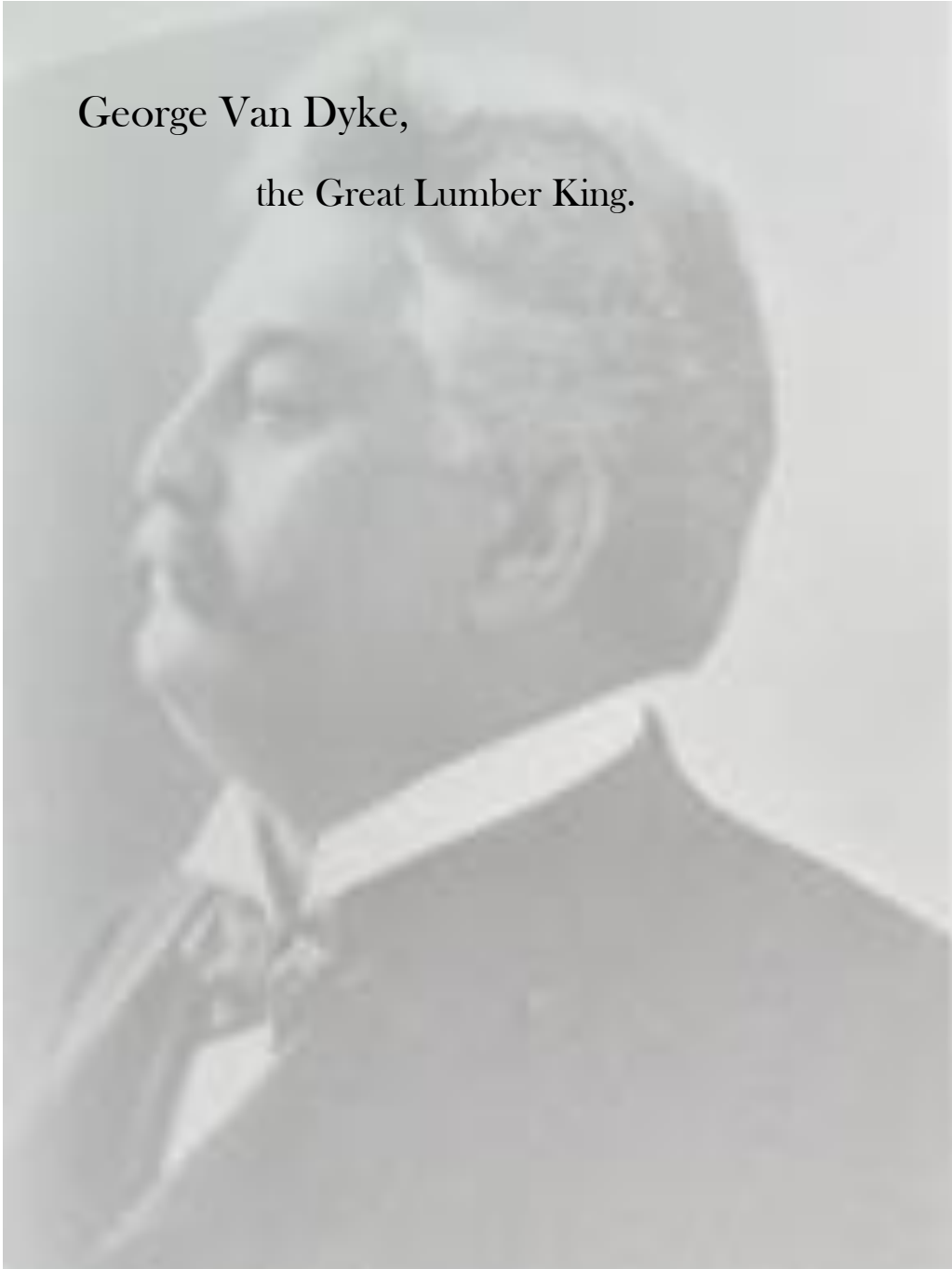


George Van Dyke,  
the Great Lumber King.



