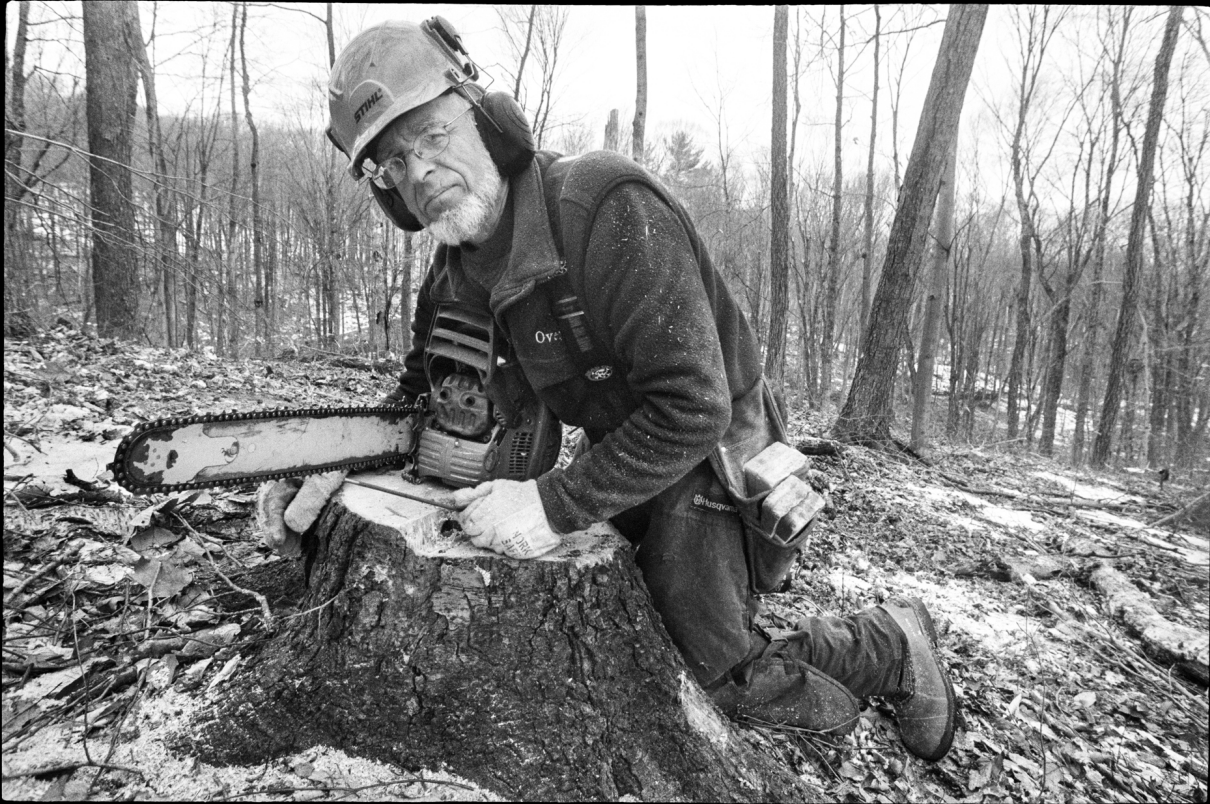




# VISION & VOICE

Gallery and Documentary Workspace



## Portrait of a Forest: Men and Machine

Photography by George Bellerose and commentary by the logging and forest products community/ TRAVELING EXHIBIT

Vermont is enviably blessed with a high-value hardwood forest. But the state's forest products industry faces a daunting list of challenges today: forest fragmentation, sustainable harvesting, global competition, climate change, invasive species, an aging workforce, loss of infrastructure.

Forestry has shaped Vermont since settlers cleared the land for cows, crops, and homesteads. Portrait of a Forest: Men and Machine documents today's forestry community and asks: What does it mean to be stewards of a working forest?

EXHIBITION / The exhibit was held at the Vermont Folklife Center's Vision & Voice Gallery from October 2015– Jan 2016, and is available to travel to traditional and non-traditional exhibit spaces around the state.



