



Rudy Wiselka (left), Jerry Bauer and Wilf Brooks meeting in Athabasca March 23, 2023

Early Logging History in Calling Lake Seeking the Bauer millsite

Forest History Association of Alberta

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When Jerry Bauer was 17, he came to the Calling Lake area to work with his older brother Mike at Mike's sawmill. Sixty-five years later, Jerry Bauer drove to Calling Lake to talk to anyone who might be able to help him locate the old sawmill operation. All he could recall was a fork in the road, a steep hill on either side of a creek, and that Calling Lake was about 17 miles away.

As part of the Calling Lake Community Society (CLCS) historical work, an interview was set up with Jerry Bauer on March 23, 2023, to gather and share information on Calling Lake's rich history of logging and sawmilling. Those in attendance were Jerry Bauer, Wilf Brooks (CLCS History Committee), Rudy Wiselka (long-time sawmill owner in Calling Lake) and Bruce Mayer (Forest History Association of Alberta).

From historical files, the group determined that Mike Bauer's sawmill operated from 1956 to 1960 in Section 30, Township 74, Range 22, W4M, just south of Rock Island Lake. Trees came from permits held by Steve Pidzarko and Sebastian Wolok, and from local farmer permits coordinated by Joseph Shewchuk. Jerry Bauer recalls that his brother, a gifted inventor and mechanic, set up two Chrysler motors to power the sawmill.

Jerry Bauer recalls going to Tanasiuk's hall in Calling Lake to watch a "cowboys and Indians" movie. When the "Indians" were doing well, the locals from Calling Lake were cheering and yelling; when the cowboys were doing well, the white guys were cheering and yelling. He said the evening was enjoyed by everyone.

With the sawmill located just south of Rock Island Lake, it seems the "Y" Jerry Bauer remembers in the road is the intersection of the old Sandy Lake trail and the newer trail to the west of Rock Island Lake that later became Highway 813. If so, the steep hill on either side of the creek is most likely where the old road crosses Rock Island River. Jerry Bauer recalls the hills were a challenge in early spring, with mud and frost coming out of the ground. Calling Lake Forest Ranger Bill McPherson would remind all sawmill operators each year to shut down and get out of the bush before spring break.