Ed Gregory

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Compiled with remarks:  
Ed Gregory  
February, 2020

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George Van Dyke,  
the Great Lumber King.

## George Van Dyck<sup>1</sup> 1846-1909

Source: Reconnaissance Background Study and Archaeological Locational Survey for the Proposed Turners Falls Heritage State Park, Turners Falls, Massachusetts. Pp 71-73; University of Massachusetts Archaeological Services (UMAS) under contract with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management.

By Michael Nassaney

One of the more colorful men in the history of Turners Falls was the lumber king, George Van Dyck. Van Dyck was born in a log cabin in 1846, and he died, appropriately, on a log jam in the Connecticut River [at Turners Falls] in 1909. Long before his death the man was a legend. Every hair on his head and every drop of blood in his veins, and every ancestor back to the forty-fifth generation, was eloquently and heartily cursed in three languages and four states and two countries for more than thirty years. But at the same time he had many staunch friends, who knew him to be public-spirited and generous, while both foes and friends agreed that he was a born executive, possessed of a phenomenal memory, strong common-sense, and excellent practical judgment concerning men and things. Also, his private life was blameless. Even his worst enemies had little to say about his sexual mores. He never married and was devoted to his mother, who lived in his palatial home in Lancaster, New Hampshire, until she died in 1906 at the age of ninety-six [Pike 1967:246].



George Van Dyke  
c1908

**p71** excellent practical judgment concerning men and things. Also, his private life was blameless. Even his worst enemies had little to say about his sexual mores. He never married and was devoted to his mother, who lived in his palatial home in Lancaster, New Hampshire, until she died in 1906 at the age of ninety-six [Pike 1967:246].

With but four years of schooling, at the age of 14, Van Dyck was driving logs down the dangerous Androscoggin in Maine with the reckless, devil-may-care attitude of an accomplished "river hog" (Noyes 1976). Van Dyck was not a tall man but wore a "walrus-type" moustache and a size 19-and-a-half shirt collar. When he was roused, his powerful voice could be heard clear across the Connecticut River. He had a phenomenal capacity for physical work, hardship and privation, equaled only by the brevity of his famous temper.

What really distinguished Van Dyck from other lumbermen of his time was his uncanny ability to spot a money-making proposition in logs, lumber, or stumpage, even on distant horizons. Sawmills, lumbering railways, and lumber in any form were the stuff of his success. Moreover, Van Dyke was always leading the men. For example, [Pike (1976)] describes a Mr. Lewis of Holyoke sitting on the bank of the Connecticut River, near Turners Falls, where bad jams were wont [sic] to form. With him were his uncle and Van Dyck, watching a foreman vainly trying to break up a jam. Van Dyck, according to Lewis watched for a few minutes, and then started out onto the jam himself. "In an unbelievably short time the jam was on its way down the river."

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<sup>1</sup> Van Dyke.

**p72** Van Dyck's only weakness seems to have been stock-market gambling. But whenever he was cleaned out by the market, he would return to the north woods to swiftly recoup for another bash at Wall Street.

Damages resulting from log drives were common in the Connecticut River valley. A victim could seldom collect from Van Dyck, however. A farmer once came close by using a double-barreled shotgun pushed persuasively into Van Dyck's ample belly. Van Dyck offered restitution by offering to cut and deliver for free "every cedar fence post" in a wood lot he was lumbering. The lumber king kept his word—only there were no cedar trees in that wood lot, as it so happened. He is perhaps best known for crying out to his crew: "Save the cant-hook! We can always get another man," when one of his workers slipped into the tossing jumble of river logs never to surface again (Noyes 1976).

Until his death, Van Dyck remained adamant about the drive going through on time—bigger and better every year. One spring, his drive was stalled for want of water. One of his loggers suggested that he ask the local priest to pray for rain. "There's ten dollars," Van Dyck told him, "and tell the priest to pray like hell." The next morning the rains came, continuing through the weekend. Flood waters were so high they threatened to flood the meadowlands, and thus pose the threat of suite for damage. Van Dyck called in the foreman. "Now tell that \*~@!", he roared, slapping down a \$100 bill, "to shut off the water up there" (Noyes 1976).

