

Ask Jon Eakes

Old growth lumber from the bottom of the river.

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In a previous show we watched the salvage operations of a group called Logs End from Bristol, Quebec, where they were fishing up old growth timber that had sunk to the bottom of the Ottawa river a hundred years ago. This week we visited the saw mill. That great stack of timber tells a lot of stories. Some show they were cut by chain saws towards the end of the river logging 50 years ago, while some were cut with an axe. Most have stamps on the bottom to identify their owners, and yes, avoid theft of trees as they travelled down the river. The bark pretty well comes off these trees but they must be power sprayed down to get gravel off the outside, a question of protecting the saw blades. And even the sawing operation is unique because of the very high water content of the trees, the saws don't work the same way as with freshly felled trees. While the salvage operations have to stop when the ice covers the river, the saw mill has to shut down a couple of months every winter, because the saw can't handle frozen trees. It could if it was frozen sap, but there is no sap or resin in these trees, it has all leached out and been replaced with water. The finished boards have unique colouring due to the minerals from the river, making beautiful floors and furniture. This is just about the only place where you can get old growth lumber, with its extremely tight grain pattern, without cutting down a single tree. In fact, using this old growth timber is good for the environment, because it helps to clean up the Ottawa river bed. It is available by mail order - Logs End.com

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