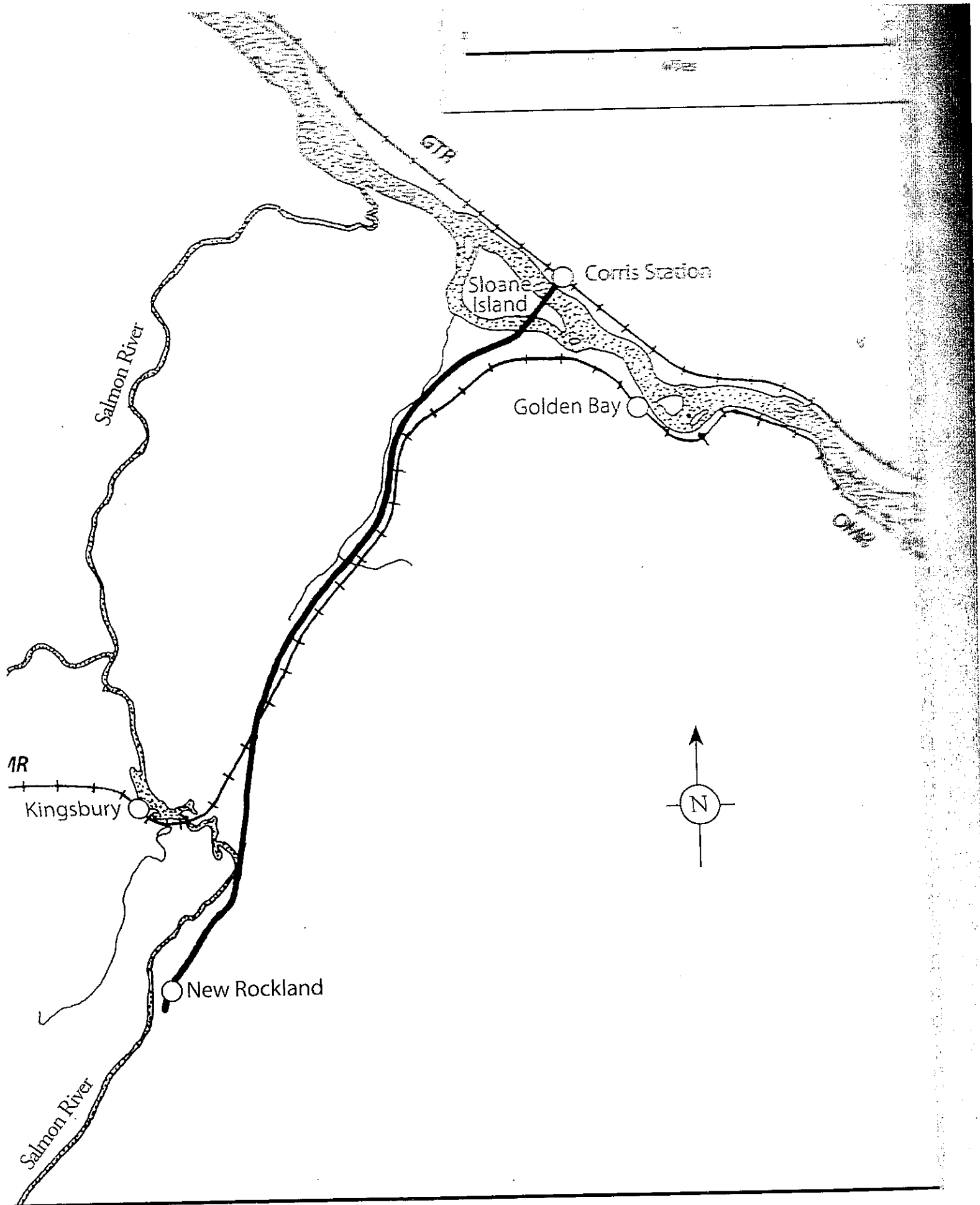
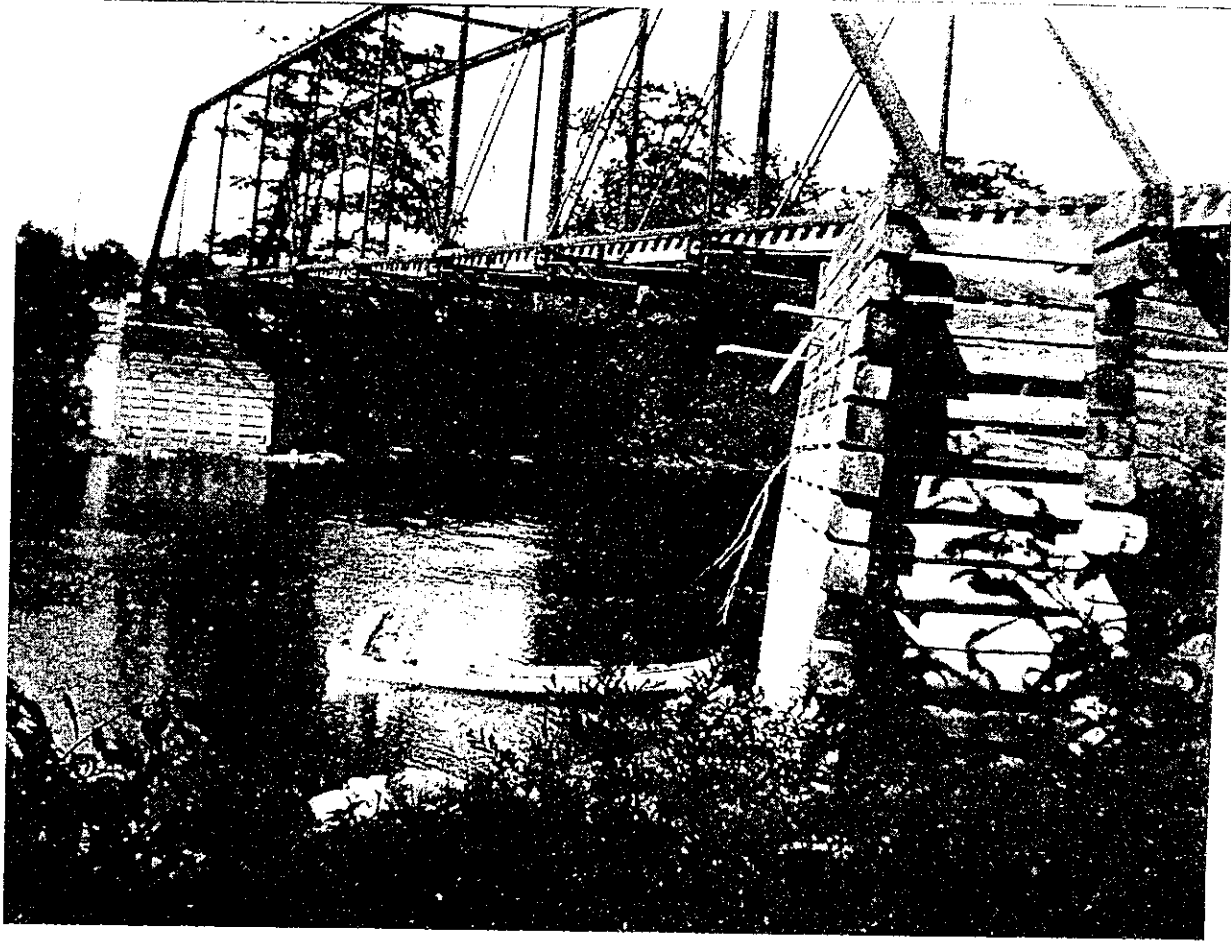