**p73** Van Dyck always followed his log drives; at first with his drivers, later from a carriage on the river banks and finally, after 1904, from a bright red Stanley Steamer. In 1909, Van Dyck sat in his steamer in Turners Falls, watching the biggest drive of his career—53 million board feet—drift past the falls. Impulsive as always, he instructed his chauffeur to drive up to the very brink of the falls, where he got out and observed his crew. When he climbed back in, the car proceeded to plunge over the embankment, astounding the crew below. Exactly what happened is not clear. Both men were terribly mangled in the 40 foot drop to the river bed. Van Dyck suffered fractures of the right arm and left shoulder, several broken ribs, two large scalp wounds, and severe internal injuries. But this did not deter him from standing to give orders to those rescuing him. He died in Farren Hospital later that day, a symbol of courage that New England will never forget. His estate was estimated at 20 million dollars (Noyes 1976; Pike 1976).

It seems somewhat ironic that Van Dyck should die in the Farren Hospital. Barney Farren<sup>2</sup> had always been outraged if some of the mills had to close when the drive came through. Since the drive had the right of water whenever they sluiced logs, the mills had to shut down in times of low water. Farren had fought the drive in vain, and he and Van Dyck argued endlessly over the issue. (Noyes 1976).

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard "Barney" Farren 1828-1912 was a prominent businessman in Turners Falls and beyond.

## Gleanings from the *Turners Falls Reporter*

**June 5, 1889**

-George Van Dyke, the great lumber king who has the lumber business on the Connecticut river, had a shock of some kind in Boston last week, but was reported better at last accounts. Some seventeen years ago, George was working in the woods for \$22 a month, to-day he is a millionaire. Hard work and true shrewdness were his chief aides in climbing the ladder so rapidly.

**Dec. 25**

### *George Makes a Deal, for Deal.*

Last Saturday, David H. Beattie & Sons of Lancaster N.H., deeded the township of Beattie, Maine, to George Van Dyke of Lancaster. The purchase money being \$70,000 for realty and \$ 30,000 for personal.

The township is situated to the northeastern part of Maine, and contains some 80,000 acres, on which is a village consisting of custom house, post office, a steam saw mill, a store, and three or four dwellings. Besides his township, Van Dyke, who is president and manager of the Connecticut River Lumber Company, individually owns 120,000 acres of lumbered wild land in the northern part of New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine and in the southern part of Canada.

David is a brother of the Captain and Thomas Beattie, well known lumber kings operating on the river. George Van Dyke is also well known here, and is in fact one of the most wonderful men in his way this country has yet produced. His active life of only a few years of marvelous money making is more wonderful than Jules Verne's fiction.

**June 27, 1900**

-The first of the fifty million feet drive of logs has got here and has well filled the booms above the narrows. The work of sorting will progress steadily until August. Mr. George Van Dyke, himself on of the marvelous products of this bustling age, always has captains the best and most enduring of men—men who combine good brain power with their push.

**June 21, 1905**

-The Connecticut Valley Lumber Company has a much more aggressive opposition to its usual custom of owning the Connecticut river this year. One party brought it to time before the River and Harbor Commissioners last year, but now ten times as many persons are interested, and some of them fully as aggressive and persistent as Mr. Van Dyke. This gentleman is expected here at once to see if matters cannot be expedited. A dozen torches arrived to-day so that night gangs will probably be operated.

**May 5, 1909**

-It is reported in paper making circles the Gorge Van Dyke is about to build a dam at some water power on the Connecticut river, near Wells river, and start a pulp and paper

making plant worth a million dollars. Gorge (without the e) has the lumber, and he has the money, and paper making would come as easy to him as cutting logs, driving streams, building railroads, or writing his distinguished signature on the left side of a national bank bill. After leading the tremendous business life he has for twenty-five years, making money so fast that nobody ever had time to count it, paper making on a big scale will appear to Mr. Van Dyke liking teaching a Sunday school class in an up river village.