Vermont Folklife Center  
88 Main Street, Middlebury, Vermont

# Portrait of a Forest *Exhibit Specifications*

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## **Description**

When Samuel de Champlain named the land south of the St. Lawrence River Les Verts Montagne in 1609 he was recognizing the obvious. This new land was almost entirely forested from valley floor to mountain ridge.

By the mid 1800s, Vermont had been transformed into a mosaic of open land and forests—settlers with their axes and oxen having cleared nearly 80 percent of the formerly forested landscape.

Today, that 80/20 ratio has been nearly reversed, testament to how quickly man and nature shape the land. Vermont, the Green Mountain State, is once again one of the most heavily forested states in the country.

Portrait of a Forest: Men and Machine documents how the forestry community continues to shape the land today and asks: What does it mean to be stewards of a working forest?

For the past decade, George Bellerose has been reading industry magazines, attending policy and program conferences and round tables, interviewing experts from the forestry community, and, above all, spending time in mill yards, on back roads, and in the forest with loggers.

The relationships Bellerose built led to unique access and knowledge given from logger to photographer. Working together a portrait of the forest emerged.

These seven vignettes of loggers and their diverse operations show us the grittiness of the contemporary logger's life, albeit a life that is conducted amidst the magnificent setting of the forest.

## **Content**

The exhibit is composed of 70 contemporary and historical photographs grouped into seven vignettes that tell the stories of loggers in Vermont. Each vignette consists of 27.25 × 20.25 inch black-and-white archival pigment prints, their respective captions, 9 × 6 inch documentary-style archival pigment prints, and text panels. In addition to the seven vignettes of loggers, there is a section of the exhibit outlining the history of logging, the industry in the present day, and a glimpse of the future - also portrayed through the pairing of photographs and text panels.

### **Vignettes:**

- 1) **Tweeter Felion:** 3 large photographs, 5 small photographs, 3 text panels.
- 2) **Steve Weber:** 3 large photographs, 4 small photographs, 3 text panels
- 3) **Mike Quinn:** 5 large photographs, 7 small photographs, 5 text panels
- 4) **Tom Yager:** 2 large photographs, 2 small photographs, 3 text panels
- 5) **The Lathrops:** 5 large photographs, 9 small photographs, 4 text panels
- 6) **Barry Burnham:** 2 large photographs, 3 small photographs, 2 text panels
- 7) **Tom Lathrop:** 3 large photographs, 5 small photographs, 3 text panels

### **Logging Throughout History:**

**Past:** 4 (13 × 9) photographs, 4 (12 × 8) text panels

**Present:** 1 (27.25 × 20.25) photograph, 1 (12 × 8) text panel

**Future:** 4 (23 × 17.5 in) photographs, 4 (9 × 6) text panels

*Reference the following pages to see photographs and text panels.*

# Portrait of a Forest *Exhibit Specifications* (continued)

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## Public Programming

*Artist Talk* – Photographer George Bellerose speaks to the inspiration, process and culmination of the project.

*Panel Discussion* – Vermont's Working Forests: Challenges and Opportunities was the topic of a panel discussion at the Vermont Folklife Center, where Vermont's most thoughtful observers on the economic, social, and environmental role of the state's working forests were brought together.

*Additional projects may be proposed in partnership with photographer George Bellerose and the Vermont Folklife Center.*

## Exhibit Press

*VT Digger* - <http://vtdigger.org/2015/09/30/portrait-of-a-forest-men-and-machine-exhibit-at-vermont-folklife-center/>

*Seven Days* - <http://www.sevendaysvt.com/vermont/portrait-of-a-forest-men-and-machine/Event?oid=2925145>

## Fees

The exhibit is available for loan for a fee to be negotiated based on the unique conditions of each host.

## Exhibit Layout

The following images display examples of the photo and text layouts of the 7 vignettes that form part of the exhibit.