THE NEW
ROCKLAND
SLATE QUARRY
RAILWAY

C H RIFF



Slate Quarry Railway



Above:

Bridge of the narrow gauge New Rockland Slate Quarry Company Railway over the St. Francis River at Corris, Quebec, 1891.

(Paige Collection)

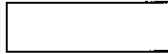
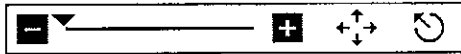
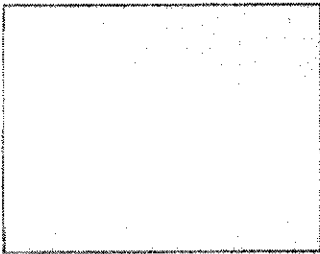
NEW ROCKLAND SLATE COMPANY

The slate quarry openened in 1864 and was worked until 1882; at that time the company reformed under the name New Rockland Slate Company and a greater impulse was given to production. The capital of the company was wholly applied to the purchase and the stocking of the property. In 1886 a tramway with a guage of thirty inches and a length of 4.125 miles was laid down to connect the quarry with the Grand Trunk Railway four miles from Richmond where the company had a siding, stores, and wharves.

Mines and Minerals of the Province of Quebec

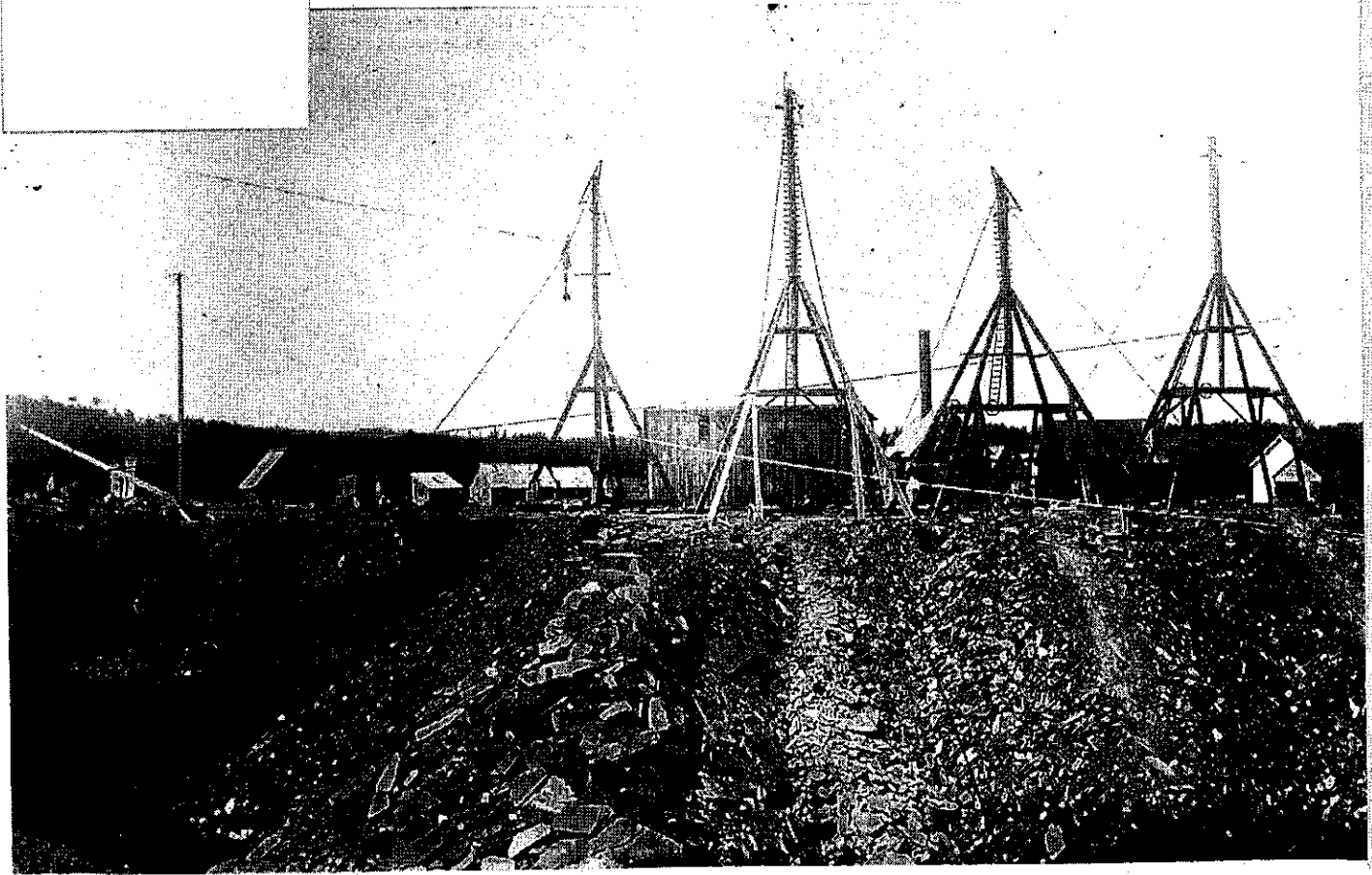
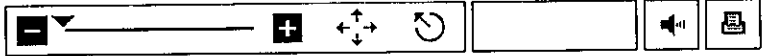
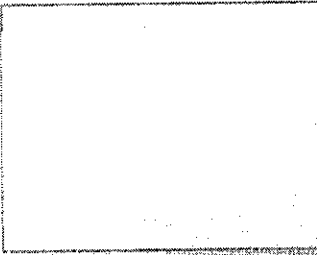
J. Obalski 1889-1890

The authors grandmother Marion (Cook) Riff was born in Richmond , Quebec in 1890, she loved to tell the story of the little and cut slate quarry engine that were parked at Corris on the Grand Trunk on Sundays. She told of riding her bicycle out the few miles to Corris. She said the railway came across the St Francis River on a bridge then came to a dead end right at the Grade Trunk and there was a platform where the slate was taken off and loaded directly into th Grand Trunk cars.



