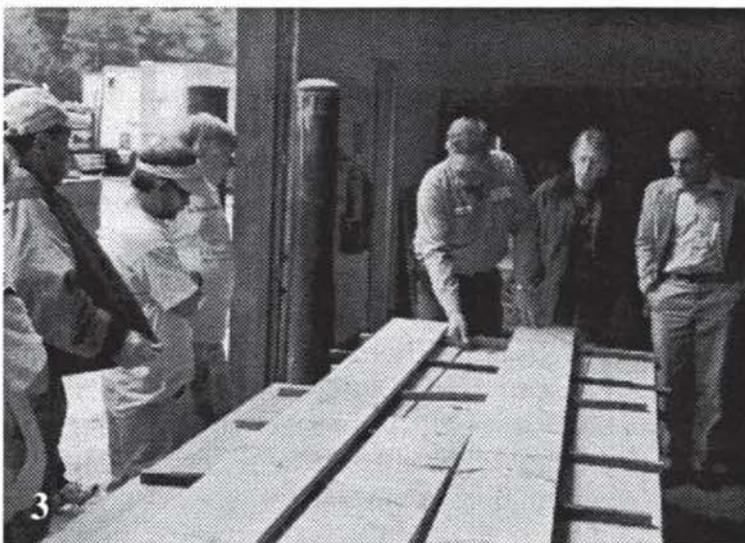


Northern NE Chapter Meeting and Fall Tour

The fall 2004 meeting and tour focusing on the woods products industry was held in Henniker, NH, reputed to be "the only Henniker on earth". We met at the local historical society museum and had an opportunity to view some of the tools, toys, and assorted items made from local wood. A very short meeting was held and all officers agreed to continue their positions for another year. However, members should consider the possibility of assisting the chapter in these positions in the future.

Our first morning stop was the Goss sawmill in Henniker, a small family-owned business. Donald Goss showed us the log yard, sawmill, dry kiln, and planer/finisher shop. His father began sawing logs in the late 1930s after the hurricane of 1938 blew down millions of board feet of timber. He

Four views of the NNEC tour of the Goss Sawmill in Henniker, NH. The photos were taken in (1) the log yard, (2) the saw mill, (3) the planer/finisher shop, and (4) the lumber yard adjacent to the kiln.



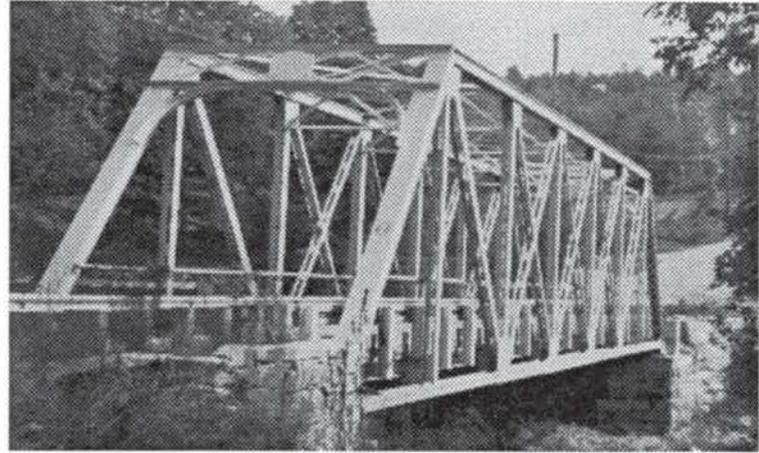
gave us an example of how the volume (in board feet) of a log is determined using a scale stick, and we looked at the machinery to debark the logs before sawing. Then we went into the sawmill and were shown the circular saw, vertical edger, and the log carriage. Of special interest was the dipping tank, where loads of fresh cut lumber are dipped in a solution to prevent the growth of blue stain fungus that would otherwise discolor the lumber. We then went to the dry kiln that will hold up to 30,000 board feet of lumber while drying to about 12% moisture. Sensors are placed into the lumber and the moisture content is monitored while drying. Approximately 70% of the lumber cut is white pine, with about 25% hemlock and the remainder hardwoods, with a yearly output of two million board feet. Lumber from the mill is shipped to retail outlets across the eastern U.S., and is sold locally at the mill.

We traveled to the village of West Henniker for a tour led by James Garvin. He discussed the history of the two riveted iron Pratt truss bridges across the Contoocook River. The smaller of the two was installed in Henniker in 1915 and slated for removal. Once the town residents were informed of the historical significance of the bridge, they chose to strengthen and reinforce the bridge rather than remove it. The larger bridge was originally across the Merrimack River in Concord at Manchester Street. This bridge was also built in 1915 and was moved to Henniker in 1933, in order to save the cost of building a new bridge.



Next was a walk along the power canal that was first dug in the late 1700's and lined with cut granite in the mid- 1800's. The canal provided water power to a 1850's paper mill which was operating until around 1980, and the mill was taken down less than ten years ago. There was a millpond on the site. James Garvin spoke about the very recently removed dam on the Contoocook River and how a coalition of kayakers, fisherman, environmentalists, and scientists pressed for the dam's removal. Federal funds were available to tear out the dam, but not available for its maintenance. The unfortunate result of the dam removal will be water stagnation and vegetative growth in the canal. It is hoped that a spring flush out of the canal may lessen this effect.