June 9

-It is stated that the log drive of the Connecticut Valley Lumber Company this year will be much smaller than had been anticipated. The company will not send drives down after this year, but will build a saw, pulp and sulphite mill near the source of supply. A million dollar plant is talked of.

August 11

### Tragic Death of George Van Dyke

George Van Dyke, the lumber king of New England, went to his long home after a sensational automobile accident, at Riverside, Sunday in a manner somewhat harmonious with the wonderful man's life and marvelous achievements.

He ordered his automobile driver, Frederick Hodgdon, to run the machine close to the steep bank below the site of the old saw mill at Riverside, so that he might get a better view of the action of the logs in a new sluiceway which the rivermen were trying out. In attempting to back out the driver seized the wrong lever, and the machine plunged over the embankment to the river bottom, a distance of 70 feet. The driver went with the machine and was fatally injured, so that death followed in an hour. Mr. Van Dyke sprang out instantly the machine started but was too near the bank, and fell to the rocks below, receiving many injuries, from which he died some ten hours afterward.

George Van Dyke, or "Gorge" as he wrote his name early in his career, and if we are not mistaken, up to the signing of bank bills, was born in Stanbridge, Quebec. His early education was not exactly collegiate, having left school at eleven. He was graduated from the school of hard knocks in early manhood, and had been taking a post graduate course, ever since, guided by the uplifting voice and magnetic beck of a beautiful woman.

He was from boyhood the embodiment of intense virility, the possessor of that charming animal manliness that is always secretly admired by the opposite sex, even if denied in the in the conventional social intercourse of the world. This physical endowment was of course his greatest weapon in conquering that which would always remain barriers to the great majority of mankind, but the strenuous battle of life was not wholly won by main strength and audacity.

Hidden from the world, maybe gruff, imperious, domineering, ferocious, George Van Dyke was led by a subtle spirit differing but little from the spirits of the beautifully poetic gods of ancient Greece. Van Dyke was a study, worthy pen portraiture at the hand of a greater master. Beginning at the bottom of the great industry of which he became more than head—an absolute king—he worked up by degrees, mastering every detail from the



cutting of the logs, the feeding and care of men in the woods, the driving of the logs in small streams, out into the larger rivers, to mills near the final market.

He worked in every part of a saw mill, he drove horses, had seen the roughest of the rough experiences in all weathers, and all temperatures. He became a supreme master of a great calling. He could pick assistants, managers and confidants with an unerring sense, because he knew by experience what every man should be capable of if driven to his best, and as he had always demanded the best of himself he seemed to have an absolute right to demand the best of service bought in good faith.

Mr. Van Dyke came down the Connecticut river with the Bowmans,<sup>3</sup> in 1872, as a log driver, on the first drive of logs that ever started from the headwaters for the mouth of the Connecticut. He became interested in a saw mill with the Bowmans, and later had a mill of his own. He bought lumber tracts and turned them over to good advantage, using much timber in a large mill at McIndoe Falls,<sup>4</sup> of which he was a third owner. He extended his business in every direction, and made money fast. He demanded and commanded success every day and night of his life. He could see further and clearer than a regiment of ordinary business and financial men.

The future was an open book to him, and not once did Fortune knock at his door and find him away playing golf. He knew when Fortune's return call was due and was home to take tea with her.

Harassed by petty lawyers, and petty lawsuits, and New Hampshire is the spawning ground for both, Mr. Van Dyke would have nothing but the services of the keenest of the profession at his bid, and although seeming to ride over everything rough shod, few men have stored away in their memory boxes better knowledge of their rights and responsibilities that was possessed by the subject of this off-hand sketch.

