

MY NAME IS PETER MCKENNA. THIS IS SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 1975, AND I'M ON MY WAY TO INTERVIEW MR. THOMAS SKOLFIELD OF WELD, MAINE, ABOUT THE DAYS WHEN HE USED TO WORK ON THE SWIFT RIVER AND WEBB RIVER LOG DRIVES.

McK: You drove on the Webb River, did you?

Skol: (Looking through photo album) Now, this was in 1941. Now, there's another one right there. Now, this was, ah...

McK: 1901.

Skol: 1901. Webb River. Yes.

McK: Webb River; a log jam.

Skol: Yes.

McK: How would they break that? Would they dynamite...

Skol: No, no, no, no, they wouldn't use dynamite. They got a crew of men right there. They'd go ahead and take the picks and break it all. If it was...you'd try, if you can, to get it from the shore. This is down at Carthage. This picture is taken from the bridge down there, looking up river, (McK: Oh, yeah.) before I came down through on a bateau.

McK: Oh really? Did they have the bateau's on that river? On the Webb River?

Skol: Oh yes, about the same kind as that. Yes, sir.

McK: Did you ever...were you ever in the bateau?

Skol: Oh, that was my...I was always, I always handled bateaux.

McK: Oh really?

Skol: Yup, I was strong on the bateaux. They started logging here in, well, 1874, yup, and they used to have big booms...they cut these mountains ...spruce off of these mountains and got them big booms 'way down the foot of the lake. And old Jimmy Swan, who was master for Bierce and Wilson...'way down the pond...I always handled stroke oar all the time on bateau... (McK: Oh, yes.) ...he said to me, "I want you to tackle those oars; stand on one of these boats." He run two boats

*Carthage
Weld
Swift
Webb*

down the river. I says, "I can't handle it." "Yes you can!" He put me on that boat, and I always handled it after that. Every year.

McK: How old were you when you got your first job on a river drive?

Skol: Well...1916 to 1921...I began working for the state in 1914...and this was in '98.

McK: You were just a young feller, then.

Skol: Mmmm-hmmm. Winter of '98 I was back of the mountains. We used to go down in the Spring of the year to old Henry Thayer's saw-mill down to Dixfield, and I was always one of his first parties - he had pine wood. I always had to go down and put his drive in for him. With his bateau. Yup. And it tells in here, "In the bateau race. Tom Skolfield." We had two bateaux down there, and old Victor Staples and myself, we won. He was the bowman. He was on the bow, and I was on the stern.

McK: There were two men to a boat?

Skol: Yup. And four sets of oars, yup. Four men with oars in the bateau too. Well, I'll show you some pictures of it.

McK: Oh, you have some pictures of, ah,

Skol: Yup. Now here we are; a picture of Mt. Blue over by Bowley Stream, Yup.

McK: Ya, the logs are right there, ah...

Skol: Yup, this one is...

McK: Now is that a sluice there?

Skol: No, no, no, no. That was...that was...I think this was a four footer drive for Gates and Harlow of Dixfield. And that other boy in there... That's the foot of Mt. Blue. That's on Bowley Stream.

McK: Oh yeah. Valley Stream. (Bowley Stream)

Skol: Yup. What they call Bowley Brook, yup. Well...

McK: That looks like a dam, there.

*Mt. Blue
Dixfield
Bowley Area*

Skol: That's down at the foot of the lake. Here I am right in here. And there's old Rol Snowman. And there's John Gates, the old foreman of the job we was driving for.

McK: Oh yeah. There's their names right there. Now, what dam is this?

Skol: This is the dam at the foot of the lake.

McK: Oh yeah.

Skol: Getting the stuff all down, yup. This is the dam at the foot of the lake, yup.

McK: Now the logs would go right through that sluice-way there?

Skol: Yup. And right down the river. Now this lake is plumb full of logs up in here. (McK: Mmm-hmm.) And they're sluicing them down the river. Well, there's another one of the...

McK: That's that same dam, isn't it? And the sluice-way, or a close-up of it. That's not there anymore, is it?

Skol: What?

McK: Is that dam still there?

Skol: Oh, yes. Well, it's pretty well wrecked, of course. Well, there's Mt. Blue and the stream right there.

McK: Mmm-hmm. Logs there...in the stream...

Skol: Now here's a boy right here picking...putting in the rear. Pick pole. Don't know who that was.

McK: Oh, he's on the rear crew there.

Skol: Yup. Oh, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five men, perhaps.

McK: On the rear crew?

Skol: On the crew. On hte crew.

McK: There'd be one man would be the boss of that twenty?

Skol: Oh ya, the foreman. That's me in there, back to. I don't know what stream this is on.

McK: It looks like pretty wet work.

Mt. Blue

Skol: Oh, you'd go right down there and wade right in over your knees.

Sure. Yup.

McK: Did you come back home at night, or did you...

Skol: Oh, no, we stayed in tents.

McK: You slept in...

Skol: Tents. Yup.

McK: This time of year, you'd sleep in tents?

Skol: In the spring of the year, yup.

McK: How could you keep warm?

Skol: Now here. Now here we are putting in the rear with pickaroons.

There's old Cleveland Masterman (?) I remember him. Right in the ice water. I remember old Matt Thurston up at Black Stream. I was just standing there, me an another one, and he says, "Jump in there! Jump in there! That wont burn you!" Right in there amongst the ice, you know.

McK: You must start in what, April? Or something like that?

Skol: Oh, there's a crew of boys right there, picking the rear off'n the dam - off'n the shore. Here they are again.

McK: Ya, another picture with the pick poles and...

Skol: Yup. Yup. Well, now, there's a bunch of them standing in the river.

McK: Yeah, standing right out there on that log. Gee, these are excellent pictures.

Skol: Now this is right down here: the bridge you just came across. Down here about a half a mile.

McK: Oh, by the corner.

Skol: No; the next one below.

McK: Oh, the next one below?

Skol: The next one below. There's that bridge right there, and this is a jam above the bridge. Probably some ice down below. Probably couldn't, and can't get into the lake account of ice, so we got the rive full,

Black Stream

and now...and there's the bridge right there.

McK: They could break that without dynamite?

Skol: Oh yes. You had to. Generally, you could get the lower end started with a haul, yup; and see?

McK How long would it take to break a jam like that?

Skol: Oh, you got to haul on it, and it's likely ^{if the lake is open} that it'd run into the boom in about an hour's time, probably. And the men that's up on the shore now, see, come along with pick poles and clean up the shore. There's another one, right there: a boy with a pick pole. Picking up rear off'n the shore. (McK: Mmm-hmm.) Settin' up there with his pole in a tree. Here we are. There I am right there again.

McK: Oh, right here, back to. Yeah.

Skol: Yup.

Now, that's me again.

See, I helped the...That's me in there again. See, I used to take charge of the whole thing for Gates and Harlow of Dixfield. Used to have a drive on Bowley Brook...and on this brook...such a big drive on the East Brook always...and West Brook, ~~coming down the mountains~~ ~~up in there, and the whole neighborhood up in there, the whole~~ ~~country up in there~~ down on that side, Snowman Brook and _____ Brook you never had a drive on, but they always had a big drive on West Brook, coming down the mountains, up in there, and the whole neighborhood up in there, the whole country up in there. Gates and Harlow, and then Bierce and Wilson, and different ones. Lots of people logging.

McK: Did they mark those logs so they could tell whose they were?

Skol: Oh, no, no. God, no.

McK: How did they sort them out for the different mills?

Skol: That's probably all four foot sticks for Gates and Harlow.

McK: Is that the tent that, ah...

Skol: Yup. Here we are. That's the tent. There we are. Now we're coming

East Brook
West Brook
Snowman Brook
Dixfield
Bowley Bros.

out for lunch. See, they're _____.
 Yup. There's the cook. The cook. Cookee. We got up in the morning before daylight. Breakfast at nine o'clock. Nine o'clock out came the cook. There's old Mel Holland from Dixfield. He's come out with the lunch.

McK: Oh, that's the wagon he used to come out with.

Skol: Yup.

McK: He'd bring it right out to you, huh?

Skol: That's the spring of the year. See, that's snow right there.