# Exhibit Content *Photographs*

**LARGE** - 27.25x20.25 inch black-and-white archival pigment prints

**SMALL** - 9x6 inch black-and-white archival pigment prints

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The following pages display the layouts for the vignettes of the 7 loggers as well as the section of the exhibit outlining logging throughout history.

A close-up view of the text panels that make up each section of the exhibit is also included.



# TEXT PANELS – Tweeter Felion

## TWEETER FELION: The Old School

Lester Felion, known to all as “Tweeter,” is by all accounts one of the last of “the old school.” Born in Leicester, one of 11 children, Tweeter started logging after the 8th grade when his family could not afford high school tuition in neighboring Brandon. Sixty years later, he’s still at it.

His crew hasn’t changed much—brother Ron for 40-plus years, son Lester Jr. for 30-plus years. Nor has his Yankee frugality—his bulldozer and skidder are well past being senior citizens of the forest.

What makes Tweeter, Tweeter is his longstanding woods ethic: “Leave the woods better than you found them.”

*Detail photos from right to left: Tweeter’s strength is legendary. Woods smarts, he says, are more important; center, his son, Lester, Jr., is the indispensable on-site fixer; near left, today’s machinery makes logging less physically taxing, pulling cable is an exception; far left, a loaded log truck, 90,000-plus pounds, requires a substantial access road, useable in all but the worst of mud season.*

## “I Know What Hard Times Are”

I was born in 1937 right after the Depression. I’m the oldest of 11 siblings, so I know what hard times are. When I started working on the cross cut with the old man, I was small and couldn’t bear on it. He’d pull that handle so hard that the blade would fly by and almost hit me in the head. And then I started with the axe, splitting wood, so my father wouldn’t have to when he got home. His axes were always sharp and if you messed up on ‘em, you’d get some good bruises to show for it.

**“TWEETER” FELION**

## “The Old School Looked to the Future”

The old school looked to the future. They took out the trees that were big enough and had to come out. Then they’d go back in 20 years and do it again. So you always had regeneration. The old school knew you left it better for the next guy. There wasn’t so much of a rush then and guys still made money.

**“TWEETER” FELION**



# TEXT PANELS – Steve Weber

## STEVE WEBER: I Like to Work

Unlike many loggers, Steve Weber does not have a family history of logging or farming. The son of a doctor, Weber grew up in sparsely forested Brooklyn. But by the time he graduated from Dartmouth College in 1962 with a degree in botany, he had a world of summer experience—cutting pulp and firewood with a French Canadian crew in Maine, clearing trees in New Hampshire for fire prevention and safety, running a choker cable in Alaskan spruce forests.

Weber has a master's degree in forestry from Yale, worked for paper companies for nearly a decade, and was the college forester at Middlebury College for 31 years. He insists that he is a forester first and an amateur logger second. Logging professionals disagree: "He is one of us."

*Detail photos from right to left: The crew: Rick Laporte, left, on dozer; center, Steve on chain saw; right, T.J. Turner on skidder; center, know your escape route, generally a 45-degree angle from the stump; left, the longer the skid, the less the profit. An hour was the turnaround time in the distant reaches of Weber's wood lot.*

## "One American, Me"

I wanted to work locally my third summer in college (1961). I bought a secondhand saw, a big Homelite for a hundred bucks, and wrote to a bunch of paper companies and other outfits. Most labor in Maine and northern New Hampshire was bonded Canadian labor because companies couldn't get local people to do that kind of work. What it meant was that any American who wanted to work had priority. But no American wanted to. There were 60 to 70 French Canadians in the camp and one American, me.

**STEVE WEBER**

## "I Don't Want to Sit In Something"

So many logging jobs today are mechanical felling and processing. That kind of cutting never appealed to me. I don't want to sit in something. With a chain saw it's a different. You're constantly moving and solving problems tree to tree. I'll be 75 in April and hate to even think that I can't keep logging the way I always have. That would be a downward path when I start thinking I can't do this anymore.

