

TRACKS THROUGH TIME

A HISTORY OF THE MAINE FOREST & LOGGING MUSEUM'S STEAM LOMBARD LOG HAULER

Terence F. Harper

May 2015

It's a phenomenon we see often - the railroad enthusiast working to uncover the operational career of a long dormant locomotive, a collector recording the ownership of a vintage automobile and its production and development or an amateur historian or local historical society tracing the history of a particular building or structure. When and why and for whom was it built? Who used or operated it? How did it get where or how it is today? All these and more are questions historians often ask in an effort to understand an artifact's role and importance – in other words its context. However, the greater purpose is to discover the interaction and tell the story of the people who created, lived with, worked on and benefited from that artifact. Whether that artifact is an airplane, a loom or a rusty piece of machinery, its history will always and undoubtedly be intertwined with people. It's fairly easy for a historian or researcher to state facts and figures. It's another to weave those facts and figures into a compelling human story.

The Maine Forest & Logging Museum's (MF&LM) Lombard Steam Log Hauler is one such artifact. The raw recent history facts are it was built by the Lombard Traction Engine Company in Waterville, Maine. In the early winter of 1968 it was retrieved from the Knowles Brook area (T9-R15) by Burt Packard, Oscar Partinen and Manley Haley and moved to Packard's Sporting Camp's at Sebec Lake. In 1984 it was purchased by the Maine Forest & Logging Museum. Obviously there is far more to the story.....

Lombard log haulers arrived in Maine's Upper St. John River basin during the winter of 1906-07 when Flavien Chouinard, operating near Chemquasabamticook stream, used a Lombard Log hauler to land an estimated 2,000,000 board feet of logs for the St. John Lumber Company saw mill in Keegan, Maine.¹ Founded in 1903 and enlarged substantially in 1907 the St. John Lumber Company saw mill, with a daily production capacity of 250,000 board ft. of long lumber, 160,000 laths and 350,000 cedar shakes, was at the time the largest saw mill in New England.^{ibid} Soon other Lombard log haulers would be working in both the upper St. John and Allagash river basins.

One of the companies which followed Chouinard's lead was the Eastern Manufacturing Company of South Brewer, Maine. In 1881 Frederick Wellington Ayer, the son of Nathan Chase Ayer, a successful banker, purchased the Palmer & Johnson Saw mill in South Brewer, Maine. Soon in 1890 Ayer added a sulphite pulp mill which created a marketable product from the large volumes of waste slabs and edgings created by the saw mill. In 1896 Ayer entered the rapidly expanding paper industry when he added a paper mill to his burgeoning mill complex. Incorporated in 1899, the Eastern Manufacturing Company² would play a major role in Maine's economy and paper industry for decades to come.

¹ William T. Nash, Report on St. John River Above Grand Falls With Lumbering & Driving Statistics, June 1933, Terence F. Harper Collection

² Harry B. Coe, Maine Biographies Volume I, Clearfield, 2002

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Encompassing the headwaters of Russell Brook and containing 22,950 acres wholly owned by Eastern Manufacturing¹, Township 9 Range 14 became a focal point of lumbering activity from 1904 through 1913 as Eastern Manufacturing worked to harvest the townships vast stands of timber as efficiently



Eastern Manufacturing Lombard log haulers, T9-R14, Circa 1908-1913, O.A. Harkness, Terence F. Harper Collection

as possible. The first hurdle to overcome was geography. Since the dawn of the Maine lumber industry in the 1820's Maine's abundant rivers provided an economical and reliable transportation network for the vast amounts of timber cut in its hinterlands. The Penobscot River along whose shores the Eastern Manufacturing Co. was located was no exception. Unfortunately for Ayer, the extreme northern limit of the Penobscot watershed was Chamberlain Lake which was separated from the north flowing waters of the Allagash river basin by a 3,000 foot wide isthmus dividing Chamberlain Lake from Eagle Lake. With his vast timber stands located within the north flowing Allagash River basin Ayer had to be creative since a long log drive north down the Allagash and St, John rivers was prohibitive. Ayer, partnered with an Old Town lumberman – Herbert Marsh – developed a creative solution.