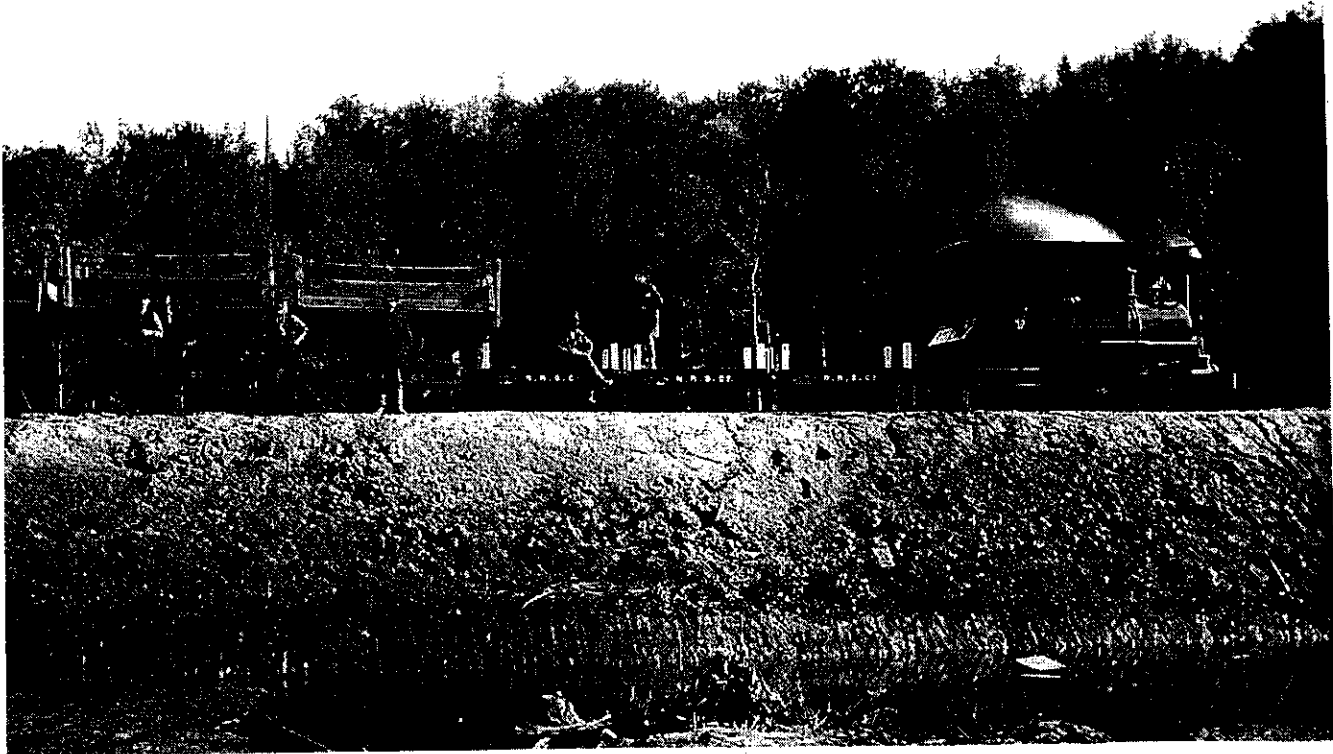
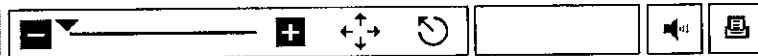
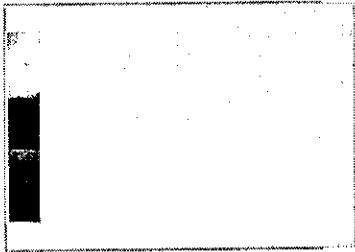
McCormick Museum