**STEVE WEBER**



# MIKE QUINN – 5 Large, 7 Small, 5 Panels



**MIKE QUINN: I Have a Niche**

Mike Quinn refers to himself as an anomaly in today's logging world where profit can be pursued on private and public lands. Quinn, a well-known local character, is a 70-year-old logger who has been logging in the mountains of North Carolina for over 50 years. He is a self-proclaimed "niche" logger, meaning he only logs in the mountains of North Carolina. He is a self-proclaimed "niche" logger, meaning he only logs in the mountains of North Carolina. He is a self-proclaimed "niche" logger, meaning he only logs in the mountains of North Carolina.



**"Oh Yea! I Like Logging"**

Oh, yea! I like logging. Every job has something different. If it's not the log, it's the market. The market is what you log because you like it. Trying to quantify it as a thing, which according to the IRS is far below poverty level, is another thing.

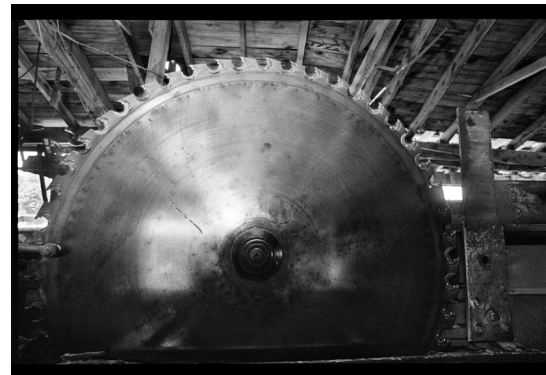
**MIKE QUINN**



**"I Can Make Money On That"**

My trick is that I want to do stuff that nobody else wants to do. I'm looking for the job that the big guys aren't the slightest bit interested in. That way I can make my price. If you have a 2000 acre of forest, the big guy will be bidding top dollar. If you have five acres in the back of nowhere to be thrown that can be bought real cheap and I can make money on that.

**MIKE QUINN**



**"Some Assembly Required"**

The mill came on several buses—motor, hook, blade, carriage, track, edge in a modified state—because it really came with "some assembly required." About half the mill was original equipment; the rest came from a probably 1970s-1980s vintage or possibly post-war. A gear or two might go back to 1900. The principle of the circular saw really hasn't changed that much in a century and a half with the exception that motors have replaced waterpower.

**MIKE QUINN**



**"High-End Hardwood is Really a Neat Thing"**

If you're a small logger, high-end hardwood is really a neat thing because you can make a much smaller log, even if you can't throw 10 acres of low-value "wood." You can have an old dilapidated skidder and chain saw and go into a fairly small lot and turn out a small amount of very valuable hardwood. Business is all about production.

**MIKE QUINN**

# TEXT PANELS – Mike Quinn

## MIKE QUINN: I Have a Niche

Mike Quinn refers to himself as an anomaly in today's logging world where profit can be pennies on pieces and bigger is better. Quinn, a self-described wheeler-dealer, is a throwback to the jack-of-all trades logger-farmer of the past.

Winters, he cuts timber on his and others wood lots. Sugaring time, he tends his 1,000-tap sugar bush. Summer is milling time at his backyard sawmill that was state-of-the-art 75 years ago. Summer and fall are haying time on his 200-acre East Middlebury farm. Raising heifers, 50 or so, is a year-round chore.

"I'll do anything where I can make a buck," says Quinn of his patch-together-a-living lifestyle.

Detail photos from left to right: Winter sequence - Nineteenth century loggers cut mainly in the easier skidding months of winter. Economics today requires loggers to work in the field year round, with the exception of mud season. Sawmill sequence - Quinn's many-hatted operation involves haying, logging, sawing, sugaring, and raising heifers all on his own land. Hemlock is a workingman's lumber. Good enough for beams but not stable enough for higher-value cabinetry and furniture.

## "Oh Yea! I Like Logging"

Oh, yea! I like logging. Every job has something different. If it's not the logs, it's the market. The truth is you log because you like it. Trying to justify it as a living, which according to the IRS is far below poverty level, is another thing.