McK: Now was he the cook, or the cookee, or...

Skol: No, no, no. He's just...he was time keeper. Now here we are. Here's the bateau.

McK: Oh, it's big, isn't it?

Skol: And this is a set of headworks. Now this is a set of headworks of thirteen logs. And there's the capstain. About thirteen logs. We had to make...you make a spindle, and take a ... two spruces and split them and hollow them out inside and put bands around them. And they set on top of this here.

McK: And there it is right over that man's head.

Skol: And we wind...see that rope on it?

McK: Yes I can, ya. It's all wound around there.

Skol: Yup. Yup. You take that off...here's the bateau. This is the bow and this is the stern.

McK: Mmm-hmm. This looks like an anchor here.

Skol: There's the anchor, yup. This is a big anchor thrown out. I'll show you more about it in a minute. (McK: O.K.) Now there's old John Kidder here. Now, here we are. There's the anchor right there. We're pounding this in. Maybe got loose on us. Yup. Now that shows... that's a better picture of the headworks. Now we got...see the bars

Dixfield

that go in here? And the men wind it. (McK: yes, ya.) Take around this, you take that, that...you pull that off and put it in the bateau, and rustle(?) off down the whole length of the anchor, down just as far as the anchor is. And I'll grab it with my hands and I'll hang on to it. See, you gotto put the rope on, and then they put the anchor on top of that. And I'll hang on to that anchor till we get down...we'll take that rope right out, and I'll throw the anchor overboard and holler out, "O.K!" Holler back and they'll start winding again.

McK: Oh, ya, and then the logs will just come right...

Skol:No; you're winding and you're pulling the boom down. We've got a boom here with several thousand cords in it. Several thousand cords in it. Well, there's a ...there I am. Now here's where we're taking that out and putting it in the stern of the boat. Now, that's me right there. Now when you get that pulled out to the stern of the boat, you pull up the anchor. Yup. Here we are again.

McK: They take you right through, step by step. Gee, who took these pictures? They're very good, aren't they?

Skol:Ya. Here we are. Now. We have at the head of the lake big booms; and we've got...if it's still and the wind is right, we're started. But if you get the least little mite of South wind, you can't move them, because you got this great big boom that could cover about a half an acre of land with a boom around it, see?

McK: And the wind would give too much resistance?

Skol:And then these men...the wind has gone down. The wind has gone down, and the wind is right. If the wind had been the other way, we couldn't do a darned thing except go ahead. Just as soon as the wind was right we'd start working. And we'd work all day. And if the wind was right, we'd work all night.

McK: Oh really? You even worked at night?

Skol: Yes, if the wind was right. The least little amount of wind, it would pull her right back. You can't hold her. And all we can do is pull her ashore and get her hitched onto the shore to hold her.

McK: There's a good picture showing the boom there 'way in the back.

Skol: Ya, there's a boom. That's made of spruce logs. That's four foot stuff. Here's a bateau. This is a big boat, this is a big boat. Thirty, yuh, twenty or twenty-five foot long. Twenty five or thirty foot long.

McK: There's the four rowers in it you were talking about.

Skol: Yuh. That'll hold both crews. See the little bow on it? I think the set over at Dixfield used to handle...different men for bowmen. I always handled stern, see?

McK: Oh, yes. Well, what are you doing right here, now?

Skol: Where? On the shore? Doing nothing. Just doing...Oh, yeah, here we are. Here's a boom of logs. Here's a boom right back here. The wind's passing down. We're pushing for shore as quick as we can. And in case...we got to hitch her on a tree. Hold her. We can't hold her if she's being pushed by the wind.

McK: Oh yeah. Now is this pick-pole he's holding touching the bottom of the lake?

Skol: Oh, yes, yes. Up near the shore. Up near the shore. Now there we are. A boom. Taking her, putting a rope around the boom. The boom, see, you got these spruce logs forty to fifty feet long...

McK: How do you link them together?

Skol: Oh, ya, linked together with a chain.

McK: With chain.

Skol: Yuh. Boom chains on each end. Yuh. Yuh. Go around them, yuh.

Dixfield

McK: Did you ever get any Penobscot men over in this direction?

Skol: We'd, see, there was a big camp at the foot of the lake. Big camp at the foot of the lake. Ah, therre's a dam there still. And, ah, we was there one night, and I know...and old Thayer Brown from the Brown Company in Berlin, New Hampshire, he come in and brought in half a dozen - I guess it was a dozen men - and we'd just gone to bed in our bunks. We just turned right in with our...fellers all wet. Just took off our calk shoes - shoes with calks in them, calk shoes for climbing around.

McK: Wet clothes and all!

Skol: And old Thayer Brown came in and hollered, "Sendin' up more men! Make room for these men! Squeeze in!

Get up in the morning, breakfast at nine o'clock...no, breakfast before light; at nine o'clock we'd have a lunch. They'd come out with our lunch. Oh, we had plenty of ham and eggs, hot biscuits, hot cake. In the morning's it's always beans we'd have for breakfast.

McK: Always beans in the morning?

Skol: At two o'clock, the cook or cookee would come. There we was lined up on the river. We'd always - the cook - meet him somewheres. He'd bring that out to us at two o'clock. At night we'd come in, and a good many times, we'd have crackers and cheese and cat fish and hot or something.

McK: Gee, that makes...that's about four meals a day, isn't it?

Skol: Oh, yeah. Four meals a day. Sure. Yup. Four meals a day, yup.

McK: Did you ever drive in the Swift River?

Skol: Not much. I never drove in Swift River. On Swift River you never had but two drives on Swift River.

McK: Oh. Oh. They used the railroad over there, did they, or...

Skol: Ya. For six years Gates and, ah, you had around there six years. First

*Berlin, N.H.
Swift*

in back of these mountains here, it was all timber spruce. It was...

Well, to start out your story,

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Skol: I helped build the railroad through Byron. The broad guage through Byron and -- Roxbury and Byron. I helped build that railroad. Ya. I helped -- I held horses there. The Italians -- Well now, we built that railroad in eighteen hundred (ninety five) through Byron and Number Six. And I worked for old _____ around there with a pair of hor horses. He'd back back with his little cart and the Italians would load up there and I'd go dump that; then I'd back the other horse in and they'd load that. And that was how that was all built - by Italians.

1904, ya in 1904 - the Sandy River was the narrow guage - when the broad guage crossed the Androscoggin River in Rumford right through down there in front of the -- where the A&P is now, in there some where, by the house that burned down there this winter sometime. That's -- there was the bridge that crossed the Androscoggin right there. Ya.

McK: So you helped build that railroad.

Skol: Ya. Ya.

McK: Ah, they had some side branches, didn't they, going in to like, ah, Blanchard and Twitchell's had an operation there.

Skol: Now, that's what -- there -- that's what I was trying to think of - Blanchard and Twitchell. Did you -- you heard about that?

McK: I heard about that. They had a big camp there, didn't they? A big ___

Skol: Oh, I -- ah, ya. See now. I've got a plan of that.

McK: Blanchard and Twitchell's?

Skol: Blanchard and Twitchell. I worked in there myself all one winter.

McK: You did?

Skol: Sure. In '98. (McK: There was a -- the tracks...) Have you ever been to the pond on Tumbledown Mountain out there? (McK: Ah, ya.) You have been? (McK: Yes.) I'll tell you something, you wouldn't believe it. I've been right on that pond with four horses.

Tumbledown Mt. Androscoggin River Rumford Byron Roxbury Sandy R.

McK: Gee.

Skol: Now, how did I get there?

McK: I don't know. Don't ask me!

Skol: Yessir. I've been right on that pond with four horses. Well, for -- Blanchard and Twitchell.

McK: How did they get the logs down? How did the -- how did they get them down?

Skol: Now, that railroad crossed the Androscoggin, crossed the Androscoggin River in 1902 up that route. Blanchard and Twitchell was in there six years. Right in behind these mountains. Right up in here. Jackson and Tumbledown mountain. Right in there, and they built a railroad - the main line - up through into Byron, and up the East Branch and then West Branch of, of Swift River. East Branch went right up towards Madrid, and the Stockbridge Branch came right in behind the mountains here. Had two branches. One . . . Now let me see if I can I've got a map of that whole thing.

