



The Waterford Echoes

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WATERFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE NORTH WATERFORD SPOOL COMPANY

by Oscar Andrews

In 1918, Harry Brown and Mell Knight started what was to become the North Waterford Spool Company. Harry became the sole owner eventually. In 1945, Earl D. and Raynor K., sons of Harry, became joint owners, and in 1947, Raynor withdrew and started his own business, which is now Pike Industries. Earl operated the mill until 1967 and a Georgia-based thread company took over until June, 1968 when they failed and the mill closed terminating the jobs of about 60 people.

I worked for Harry Brown for five years before WW2. During the war I worked for the New England Shipbuilding Corp. in S. Portland. In 1945, I returned to the spool mill and was there until 1960. I was foreman for the last 14 years I was there.

The wood used for spools was all white birch. It was hauled into the birch mill in four-foot lengths, which some called short logs, but which were commonly called bolts or bolt wood. The most desirable part of the bolt was the so-called sap wood, or the white wood. The heartwood was used, but for a lower grade of spools or cores.

The birch mill itself consisted of a machine called a bolter, which sawed the bolt wood into planks of various sizes and two strippers (not like Las Vegas). The strippers sawed the planks into squares, the size to accommodate the size spool to be made. The squares were loaded onto wagons in summer and sleds in winter, then hauled into the yard, and laid up in layers to air dry (it was called cobbing). These were often taken down after becoming air dry and piled solid in the drying sheds. Before the lumber was used in the spool mill it had to be dried in a kiln. The dryness depended on the kind of spool to be turned, usually down to 8% or 10% moisture content. In the old days there was quite a lot of guess work on how dry the lumber was. Sometimes it would be pulled from the kiln to turn and

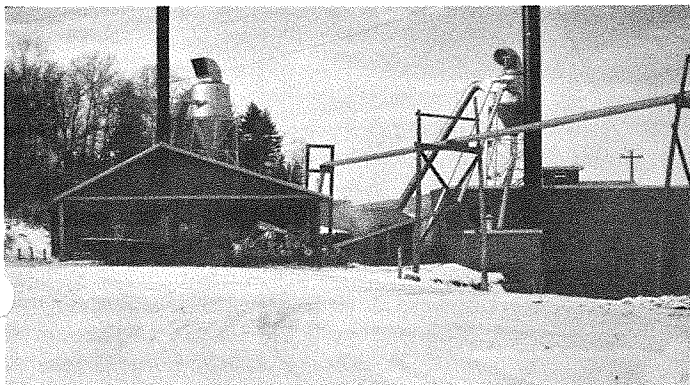


About 1957 when Route 118 went between the mill and the office and continued on across the bridge toward Bisbeetown.

found not dry enough, and would have to be put back into the kiln. The old kilns were made up with coils of steam pipes under the floor. The floor had a lot of small openings to let hot air through and were called gravity systems. The mill was modernized in the 1950's and had kilns that would dry the lumber from green to 10% moisture content in a few days. Then the squares were dry and ready to be used. I attended a special course at the U. of Mass. to learn about the new modern kilns and their operations.

The squares would be loaded onto wagons or carts and moved by hand into the spool mill. In the early days, they used machines called "roughers". It was a little mill in itself. The operator would pick up a square, trim the end on a saw, push it into a part of a machine that turned the square round for approximately two and one half inches and drill the approximate hole at the same time, then the operator cut that portion off and it dropped into a basket. When the basket was full it went to the hand finisher or to the automatic machine. Remember these pieces were turned, drilled and cut at approximately 30-40 pieces a minute. After the days of the roughers, they went to dowel machines. The squares were fed into this machine by hand, and it turned the whole four-foot piece through. Then these dowels went to the clippers, which were high speed circular saws. The dowels were laid in a tray and pushed to a gauge and sawed off at approximately 150 to 200 blocks a minute. These blocks, which were round pieces cut to accommodate the spool being turned, were fed by endless belts into bins built over each spool machine. The spool machine automatically picked up these blocks, fed them down the track and they were picked up by an automatic finger. The finger set it in place for the finishing heads to come in and finish the end. Then the carriage moved in with knives set in place. The spools were turned and dropped into canvas baskets. All at the rate of approximately 60 to 70 a minute. The blower system took care of the shavings.