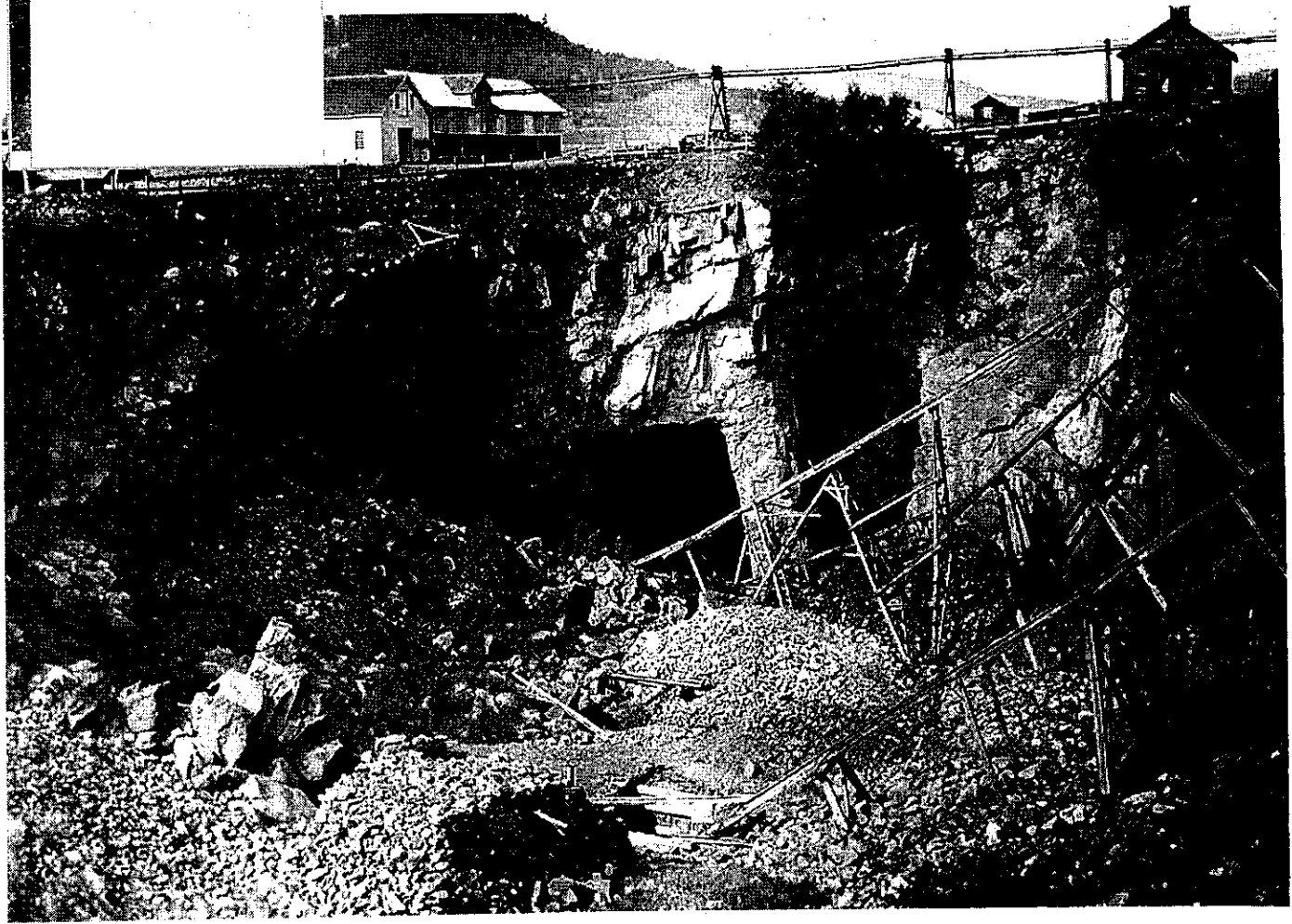
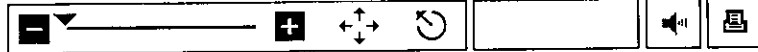
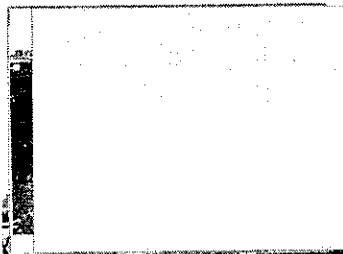


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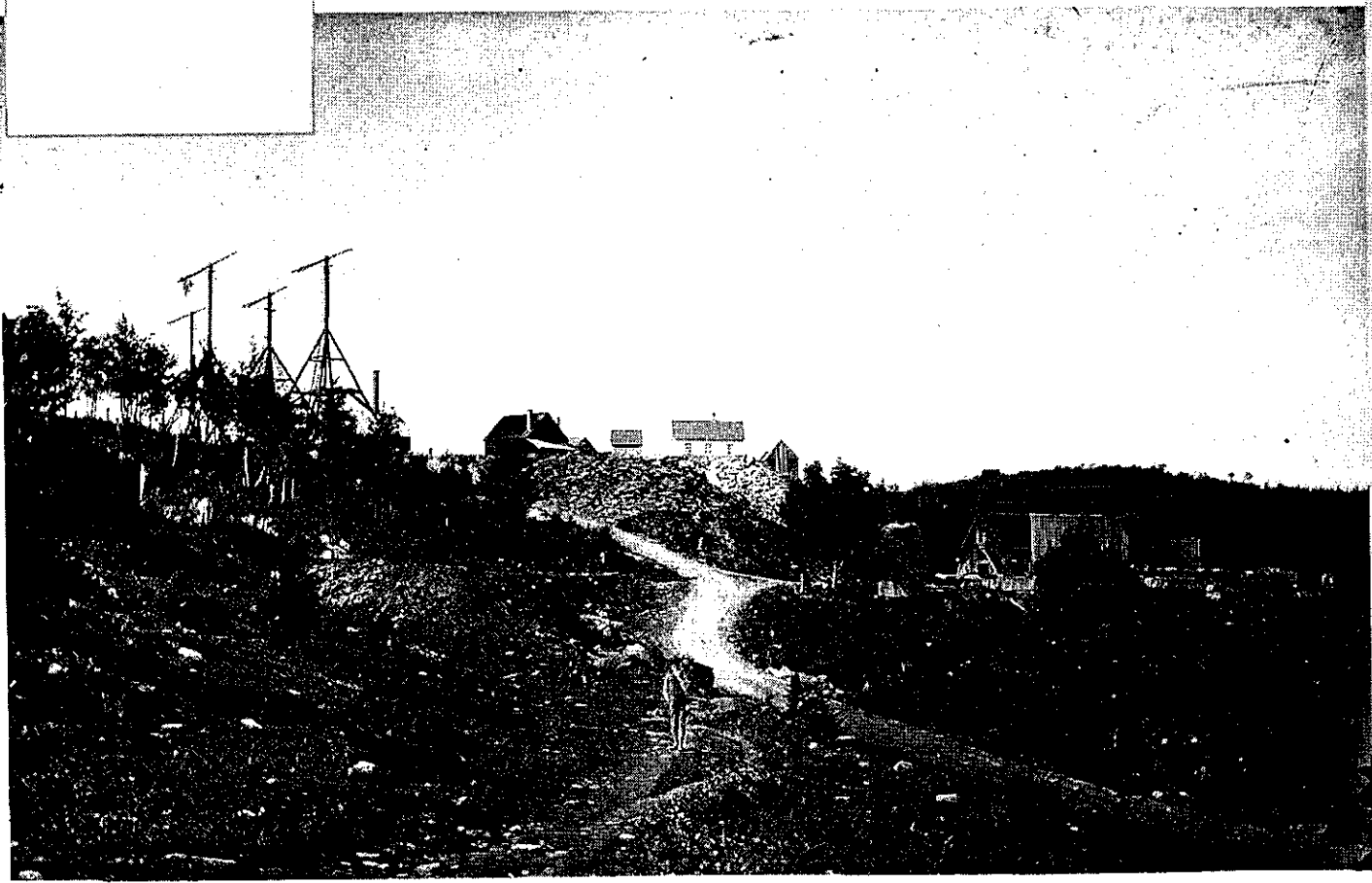
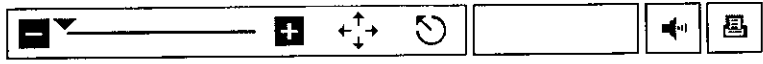