With construction beginning in 1903, the Tramway as it was called beginning operation in the spring of 1903. The tramway was in fact a conveyor consisting of upper rails supported on a timber structure with the lower rails supported on cedar ties and a graded roadbed. Six hundred two wheeled trucks (to carry the logs) fastened to a 6,000 foot long endless cable were pulled via a 9 foot diameter drive sprocket located at the Chamberlain Lake end. Powered by a two cylinder Westinghouse compound steam engine, which drew steam from a pair of wood fired boilers, the tramway was capable of moving over 500,000 board feet of per 16 hour work day³.

To supply the Tramway with timber to move, during the winter a small army of loggers chopped and moved vast amounts of long logs to the shores of Eagle Lake using horses and sleds. After ice out the logs would be boomed and towed to Tramway by a side wheel steam boat - the *H.W. Marsh*, which was specifically built for the purpose. Once the logs had finished their journey over the tramway and were dumped in Chamberlain Lake yet another steamer boat - the *George A. Dugan* - would tow the boomed logs south to Telos. Today, visitors to the tramway site can view the remains of the Tramway as well as a

³ O.A. Harkness, *The Northern*, November 1927

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reconstructed section. At the close of the 1907 operating season Ayer recognized that the Tramway was inefficient. Furthermore, since the accepted rule was that the maximum haul via horse drawn sleds was only four miles his ability to access and profitably exploit his timber holding was limited.

Ayer's solution was the Lombard Log Hauler. Records show that on December 25th of 1907 the Eastern Manufacturing Company purchased two steam log haulers direct from the factory in Waterville, Maine⁴. Although the surviving Lombard records are far from complete we know via other sources⁵ that Eastern Manufacturing eventually purchased a total of four steam powered Lombards for their Allagash operations. Evidence suggests that at least one if not two machines were purchased from Mark T. Claflin – a steam and logging equipment dealer located in Waterville, Maine.^{IBID}

Operating over a well maintained haul road, Ayer's Lombards were able to haul long trains of sled loaded with timber from deep within T9-R14 and also Woodman Brook to the shore of Chamberlain Lake where the logs would be simply piled on the ice awaiting the spring thaw and the subsequent drive down the East Branch of the Penobscot river to the mill.

Ayer, being a shrewd businessman and son of a conservative banker, understood well that profits are directly linked to efficiency. A wide main haul road was flanked by much cheaper and rougher "go-back" roads which allowed loaded sled trains to have clear passage and not be balked by returning empty sled trains. Similar to a railroad a phone wire strung connecting phone boxes strung out along the roads allowed a dispatcher to control log hauler movements while a conductor rode each sled train along with a steersman, fireman and the all important engineer.

A poor engineer could destroy a steam powered Lombard in very, very short time. Whereas a good engineer, who knew his business, could extract the last fraction of work and efficiency while keeping it running like clockwork. One such engineer was Dougall S. Price. Dougall went to the woods when he was 16. Soon he was working as a "Swamper" cutting tote roads near Roach Pond. Like many youths Dougall must have had a touch of wanderlust which lead him to working as a deckhand on the *Cimbria* – a passenger and freight ship. Eventually he found his way to the boiler room. After studying via a correspondence course Dougall became a licensed boiler operator.

By 1906 Dougall had worked his way up from Assistant Engineer to Engineer on the *Helena* - Fred Ayers luxury yacht. It was a position he would hold until the *Helena* was sold the following year. Thus in the winter of 1907-08 Dougall was pulling the throttle on one of the Eastern's Lombards while his brother Richard worked as his Fireman. Later, in 1910, Dougall became an Engineer for a tannery in Island Falls, ME. He eventually retired as a Boiler Inspector for Hartford Insurance Company in 1948.⁶ As for the Eastern Manufacturing's Lombards, at the close of the 1912-13 hauling season, all four machines were

⁴ Lawrence Sturtevant, Unpublished manuscript, Terence F. Harper Collection

⁵ O.A. Harkness, Photograph of Eastern Manufacturing Lombard Log Haulers, circa 1908-1913, Terence F. Harper Collection

⁶ Alice Merriam e-mail to Terence F. Harper, June 12, 2009

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gathered at Chamberlain Lake (possibly Tramway) and eventually abandoned. However, this was not the end of their story.

