

SLABTOWN

Since 1880

Site of a saw mill owned by
Thompson and Findley

1851



2001

SLABTOWN

This settlement was primarily a lumber mill site on the deviation road leading to the 20th sideroad where it branches off from River Road about 1 mile west of Terra Nova.

The mill owners Thompson and Findlay ran a busy operation. A local resident remembers working there as a youngster and reports that there was a pile of sawdust more than 30 feet high. It later caught fire and smoldered for three years.

Another mill was built at the next creek down the road but the life of a mill was usually short and moved as the supply of lumber depleted.

With several other established villages in the area, Slabtown did not develop as a community.

SLABTOWN

(Further data and stories from the notes of Dick Byford)

Slabtown was the name given to a small collection of 6 to 8 houses which developed around the creeks that flow into the Pine River near the junction of 20th Sideroad and Pine River Road, Mulmur. The creeks were used by a lumber company to run their sawmills to cut lumber. The piles of slabs and sawdust left behind led to the area being called 'Slabtown'.

According to a 'young' man, now 81, Roy Baker, there were three saws at the mills sites owned by Thompson and Findlay

Company. The saws were powered by steam, the water being drawn from the creeks in the area. One man would begin building the fires to produce steam at about 5:00 a.m. so that the saws would be ready by 7:00 or so. When the distance the logs had to be hauled to the saws was too great, the mill was moved to another site closer to the source of wood. Roy Baker remembers that about 6-8 men worked on the mill site but there

2.

were many more who drew logs from the surrounding hills and farms. Roy was hired to draw logs to Slabtown as a replacement for another man who, on occasion, had 'too much of the bottle' to load his team to carry wood from the forest to the mill.

The logs once sawn into lumber, were stacked on the east side of 20th Sideroad on the property known as 'Flintstones'. The lumber was then drawn by horse team either to the rail line near Lisle or southwest towards Shelburne. The teams hauling towards Lisle were forced to dig into sandy roads which made the work hard but the teamsters learned to 'shorten the load', that is, increase the height of the pile of lumber and reduce the length, thereby reducing the strain on the horses.

The road out of the Pine River Valley was more difficult because of the grade. Often, extra teams of horses had to be hitched to the sleighs and wagons as they followed the tracks along the Pine River. Roy Baker believes some of the lumber was used to build several of the large 'round barns' near Erin, Ontario.

There were about six to eight wooden houses around the mill. They have all disappeared now. One unconfirmed report tells of a suicide at Slabtown and another, more reliable, tells of a man, having to be taken away by the county policeman because he was behaving in a very erratic manner. Another account reports that Issaac Griffith Hughson was killed by a falling tree on January 14, 1913 while working at Slabtown. (Reported by Mary Boyle)

The mill closed some time in the late 1930's or early 1940's but, for years, the piles of woodchips and sawdust were local landmarks. Nawton Lloyd on River Road remembers riding his bicycle along the road to Terra Nova past huge piles of sawdust. When the Byford/Buzzells had their pond excavated in 1990, there were still buried piles of sawdust and remnants of the mill - a saw blade, several bricks and a valve.