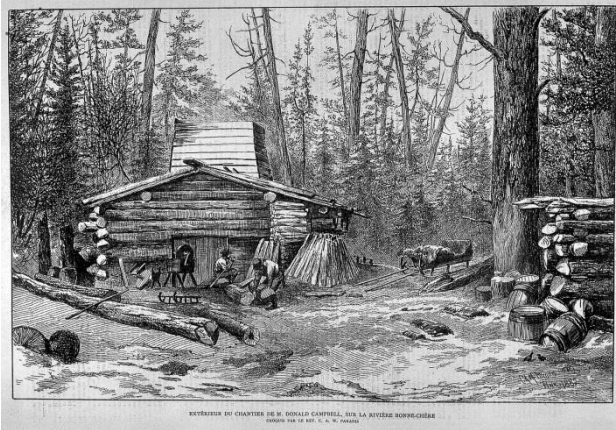


Lumberjacks and log drivers

With the deep green of the conifers and the throaty rumble of the Cachée River... Just a stone's throw from Lac Tremblant, the natural beauty of the Park des Chutes enthalls its visitors. The presence of the wood and the white water are poignant reminders of the lumberjacks and log drivers—those unknown workers in an industry that left an indelible mark on the history of this area: the forest industry.



A logging camp at the end of the 19th century, with buildings similar to those the settlers built when they arrived on their land.

Source: *L'Opinion publique*, mai 1882,
Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.



Gaston Gervais, former forest industry worker in the region, wrote the following on the photograph (translation): "Log drive, spring 1917, on the Diable. No stove, no beds, fir branches for mattresses, no fresh meat—everything cooked in the ashes". You can see, at left, the "cantouques" (cant hooks) used by the log drivers. Source: Gervais collection.

In 1858, surveyor George N. Albright noted in his report that the Hamilton brothers, owners of a large sawmill on the Ottawa River, had already started to cut pine here -- in the territory that would one day become the Ville de Mont-Tremblant. Ten years later, two wealthy wood merchants and boat builders from Québec, John Roche and James Connelly, obtained cutting rights for the area around Lac Tremblant and along the Diable (Devil's River). Felled by axe in winter, then floated in the river in the spring, the huge squared trunks set off on a journey that took them to the Ottawa River,

then on into the St. Lawrence River as far as Anse au Foulon in old Quebec City. Lumberjacks, log drivers and raftsmen thus presaged the northward march of the settlers, who started clearing land in the mid-1870s.

But the land was not generous, and the dreams of agricultural prosperity that had lured the settlers collapsed like a house of cards. To survive, the men left their families come autumn and headed for the logging camps. They spent the winter there, working "from one star to the next"—from dawn till nightfall—for a pittance. When the snow finally melted, armed with their cant hooks, the log drivers—the cowboys of the river—floated the logs from meanders to rapids, battling the log jams at the risk of their lives. From

one generation to the next, with the rhythm of the seasons, a way of life developed around the logging camps. The region was at the mercy of forest industry companies and market fluctuations.

Production of squared logs was replaced in the last quarter of the 19th century by the sawmill industry, whose products were largely intended for the United States — which was experiencing a real estate boom. In the 1920s, still in the United States, the birth of yellow journalism resulted in high demand for newsprint. In 1925, Canadian International Paper, a subsidiary of an American multinational, became owners of the cutting rights for an enormous area that included part of the current Parc National du Mont-Tremblant. The firs and spruces of the Diable River valley were transformed into pulp in the mills in Hawkesbury, on the Ontario shore of the Ottawa River. It was only in 1981, following passage of the Parks Act, that the forests of the Parc du Mont-Tremblant became exempt from wood harvesting.



Log transport by water required construction on the rivers. The chute on the Cachée waterfalls helped with movement downriver of the logs from Lac Tremblant.

Source: postcard, photographer unknown.



In about 1880, the raftsmen having a meal on the log raft that they were floating from the Ottawa River to Quebec City.

Source: After a photo by William James Topley (PA-008405), Bibliothèque et Archives Canada.

Research and writing: Danielle Soucy



Forest workers, in winter, at the camp of the Boulé, in Parc du Mont-Tremblant.

Source: Gervais collection.