While Eastern Manufacturing's fleet of Lombard log haulers were working the timber stands deep within Township 9, Range 14 a small cadre of "Jobbers" contracted to cut timber for the St. John Lumber Company were using Lombards on the upper reaches of the St. John River. During the winter of 1911-12 R.J. Potts began using the previously mentioned Chouinard's Lombard to move his timber. He was followed a year later by John A. Morrison. Will Cunliff, and C.E. Jones were two more who put their trust in Lombard's creation.

The use of steam powered Lombard log haulers allowed unprecedented access to previously inaccessible and untouched stands of timber. As an example of this, during the winter of 1914-15 Morrison's single Lombard successfully hauled some of his logs a distance of 14 miles – a task far beyond the capabilities (and humane treatment) of draft animals. None of this came cheap though. Building log hauler roads was both time consuming and costly. For instance, in 1922, a tote rode suitable for horse drawn sleds cost approximately \$48.66 per mile were as a wide, carefully located and graded Log hauler road cost approximately \$323.47 per mile.⁷ Add to this the cost of maintenance, wages, fuel, lubricants etc. and the need for three sets of sleds for each machine – one set being un-loaded at the landing, a second set being loaded at the cutting and the third set being hauled too or from the landings - all added to the cost and the need to cover it by increased productivity during a very short (average of 90 days) hauling season.

By the end of the 1915-16 season Morrison was working an excellent area with "Very good logs".^{ibid} However, the long distance – 14 miles - the logs needed to be hauled was no doubt proving to be inefficient with only one Lombard on hand. Since the Lombard Traction Engine Company had ceased producing steam log haulers in 1917 and was focusing production on their gasoline powered models, ordering more steamers from the factory was not an option. Morrison, however, found a solution.

In 1918, following a two year endeavor, Morrison's crews – in a herculean effort - finished hacking a crude road nearly 30 miles to Chamberlain Lake, to retrieve three of the Eastern Manufacturing Lombards which had been abandoned nearly five years previously. This effort cost Morrison \$24,500.00 which he factored into his cost of logs for the 1917-18 and 1918-19 seasons.^{ibid} The boiler from the remaining Eastern Manufacturing Lombard would eventually be used by Ed Lacroix's Madawaska Company to heat fuel oil for use on the Eagle Lake & West Branch railroad. (Circa 1926-1933) Today, visitors to Tramway can find the boiler and other remains.⁸

With a fleet of four steam powered Lombards Morrison opened to the 1918-19 season by building new sets of camps and log hauler roads at a cost of \$20,500.00 – all of which was rolled into the cost per

⁷ William T. Nash, Report on St. John River Above Grand Falls With Lumbering & Driving Statistics, June 1933, Terence F. Harper Collection

⁸ Letter, Edwin Robichaud to Terence Harper, October 31, 1992, Terence F. Harper Collection

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board foot of the logs he sold to the St. John Lumber Company. By 1921 Morrison and his fleet of Lombards were recorded as hauling the furthest of any of the St. John Lumber Companies jobbers. However, this long haul to the main branch of Baker Stream avoided a long spring drive and thus saved money.

Few realized that with the failure and liquidation of the St. John Lumber Company in 1925 and its subsequent purchase by Edouard Lacroix, that a new era of mechanization would be introduced to the upper St. John and Allagash river basins. Lacroix, a Quebec lumberman from St. George Quebec, would from 1926 thru 1933 truly industrialize the timber industry of the region on a vast scale never before imagined. One of Lacroix's early forays into the Maine timber industry was as a jobber for Great Northern Paper Company when he operated a 1-1/2 mile long sluice to carry pulp wood across the border from Portage Lake to Penobscot Lake.⁹

While the surviving records are not clear – we know that during the winter of 1921-22 Morrison was working along Turner Brook in Township 8, Range 17. During that season he jobbed out 50% of his cut and was recorded as using only two of his four log haulers. The jobber may have been Lacroix but we cannot be certain. What we do know is that during the following winter of 1922-23 Lacroix is listed as using two Lombards (presumably Morrison's). However, the entry of the winter of 1923-24 states "Pott's and Morrison's cost per M (million board feet) includes costs of supplies sold Lacroix and which were for season 1924-25."¹⁰ At this point Morrison had moved his operations to Township 13, Range 14 and would do so until 1924 when he disappears from the records. The assumption is that he sold his holdings to Lacroix. Thankfully the records are a bit clearer in regards to R.J. Potts. We know that during the winter of 1923-25 he was working in Township 10, Range 14 and sold his Clayton Lake Depot camp to Lacroix in 1925.