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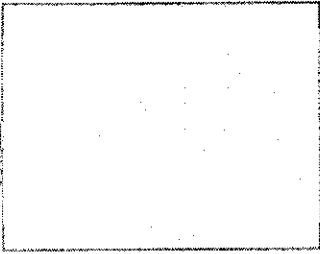
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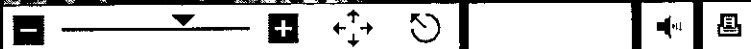
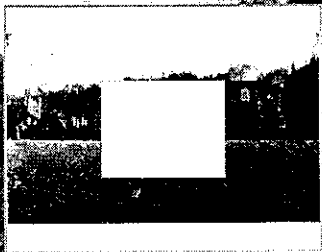
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA





McCord Museum



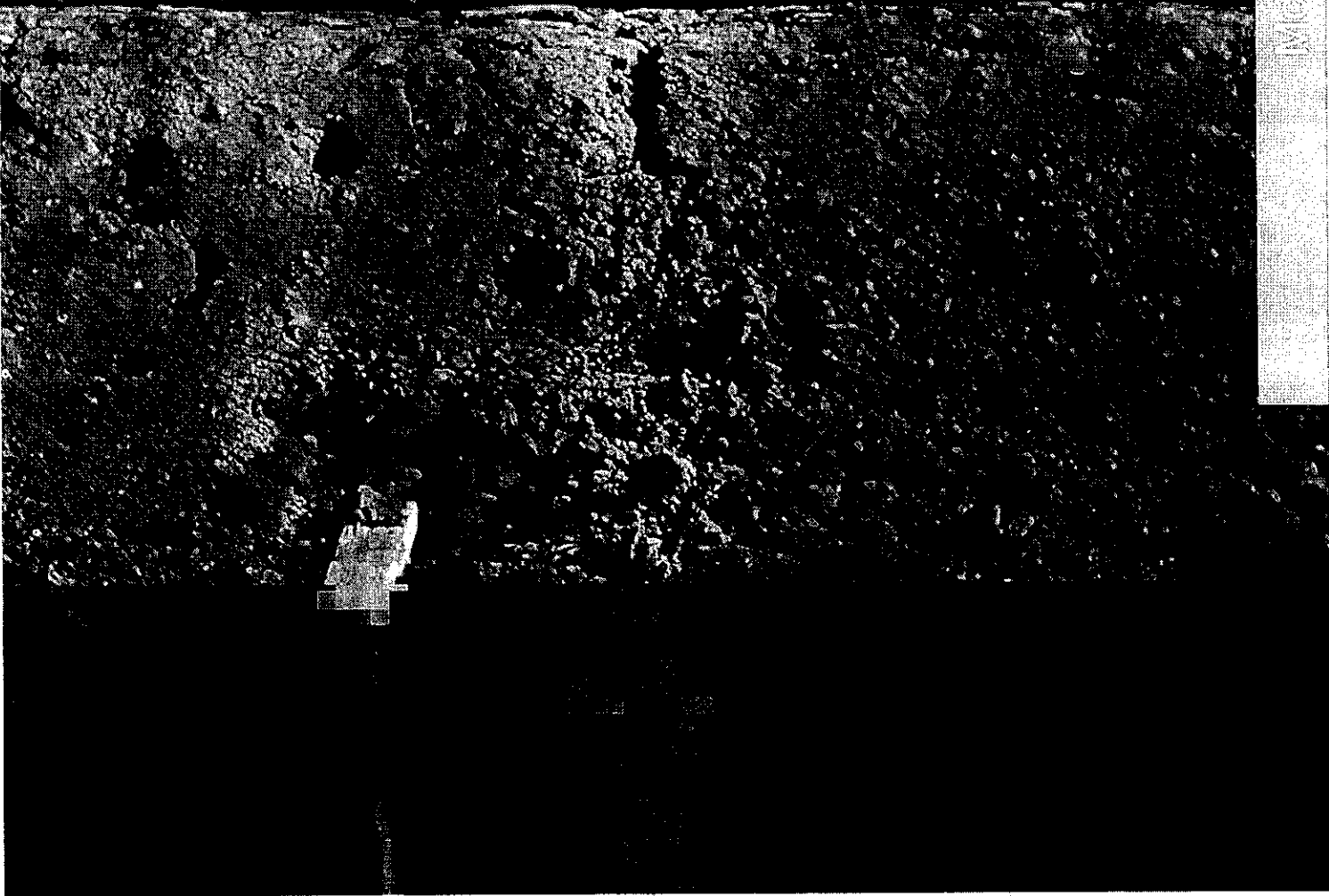


