

Townsend family's tradition of hard work and goal setting translates into success

By Doug Bellas

Some people think saw mills are the enemy of the forest. "Nothing could be further from the truth," says David Townsend of Townsend Lumber Company. "It's our livelihood!"

And now that the tobacco industry has faded, he's glad he didn't follow in grandpa Whitney's foot steps. Robert, his father, worked in tobacco growing up.

"Dad and his friend Bert Abbott the ball player, decided to see if they could make some extra money in the lumber business," said David. "In winter they cut firewood for the tobacco kilns. So why not cut extra logs and get a sawmill to cut the lumber?"

In 1959 after marketing and selling some lumber, Robert and Bert bought and old portable saw mill. They started small, in a bush lot to the West of Cultus known as the Harris-Harris tract. A gentleman actually custom cut for them.

"They did almost everything themselves," said David. "They harvested the timber, skidded the logs to the mill, and when it was cut, they piled the lumber on an old truck and sold it all over Ontario."

The industrial lumber went to Hamilton and Toronto and the better lumber went to the furniture industry, places like Kitchener

and Hanover. Most are now gone.

"Dad worked his portable mills and also hired other mills to cut for him. They even cut on Manitoulin Island."

In 1971 this small little lumber company took a giant step forward. It established an electric stationary mill near Glen Meyer. It had the capacity to cut much more lumber, up to 25 thousand board feet a day!

Most of the logs came from Norfolk, Oxford and Elgin Counties. This holds true even today with a few exceptions.

Townsend Lumber operated near Glen Meyer over 14 years. In the summer of 1984 a fire put it out of business. But very quickly a perfect site was found at Highway #3 and the Jackson Sideroad near Tillsonburg. By Spring business resumed.

"We started with 69 acres," said David. "We bought it from Carl Braun. But it's interesting to note that at one time George Backus owned it. Here's another interesting tidbit. My mother's father, grandpa Lambert, hauled gravel out of the same corner to help build Highway #3 decades before," said David.

Townsend Lumber Company has since expanded, buying 20 acres to the West and 17 acres to the North. And since David took over

from his father in 1978 the Company has gone from 30 employees on the payroll to 218, plus 60 contractors for product.

"We are highly automat-

From pre-finished flooring to railway ties."

A tour of the lumber yard is a revelation. Everywhere it is neat, clean, tidy and SAFE. And designed to

Kurf band saws that produce half the amount of saw dust. This allows for higher yields."

Higher technology means higher cost. For example

in the hardwood market. Southern Ontario hardwoods that include Maple, Ash, Oak, etc.

"We believe in giving back also," said David.



Townsend Lumber has been a family business for two generations. Pictured above in 1972 standing, Bert Abbott, David, Robert, Duane Townsend and Robert Abbott. Seated are Marion, Ruth Ann Abbott and Kathalene Townsend.

ed and sophisticated compared to the days of Cultus and Glen Meyer. Now we carry 26 species of logs and produce hundreds of items.

make money!

"We have 3-D cameras on the carriage machine to help maximize the yield out of a log. We utilize thin

these thin band saws have to be watched carefully and changed every 4 hours. Replaced with a freshly sharpened saw.

"Today's farmers are better informed. They know what a tree is worth. They go through their bush lot marking trees to be harvested. They call in companies like ours to bid on them. We have to allow for markets and conditions, exchange timing. We have to keep refining our math to make a profit."

"An enemy of the forest?" I don't think so! Townsend Lumber Company strongly supports all the tree cutting bylaws and even improves on them. So much so that other Counties simply copy the standards that Townsend has set up, saving them time and money.

"There are at least 6 other small saw mills in Southern Ontario that operate on a regular basis," said David. "And there's a large mill in Huntsville, and several in the Ottawa Valley."