MIKE QUINN

## "I Can Make Money On That"

My trick is that I want to do stuff that nobody else wants to do. I'm looking for the job that the big guys aren't the slightest bit interested in. That way I can name my price. If you have 1,000 acres of firewood, the big guys will be bidding top dollar. If you have five acres in the back of nowhere to be thinned that can be bought real cheap and I can make money on that.

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MIKE QUINN

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If you're a small logger, high-end hardwood is really a neat thing because you can make as much on three big veneer trees as you can thinning 10 acres of low-value "weeds." You can have an old dilapidated skidder and chain saw and go into a fairly small lot and turn out a small amount of very valuable hardwood. Biomass is all about production.

MIKE QUINN

# TOM YAGER – 2 Large, 2 Small, 2 Panels



## TOM YAGER: Feeding the Beast

Foresters are the traffic cops of the woods. They evaluate wood lots for their economic potential and ecological value and develop management plans that combine sustainable cutting with habitat protection. But much of their mandate is to think generationally. How can today's forests be improved by eliminating "weeds" and by promoting high-value species?

Tom Yager, the dean of area foresters, has worked for A. Johnson in Bristol, one of the state's largest mills, for 40-plus years. His job, very simply, is to "feed the beast"—a mill that directly employs 30-plus people and requires a constant diet of logs.

The following documentation illustrates two of his jobs: laying out access roads to new wood lots, and planting pine seedlings for harvesting in 50-plus years.

Detail photos from left to right: Paul Turner preparing the road bed. When natural seedling Bob, Johnson foresters plant three-year-old seedlings hoping that one in five will grow to commercial value in the next half century, right.



## "Most Don't Read the Landscape"

Most loggers think they can put in a road, but there are only a few who really know what they are doing. Most don't read the landscape. They make the roads too steep or the turns too tight. They don't get rid of the water the way they should. Ultimately, the old timers are the best because they have built a lot of roads and have a good feel for the machine and the earth. You need a lot of experience to be able to look at the ground, at the side of a hill, at the roots of trees, and then stick your blade in and get a feel for what you're running over.

TOM YAGER



# TEXT PANELS – Tom Yager

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**TOM YAGER**



# TEXT PANELS – The Lathrops

## THE LATHROPS: Six Generations

When Jim Lathrop took over the family business in 1994, he placed portraits of the four generations that preceded him on the office wall (see detail photos, right).

**Noah (1848-1931)** buys spruce-thick land in Bristol Notch in 1880, builds a water-powered mill, works the woods with oxen, and creates a very profitable niche by selling beams, framing, and fixtures for turnkey barns. **William (1877-1958)** a genius at setting up mills and then, restless, selling them and moving on to start another. **Clarence (1899-1980)** a part-time farmer with a portable sawmill. Like William he had a tinkerer's knack and like Noah the entrepreneurial bent to expand the business. **Claire (1922-1999)** buys the portable mill from his father in 1944 for \$3,500 and later begins sawing year round. With the help of his father, he builds a permanent mill in Bristol and expands it to be one of the largest mills in the state.

**Jim (1948-)** takes over the business using his engineering background to create a state-of-the-art mill. After a fire in 2003, he transitions from saw logs to a chipping operation that is now the largest in the state. **Jason (1972-)** and **Justin (1974-)** who took over in 2014 are not yet on the wall. Jim's advice, "Always have a Plan B."

Detail photos from left to right: Shot of Clarence, sawing in the mill behind his farm, 1940. Aerial shot of mill in 1987, Jim Lathrop portrait, Justin and Jason, Three sequence shot: A high-volume chipping operation is capital intensive, requiring grapple skidders, slashers, chippers and a fleet of trailer trucks. Photos of Lathrop generations courtesy of Tom Lathrop.

## “You Have to Get Bigger”

What it comes down to is in logging, just like dairy farming, you have to get bigger and mechanize in order to survive. There will always be a place for a guy who can cut 5-10-15 trees and do jobs that are too small to justify the expense of moving a lot of big equipment. But those little guys don't cut enough to keep big mills going.