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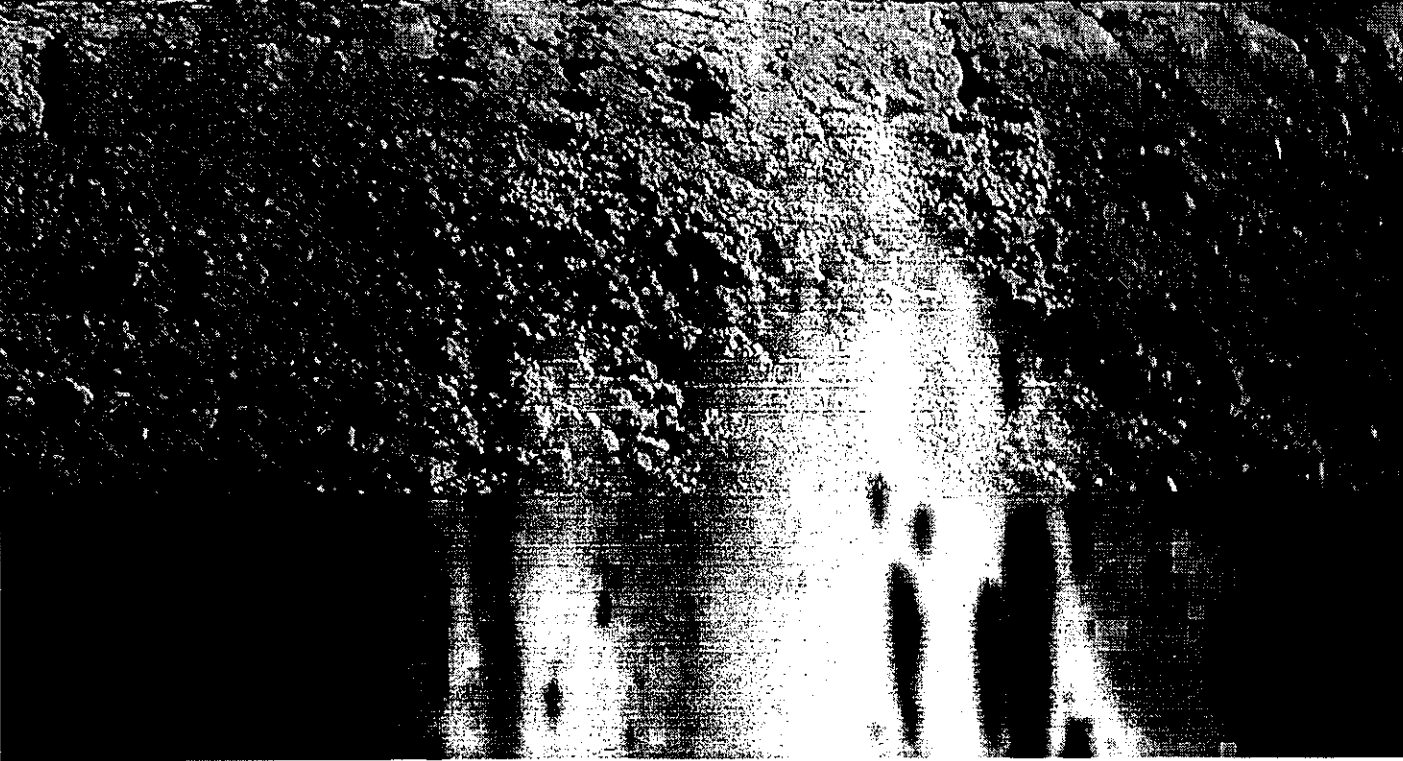
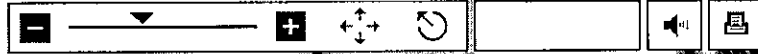
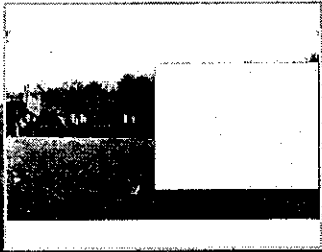


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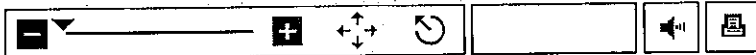
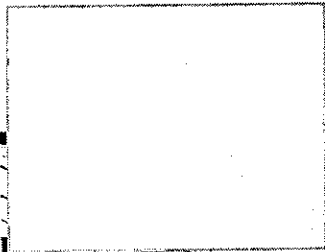


McGraw-Hill



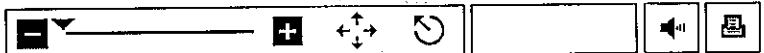
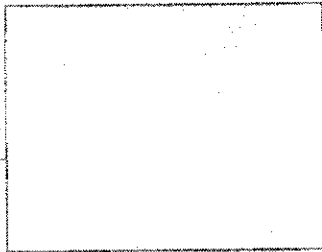
McGill Museum