George Van Dyke was religiously hated from one end of the four hundred mile stream to the other, was called a tyrant, unprincipled, an outlaw, and a coward. Pinned down it would be hard to find any other reasons for the universal judgment than that the man had met with success others could not attain, and defended his rights with a brutality that would have charmed the heart of an ancient baron, because the method he followed was more successful than any attempt at diplomacy, especially when compelled to run the gauntlet of the whole river every with petty claims thrust in his face at every farm by some Marks over anxious to keep the temple of justice open for steady business.

He was no coward. He took more than a gambler's chance every day of his life, and the last one sent him speedily to his long home. He loved a horse, and was kind to all animals, but he demanded of his horse what he demanded of himself, of the rest of vigorous manhood, the best that was in him. He drove in all manner of outlandish places in all hours of the day and night, mingles freely among surly and disgruntled men, never shirking a duty, continually at the risk of his life. In driving up and down the river, he would go over ditches, among stumps, anywhere to get at his men in the best possible time.

At the farm door the buggy wheel was always placed near enough so that the whip butt could be used as a knocker. No time was lost in hitching horses if a man could be

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<sup>3</sup> Henry and Lewis Bowman were partners with Van Dyke early on in Van Dyke's career as a lumber baron.

<sup>4</sup> McIndoe Falls, Vermont. Also known as the Fifteen Mile Falls.

reached from the buggy seat. The Mountain came to Mohamet[sic] at the back of the whip. Life was always too short with Van Dyke to waste any of it on top of shoe leather, so long as the other fellow was well shod and did not object to pedestrianism.

As to cowardice, it wasn't in his nature. When he built the upper Coos railroad, the Italian workmen had some trouble with their Diago<sup>5</sup>[sic] boss, and to get even began to tear up the railroad tracks. Van Dyke, quick as a flash, made a traveling arsenal of the locomotive and taking command of a choice company, ran the engine right into the infuriated mob. It didn't take ten minutes to convince them that George Van Dyke was bad man to monkey with, and order came out of chaos before the guns had time to cool.

Van Dyke's lumber interest passed into the hands of the Connecticut Valley lumber Company, and he has long been its president and managing director. An expert river-driver he took a personal interest in every device no matter what other business might be in hand, and not a move escaped his attention. The question of the practicability of a longer or shorter sluice at a given point to facilitate the passage cost him his life. He started the Colebrook National Bank, and was its president, and was president of the Upper Coos Railroad, which he built. He was also a director in many other business enterprises.

He was never married. He leaves a brother, Philo D. Van Dyke, who has been a manager on the drive for many years, a sister Miss Eva L. Van Dyke, and a married sister. His nephew George Van Dyke, married a pretty Turners Falls girl, Miss Marie Paul, some years ago.

The judgment of the writer of this sketch on the quality of the deceased, was formed some years ago from intimate association with Captain Beattie, the well known lumberman of Lancaster, N.H., who knew Mr. Van Dyke from his earliest boyhood. A man of superb physical manhood, cultured to a degree. Captain Beattie could well appreciate a fine type of manhood wherever it appeared.

-Riverside has been overflowed with visitors who came to view the scene of the fatal automobile accident. On Sunday there was a continuous procession of people passing over the bridge and there must have been over a thousand men, women and children who viewed the fatal bank. Nobody seemed to mind the terrific heat in their eagerness to be on the spot, and some venturesome souls even, made their way down the bank and filched souvenirs from the wrecked car. Turners Falls has seldom been so exercised over any event as over this horrible accident.

-W.P. Dustin went yesterday to attend the funeral of the late George Van Dyke at Lancaster, N.H.

August 18

### George Van Dyke

That George Van Dyke, the multi-millionaire lumberman, who was killed here last week, was disliked largely because he was not wholly understood, was very evident.

A tremendous tireless worker, at all times and in all places, his commendable industry even made him enemies. A few people, however, have been turning the man's life over in their minds, and have come to the well founded conclusion that whenever you find

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<sup>5</sup> The reference s/b Dago; A highly offensive term for somebody of Italian, Spanish or Portuguese birth or descent.

a man who is universally hated, you will find a man of very superior merit, and usually with a generous heart for all but grafters.<sup>6</sup> As success in a large measure always has a magnetic attraction for the grafter, an iron front must be maintained at all hazards as a matter of self preservation.