**JIM LATHROP**

## “You Pay Your Dues”

I started like everyone else with a bulldozer and a chainsaw. That led to a newer bulldozer and a skidder and that skidder led to another skidder. And then I wound up with a log truck. One bulldozer led to three bulldozers. Two skidders led to four skidders. You pay your dues and work your way up. The only way you could start today and be a chipping operation like us is to have very deep pockets. Machinery is so expensive that if you buy top shelf, you won't be able to make the payments. And you can't just buy one piece because you need four or five pieces with it.

**JIM LATHROP**

## “Transportation Eats Up All Your Profits”

We used to have a global business with our sawmill, but it's all local today. We cut our wood within 50 miles of Bristol and stay under 70 miles for delivery. Going east and west is very difficult because of the mountains. Transportation eats up all your profit and you have nothing left if you truck it any farther.

**JIM LATHROP**

# BARRY BURNHAM— 2 Large, 3 Small, 2 Panels



## BARRY BURNHAM: I'll Stick with Diversification

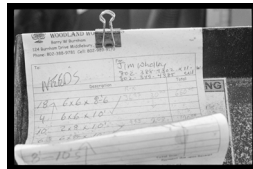
Barry Burnham began helping his father in his home construction business during high school and joined him upon graduation in the early 1980s.

Several years later, he set up his own shop to concentrate on cabinetry and fine furniture during slow spells. And in the late 1990s, he added a portable saw mill to cut timber for others and his own projects.

Burnham only partly jokes that he has passed 50 and is still trying to figure out how to make a living in housing's boom-bust cycle. "Whatever it is, it has always been about wood and where I can best spend my time. There have been times when the mill is real busy and building isn't. Other times it has been just the opposite.

"I'm still trying to figure out the best mix. For now, I'll stick with diversification," says Barry.

Below photos from right to left: The mill sits in a wooded area in North Carolina. In this view looking for a minute, Barry Burnham's cement guard boards start with a level surface, a sharp blade, and a blade square to the cutting bed, and the floor square with the blade. Small errors quickly compound during the dozen-plus slices of a 20' log.



## "It's Just Cool"

The building trades are really iffy today. There are so many builders. It's a saturated market so you have to be diversified to weather the ups and downs. That's why I like running the mill. It's cool. You take this raw material and turn it into valuable lumber. It's just cool. But I don't think there is enough demand year round to making a living at it.

BARRY BURNHAM



# TEXT PANELS – Barry Burnham

## **BARRY BURNHAM: I'll Stick with Diversification**

Barry Burnham began helping his father in his home construction business during high school and joined him upon graduation in the early 1980s.

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"I'm still trying to figure out the best mix. For now, I'll stick with diversification," says Barry.

*Detail photos from right to left: The cut list is a sawyer's blue print, left, in this case beams for a small sheep barn; center, good boards start with a level setup, a sharp blade, and a blade square to the cutting bed, and the fence square with the blade. Small errors quickly compound during the dozen-plus slices of a 20" log.*

## **"It's Just Cool"**

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**BARRY BURNHAM**





# TEXT PANELS – Tom Lathrop

## **TOM LATHROP:** Flooring for 20,000 Houses

“How come you sawmill people are always crotchety?”

Tom Lathrop, a fifth-generation lumberman along with his brother Jim, has a quick response. “In the flooring business, you have a thousand pieces of machinery that can break at any minute. Monday morning, someone doesn’t come in because they have ‘issues.’ You’re playing catch up the rest of the week. Then it’s raining and you can’t deliver. You have a million factors to make your day miserable. And you wonder why we are crotchety?”

Over the past 25 years, Tom Lathrop has produced flooring for over 20,000 houses. Flooring, that by all accounts, is the gold standard for hardwood floors.

And he is not always crotchety. “Oh gosh! Today was a great day. We put out a lot of flooring.”