McK: You have a map of it.

Skol: Sure I have.

McK: Gee.

Skol: In 1902, the Sandy River -- across the -- in 1902 Blanchard and Twitchell built the railroad through. In 1902, they built it right through there. And 1903, they went up - the railroad -- we went up the East Branch. It comes out, ah, Number One. Ah, let me see if I can -- let me get a pencil and paper. I can give you a sketch of it. (Gets up and goes over to desk to get pencil and paper. Pause of about a minute.) I've got it somewhere.

END OF SIDE ONE

Skol: Well, let's say this is Rumford. (Sketches point A of map.) Now we cross the Androscoggin River. You go up there through Roxbury. (Extends

Roxbury *Swift River* *East Branch Swift River* *Jackson*
Sandy River *Androscoggin River* *Tumbledown mt.* *Byron*
1) East Branch Swift River

line through Point B.) You go right up the river. You go right -- you have to go right through to Oquossoc. (McK: Yeah, right.) Well, through, through, there's, ah, Hop City. Let's say this is -- we'll say this is Byron, right here. You know where that is? (McK: Yes, ya.) Byron. (Draws line to point C.) Go up here above Byron on the main line. Blanchard and Twitchell comes off the main line right there. (Indicates point D.) Comes off the main line and comes right up here. (Extends line toward point E.) Now we go up five for every hundred. (Inaudible sentence.)

McK: That's a steep grade, isn't it?

Skol: Ya. Let's say -- here -- let's say we come up (pause as he draws line up through point F,) this, then, is the railroad coming off the main line. Blanchard and Twitchell. (McK: Mmm-hmm.) We came right up here. (Pause as he draws line up through point G.) Ah, that's right. This is behind the mountains. (McK: Mmm-hmm.) (Pause.) Now this is Stockbridge Branch. (Indicates line G.) Here. This is -- now this is Tumbledown Mountain right in behind here. (Draws circle H) This is Stockbridge Branch. Here's Tumbledown Pond down in here. (Draws circle I.) They went up -- and in here we built Number Four, Five, and Seven. Four, Five, and Seven was along the Stockbridge Branch.

McK: I'm going to mark them, here. (Pause, while McKenna puts the figures 4, 5, and 7 at the points indicated by Skolfield.)

Skol: And here we have Number One. And here Number Two. And that is the -- here, and -- this, this is as far as the locomotives run. ~~You~~ ^{the} ~~all~~ ^{know,} ~~they~~ and the other one. I don't know who was on [locomotive] Number Two. Number Two. Ya. And [Camp] Number Three, well, them big cars _____ at Number Three. They loaded big devil spruce. They'd been growing for thousands of years, you know.

Tumbledown Pond *Hope City*
Byron
Tumbledown

(Pause of several seconds.) Boy's...that boy's...now there's some, some...boom right there, see? Standing on the boom.

McK: Oh yeah, you can just see it above the water.

Skol: Yuh, there's a bateau. Now here's the stuff they picked up. Stuff that the wind...that's stuff that's gone over the boom. They'll pick it up and put it in a boat. Take it in the boat and throw it
o overboard inside the boom.

McK: Did that boom ever break?

Skol: Oh, well, no; not's I know. We never lost a boom, no. We got these big spruce logs, you know, and they got them big chains on the end of it there. There's a he got right there. Well, now, or was it? Look at the fish he got. It's a good one. Give it to the cook to cook and eat for lunch...

McK: Oh, really? Gee, that must be...

Skol: I didn't see it. (McK: Ya, in the...well) The time keeper in the wagon, not that one? That's not the one, is it? Who was the cook, do you remember?)

Skol: Oh, my god...different ones, different...

McK: Different ones?

Skol: Different ones. Old Harry Rand, used to live in Dixfield. He got a son in Dixfield now. Carl Rand?

McK: Oh yes.

Skol: Harry Rand. Thre was...we used to have a man from Lewiston would come up every spring. Lewis. Barney Lewis.

McK: From Lewiston?

Skol: Lewiston. Oh, yes, we had men from Lewiston up here river driving in the Spring of the year. Yup. On these big spruce for Gates and Harlow. Early. Oh, they'd send up thirty or forty men in the Spring of the year.

*Dixfield
Lewiston*

McK: Gee. How long were they, about?

Skol: Oh, about -- trees in there about fifty, sixty, seventy feet long. Oh, big timber spruce. Big spruce. Been growing in there forever, you know. (McK: Gee.)

Skol: Ya. Ya. And you'd...That was -- that was the end of the, that was, we'd turn there. We'd ~~come~~ back up to Number Three. We come up here at night time. We'd get in here and here was a roundhouse where we -- ah, we come off the main line and backed into the roundhouse. The locomotives, see? (McK: Mmm-hmm.) Now, Blanchard and Twitchell. We come up here, ya. And we come up the East Branch. Right here we go Number One. Number One Camp.

McK: Oh, a camp. Oh ya.

Skol: That's right. Number Two right up here. That's headquarters. There was -- big camp right there, and a big office, and a big _____ . We brought wood and (milk?) over. Number Two. There was several camps there, oh....Joe, Jim Lary and Ward Lary and Ward Lary's son. Jim Lary was boss and, ya. But that was Number Two. That was the number of the camp. People see that's....the clerk here at the office in the big building there where they used to have all kinds of clothing there -- ah, clothes. And here was camps along in here, I'd say. That'd be Number Two.

McK: Did the --did the railroad track go right up through Number Two, or did it stop down here?

Skol: No. Ah, no, it went right up here. (Pointing to Stockbridge Branch.)

McK: Oh, the railroad went up --ah, I see. So this is just a road over here then. (Points to East Branch.)

Skol: This, this was the railroad here. (Points to Stockbridge Branch.) Now we'll -- see, we're headed up. We'd get down in there after dark. I worked on that railroad myself. As a brakeman.

East Branch Switz

McK: Oh, you did.

Skol: Yessir. And we'd come up here. We'd back in for the night in here. Now, see, we're backed in. Now we've got to turn that -- turn her. So in the morning, we'd come out and we'd go over here. We'd backed in. See? Now we'll head out. We'll head out here. (Towards point J.) Ya. We're headed out. Now we --we come back here. We'd turn on a Y (at point J.) See, we're headed out. (Toward Camp Three.) So now we'd back in here. Here we are on the line, and we're all turned around again, see? (McK: Oh, ya.) Now, when we back up to Three, now we're all turned around. There's Number Two. That was headquarters. (McK: Mmm-hmm.) That was where there was a big house, and that was where there was all the grain, hay, and everything. And we'd back up to Number Three. One mile. There was a mile between all these camps. (McK: Oh, I see.) We'd back up here to Number Three Camp in there. That's Number Three. And that was built of logs, that camp right there.

McK: How many men in a camp, do you suppose?

Skol: Oh, twenty-five. Ya. You go one mile further and you come to Camp Number Six. Ya. Now we go from Camp Number Six --we've got Seven in here --Camp Number Six. WE go to Camp Number Eight. No, wrong. I've got Number Six. Number Six, ya, Number Six. Number Eight, Number Nine. Oh yes, that's right, ya. Number Eight, ya. You go one mile further we get to Camp Number Nine.

McK: Gee, they had them all up in there, huh?

Skol: Ya. Ya. Now I run up in here somewheres, and there's Camp Number Ten. That was the, ya. That was the camps. They had all these camps right in there. They was in there six years.

McK: Did they ever use Lombards in there, ah

Skol: Huh?

McK: Did they ever use those big Lombards in there; those, ah, steam, steam locomotives with the sleds on them?

Skol: Oh, yes, we had all kinds of horses. I know Blanchard and Twitchell we was in there the winter of '98. The time we had that big storm off Portland, and the Maine went down.

McK: The winter of '98, huh?

Skol: '98, yuh. And Old Cass Twitchell was in there himself. We was in there and, and come a big storm across and we'd take four hours and drive through the woods anywhere. Yup.

McK: What was that Twitchell like? Do you remember him?

Skol: What?

McK: Do you remember Twitchell himself, at all?

Skol: Twitchell?

