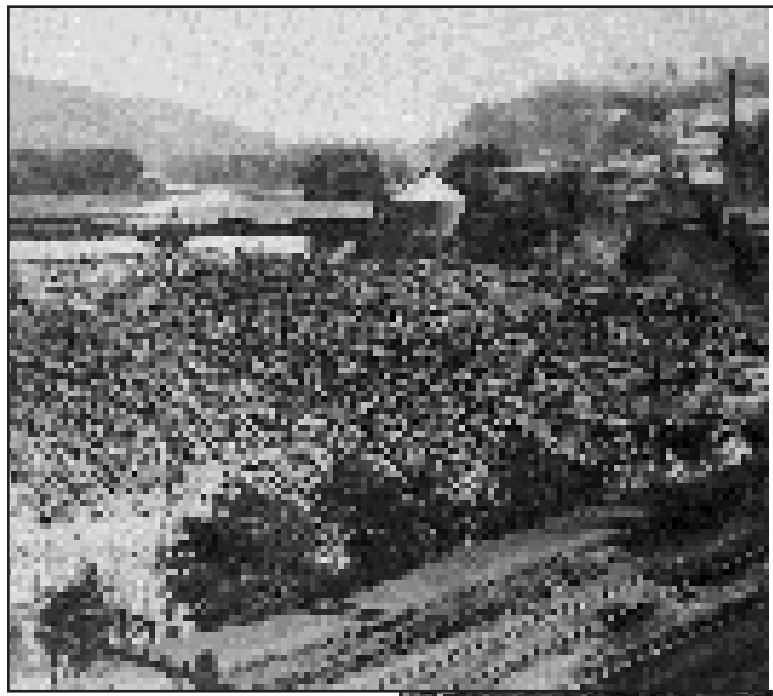
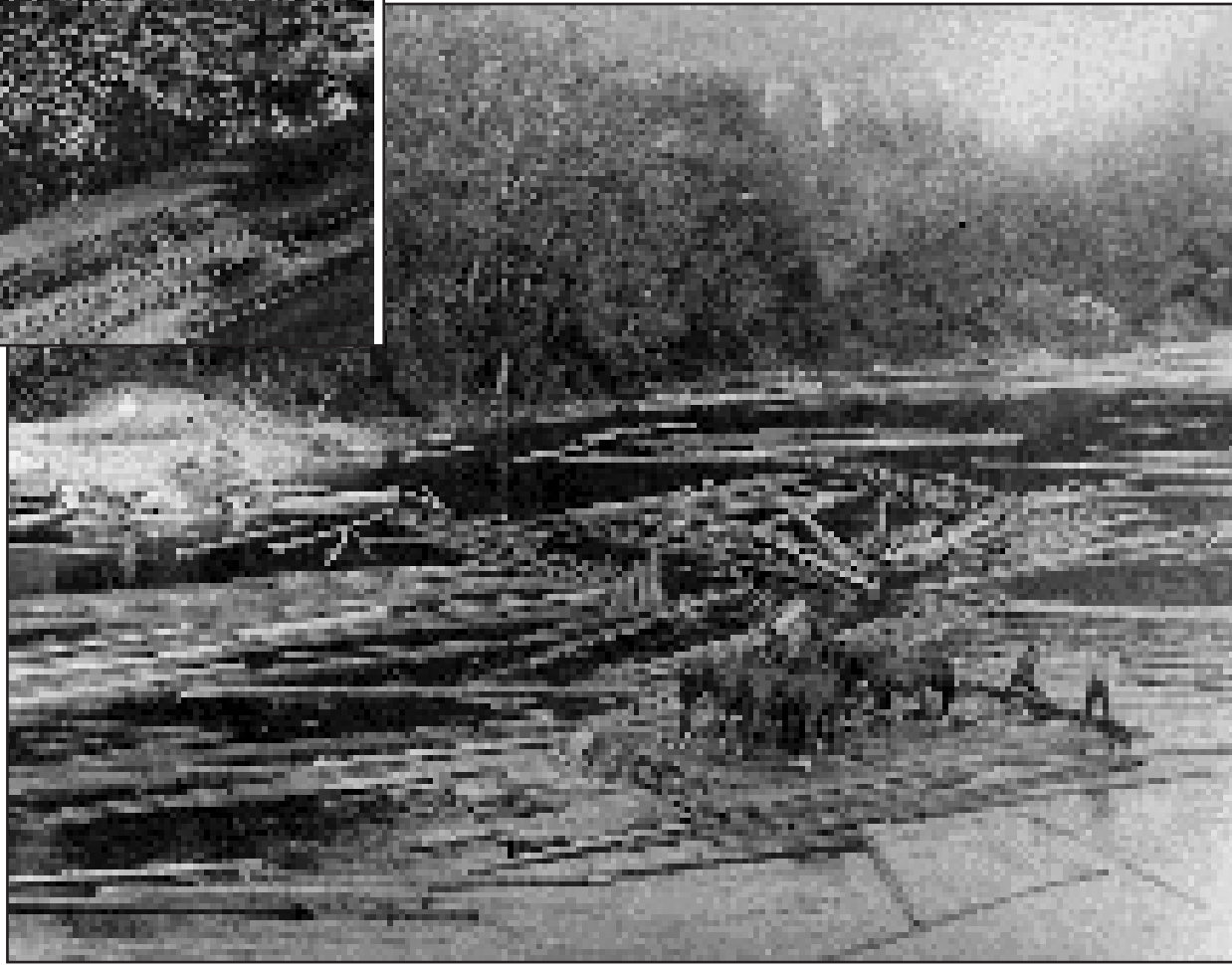