(Continued on page 2)



Looking at the birch mill and new boiler mill from the birch mill yard about 1957.

Now about the power plant. The heart of this whole operation was the steam boilers and steam engines. The boiler was fired by the waste from the mill. During the time the mills were running, it was all automatic. At night and on weekends, there was a watchman that hand fired the boilers. The steam engines were fascinating. The birch mill was run by a steam engine. The engine drive pulley was belted to a main line. From this line all of the machines were driven in the birch mill. The same thing was true with the spool mill, except the engine was larger. When the engine was running to power the spool mill, it also drove a generator, and when the spool mill was started the engineer would throw a switch and the mill was on its own DC power. When all of the machines were running in the spool mill, there were a lot of drive belts flying in the air and it was very noisy.

Now let's go back to what happened to the spools after they landed in the baskets. Several baskets of spools at a time would go into tumbling drums, and they were tumbled until they would have a nice shiny finish. From the tumblers they went to the sorting room where all of the rejects would be picked out. The spools were placed in burlap bags for shipping and they were shipped all over the country. In the old days, they were hauled to the Norway Rail Freight Station, first with horses, then with trucks. Finally they were shipped by truck direct to the customer.

Spools were sold by the gross and were counted on computing scales.

1985 WATERFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS

LIFE MEMBERS - Eva and Malcolm J. Bean, George Brett, Georgia and Raynor K. Brown, Keith F. Brown, Royce F. Brown, Chapin and Virginia Cutler, Dorothy H. Davis, Rachel R. Deans, Angela d'Errico, Elisabeth S. and Stephen B. Dewing, Joan and W. William Fillebrown, Beatrice V. Fitts, A. L. Hammett, Jane W. Hammett, Chester A. and Eleanor T. Howard, Idamai Howe, John G. Howe, Dr. Lois J. King, John Klepinger, Miriam S. Monroe, John C. and Karen N. O'Brien, Charlotte L. Orr, Richard Perkins, Albert H. Rice, Ella E. Rice, Dr. Ruth E. Rounds, Fred F. and Marjorie W. Stockwell, William F. and Sara G. Stockwell, Thora H. Wardwell, Keith G. and Lieselotte H. Willoughby.

CONTRIBUTING - Agnes E. Blake, Seward B. Brewster, George C. Hamlin, M. Elizabeth Kilburn, Margaret M. Sawyer.

HONORARY - Michael Uhl-Myers

SUSTAINING - Mary U. Andrews, Randall H. Bennett, Ben B. Conant, Orris Durgin, Mary T. Fillebrown, Annie H. Gardner, Merrylyn S. Hilton, Stanley R. Howe, Edith Kimball, Prentiss Kimball, Elizabeth S. Lord, Stanley Lord, Joan Markey, Barbara F. Martz, John R. Martz, Elizabeth M. Maxfield, Harold N. Maxfield, Rev. Donald L. McAllister, Maisie M. Murch, Sylvia S. Sebelist, Beatrice Roberts, Jill S. Sawyer.

SENIOR CITIZENS - Oscar K. Andrews, Winola Brown, Elizabeth Carter, Anita T. Cook, Hazel DeMerritt, Vera M. Emerson, Dorothy Erickson, Charles A. Fillebrown, Charles A. Gordon, Clara M. Gordon, Ethel Grayber, Irving N. Grayber, Elizabeth Ingraham, John Ingraham, Marjorie Kimball, Gladys Knight, Agnes Lahti, Laurence Lundstrom, John Roberts, Isabelle Rolfe, Velma A. Thompson, James H. Tyler.

