

What's Old is New Again

The Minesing Basket Company was started in 1897 by C.W. Ward, manufacturing berry boxes and meat baskets. In 1905, George Johnston and Harold Kerfoot purchased the business and focused their operation on the production of meat baskets. In 1911, Mr. Kerfoot sold his interest to Mr. Johnston. Between 1920 and 1926, John T. Johnston was associated with the business, and by 1947, Alan Johnston, George's son, went into partnership with his father.



Most of the logs used by the Minesing Basket Company came from the Minesing area, particularly the Minesing Swamp. Over ten million feet of timber passed through the veneer mill, most of it cut to a thickness of 1/20th of an inch to ensure that the basket was light and pliable.

For a number of years, the Minesing Basket Company turned out more baskets than any other company in Canada, shipping to Halifax, Quebec and other locations in the country. Over the years, more than one thousand carloads were shipped by rail from Minesing Station. An increase in the availability of cheaper cardboard boxes caused the demand for baskets to decline. The factory closed down in 1954 after 57 years of operation, and the building was demolished in 1971 when the property changed hands.

In manufacturing a basket, veneer strips are first woven on the plating table. The woven strips are then placed in a press, giving the basket its shape and holding it firm while the top strips are nailed by hand. This image of the factory interior shows a plating table, as well as a press with a nearly finished basket.