McK: Yuh.

Skol: Oh, sure.

McK: What kind of a guy, a feller, was he?

Skol: Oh, well, he was the head. I didn't see Mr. Blanchard. I don't know as I ever saw Mr. Blanchard. Mr. Twitchell was in there. Yup. Yup. Now the winter of '98, we came over from, let's see, number...I've got, oh ya...We come up here to Number Seven. Most of this in here they...the small locomotive took care of this one. Harry Purinton was engineer on that.

McK: Who was that?

Skol: Harry Purinton. It had a list on it in there. In the fall of the year. And there came a big storm. And old Jim Lary says to Harry, "Be careful because...on the track coming up on the west." Old Jim Lary was the walking boss. He stayed, this was his headquarters right here. Harry Purinton went up that mountain, and he put on too much load. He started back. Got down to...and he couldn't

Portland

hold her. Zoomed right into the woods. Killed Harry

Now here we come to Number Seven. Now from Tumbledown Pond, (You got Tumbledown, you know; you got Jackson up here), from the head of Tumbledown Pond, it's kind of a gradual slope. This side of Tumbledown. This is kind of a gradual slope. The pond's up in here. We came over on this side of the slope beyond Tumbledown Pond and cut alot of four-foot stuff. Four-foot pulpwood logs. Not big logs. We came over here on this side and cut alot of four-foot stuff from Number Seven. We came down. You may not have noticed it, but between Jackson and Tumbledown is a slope in there; a big valley that's not too - it's just about like that, you know. (Skolfield indicates a gradual slope with his hand.) Then it goes down to the river.

McK: Just kind of gradual.

Skol: Yup. Came down in here and cut alot of four-foot stuff. Yup. We came up here with two four-horse teams and we came down here, and we'd go down to the pond, and the only place, this route in here, we'd go down to the pond with four horses - or eight horses, too, but I'm not...- and turn around on the pond.

McK: What pond is that now?

Skol: Tumbledown Pond.

McK: Oh, yeah.

Skol: See, we'd turn around and go back up and pick up this four-foot stuff, see? And go up on the mountain and down to the railroad with it. That's where they got that four-foot stuff, on this side of the... And that's when - that winter - I was over there. And I was with a team one day and I came home. And I came over Tumbledown and I came over to Weld on the crust and the four horses and I was down on that pond with the team and turned

*Tumbledown
Jackson Pond
Weld*

around. I been right on Tumbledown Pond with four horses. And then we'd go up there, back up to the railroad, and down through. Yup. So that's Blanchard and Twitchell.

McK: That's the layout there.

Skol: Yup.

McK: Did you ever go up as far as South Bog, there, where Porter and Thomas were operating?

Skol: No. No.

McK: Not that far up, huh?

Skol: No. So that's Blanchard and Twitchell. *Now, when we were working there on all this, here,*
Man name of Irving (Southwell?) was engineer.

(NOTE: the following handwritten pages have been typed and that typed copy follows the handwritten ones.)

(1)

1108020

and Phillip (Clearweather?) was brakeman and
so was I, we'd take them big ^{well, then big, then} trucks,
we'd just ^{those big logs} ~~now~~ - go to
^{that's} make long lumber, finally; of course then, it
was spruce; we were, we were, ... long spruce
wid cut them together, see? See, see, and
the long logs sticking out. So we'd cut them
together, the long, long spruce ^{in here.}
Now we'd go down here - ^{+ we might go down} along down ^{to the}
we'd get down just about down here + we'd
drop five feet per hundred. We'd head down
to the main line. And we'd get down here
Phil Clearweather and myself, we'd jump out.
Now all them ^{logs} logs were just as

and then to
handle of the brake ^{would be} ~~too~~ just like a broomstick
handle. (Mik: oh. oh.) we'd ~~—~~ [—] Bridge
we'd come out here - ~~this slope~~ and they
slow up. And - (we're in a locomotive, now,
we'd jump out right here; Phil Clearweather
would) grab that first handle + give it a
turn, + I'd grab the next one + give it
a turn. + we'd drop five feet - you had to
put the brakes ^{to slow}

Mik: before you get to the main line, see? (the
oh, yes. Guess you had a big load of logs
behind you, huh?)

About 7 thousand feet ^{or so} of logs on a

we'd
 — brakes, you know, down, down to the main
 line.

Mike Well, Blanchard & Twitchell owned this line.
 The Railroad didn't own that side track.

Stu No. Blanchard & Twitchell owned all this in here.
 Yep.

Mike And they owned their own locomotives, and they
 owned them ^{around} every place.

Stu Oh, yes, I guess so. I don't know what
worked on the old Shay —
 the old big one. But he brought wood out of
 the woods. And ~~remember~~ #2 right here?
 There's a great big shed right here, ^{full of} a great big
 shed where everybody got their wood for all
 these camps. Oh, yes, right in ^{right} in here,
 in #2 — a big Cook's camp. A big Cook's
 in there, yep.

Mike Would everybody eat in the same place? or
 did they eat at their own camp?

Skals: Oka, well, all these different Camps..

Mk: They had their own Cooks. Each Camp

Skal: Yup. I know Ward Lory's son Cooked
 myself there Number ... No; you ~~was~~ Number
 Nine. I was up there a while. Number
 And old ward Lory - it ~~was~~ his son was ~~the~~ ^(Gene?)
 yup. ward Lory & Jim Lory both had
 Camps down here. Yup, in there ^{the man} in the office
 & in the store. ~~They~~ ^{he} had a Camp, too. Yup. I
^{showed} ~~ask~~ ^{ask} his wife and family. Yup.

Mk: I heard that where thou, oh, where they ate
 you had to be pretty quiet, didn't you?

Skal: Well around nine o'clock.

Mk: I mean you couldn't be talking while you
 were eating.

Skal: Around 9 o'clock we were supposed to be -
 you were supposed to be ^{all} in bed at 9 o'clock
 The lights were out. Yup. (Cute eye.)
 But Saturdays, the men in the ^{Camp} Camps would
 come down on the rail road - & they'd gather

ought here at Number 2 and get in their
Camp things

and get their molasses, and their tobacco
and all that stuff, and their groceries.
In fact, that's where the locomotives would used to
unload every thing. (Mike: oh, yes) Right
by Number 2. Number 2 was the village.
That's what it was. Yes. And well... They
come in in the evening and tell stories
and perhaps. ~~They had~~ a fight. for past-

Mike: Did they do any singing or anything in there

Skid: No. (Mike No.) Ah, there was an old
fellow in there name of Anthony Bullier
and he probably was.

He was a fat man. He could fight the... you... he was a champion
We was tough nobody wanted to --- there was another
fellow in there ^{man} got in a scrap one
night and just ^{each other}
this other fellow ^{that was in the night} gave it to him good.
had fight with his
feet. Yes.

Mike: Did they have any Canadians working in there

Skid: Oh, yes. ^{4 of us} I don't know: 50¢ a day

about \$73 a month. 3¢ a day ^{is} a
lot of money '92. Then, you get your find
of course. 3¢ a day, thirteen dollars a month.

Mik: It's not very much, is it?

Skul: No. Yes, I worked to different springs
in & around these lakes here. I beamed
down that river fifteen springs. From the
I never take the beaman out from the time
left Weld Pond job we got to Dixfield. And
on 4 feet stuff - This was another big job
I had, oh, I had a team of men & I cut
popple - Just about the time in the Spring
of the year - boom

Down that stuff into Weld Pond & took that down
to Dixfield. After that we would go to Dix
In fact the only time I'd take the logs out on
the river ^{was} when we get down to Dixfield. We
had to take them down - go up slow - put them
into the budooyon. And we'd end 'way
down below Canton - there there's some
piers in the river now (Mik: oh.) yes-

Mik: Oh, you come right down the budooyon

Skul: Sure - I was on beaman down there. On boat

[6.]

1108025

I had...

well, I was foreman of that crew there. Yes.
I was foreman of this crew from the time it
started logging here in 1807, 10, 11, and 12.
10 and 11. 10, 11, and 12. And...
11, 12. Mixed up, I'm mixed up. 1912.
Down... Got his outfit in that town down below
Canton.