*Detail photos from right to left: Exclusively Vermont uses only Vermont timber grown almost entirely within a 40-mile range of the mill; near right, Sam Hutchinson has sawn lumber for Tom Lathrop for years and instinctively understands how to slice the beams that Tom sends him; near left, computers can maximize yields but don’t detect defects like knots and lack the human eye to highlight the grain and character of each board; far left, Lathrop’s stocks 200 varieties of flooring in 15-plus wood species.*

## “Sawing an Unknown”

Anyone can run a machine. But can you take the best face off that board at the right thickness? That separates the men from the boys. You’re cutting into something you can’t see. You’re looking for clues like grain and a big, dark heart that means the tree has been struggling. Some people never develop the sense that you’re not just sawing the outside of the log. You’re sawing what you believe is behind it. You’re sawing an unknown. I still get fooled and I’ve sawn millions of board feet.

**TOM LATHROP**

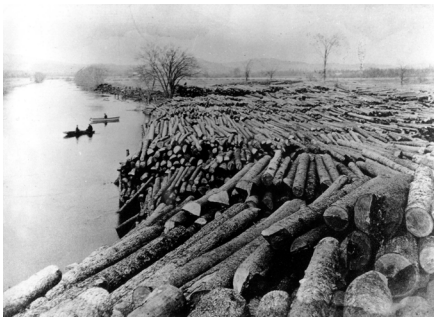
## “I’ve Tried to Do it Well”

Unless you really know the lumber business through and through, I’d advise you not to go into the flooring business. The learning curve is too expensive. If you do, you have to like what you do. You’re like farmers or bakers. They rarely get rich. They do it because it’s labor of love and a love of hard work. I never went to college and this is all I know how to do. But I’ve really thought about it and I’ve tried to do it well. I love what I do and I’m going to miss it. It’s all I have ever known.

**TOM LATHROP**

# LOGGING THROUGHOUT HISTORY - PAST

4 (13 x 9 in) photographs, 4 (12 x 8 in) text panels



## LOG BOOM OTTER CREEK: 1875

Just as rivers and lakes were often the first highways, so, too, were these waterways the most efficient way to get logs to mills. In 1840, Vermont had over 1,000 mills, 10 times the number today. The last saw log drive was in 1915. The last pulpwood drive was on the Connecticut River in 1948.

Photo courtesy of Vermont Historical Society.

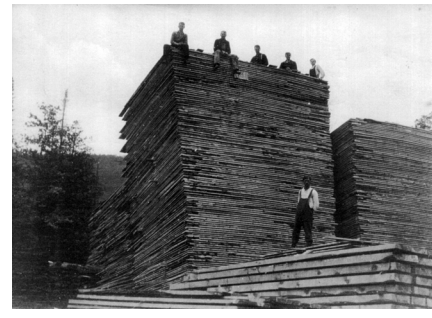


## MEN AT LOGGING CAMP: 1906

*Tall Trees, Tough Men*, Robert Pike's classic history of logging and log driving in New England aptly describes logging camp life:

It is true that the majority of old-time woodsmen believed that taking a bath in the winter would bring on galloping consumption, and so forebore, and it is true that some loggers kept putting on one pair of socks over another and one suit of long red underwear over another (the common belief was that red was especially warming), and were quite surprised, come spring, when they had their first wash, to find several layers of socks and long johns that they had forgotten about.

Photo courtesy of Vermont State Archives and Records Administration.



## WORKERS AT ROY'S SAW MILL, JEWETT'S POND: 1910-35

Vermont's waterways were once dotted with sawmills and few communities didn't have ready access to one of the 1,000-plus mills in the state. Today, about 90 percent of all sawing is done by a score of major saw mills.

Photo courtesy of the Warden Collection.



## WINTER SKIDDING: 1915

The Lombard hauler, belching smoke and cinders, was an "awesome sight" in its early 1900s heyday. It could run all day at a steady four miles per hour and could, on even terrain, pull sleds hundreds of feet long. But Lombards required rugged and costly roads and were very temperamental and expensive to maintain. Worst of all, perhaps, they had no brakes, which made for harrowing descents.