Townsend Lumber is interested almost exclusively

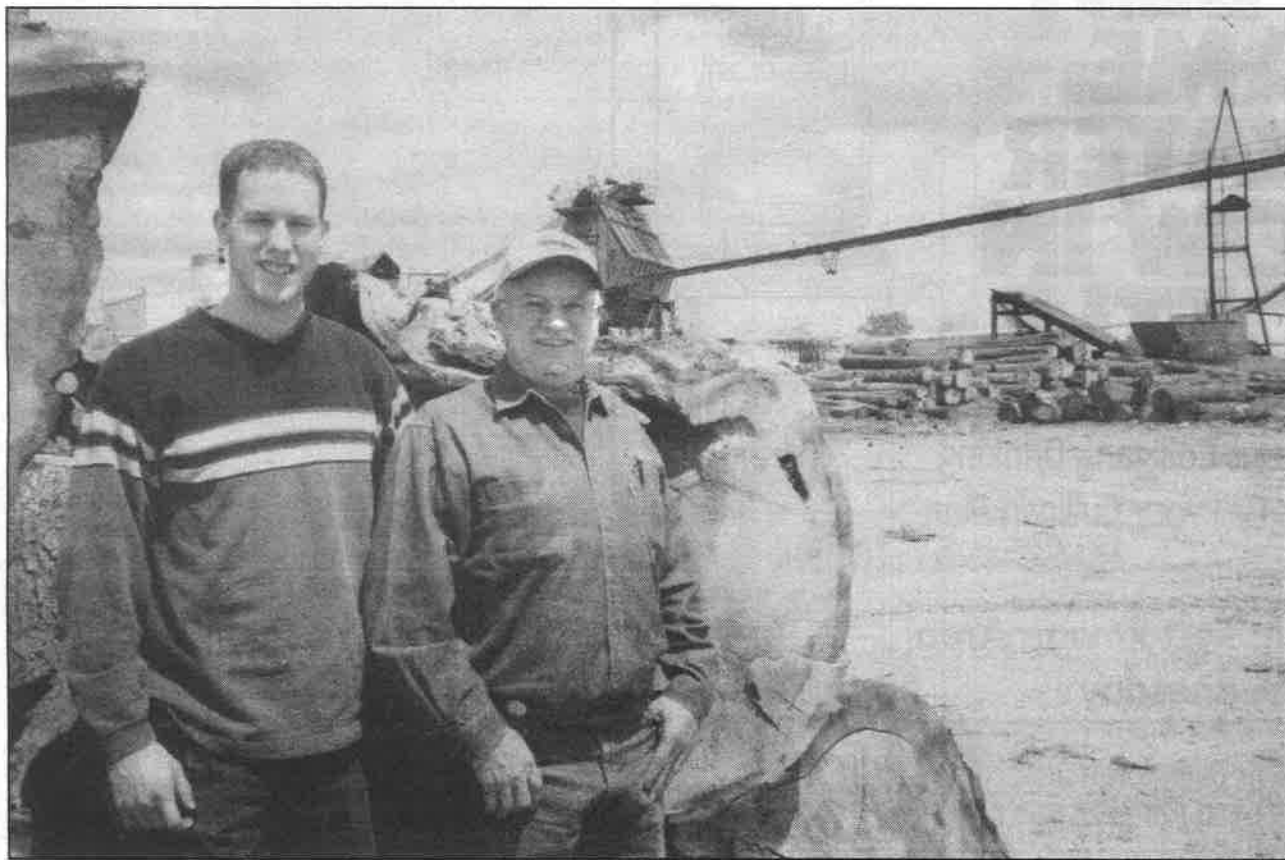
"We sponsor events such as hosting the Tree Capital of the World for Norfolk County. And we support baseball, hockey and rugby teams and Old Timers games."

David was born in Tillsonburg hospital. He married Brenda Tollenaar of South Middleton whose ancestry goes back to Holland. His grandpa Whitney Townsend of South Walsingham was a well-known and well-liked tobacco grower.

"I'm very proud of our Company invention, the BREEZE DRIED stacking sticks," says David. "These are the cross-sticks between the layers of stacked lumber. Their special patented lateral ridge design keeps moisture from staining the hardwood lumber while drying. "It's highly successful and profitable. We have a patent for it in 14 countries."