Mik: Was that a sorting gap down there?

Skd: No, no. Nobody had any. They got some big pieces
they used to put booms on to keep the lumber
from going down the river any further.

Mik: They had a saw... They had a saw mill down
there in Canton did they?

Skd: Yes. They had ^{them} big pieces cut there in the river
and booms across to hold. But then they
take it to Lewiston - Drive it to Lewiston
that's as far as I'd ever go. That was the
end of my job right there.

Mik: Oh, yeah. Did you ever see them working on
that sorting gap up above Rumpel there. The
operation

Skd: No, no. I'm Ninety... I finished that job

(7)

in nineteen... I got that... I finish working for
them. I finished that job when we got the
drive down into the boom there. And I know
40 boys - some of us -

we were going to Some
of us, some of us we went back to
the train ^{at Cent. or something.} & went to Lewiston - went to
~~Portland~~ ^{Portland} - Some of us were going to Lewiston.
I know I went to Portland. And I bought
me a suit of clothes. Geometric clothes
got some decent blocks on. Went back to Lewiston
& they were holding a circus in Lewiston - seen things
I got to Lewiston. Seen as - though I may
to a circus. The next day I come home.
That was 1912. That was in August.

Mike: It took that long for the drive to... how
how long was that drive? A couple of months.

Jack: No, no no. Before 1912. I
May

and Phillip (Clearwater?) was brakeman and so was I. We'd take them big...well, them big, them big trucks. We'd just those big logs, that's long lumber, finally; of course then it was spruce; we were, we were... long spruce and we'd cut them together see? See, see, and the long logs sticking out. So we'd cut them together, the long, long spruce in here.

Now we'd go down here and we might go down along down here. We'd get down just about here and we'd drop five feet per hundred. We'd ~~hand hand~~ head down to the main line. And we'd get down here Phil Clearweather and myself. We'd jump out.

Now all them logs was just as and then the handle of the brake would be just like a broomstick handle. (Mike: Oh, oh.) We'd we'd come out here This slope and they'd show up . And (we're in a locomotive now) we'd jump right here; Phil Clearwater would grab that last handle and give it a turn and I'd grab the next one and give it a turn and we'd slow her fast. You had to put the brakes to slow up before you got to the main line, see?

Mike: Oh, yes. Guess you had a big load of logs behind you, huh?

Skol: about 7 thousand feet of logs on a

.We'd brakes, you down, down to the main line.

Mike: Well, Blanchard and Twitchell owned this line. The railroad didn't own that side track.

Skol: No, Blanchard and Twitchell owned all this in here. Yep.

Mike: And they owned their own locomotives, and they owned them owned every thing.

Skol: Oh yes, I guess so. I don't know what worked on the old Shay, the old big one. And he brought them out of the woods. And number 2 right here? Here's a great big shed right here, sort of a great big shed where everybody got their wood for all them camps. Oh yes, right in, in here, too, #2- a big cook's camp. A big cook's camp in there, yep.

Mike: Would everybody eat in the same place? Or did they eat at their own camp?

Skol: Oh well all these different camps..

Mike: They had their own cooks, each camp?

Skol: Yes, I know Ward Larry's son cooked right there number... no yes number nine. I was up there a while. Number 9. And old Ward Larry, it was his son was cook. Yep. Ward Larry and Jim Larry both had camps down here. Yep and then the men in the office and in the store. He had a camp too. Yep. In there with his wife and family. Yep.

Mike: I heard that where they, oh, they ate you had to be pretty quiet, didn't you?

Skol: Well around nine o'clock.

Mike: I mean you couldn't be talking while you were eating.

Skol: Around 9 o'clock we were supposed to be, you were supposed to be all in bed at 9 o'clock. The lights were out. Yep. (Mike: go) But Saturdays, the men in the camps would come down to the railroad and they'd gather here at number 2 and get in their camp things and get their mittens, and their tobacco and all that stuff, and their groceries, In fact that's where the locomotives used

to unload everything. (Mike: Oh yes) Right by Number 2. Number 2 was the village. That's what it was. Yep. and well...they'd come in in the evening and tell stories and perhaps end with a fight, for pasttime.

Mike: Did they do any singing or anything like that?

Skol: No. (Mike: No.) Oh there was an old fellow in there name of Anthony Bullier and he probably was he was a fat man He could fight the...you...he was a champion, he was tough, nobody wanted to....there was another fellow in there got in a scrap one night and right each other. This other fellow that was in the fight gave it to him good.

Bad fight with his feet. Yep.

Mike: Did they have any Canadians working in there?

Skol: Oh, yes I don't know. 50¢ a day, about \$13 a month. 50C a day \$13 a month , a lot of money. Yep. Then you got your food of course. 50¢ a day, \$13 a month.

Mike: It's not very much is it?

Skol: No. Yes I worked 15 different springs in and around these lakes here. I bateaued down that river fifteen springs. From the time..I never took the batteau out from the time we left Weld Pond til we got to Dixfield. Andon four foot stuff. This was another big job I had, ah I had a crew of men and I cut popple. Just about the time, in the spring of the year.

boom down the stuff into Weld Pond and took that down to Dixfield. After that we would go to

In fact the only time I'd take the logs out on the river was when we got down to Dixfield. We had to watch the dam-go up now-put them into the Androscoggin. And we's end way down below Canton, where there's some piers in the river now. (M:ok) Y

Canton
Androscoggin River
Weld Pond
Dixfield

Mike: Oh, you drove right down the Andros~~oggin~~?

Skol: Sure. I was on bateau down there. On bateau. And I had...I was foreman of that down there. Yep. I was foreman of this crew from the time it started loggin here in 1809, 10, 11 or 12 10 and 11, 10 ~~xxxx~~ yep 10 and 11. And 11, 12. Mixed up. I'm mixed up 1912. Down...got this stuff in that been down below Canton.

Mike: Was that a sorting gap down there?

Skol: No no they got some big piers they used to put booms on to keep the lumber from going down the river any further.

Mike: They had a saw...they had a sawmill down there in Canton did they?

Skol: Yes. They had other big piers out there in the river and boom across to hold..and then they'd take it to Lewiston. Drive it to Lewiston. That's as far as I'd ever go. That was the end of my job right there.

Mike: Oh yes. Did you ever see them working on that sorting gap up above Rumford there, that operation

Skol: No, no. In nineteen...I finished that job in nineteen. I got that.. I finish work for them. I finished that job when we got the drive down into the boom there. And I know us boys-some of us we were going to

some of us, some of us. We went back and the train at Canton or somewhere and went to Lewiston- went to Portland. Some of us were going to Lewiston. I think I went to Portland. And I bought me a suit of clothes. Gentlemen's clothes. got some decent clothes on. Went back to Lewiston and they were holding a circus in Lewiston. Seems though I got to Lewiston. Seems as though I might. to a circus. The next

Portland
Rumford
Androsoggin River
Canton
Lewiston

day I come home. That was 1912. That was in August.

Mike: It took that long for the drive to...how long, how long was that drive? A couple of months?

Skol: No,no,no. Before 1912

May

ACCESSION SHEET
Maine Folklife Center

Accession Number: 1108

Accession Date: 1975.04.00 T # C # PM CD #

Collection Name: General Collection

Collection Number: MF 500

Interviewer /
Depositor:

Narrator:

Address
& phone:

Address
& phone:

Description: 1108 McKenna, Peter. April 1975. Maine: Weld. 30 pp. No Tape. Partial trans. Interview with Thomas Skolfield about working on the log drives on the Swift River and Webb River at the turn of the century. P937 — P968

(Photocopies of photographs with text descriptions in Accessions folder.)