Forest to stream

Water carried wood from place to place



WATERWAY Ñ Above, logs fill the river during a 1902 log jam. The round brick structure to the right, seen in this view from Walnut Street, was known as the gashouse and is now the location of the Riverview CafŽ. At right, horses used to haul the logs to the river are transported by raft in this 1890s photo.



By **WAYNE CARHART**

BRATTLEBORO Ñ The construction of the Vernon Dam in 1909-1911 ended the log drives on the Connecticut River. Small drives continued to the north of the dam, but by 1916 the transport of logs was taken over by the railroad and eventually trucks.

There is no one person credited with the idea of transporting logs from where they are cut to the sawmill by floating them in rivers, but the idea sure took off. Many major rivers in the country were used for this purpose. The Hudson and Mohawk rivers in New York and the Susquehanna River in New York and Pennsylvania were so used, as was the Connecticut River. The first log drive on the Connecticut took place around 1869.

The need for wood for building materials and paper soared in the latter part of the 1800s. Early settlers could construct their homes and barns out of the timber and stones at the site.

The felling of trees and the gathering of stones were also necessary to create tillable land. These early homes were made of whole logs shaped with an ax so that they would stay in position Ñ there were no log cabin kit homes at the time.

As communities grew, a consolidation of skills took place. A sawmill could provide the lumber for the whole settlement rather than each homeowner milling his own. Timber would be cut by loggers and brought to the local mill by horse- or ox-drawn wagons. This seemed to work well until the location of the mill and the source of timber got farther apart because more and more trees were being harvested to meet the demand for wood for buildings in the ever-growing communities.

As urban centers and factories expanded, the need for paper also increased as more record-keeping was needed.

Logging camps were established where the timber was to be harvested. The felled trees were transported by horse- and ox-drawn wagons or skids, and later by small railroads, to the river's bank.

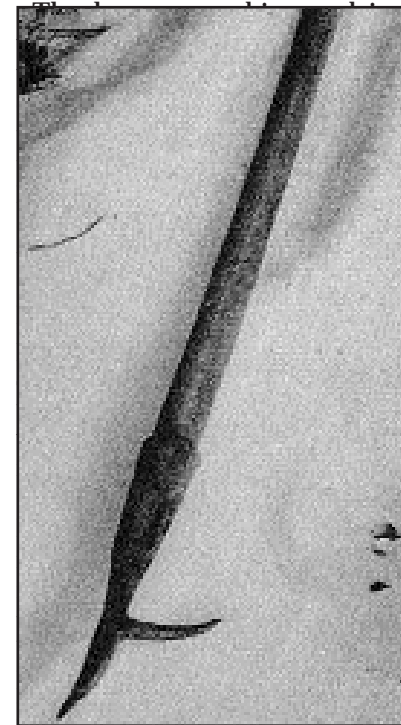
This was done in the late fall and through the winter for several reasons. The foliage was gone, the sap was down, there were no mud problems because the ground was frozen hard and the spring freshets in the rivers had not yet occurred. At the river's edge a series of logs would be attached end to end to form a boom which was floated on the river. All other logs would then be placed in the river and held captive by the boom. When the spring freshets occurred and the river's water level and current increased, the logs would be released.