George Van Dyke knew how to look out for his own interests, apparently with brutal frankness, and he could make a thousand enemies where he could gain a friend. And yet George Van Dyke had a big heart stored away under that big waist coat, and fine sensibilities that you can only find in a true man.

He was blessed with a most affectionate mother, and the affection was not wasted. The big hearted bluff fellow put over \$85,000 in a mansion that she might have a home to his taste if not to hers. He employed gardeners and florists, and raised flowers in endless profusion, and every house of mourning was sent quantities of blooms by the thoughtfulness of the owner, the church pulpit was not neglected, nor any function where flowers would be acceptable and not used but for his generosity. His aged mother's birthday never came around but her thoughtful and dutiful son had sent her from Boston a bouquet of beautiful roses, one rose for each year of her age. The last offering contained 95 roses.

George Van Dyke, like any other gentleman, played poker, when he had a chance to steal an hour away from his tremendously busy life. Poker with him, as with every man of brains, was not a game of cards, or a means of gambling. He used it as a recreation to study men. He could stand pat on a four flush and study his man down to his boots with unerring judgment. He would never punish a man who could not afford to pay for his education at the table. Once he held a hand against a sitter that was worth something, they raised and raised until it seemed that the first call would be by Gabriel. Neither would quit, until one struck bottom, when the call came of necessity, Mr. Van Dyke's opponent's judgment was in error, and the big pot was raked toward the big man.

The loser paled and his lips trembled. Mr. Van Dyke asked what was the matter. The opponent said that he had been led by his judgment to risk more than he could afford. The big man pushed the whole collection back to the fellow including his own contribution, with a smile, saying that no man using such good judgment as he had should be made to suffer for it. There was a sidelight on the better side of Van Dyke George.[sic]

August 25

### George Van Dyke's Will

The will of George Van Dyke, president of the Connecticut Valley Lumber Company, was filed Monday in Coos County, N.H. The instrument is dated Aug., 5, 1899. The executors named in the will are:

Thomas H. Van Dyke, George S. Lewis and Irving W. Drew. The special bequests amount to \$162,000. The bulk of the estate is bequeathed to the brothers and sister of the deceased.

There are bequests of \$1000 each to the Methodist church in Canaan Village, Vt., to the Methodist and Episcopal churches in Lancaster N.H., and to the Congregational

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<sup>6</sup> The use of dishonest or illegal means to gain money or property by somebody in a position of power or in elected office.

church of West Stewartstown, N.H., and \$500 to the Advent church in Hall Stream, P.Q. The sum of \$5000 is bequeathed for the perpetual care of the family lot in the Summer Street Cemetery, Lancaster, and there are numerous smaller bequeaths to the nephews and nieces of the deceased, and to old employees. Of course the residence will go to the relatives. All his money has been made since the will was drawn.

-The scene of the fearful automobile accident at Riverside is still drawing many tourists and people from adjoining towns who desire to look the place over. Last Sunday there were a great number of auto parties as well as pedestrians that thronged the top of the cliff all day, watching the Sluicing of the logs and seeking for souvenirs of the accident.

### January 19, 1910

-Louis Sicard is having the Stevens Duryea six-cylinder automobile which went down the river bank at Riverside last August with George Van Dyke, repaired and will run a public conveyance next summer. The body of the car, the wheels, and other parts, were ruined in the fall, but the engine and parts for transmitting power were not injured.



Man and boys pose with Van Dyke auto wreck below the Gill side of the Turners Falls Dam.

Image source unknown.

*e.g.* archive



## Wreck of Van Dyke 'Gas Buggy' on Turners Falls Rocks



## Old Photo Recalls Early T. Falls Auto Tragedy

TURNERS FALLS — Early automobile history in this community was revived recently when Mrs. Laura Gibson of 111 L street brought out an old picture of the Van Dyke fatality 30 years ago.