The future is bright for Townsend Lumber and yet with new laws and increased competition it will be more intense. That's why David's three children,

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2008. Father and son Andrew and David carry the family tradition to the third generation.



Equipment, a far cry from the early days at Cultus.

Backus invites everyone to great events planned for 2009

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Presentation sponsored by the Backus Campers' Association.

Throw out a line and see if you can hook "the big one" at the Backus Fishing Derby on June 27 from 8:00 a.m. 'til 3:00 p.m. Fun, fish and prizes in a great setting add up to a terrific family outing. The Backus Campers' Association sponsors this fun event. Regular park admission plus derby entry fee required. You many want to make it a camping weekend at Backus.

Step back in time on July 11 from 12:00 until 5:00. Experience rural life as it might have been in the 1880's through demonstrations and hands-on activities.

See vintage and classic cars exhibited in the Heritage Village on July 26 from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. presented in partnership with the Historical Auto Society of Canada.

If you are looking for fun and educational activities for the kids during their time off of school the Children's Camps are great! Call 519-586-2201 to register for any of the following programs, which are only \$30.00 per child per day spaces, are limited and fill quickly.

March Break is a Nature Day Camp daily from March 16 through 20th, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. A fun-filled nature adventure awaits children ages 6 to 12 at Backus. Hiking, crafts, unique nature discoveries and games are just a few of the activities campers can enjoy. Daily program fee is \$30 per child. Space is limited and

advance registration required.

Summer Nature Day Camp daily July 6th to 10th, August 3rd -7th & August 24 - 28 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Children ages 6 to 12 can have a nature adventure this summer. Go on an adventure hike, create cool crafts, swim, explore nature and play games. Cost: \$30.00/child/day.

Heritage Day Camp: July 13th- 17th, July 27th - 31st, August 10th - 14th, August

17th - 21st, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Discover for yourself what it might have been like to be a child in early Ontario. Enjoy pioneer-style games, hands-on activities, friendly competitions, chores and swimming. A week of old-fashioned fun in the Heritage Village for children ages 6 to 12. Cost is \$30.00/child each day..

Eco-Explorer Camp: A three-day camp program with a 2-night campout. They take the

nature day camp experience to the max with two overnights, environmental games and activities, fishing and friendly team challenges. Cost is \$120 per child. Camp 1: July 21 - 23 for ages 8 to 10 and Camp 2: August 11 - 13 for ages 11 to 13.

And that is only the first six months of the year so take time this year to get out to one of the premier spots in Norfolk County.

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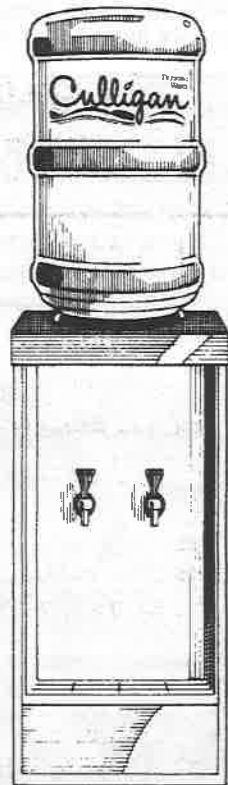
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Townsend family tradition of hard work and goal setting translates into great success

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Andrew, Kristin and Laura have education, experience and family ties to become the driving force behind the Company in the near future.

"Bigger and better," says David. "That is what business is all about. More spin-off products, more expansion and more efficiency. Pride, passion and the love of doing something well keeps most successful businesses thriving. Plus a little bit of worry!"

The Company is committed to safety. New hires are never allowed to work alone until they have viewed a film on safety and have spent sev-

eral weeks with an experienced technician.

"Dreams are fine," says David, but you have to have goals and a work ethic. And something else. It helps to come from a family background of achievers. I did!"

His family were tobacco growers. It provides a great training ground. If you have the nerve to take a risk and the tolerance to get the job done you can do anything!

If you meet David Townsend you will like him. He has the passion and the drive to make Townsend Lumber Company more successful.

So do his employees!



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