

OPFA Field Trip A:
Les Chutes Coulonge, an Ottawa Valley Timber Baron Experience!

Mansfield et Pontefract, Québec

Before the construction of roads and the railway in the Ottawa Valley, the rivers of the watershed were the only thoroughfares by which harvested timber was transported to market and mill. The river drive on the Coulonge spanned almost two centuries. The first log drives began in the early 1800s by well established companies including Bronson, Bryson, Fraser, Gillies Bros., E.B.Eddy, McLaren, and Wright.

Displays and artifacts at Chutes Coulonge are a testament to the foresight and ingenuity of George Bryson, who settled the area in the 1840s. He overcame the obstacle of the waterfall and gorge at the lower end of the Coulonge River by constructing a 3000 foot wooden slide to be able to safely float timber 150 miles from the headwaters to the Ottawa and beyond. In early years squared timber was shipped to Quebec for the British market and in latter years round wood fed his mill and others down the Ottawa.



Visitors can take the walking tour with strategically located look-outs and foot bridges over the gorge that, in April, will guarantee a spectacular experience of the drama and danger of the romanticized Canadian river drive. A logging museum and theatre complete the picture.

As a contrast, the tall white pine forest at Chutes Coulonge features a modern 900 ft. Zip Line suspended up to 40 ft through the canopy, allowing you to experience this magnificent site with a bird's eye view (and accelerated heart rate) in the summer season.

<http://chutescoulonge.qc.ca/>

OPFA Field Trip B:
Modern Milling and Shaw's Old Growth

Commonwealth Plywood Mill

Commonwealth Plywood Co. Ltd. was founded in 1940 to produce birch veneer for the World War II effort. The birch veneer was used to produce the plywood fuselage of the Royal Air Force's Mosquito bomber.

Today, the Commonwealth Plywood group of companies (managed from its corporate headquarters located in Ste. Therese, just north of Montreal, Quebec) has grown to comprise seven rotary veneer mills, two veneer splicing mills, eight sawmills, three kiln drying operations, three plywood production mills, one flooring mill and eighteen distribution centers located in Canada and the USA.

The Commonwealth Plywood Plant known as “Canada Plywood and Veneer” manufactures decorative plywood for the cabinet and furniture industry. The plant has recently been upgraded with state-of-the-art sanding and sawing lines. Also available for observation on the same site is a small white pine sawmill that is heavily dependent on logs from Algonquin Park.

<http://www.commonwealthplywood.com/en/index.shtml>

Shaw Woods



After the mill tour, the bus departs for Shaw Woods, one of the last remaining stands of old growth hardwood forest in Renfrew County. This 78 hectare forest is owned by the Shaw family (a pinnacle of the local forest industry) and has been a nature reserve since 1979. A 2.3 km trail loops through the 200 year old forest, displaying all of the unique features of old growth. The forest type is mainly a blend of tolerant hardwood and mixed pine, with many unique ecological features including an ancient white cedar swamp. The National Museum of Sciences and the Nature Conservancy of Canada are leading scientific studies and outdoor recreation in

this nature preserve.

http://www.ottawavalley.org/Valley_Explore/Walk/Bonnechere_River_and_Valley/Shaw_Woods.html