During a log drive, hundreds of loggers would arrive to see that the logs got to their destination. The logs used for paper mills floated on the Connecticut from Colebrook, N.H., to paper

mills in Massachusetts.

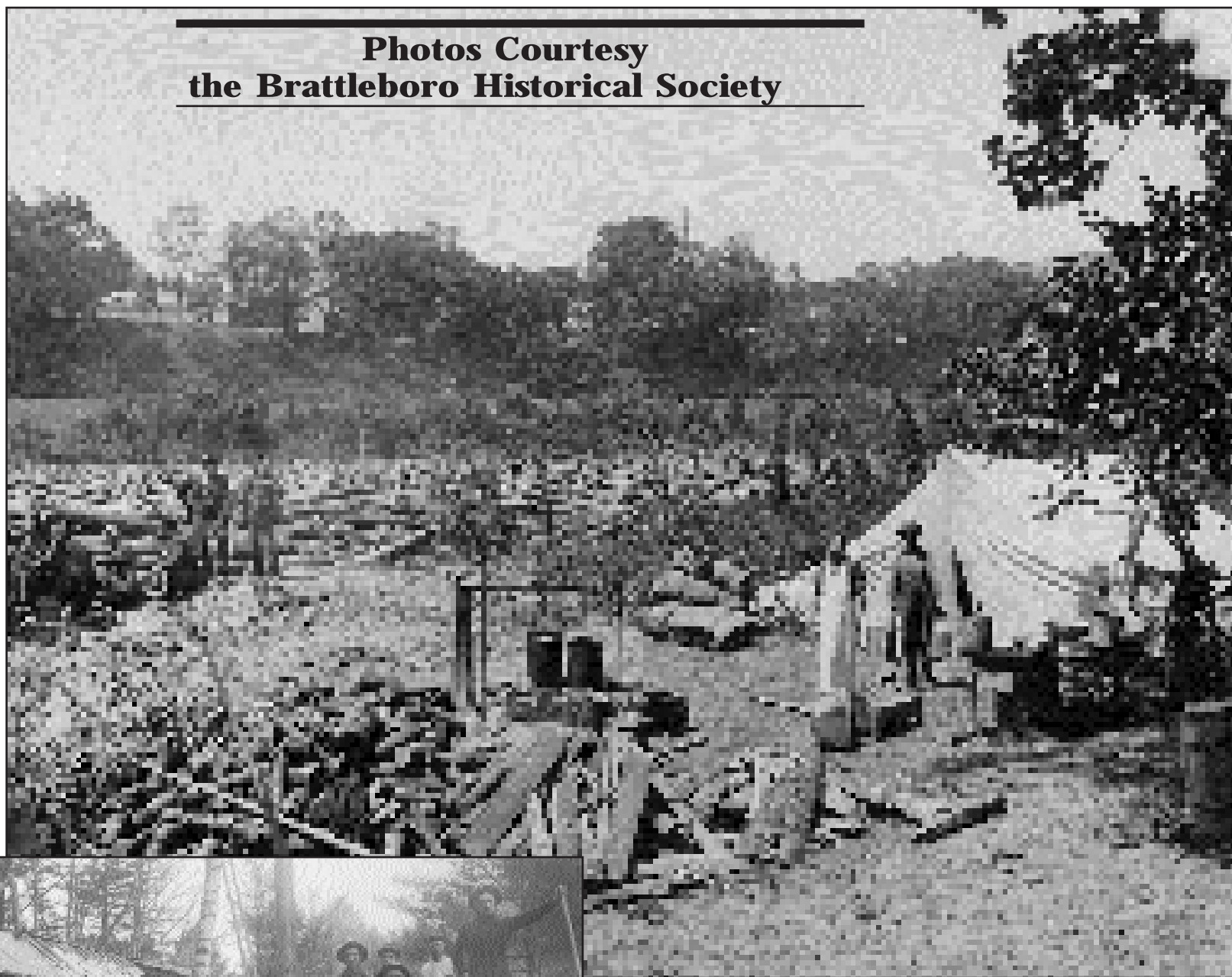
Working in groups, these loggers, equipped with spiked shoes and poles, would ride the logs to poke and twist them on their way. When a jam formed, logs would start piling up. Loggers would have to look for the Okey log—similar to a Okeystone (in an arch) and dislodge it.