After lunch we had a short tour of Merrimac Log Homes, which is located at the Granite State Forest Products sawmill in Henniker. Beginning in the late 1970's, the sawmill started cutting logs for log homes and selling wholesale to log homebuilders. In 2001 Merrimac Logs Homes was established to sell the logs directly to customers who will build their own log homes. White pine logs are cut to a standard 6" X 8" size with other sizes available. Numerous log shapes can be selected, in order to customize your home. There are also a variety of home designs to choose from. We went into the mill where the rough cut square logs are finished, Depending upon the desired fished log, the mill shapes each log, planes it, and cuts a double tongue and groove pattern for seating one log atop another. Gaskets and metal rods are used to hold the logs together as the home goes up. Log siding is available so that garages and outbuilding can have the log home look. We then went into the shop where logs are pre-cut to the required lengths. A customer can either purchase the necessary volume of logs for his house, or have them pre-cut and numbered with openings for doors and windows once the house is built. At this time, about fifty log homes are sold each year and business is increasing yearly. Merrimac Log Homes are sold in the northeastern and southeastern U.S. and in European countries such as Spain, France, and Germany. They are preparing a shipment that will soon go to the island of Martinique.



One of two riveted Pratt truss bridges crossing the Contoocook River in West Henniker near the industrial complex remains visited during the NNEC Fall tour. Erected in 1915, the bridge was designed by New Hampshire's first State Engineer, John Storrs. It rests on dry laid stone abutments, which have recently been strengthened with concrete pads.



This two-span riveted Pratt truss bridge, also attributed to John Storrs, was erected in 1933.

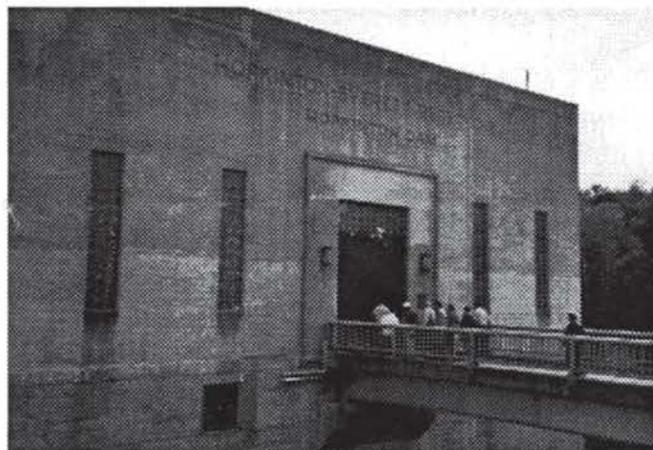
The trusses were salvaged from a bridge originally carrying Manchester Street across the Merrimack River in Concord to save money during The Great Depression. The Pratt truss was first introduced in 1844 by Thomas and Caleb Pratt and was originally constructed in timber. It is the only truss form to be erected in wood, iron and steel according to David Plowden, Bridges: The Spans of North America (New York, Viking Press, 1974:65).



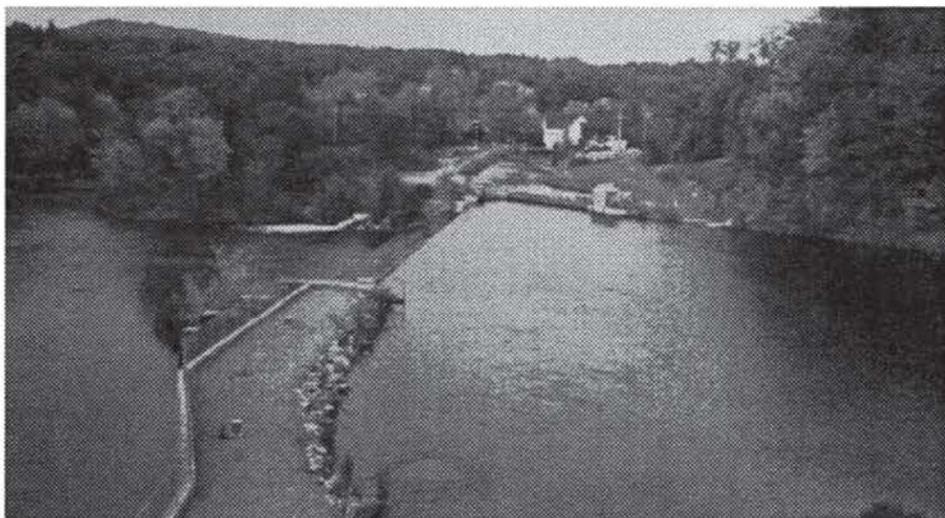
The remains of the power canal that once supplied the Contoocook Valley Paper Company. The dam that created the impoundment was removed in August of 2004. The canal and other remains of the paper company are planned to be adapted to a recreation/ educational area by the Town of Henniker.

Our final stop was the nearby Hopkinton Dam at the Hopkinton-Everett Reservoir. There are two flood control dams that control the volume of spring runoff from the Contoocook and Piscataquog rivers going into the Merrimack River. The project was completed in 1962 with a land area of 10,000 acres, most of which can be used for water storage in the spring, and then released during the summer. We entered and looked around the gatehouse, which contains six gates, two of which were open at the eight-foot level. By this time it was 4 pm and the tour was officially over. However from the dam we could see a covered bridge, so ten individuals went down, took pictures, and walked through it on such a nice fall day.

David Coughlin



Participants in the NNEC Fall tour enter the gatehouse of the Hopkinton flood-control dam.



A view downstream from the top of the Hopkinton flood-control dam where a second, hydropower dam is seen. A canal supplying the hydroelectric generation station is in the distance, beyond the spillway.