Operating extensively in the Chemquasabamticook Stream Watershed from 1917 to 1924, R.J. Potts began using a steam Lombard log hauler in the winter of 1911-12 when he was listed as using Chouinard's Lombard. Apparently Pott's acquired his own Lombard five years later in 1917 which he used until 1922.^{ibid} Whether or not his Lombard log hauler was part of the deal we simply do not know.

⁹ Lewiston Journal, September 8, 1923

¹⁰ William T. Nash, Report on St. John River Above Grand Falls With Lumbering & Driving Statistics, June 1933

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*Maine Forest & Logging History Museum Lombard circa 1925,
Lacroix family, Terence F. Harper Collection*

If you're counting, at this point Lacroix may have had as many as five steam Lombard Log haulers on hand at the close of 1925. These would include Morrison's four Lombards (three of which were ex-Eastern Manufacturing) plus R.J. Pott's machine. With the purchase of the St. John Lumber company in early 1926, Lacroix added yet another Lombard along with sundry "logging equipment" located in Township 20 Ranges 11 and 12 to his growing collection. A study of

contemporary photographs, provided by the Lacroix family and taken in the 1924-

1933 period, allows us to identify five different steam Lombards associated with Lacroix including the Maine Forest & Logging museum's Lombard which can be identify by the dent in the tank corner and other clues.¹¹

So what became of these machines? One machine (No. 39) was left at Churchill Lake in 1933 when Lacroix abandoned his Allagash operations. Later it was moved and stored at Clayton Lake and eventually donated by J.D. Irving - who acquired much of Lacroix's Maine holdings - to the Ashland, Maine logging museum. In 1928 an additional machine was sold by Lacroix to one of his many jobbers doing business under the unforgettable name of Roy, Roy & Roy along with \$634.00 worth of spare parts.¹²

A contemporary photograph taken at Churchill Lake (circa 19126-1933) provides a intriguing image of one of Lacroix's Lombards. Studying the image we can see that the piston rods, crankshaft and drive chain have been removed. A tow bar is hooked to the front. Could this be the machine sold to Roy, Roy & Roy or a machine being parted out? Interestingly the cab and steersman shelter looks fairly new.

Between 1921 and 1925 Ed Lacroix logged extensively along Knowles Brook in Township 10, Range 16.¹³ Lacroix was not the first to log this area. From 1911 to 1920 another "jobber" for the St. John Lumber Company – A.L. Noble - worked the timber stands in this region. However, it appears that Noble relied on horses since no use of a Lombard is recorded in the surviving record.

¹¹ Photographs Lacroix Lombard Log Haulers, circa 1900 – 1933, Terence F. Harper Collection

¹² List of Log Hauler parts taken by Roy, Roy & Roy, Pierre Tradif Camp, January 11, 1928, Terence F. Harper Collection

¹³ William T. Nash, Report on St. John River Above Grand Falls With Lumbering & Driving Statistics, June 1933, Terence F. Harper Collection

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With March of 1925 bringing with it the end of "good sledding", Lacroix's crew parked two of his steam Lombards side by side. Once the fires were dumped and the boilers cold they covered the behemoths with sheet metal roofing, leaned heavy sled runners against their oil and rust stained flanks and headed down river to catch-up with the drive. They would remain hidden until 1968.

It would be nice to state with certainty that the MF&LM Lombard was indeed one of the former Eastern Manufacturing machines salvaged by John Morrison in 1919 or that a young Dougall S. Price worked the throttle of that particular machine as it steamed and clanked down the 9-14 road along the banks of Russell Stream so many generations ago. The reality is that we may never know with certainty but the possibility is certainly there.