Photo courtesy of Special Collections, BodleyHead Library, University of Vermont.

# TEXT PANELS – Past

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*Photo courtesy of Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.*

# LOGGING THROUGHOUT HISTORY - PRESENT

1 (27.25 x 20.25 in) photograph, 1 (12 x 8 in) text panel



## OUR BEST HOPE

I spent 30 years as a forester working with landowners. Being commissioner for the past three years has given me the chance to see the complete supply chain. We are making progress in understanding the role of forests and forestry, but we need greater understanding of all elements—loggers, foresters, mill owners, truckers, retailers, artisans, and the public.

Forests provide clean water, the natural infrastructure for our recreational activities, the scenic backdrop for our tourism economy, and ecological resilience during flooding and climate change.

I haven't even mentioned the one billion dollars plus that wood products add to our economy. It's a major part of our economy and foundational to our rural economy.

But we take this green backdrop for granted. When I speak as the foliage guy with the tourism folks, I hammer away that foliage is not an accident. It's because of the people who work the land.

I tell them that working forests are our last best hope to keep forests as forests.

**Michael Snyder**  
Commissioner  
Vermont Department of Parks, Forest & Recreation

## TEXT PANELS – Present

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Commissioner

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# TEXT PANELS – Future

## THE FABRIC OF VERMONT

There are harvesting practices, some happening in Vermont, that may not build a positive understanding of forestry. We need to be honest and tell positive stories of how industry has worked hard to make improvements, that poor stewardship is the exception.

We must all collectively agree on what we want—healthy forests, clean water, local jobs, local wood, a viable economic engine.

Working land keeps the fabric of Vermont intact. Both wild and working forests are part of Vermont's character.

### **Jamey Fidel**

General Counsel & Forest and Wildlife Program Director  
Vermont Natural Resources Council

## DISCONNECTED FROM THE LAND

Two hundred years ago nearly everyone had direct or indirect contact with the working environment, our farms and forests. In the last 50 years as society has become more urbanized, people have become disconnected from the land.

This is both a problem and an opportunity. We have a good story to tell. The same people who serve on fire departments, select boards, and other community organizations are also the same people who earn their living by harvesting forest products or growing agricultural products. If you weaken any aspect of that rural culture, particularly if you weaken the economic aspect, you will eventually weaken and break down the other aspects of rural life.

### **William Sayre**

Chair, Forest Policy Task Force  
Associated Industries of Vermont

## THE NEGLECTED STEPCHILD

The forest products industry feels like it's the neglected stepchild in the Vermont economy. Agriculture and farming are visible. We see and purchase stuff directly at a farmer's market and farm stand, from a CSA. We get to know the family.

Forestry hasn't told its story as well and is much less visible. There is a very strong stewardship ethic within the industry, but that hasn't been understood because people just see the stumps and big machines and disruption. They don't understand that this cutting is renewing the forest.

### **Paul Costello**

Executive Director  
Vermont Council on Rural Development

## FUTURE: Vermont Is Enviably Blessed

Vermont is often a postcard of red barns and grazing cows. Our dairy farms do have bragging rights, producing more milk than the rest of New England combined. But the state flag, centered by a pine tree and framed by boughs, reminds us that Vermont also has bragging rights for its forests. These forests, from logging to recreational use, are a billion-dollar plus industry and one of the state's largest employers.

Vermont has always been a state of booms and busts. The state's forest products industry has been no exception and faces a daunting list of challenges today: forest fragmentation, sustainable harvesting, global competition, climate change, invasive species, an aging workforce, loss of infrastructure from saw mills to equipment dealers, negative public perceptions of a perceived cut-corners culture.

For those who see the glass half full, Vermont is enviably blessed: A high-value hardwood forest that is unequalled in the country. A family business culture that thinks long-term. A relatively harmonious working relationship between the environmental, forest products, and policy-making communities.

Forestry has shaped Vermont since settlers cleared the land for cows, crops, and homesteads. How Vermont will look in the coming decades will continue to be shaped, today and by generations to come, by those who work the land.