Related Collections
& Accessions

Restrictions

NA 1108

Photographs W/Text

P937 - P958

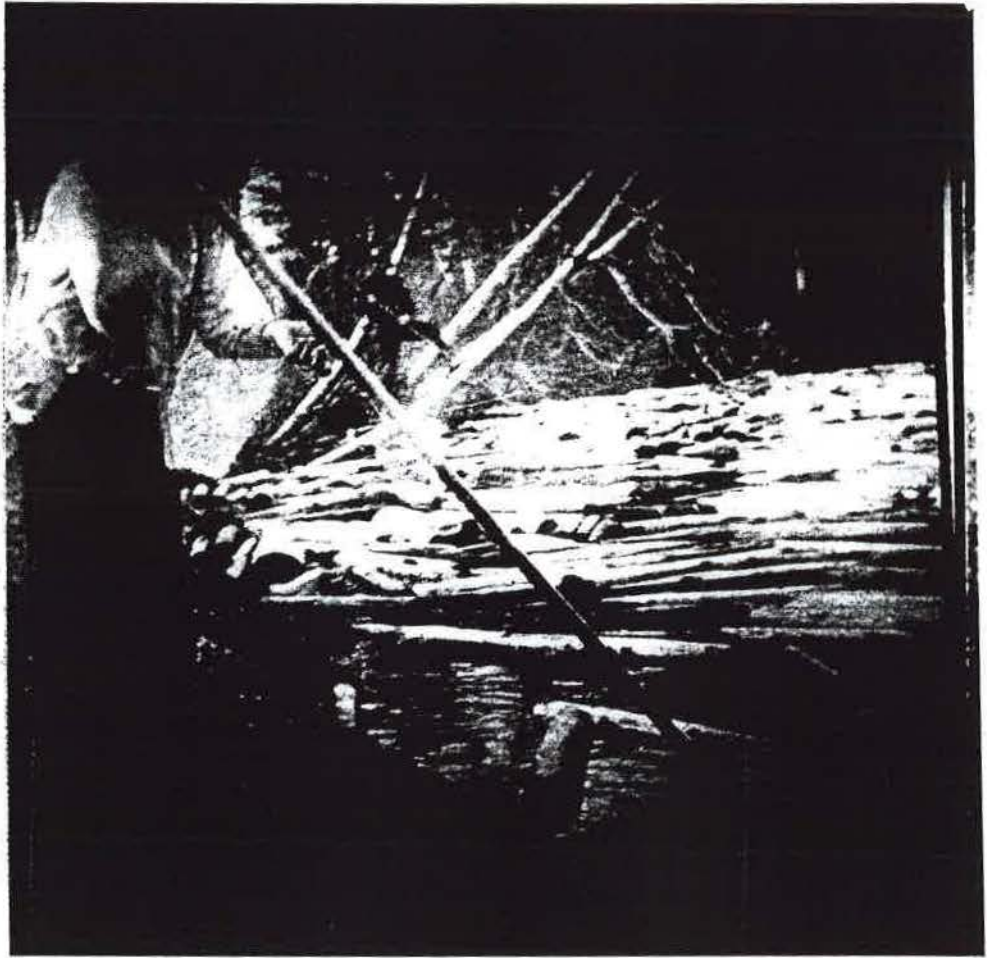
I of II

959



Skol: Oh, there's a crew of boys right there, picking the rear
off'n the shore.

960



Skol: There's another one, right there: a boy with a pick pole.
Pickin' up rear off'n the shore.

McK: Mmm-hmm.

Skol: Settin' up there with his pole, in a tree.

961



Skol: There's a fish he got right there. Look at the fish he got! It's a good one. Give it to the cook to cook and eat for lunch.

962



McK: Who was the cook? Do you remember?

Skol: Oh my @od, different ones. Different...

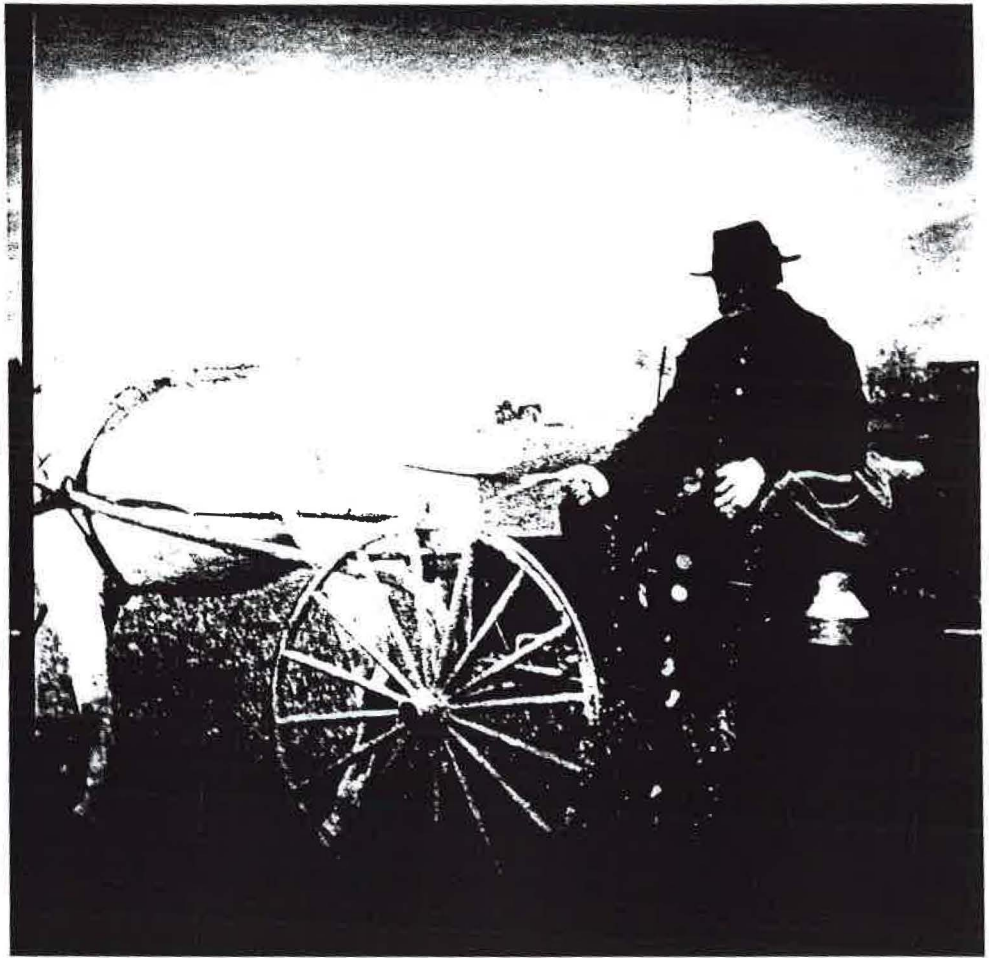
McK: Different ones?

Skol: Different ones. Old Harry Rand - used to live in Dixfield. Harry Rand. There was - we used to have a man from Lewiston would come up every spring. Lewis. Barney Lewis.

McK: From Lewiston?

Skol: Lewiston. Oh, yes, we had men from Lewiston up here river driving in the Spring of the year. Yup. On these big spruce for Gates and Harlow. Early. Oh, they'd send up thirty or forty men in the Spring of the year.

963



Skol: There we are. Now they're coming out with lunch. That's old Mel Holland from Dixfield. He's come out with the lunch.

McK: Oh, that's the wagon he used to come out with?

Skol: Yup.

McK: He'd bring it right out to you, huh?

Skol: That's the Spring of the year. See, that's snow right there.

McK: Now, was he the cook, or the cookee, or...

Skol: No, no, no. He's just - he was time keeper.

964



965



Skol: Get up in the morning, breakfast at nine o'clock - no, breakfast before light; at nine o'clock we'd have a lunch. They'd come out with our lunch. Oh, we had plenty of ham and eggs, hot biscuits, hot cake. In the mornings it's always beans we'd have for breakfast.

McK: Always beans in the morning?

Skol: At two o'clock, the cook or cookee would come. There we was lined up on the river. We'd always - the cook - meet him somewheres. He'd bring that out to us at two o'clock. At night we'd come in; and, a good many times, we'd have crackers and cheese and cod fish or something.

McK; Gee, that makes - that's about four meals a day, isn't it?

Skol: Oh yeah. Four meals a day. Sure. Yup. Four meals a day.

966



967



Skol: Now here we are. Here's the bateau.

McK: Oh really? Did they have the bateaux on that river?

Skol: Oh, yes; about the same kind as that. Yes, sir.

McK: Did you ever - were you ever in the bateau?

