to show what the mill and bridge looked like in the early 1900's; the setting is very pleasing to the eye.

By having Lyndhurst mills restored to their former beauty, their natural ability will be able to promote tourism in Eastern Ontario. The Lyndhurst mills with an addition or combination of other sites, such as the

wall paintings in Athens, Delta's mill, Bedford's mills, the Rideau Canal, Jones Falls, Perth, Kemptville, Upper Canada Village, Rideau Trails, Rideau Lakes, Iron Transshipment points on Gananoque Lake, Crystal mine at Red Horse Lake, Frontenac Park or a boat trip up the Rideau Canal to Ottawa, could be used as means around which tours, tourist attractions and visitors centres could be built and developed.

Sure, to restore Lyndhurst mills will take money, imagination and hard work. However, I believe it is a vision well worth considering. It will breath new life in a dying community; provide employment, pride in the community, area and county; development of pollution free industry, tourism, and its offspring in bed and breakfast, hotel/motel operations, tours, restaurants, arts and crafts, housing, etc.

By making use of existing capital pools, such as Eastern Ontario Development Corporation, Wintario, Parks Canada, Canada Heritage Foundation, private capital, grants, and yes, some tax dollars to get the ball rolling. The funding can be found. What it really takes is the creating of a vision of the possibilities for the area and then form a group of people who are willing to co-ordinate the various resources and existing interests. Together, and with all those having a stake and interest in the development of Eastern Ontario taking part in the process, a master plan should be developed which lays out the overall framework, cost, and needed funding. The possibilities exist. Who will take the bull by the horns and see a dream become a vision ultimately translated into reality?



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