

LINCOLN MILL BUILDINGS COMING DOWN

Resort town residents, mill town memories



The conceptual design for the planned RiverWalk resort in Lincoln on the site of the old Franconia Paper Company. COURTESY IMAGE

By LORNA COLQUHOUN
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LINCOLN

MORE THAN a century after it rose up out of the mountain wilderness to turn trees into paper, the old mill that shaped the community for generations is coming down, making way for a resort development.

There is little fanfare in the task, for it has been nearly 30 years since the demise of the Franconia Paper Company. There are no spectators watching as crews pick off the roof of the old machine room or reduce the enormous bleaching plant to a steel skeleton.

"It's sad in a way, but it's progress," said Roger Harrington, who went to work in the mill in 1957 and remained through the years, when part of the mill was redeveloped into retail shops and some 30 outbuildings were torn down. "It's not going to come back."

Harrington, local historian Rick Russuck and retired U.S. Forest Service archeologist Karl Roenke paid a visit to the mill the other morn-

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ROGER HARRINGTON
Former Lincoln millworker



LORNA COLQUHOUN

Local historian Rick Russuck, left, retired U.S. Forest Service archeologist Karl Roenke and longtime papermill worker Roger Harrington stand by the skeleton of the old bleaching plant in Lincoln.



COURTESY OF RICK RUSSUCK

J.E. Henry built the first mill in Lincoln in 1893 and it fueled the town's economy until the Franconia Paper Company closed forever in 1980. The remaining mill buildings are coming down to make way for a resort development.

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LORNA COLQUHOUN

An asbestos mitigation crew removes the roof of the old machine room at the former Franconia Paper Company in Lincoln.

Lincoln

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ing. There, crews dressed in white haz-mat suits walked on the roof of a sturdy brick building and bagged materials that contained asbestos.

The trio alternately commented on the progress, marveled at what had been built here in 1893 and reflected on the quiet passing of what was a way of life.

The history

Timber baron J.E. Henry arrived in Lincoln, a wilderness outpost, in 1892. Within a year, he started building a mill and developed miles of logging roads and railroad tracks into the forest.

Henry built mill houses (which remain today) for the workers, churches and a hospital. Lincoln was a company town.

"My father and my brothers worked there," Harrington said. "This was home."

As a boy, he used to bring lunch pails to the mill workers in exchange for a quarter, which would buy him a ticket to the movies and some popcorn, with a few cents left over.

The first of several lawsuits over water quality was filed in 1962, which prompted construction in 1967 of the huge bleaching plant that rose seven stories over the town to help meet environmental regulations.

Franconia Paper went bankrupt in 1972 and despite attempts over the next eight years to get it back on track, the last paper was produced on June 11, 1980.

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The future

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Developer Dennis Ducharme, who built the Pollard Brook timeshare resort in the 1990s, envisions a modern-day grand hotel, incorporating the best of that era, such as the signature red roof of the Mount Washington Hotel.

Tourism and papermaking co-existed for years in Lincoln, beginning in the mid-1960s, when Loon Mountain opened to skiers. The ski area was, Russuck said, the fallback for the hundreds of workers who lost their jobs when Franconia Paper closed in June 1980.

The Millfront Marketplace — built from one of the mill buildings — opened in 1987. And as construction of Interstate 93 pushed northward, it brought skiers in the winter and vacationers in the summer, turning the region into a recreation destination.

Ducharme plans to include a museum in his development, and there are still some reminders of the mill throughout town: The kiln United Shoe Machinery built in 1927 is now a part of the marketplace.

And every day at noon, the lunch hour is marked with a piercing siren, just as it was in the mill era.