Skol: Oh, that was my - I always handled bateau.

McK: Oh, really?

Skol: Yup. I was strong on the bateau. Old Jimmy Swan, who was master for Bierce and Wilson, he said to me, "I want you to tackle those oars. Stand on one of those boats." He run two boats down the river. I says, "I can't handle it." "Yes, you can!" He put me on that boat, and I always handled it after that. Every year.

Skol; Now this is right down here - the bridge you just came across. Down here about half a mile.

McK: Oh, by the corner.

Skol: The next one below. There's that bridge right there, and this is a jam above the bridge. Probably some ice down below....So we got the river full, and, now...

McK: Could they break that without dynamite?

Skol: Oh, yes; you had to. Generally, you could get the lower end started with a haul. Yup. And, see?

McK: How long would it take to break a jam like that?

Skol: Oh, you had to haul on it, and it's likely, if the lake is open, that it'd run into the boom in about an hour's time, probably.

NA 1108

Photographs w/Text

P 959 - P 968

II of II

Descriptive Checklist of NAFOH Accessions 1 - 2566

1108 McKenna, Peter. April 1975. Maine: Weld. 30 pp. No Tape. Partial trans. Interview with Thomas Skolfield about working on the log drives on the Swift River and Webb River at the turn of the century. **P937 - P968**

My name is Peter McKenna. This is Saturday, April 5, 1975, and I'm on my way to interview Mr. Thomas Skolfield of Weld, Maine, about the days when he used to work on the Webb River log drives.

McK: You drove on the Webb River, did you?

Skol: (Looking through photo album) Now, this was in 1901.
Now, there's another one right there. Now, this was,
ah -

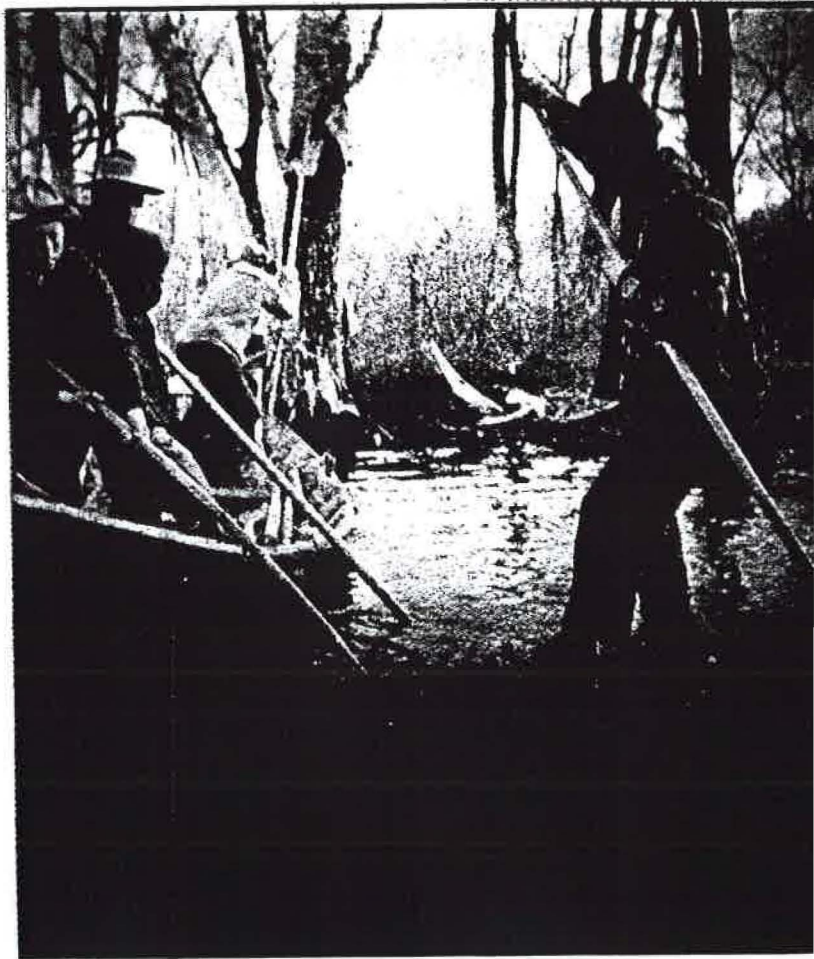
McK: 1901.

Skol: 1901. Webb River. Yes.

937



938



Skol: That boy's standing on the boom.

939



Skol: Now here's the stuff they picked up. Stuff that the wind - that's stuff that's gone over the boom. They'll pick it up and put it in a boat. Take it in the boat and throw it overboard inside the boom.

McK: Did that boom ever break?

Skol: Oh, well, no. Not's I know. We never lost a boom, no. We got these big spruce logs, you know; and they got them big chains on the end of it, there.

940



941



Skol: And this is a set of headworks. Now, this is a set of headworks of thirteen logs. And there's the capstan. We had to make - you make a spindle, and take a - two spruces and split them and hollow them out inside and put bands around them. And they set on top of this here.

McK: And there it is right over that man's head.

Skol: And we wind - see that rope on it?

McK: Yes, I can. It's all wound around, there.

Skol: Yup. Yup. You take that off - here's the bateau. This is the bow, and this is the stern.

942



McK: Mmm-hmm. This looks like an anchor here.

Skol: There's the anchor, yup. I'll show you more about it in a minute. Now there's old John Kidder, here. Here we are. We're pounding this in. Maybe got loose on us.

943



944



Skol: You put the anchor in the boat and rustle off down the whole length of the rope. I'll hang on to that anchor till we get down. We'll take that rope right out, and I'll throw the anchor overboard and holler out, "O.K!" Holler back, and they'll start winding.

McK: I see; and then the logs will come right along.

945



946



Skol: Now that shows - that's a better picture of the headworks. Now we got - see the bars that go in here? And the men wind it. We've got a boom here with several thousand cords in it. If it's still and the wind is right, we're started. But if you get the least little mite of south wind, you can't move them.

The wind has gone down. The wind has gone down, and the wind is right. If the wind had been the other way, we couldn't do a darn thing. Just as soon as the wind was right, we'd start working. And we'd work all day. And if the wind was right, we'd work all night.

McK: You even worked at night?

Skol: Yes, if the wind was right. The least little amount of wind, it would pull her right back. You can't hold her. And all we can do is pull her ashore and get her hitched onto the shore to hold her.

947



McK: There's a good picture showing the boom there, 'way in the back.

Skol: Yup. There's a boom. That's made of spruce logs. That's four foot stuff.

McK: How do you link them together?

Skol: Linked together with a chain.

McK: With chain.

Skol: Yup. Boom chains on each end.

948



Skol: Here's a bateau. This is a big boat, this is a big boat. Thirty, yuh, twenty or twenty five foot long. Twenty five or thirty foot long. I always handled stern, see? There's a boom of logs. There's a boom right back here. The wind's passing down. We're pushing for shore as quick as we can. And in case - we got to hitch her on to a tree. Hold her. We can't hold her if she's being pushed by the wind.

949



McK: That looks like a dam, there.

Skol: That's down at the foot of the lake. Here I am, right in here. And there's old Rol Snowman. And there's Don Gates, the old foreman of the job we was driving for.

McK: Oh yeah. There's their names right there. Now, what dam is this?

Skol: This is the dam at the foot of the lake.