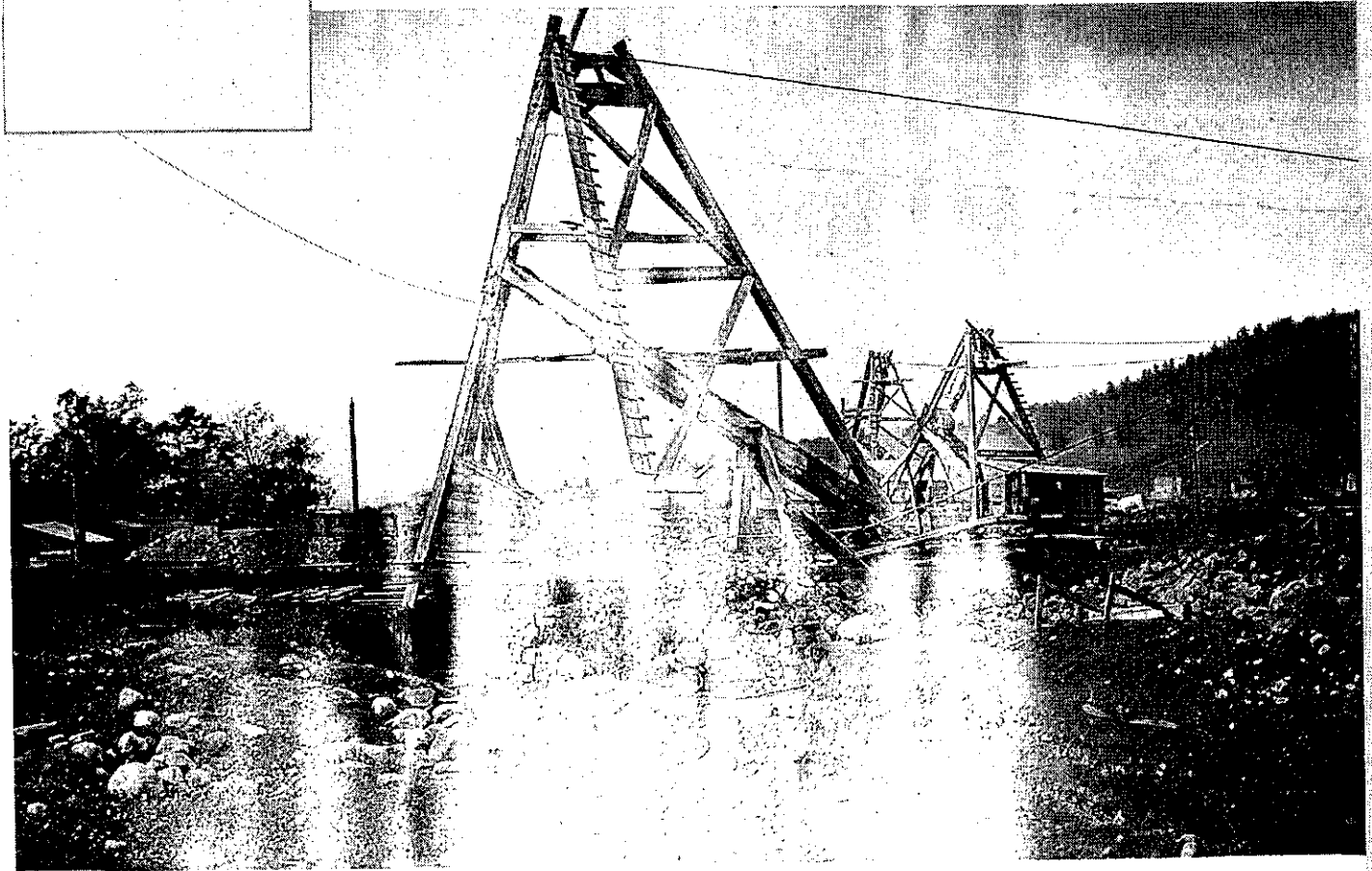
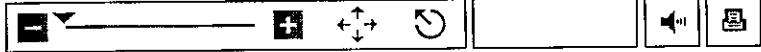
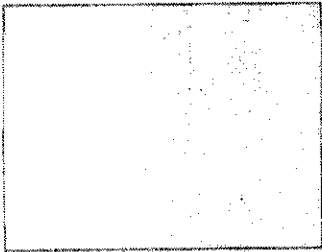
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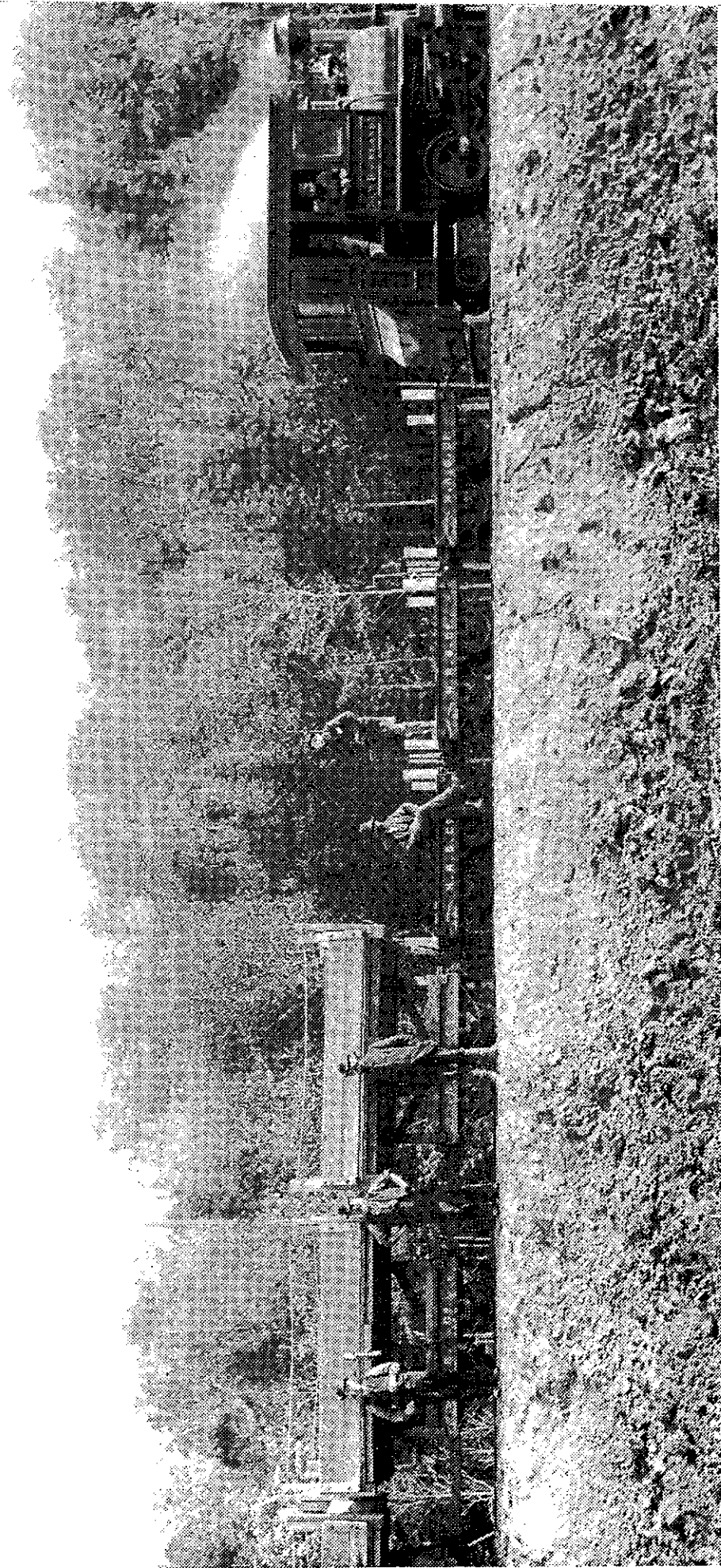
Archiv



Below:

Train of the New Rockland Slate Quarry Railway between New Rockland and Corris, Quebec, c1895.

*(Notman Photographic Archives,
McCord Museum, McGill University)*



Booth

Annals of Richmond County and Vicinity Vol 1. 1966 Richmond County Historical Society

Mr. George Bombardier bought out the property of the company in 1946 or 1947, opening the mill each summer for custom work until, in 1958, it was closed. After Mr. George Bombardier had bought out the property, Armand Bombardier commenced building a new factory on the site of the old box mill, which had manufactured buttertubs for farmers living all over the province, the butter box industry having sprung up after butter factories had replaced the cheese factories.

Mr. Bombardier's modern new factory produces lags as well as other parts for the George Bombardier Snowmobile and for Mr. Bombardier's latest invention the "SKI-DOO". These factories were and still are, partly the reason for Kingsbury's being.

During the lifetime of the railroad in Kingsbury, lumber was shipped daily, often to the amount of several carloads. Three foot wood, known as "Montreal Wood" was shipped from Kingsbury and from several sidings along the railroad's main line. Several carloads of finished slate from the nearby quarry were shipped weekly. The closing of the mill and the slate quarry, not too far apart, were the main causes for the railroad discontinuing operations. From the time the railroad had been opened in 1911 until its closing in 1930 it had aided greatly Kingsbury's growth and importance.