Dynamite was at times used, but only if other efforts failed because it damaged the timber. Log jams were a constant problem because logs did not behave well in the river Ñ they were not equipped with a rudder or a shaped keel like a boat. Their move downriver went well as long as they didn't hit a rock or another log and have their course changed. Loggers worked 10- and 12-hour days often standing in freezing cold water with little protection from the wind. It was a dangerous job.



Adirondack Museum **LOGGERS** used a pike pole during log drives.

Photos Courtesy
the Brattleboro Historical Society

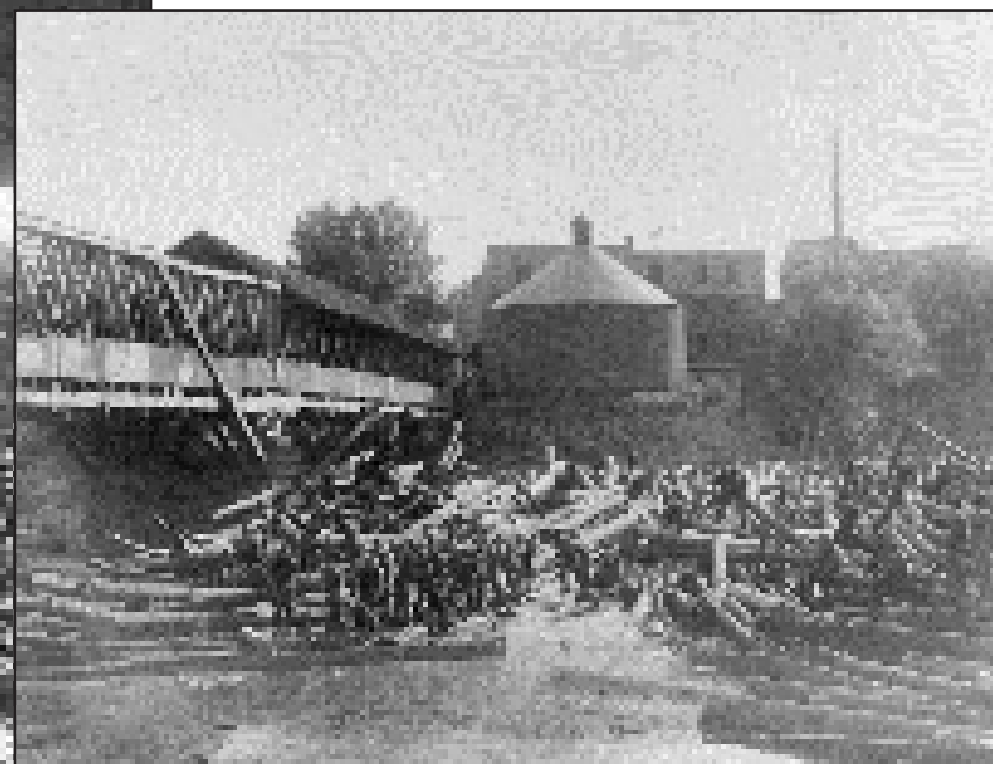


Ruth Hertsberg collection

AT CAMP Ñ A logging camp, above, with cook tent was set up on the island across from Brattleboro in 1902. The site was later called Island Park. Log drives occurred in the spring when the water in the river was high. At right, a work crew stands by fallen trees. There were no gasoline-powered chain saws for these men. Work was done in cold weather, after the leaves had fallen and snow had covered the ground.



Lucille Mitchell collection



Lucille Mitchell collection

DRAWING A CROWD Ñ A 1902 log jam draws a crowd at the Brattleboro-Hinsdale bridge. At left, loggers work to free up the logs that have jammed beneath the bridge. Above, spectators line the bridge and logs to get a closer look.