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

It doesn't seem possible that nearly a year has gone by since I have been president of the Waterford Historical Society. It has been a very interesting year, and we have held our meetings on schedule, regardless of the weather.

There is always a feeling of sadness in the passing of members, especially one so dedicated to the Society and to the whole town as was Billie Sawyer. We will all miss you, Bill.

Presently in progress are several projects which hopefully will be brought to completion in due time. I have enjoyed the cooperation and support of all members this past year, for which I am very grateful. I am confident that these projects will be completed.

Respectfully,
OSCAR ANDREWS

MEETINGS IN 1985

- JAN.** At Mary and Oscar Andrews' home. Open meeting about blacksmiths. Mary and Oscar and Isabelle Rolfe contributed greatly.
- FEB.** Ernest Knight spoke on the Cumberland and Oxford Canal and showed slides at the home of Bill and Margaret Sawyer.
- MAR.** Meeting at the Wilkins House. Ernest Knight spoke and showed slides on metal monuments in cemeteries.
- APR.** Meeting at Oscar and Mary Andrews. Show and tell was the subject.
- MAY** Meeting at Agnes Lahti's Bill Stockwell talked about town zoning.
- JUNE** Pot luck supper at our N. Waterford Museum proceeded the business meeting. Landscaping at our museums, replacing broken glass in cabinet and 4th of July parade were discussed.
- JULY** Potluck supper at North Waterford. Voted to have glass put in cabinet and to have the electricity and chimneys examined for safety.
- AUG.** Potluck supper. Chapin Cutler provided the program with slides and talking about his mountain climbs in the United States and Europe.
- SEPT.** Potluck supper at N. Waterford. Rodney Kimball provided the program about a collection of Indian arrowheads mostly collected on the shore of Bear Pond, South Waterford by his father, P. Harold Kimball.
- OCT.** Meeting held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Keith Willoughby. Ernest Knight talked and showed slides about gunpowder.
- NOV.** Meeting held at the Wilkins House. Raynor Brown gave the history of Papoose Pond.
- DEC.** Meeting held at the home of Mary and Robert H. Ross. Members gave the history of their own homes. The Ross home was the home of Joseph Hale at the turn of the century, and is known as the Bishop House today, Mary Bishop Ross having lived there many years in her young life.

NOTED IN THE PASSING SCENE

On May 29 seventy-five friends and co-workers gathered at the Country Way, S. Paris, to honor Marjorie Kimball who was retiring after teaching twenty-six years.



Agnes Labti weeding the back flower bed at the Mary Gage Rice Museum in early June.

Also, observed in Waterford's Historic Village at the Mary Gage Rice Museum were three window boxes and some rhododendron plants given by Mary and Robert Ross in memory of Mary's brother, Tom Bishop.

Adam D. Rice, son of Donald L. Rice and Elaine K. Rice completed training in fundamental military skills at the Army ROTC basic camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The basic camp is designed to give junior college graduates and college sophomores who have not taken ROTC courses the chance to enter the program. It also qualifies high school graduates for the ROTC program at any of the nation's six military junior colleges.



Waterford Historical Society float in the 4th of July Parade. Photo by Ross.

In the over 30 class, Sara Stockwell of Waterford was named champion in the annual Waterford Equestrian Center Horse Show. For the second year Sandy Porter Bean of Fairfield judged the event sponsored by the Waterford Equestrian Center and owner India Baker Haynes.

India Haynes rode Crossroads Prince of Wales at the 17th annual N. E. Welsh Soc. Show held at Cheshire Fair Grounds,

Keene, N.H. last Aug. 17 and 18, taking top honors in its class.

Windcrest Tiara, the 2 year old palamino filly of Donna Chase, was Reserve Section C Grand Champion at the Keene, N.H. show.