The mail has been delivered from Kingsbury Post Office by the Armstrong family ever since 1911. Today the mail is brought by car from Richmond to Kingsbury, and delivered by Miss Irene Armstrong, who has done this since 1935, her present route covering fifty miles a day.

Kingsbury can boast of having a general blacksmith ever since its founding. The present smith, Mr. Maurice Poulin, is one of the few who shoes horses today, and he is also equipped to repair automobiles. The first brick house in Kingsbury was built by Mr. Poulin in 1962.

Kingsbury did have two schools. The Roman Catholic school was later closed and the pupils transported to Richmond. The Protestant school, originally of one room, was enlarged in 1912 to a two-room building with two teachers. It was closed after the school term of 1945-1946, at which time came the consolidation with St. Francis High School in Richmond. Shortly afterwards, the school was sold to the Women's Institute to be used as a community hall.

Today, Kingsbury has two general stores, a combined repair shop and garage, a machine shop, a factory and is the home of about one hundred and twenty people.

NEW ROCKLAND

In 1886 a Mr. Frizzle from Montreal bought a piece of land which was later to become the New Rockland Quarry. This land was purchased by Sir George E. Drummond and Mr. Ferrer of Montreal. It is said that the purchase price was \$100. They formed the New Rockland Slate Co., with Sir George Drummond as president until 1903, when his son, Huntley Drummond, succeeded him to this office.

The most productive years were from 1886-1890. At this time, there were about 300 men employed. John A. Williams from North Wales was the manager. He was followed by Thomas Torrance, Sr. At

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At this time the men were working ten hours per day at the following rates: Laborers 18¢ per hour; Trimmers, 20¢ per hour; Splitters, 21¢ per hour; Block cutters, 22 or 23¢ per hour.

The quarry was first run by water power from a dam above the quarry on Salmon Creek. A flume running from the dam brought water to a large wheel along side of which was a smaller wheel. This smaller wheel was attached to a cable which went around a pulley in the hoister house, starting the mechanism which provided power to lift the great blocks of slate from the pit. The first drilling was done by hand — holes were laboriously dug and dynamite inserted. Later a steam engine was installed which powered pneumatic drills. To bring the cars of slate down the incline, there were two separate tracks, side by side. On top of the incline was a little shed which contained a drum, around which was a strong iron cable stretching to the bottom. At the bottom of the cable were the empty cars, and at the top the full ones. As the full cars were pushed down over the incline, they would pull up the empty ones, the two passing each other half way along. One man handled a brake to govern the speed, while another man at the bottom hooked and unhooked the cars.

The first slate produced was drawn by team to Richmond and loaded on the Grand Trunk Railway. Later, a narrow gauge road ran from the quarry to the St. Francis River; crossed the river on a trestle to Corris, and there it met the Grand Trunk Line. Some slate products were taken to Kingsbury and shipped by Canadian Pacific after 1893. The chief products were roofing slate, sinks, washtubs and blackboards.

The quarry was idle in 1900, but in 1901, Evan Owen Davies and Samuel H. Frazer formed a partnership to take over the operation of the quarry. They leased the mining rights from Sir George E. Drummond and operated the quarry till 1917. Samuel H. Frazer continued the undertaking until 1924. Messrs. Williamson and Crombie owned the property until it was sold in 1945 to Mr. Armand Bombardier of Valcourt, who passed away in 1962. The land is now owned by the Company which he founded.

Along the narrow gauge railway line there was a small soapstone quarry. Half a mile along the road to St. François de Brompton, and in to the right, there is a green slate quarry. The Melbourne Slate quarry, east of New Rockland and approximately halfway between Melbourne Hill (opposite Kingsbury) and the St. Francis River, was opened and worked earlier than the New Rockland quarries, but closed a year or two before operations began at the latter place.

The village of New Rockland was incorporated in 1889 and many of its citizens were from Wales and Cornwall. A store, a post office and a school were there. The schoolhouse once held 70 pupils and 2 teachers in its single room. The building sat on the opposite side of the road from the pits, near the foot of the steep hill, but above the right-of-way of the narrow gauge railway. The school was used for church services by members of several denominations — a Methodist Minister from Trenholmville, a Presbyterian Minister from Melbourne and an Anglican Clergyman from Gallup Hill held services in New Rockland.

In February 1891, the Welsh people petitioned the Presbytery of Quebec to organize a mission station and to supply them with gospel services in the Welsh language. It was pointed out that there were over 200 persons of Welsh origin in the village; that the majority of them did not understand the English language well enough to be benefited by services in English, while some did not understand English at all. The mission was organized in March 1891 and Reverend David Pugh conducted the services. In 1895 the Presbytery was informed that the Welsh population of New Rockland was decreasing, but at Slatington, near Danville, the Welsh community was increasing and Reverend Pugh was holding monthly services there. This is the last mention in the Presbytery records of the New Rockland Mission (Welsh). Mr. Pugh had a store in the village while Mrs. Pugh, formerly Margaret Hall, taught in Kingsbury school.

The Manager's house was at the top of the hill and the cedar which bordered the property will remain. At one time there was a bowling green in front of the house.

The houses across the highway were owned by the Company. At the foot of the hill was a section known locally as "Birkenhead" where the people owned their own homes. A road turns in at the right beyond the site of the Manager's house, and along this road were many more houses, extending for an eighth of a mile. Farther back on the road were eight or ten log houses.

The "Flats" or village green on the same side of the road as the school and near Salmon Creek, was the centre of community activities. The Town had a brass band and each summer the Independent Order of Foresters sponsored a picnic which attracted people from many miles away. Those who remember New Rockland of those days will remember the singing of the music-loving Welsh people. Picture the summer evenings when people were relaxing on the porches. One began a song and it was taken up by those near, and so on until the whole village was singing. The townspeople organized their own Eisteddfod and drew a goodly audience from the surrounding countryside.

New Rockland is situated about 8 miles from Richmond and 10 miles from St. François Xavier de Brompton. A drive there today will show us a huge gaping hole dug in a mountain of discarded slag. At the bottom of the pit is a miniature lake of translucent green water. Struggling down the narrow twisting path that leads to this lake, we find ourselves in a gloomy atmosphere of chilling cold and eerie silence. We climb again to the road which led us here, and as we get into our car to leave the site of this once busy and industrious town, we experience a feeling of nostalgia for all that must have been there some 100 years ago.

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