

Mason and Sons Lumber Mill



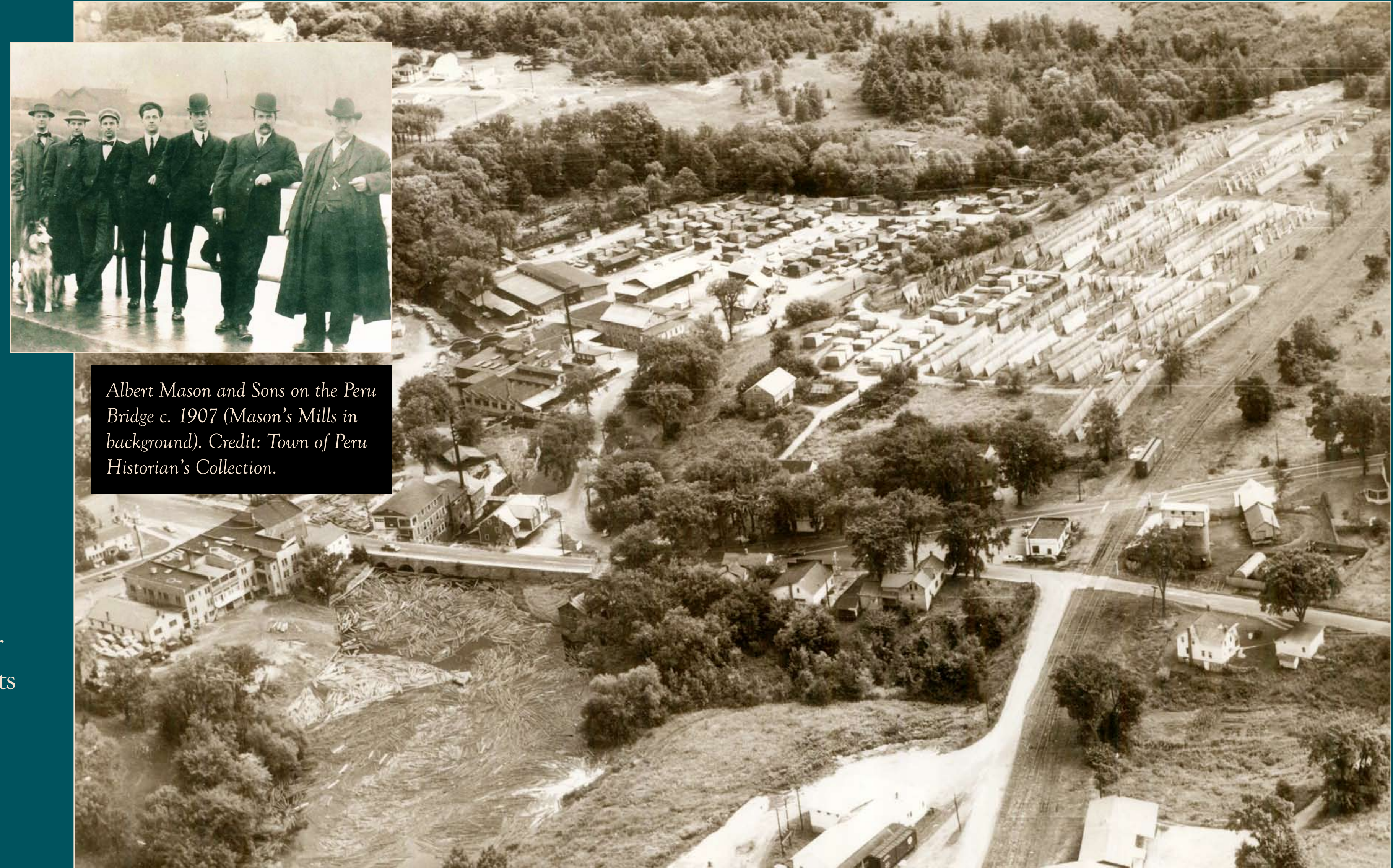
Mason & Sons, in its heyday, was the main employer of Peru. For nearly a century, from 1883 to 1972, Mason's was the "heart and lifeblood" of the town. Residents listened for the Mill's steam whistle to blow three times each day, at 8:00 am, at noon and at 5:00 pm.

Mason's Mill employed approximately eighty-five men during the summer and up to two hundred men and fifty teams of horses during the winter. Many local farmers added to their incomes by cutting logs during the winter. The logs were hauled by horse and sleigh and stacked along the banks of the Little AuSable River. After the spring thaw, they were rolled into the river and fed into the sawmill to be cut into lumber.

Mason or one of his six sons supervised all operations at the mill, from the initial sawing of the logs into rough lumber to the finished product. The mill produced its own steam power and electricity. Sawdust was burned for fuel, and no pollutants were dumped into the river.

Mason's produced many items, including building materials, columns, bookcases, apple crates and furniture. They specialized in making interior moldings and were the only local sawmill to do so, which contributed to their success. Mason's also had the honor of making bobsleds used in the 1932 Olympics at Lake Placid. During WW II, the mill made ammunition boxes for the U.S. Government and manufactured prefabricated houses for defense workers in Maryland and Virginia. In 1954 Mason Homes Inc. was formed under Philip Mason to build and sell Gunnison Homes. These prefabricated, steel frame houses can still be seen along McIntosh Dr., Locust Dr., and Holden Ave. in the village. At the time, a three bedroom home sold starting at \$9,400.

Due to the increased use of plastics, the demand for custom wood millwork decreased and A Mason and Sons Lumber Mill closed in the Fall of 1972.



Albert Mason and Sons on the Peru Bridge c. 1907 (Mason's Mills in background). Credit: Town of Peru Historian's Collection.

Aerial view of Mason's Mill circa 1950. So much has changed in 50 years, can you see...the stacks of drying lumber where the shopping center is currently located? the old three arch stone bridge and dam holding back a pond full of logs for the sawmill? the 1836 stone Heyworth building, part of the mill complex and the only buildings still standing on the site? the train lines, sidings and station? Credit: Town of Peru Historian's Collection.



Armed with only axes and cross cut saws, farmers would head into the woods in the winter with their teams of horses to cut and haul logs back to the saw mill. Credit: Town of Peru Historian's Collection.



A.L. Bartlett in the glazing room in the 1836 stone Heyworth building. Credit: Town of Peru Historian's Collection.



While the mill is gone the craftsmanship of the mill workers still lives on. In 1860 the eldest Mason son, George, built this house for himself and his family on Pleasant St. Credit: Joanne Kennedy