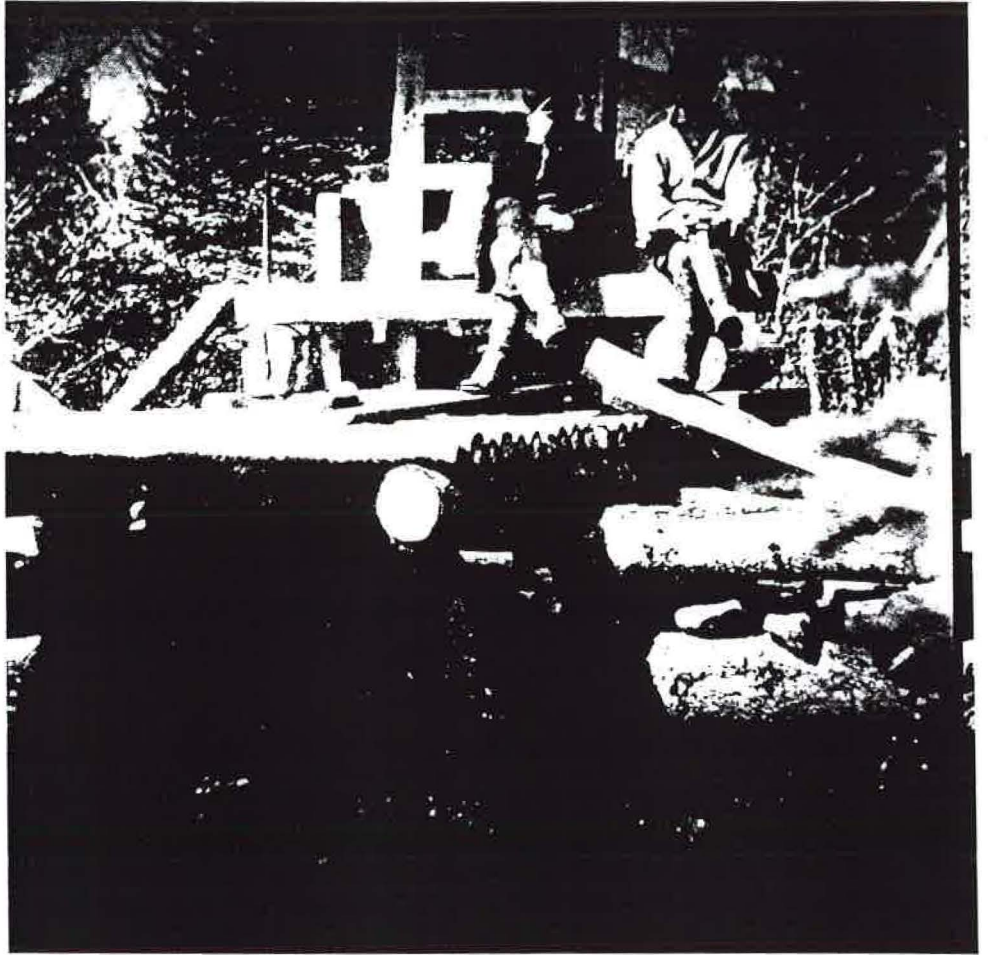
McK: Oh yeah.

Skol: Getting the stuff all down, yup. This is the dam at the foot of the lake, yup.

McK: Now, the logs would go right through that sluice-way there?

Skol: Yup. And right down the river. Now this lake is plumb full of logs up in here. And they're sluicing them down the river.

950



Skol: Well, there's another one of the...

McK: That's that same dam, isn't it? And the sluice-way; or a close-up of it. That's not there anymore, is it?

Skol: What?

McK: Is that dam still there?

Skol: Oh, yes. Well, it's pretty well wrecked, of course.

951



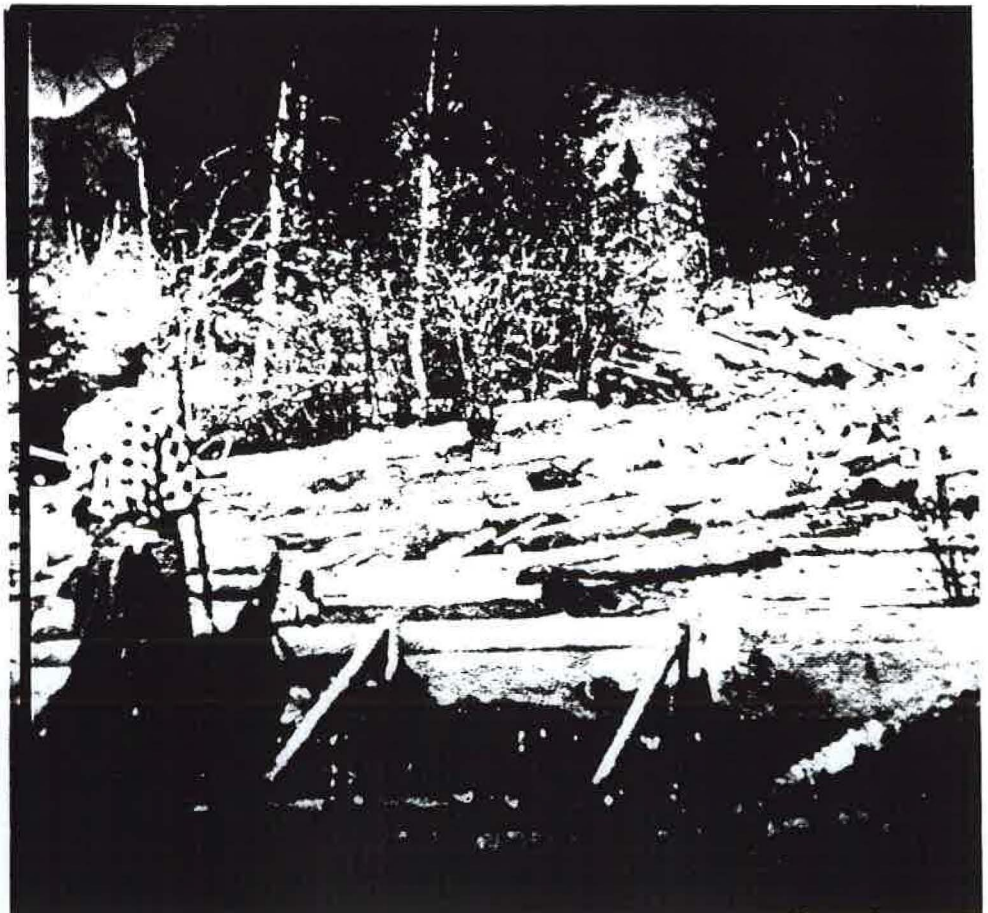
Skol: Well, there's Mount Blue and the stream right there.

McK: Mmm-hmm. Logs there - in the stream.

952



953



Skol: Now here we are. A picture of Mount Blue over by Bowley Stream. Yup.

McK: Ya, the logs are right there. Ah...

Skol: Yup, this one is...

McK: Now is that a sluice there?

Skol: No, no, no, no. That was - that was - I think this was a four footer drive for Gates and Harlow of Dixfield. And that other boy in there - That's the foot of Mount Blue. That's on Bowley Stream.

954



Skol: That's me in there, back to. I don't know what stream this is on.

McK: It looks like pretty wet work.

Skol: Oh, you'd go right down there and wade right in over your knees. Sure. Yup.

McK: Did you come back home at night, or did you...

Skol: Oh, no; we stayed in tents.

McK: You slept in...

Skol: Tents. Yup.

McK: This time of year, you'd sleep in tents?

Skol: In the Spring of the year, yup.

McK: How could you keep warm?

955



Skol: Here we are. There I am right there again.

McK: Oh, right here. Back to. Yeah.

Skol: Yup.

956



Skol: Now that's me again. See, I helped the - that's me in there again. See, I used to take charge of the whole thing for Gates and Harlow of Dixfield. Used to have a drive on Bowley Brook - and on this brook. Such a big drive on the East Brook always. And West Brook, down on that side. Snowman Brook, you never had a drive on; but they always had a big drive on West Brook. Coming down the mountains up in there, and the whole neighborhood up in there - the whole country up in there. Gates and Harlow; and then Bierce and Wilson, and different ones. Lots of people logging.

McK: Did they mark those logs so they could tell whose they were?

Skol: Oh, no, no. God, no.

McK: How did they sort them out for the different mills?

Skol: That's probably all four foot sticks for Gates and Harlow.

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Skol: Now here. Now here we are putting in the rear with pickaroons. There's old Cleveland Masterman; I remember him. Right in the ice water. I remember old Matt Thurston up at Black Stream. I was just standing there, me and another one, and he says, "Jump in there! Jump in there! That won't burn you!" Right in there amongst the ice, you know.

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Skol: Now here's a boy right here picking - putting in the rear. Pick pole. Don't know who that was.

McK: Oh; he's on the rear crew there?

Skol: Yup. Oh, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five men, perhaps.

McK: On the rear crew?

Skol: On the crew. On the crew.