Bill Haynes photo

Members of the eighth grade graduating class of 1937 at North Waterford School held a reunion Saturday, August 24, at the home of Richard Jones, North Waterford. Mrs. Frances Jones served luncheon and the afternoon was spent visiting. The teachers of this class present are shown in the front row, left to right, Doris Hunt Jackson, Louise Stone Lord, June Brown Batchelder, and Hazel Kimball Demeritt. Second row, Dr. Kurt Lord, Richard Jones, Ella Rolfe, Dorothy Sanford Grover, Erma Rich Hatch, Pauline York Adams, Charlotte Blish McDonald; and third row, Dr. William Hersey, William Andrews and Wesley E. Bradford.

Rounds Store closed on Sept. 30 for the winter. They hope to reopen in the spring. This is the first time the store has closed since it opened in 1909 as L. R. Rounds and Company. The current owners are Mr. & Mrs. Gary Rounds. Gary is the grandson of L. R. Rounds.

Join the Waterford Historical Society. Check appropriate category and mail to Box 2, Waterford, ME. 04088.

Name _____

Address _____

MEMBER CLASSIFICATION

_____ Life-Couple	\$75.00	_____ Senior Citizen	\$ 1.00
_____ Life	\$50.00	_____ Student	\$ 1.00
_____ Patron	\$25.00	_____ Sustaining	\$ 2.50
_____ Honorary	\$35.00	_____ Contributing	\$10.00

ACQUISITIONS AT THE NORTH WATERFORD MUSEUM

From Ernest Knight, Raymond, "A Guide to the Cumberland and Oxford Canal" and "The Origin and History of Raymond-town" both written by Ernest Knight.

From Mildred Howe, photo of the Flat School (1910) and a post card of the Lake House.

From Agnes Lahti, scrap book of 1984 clippings.

From Nancy Marcotte, items from the late Flora Abbott's barn, including carding mill pictures, certificates of stock, etc.

From Randall H. Bennett, a book, "Sunday River Sketches" by Randall H. Bennett.

From Betty Witham, twenty one Oxford County United Parish Carnival Pins.

From Winola Brown, picture of North Waterford Church and a Remington portable typewriter, formerly Maude Brown's.

From Marjorie Kimball, school bell used in Waterford and Harrison schools.

From Olive Elliott, material on Dr. Shattuck.

From Mary Ross, five photographs of the Waterford Historical Society float at the annual 4th of July Parade.

From Miriam Monroe, picture of Hamlin Homestead (1930) in Skunk Alley.

From Winola Brown, scrap book and newspaper clippings, sheet music.

From Arthur Tucker, picture of McWain Packing Cornshop in East Waterford.

From Bill Fillebrown, Artemus Ward article on page 23 in Knight Templar, Sept. 1985 issue, Vol. XXXI, No. 9.

From Winola Brown, several school pictures taken during the time she taught at Waterford.

1985 OFFICERS

Oscar Andrews	<i>President</i>
Mary T. Fillebrown	<i>V. President</i>
Agnes Lahti	<i>Secretary</i>
Margaret Sawyer	<i>Treasurer</i>
Trustees for 3 Years	<i>Raynor K. Brown</i> <i>Philip E. Buchert</i> <i>Stephen B. Dewing</i>

IN MEMORIAM

Billie A. Sawyer died Sept. 18, 1985. He had been a trustee of the Waterford Historical Society and on several committees over the years. He was in his 10th year as a selectman and serving as chairman of the Board. He retired from the Portland Pipe Line Corp. in his 38th year with them in 1979.

FOR SALE

The History of Waterford, Maine 1775-1875, reprinted from an 1879 publication \$10.00, plus \$1.10 if mailed. Waterford, Maine 1875-1976 published in 1977, also \$10.00, plus \$1.10 if mailed. Both books are available from the Waterford Town Office, Mrs. Curtis Millett above Waterford Memorial School, and from the Waterford Historical Society, Waterford, Maine 04088, and L.R. Rounds & Co. Store in Waterford Village.

ADV.

Waterford Historical Society
Waterford,
Maine 04088