The accident, in which George Van Dyke, "the lumber king", and his chauffeur, Frederick B. Hodgdon, lost their lives when their car went over the river bank below the falls, occurred Aug. 8, 1909.

Mrs. Gibson not only had a picture of the crash, but also the license plate on the car. The plate, the type used before the current style of registration plates, is only three inches long and an inch and a half wide. On it is stamped in relief, "Lincensed under Selden Patent N. 549,160. Patented November 5, 1895." In the background is the figure of an old time automobile, also in relief. In the lower left hand corner are the figures, 73,661.

### Worked For Van Dyke

Mrs. Gibson's brother, Harold A. Gartrell, was employed by Van Dyke for 18 years. He vividly remembers the old Connecticut river log jams and last week was called as a government witness in the Belows Falls Hydro-Electric corporation's fight against federal licensing.

The Greenfield Recorder of Aug. 11, 1909, carried the following account in part about the Van Dyke accident:

"The pull of the wrong lever or the failure of the mechanism of the automobile of George Van Dyke, the lumber king of the Connecticut valley, carried the car over the bank of the river just below the falls on the Gill side of Turners Falls, Sunday morning, and caused the death of Mr. Van Dyke and his chauffeur, Frederick B. Hodgdon.

### Driven To Brink

"The car had just been driven to the brink of the river across open land a short distance from the suspension bridge and but a few rods from the highway. Mr. Van Dyke had alighted and was watching the work of the log men on the drive of his logs down the river. Finishing this he stepped into the car and the chauffeur pulled a lever to run the car backwards. In stead of doing so it made a leap forward and in an instant plunged over the bank. Mr. Van Dyke jumped from the car as it went over, landed on the steep slope but did not gain a hold and fell over the precipice to the bare rocks in the bed of the river exposed by the low water. Hodgdon stayed with the car, which turned over and reached the rocks in its fall with the wheels in the air. He was pinned under the wreck.

"Both of the victims of the fall lived and were conscious. The accident was witnessed by men who were watching the logs and the log men in the stream saw the automobile plunge. They rushed to the spot where it struck and did the utmost to assist the victims.

### Sheer Precipice

"The bank over which the machine plunged in its fatal fall is almost a sheer precipice 85 feet from the level where it stood to the point on the rocks where it landed. The upper part of it is somewhat covered with short growth, and the lower 30 feet is of jagged rocks, cleared of vegetation by the water.

"The wrecked machine was pulled up the bank and taken to the freight station, from where it will be shipped to the factory at Chicopee Falls. It was a Stevens-Duryea, six-cylinder touring car, with an engine made in France. It had been used by Mr. Van Dyke in following the drive down the river."

Both Van Dyke and Hodgdon

died in the Farren memorial hospital the afternoon of the accident.

Mrs. Gibson said she believed the car was purchased by the late Louis Sicard, whose family now reside in Glens Falls, N. Y.

### One Of First Fatalities

The accident was one of the first automobile fatalities in this section, and doubtless the most spectacular. It was more than five years later before cars appeared in large numbers here.

By coincidence, a similar accident occurred the next week, but no one was seriously injured. The four-cylinder touring car of a Philadelphia family plunged headlong over a 137-foot embankment on the main Shelburne road out of Greenfield, half way up the mountain near the old watering trough. It turned three somersaults and landed a few feet from the mountain brook.

## Wreck of Van Dyke "Gas Buggy" on Turners Falls Rocks Old Photo Recalls Early T. Falls Auto tragedy

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The (fuzzy)  
Recorder image.

The archetype image.  
Courtesy Ross Currie Family.



<sup>7</sup> The image on page 18 of this account shows the wrecked automobile being rafted to an unknown location. My knowledge of the area "below the dam" indicates the raft is heading due north toward the mouth of Fall River. A short trip up the river would yield more level ground where removal of the wreck would be much easier. *e.g.*

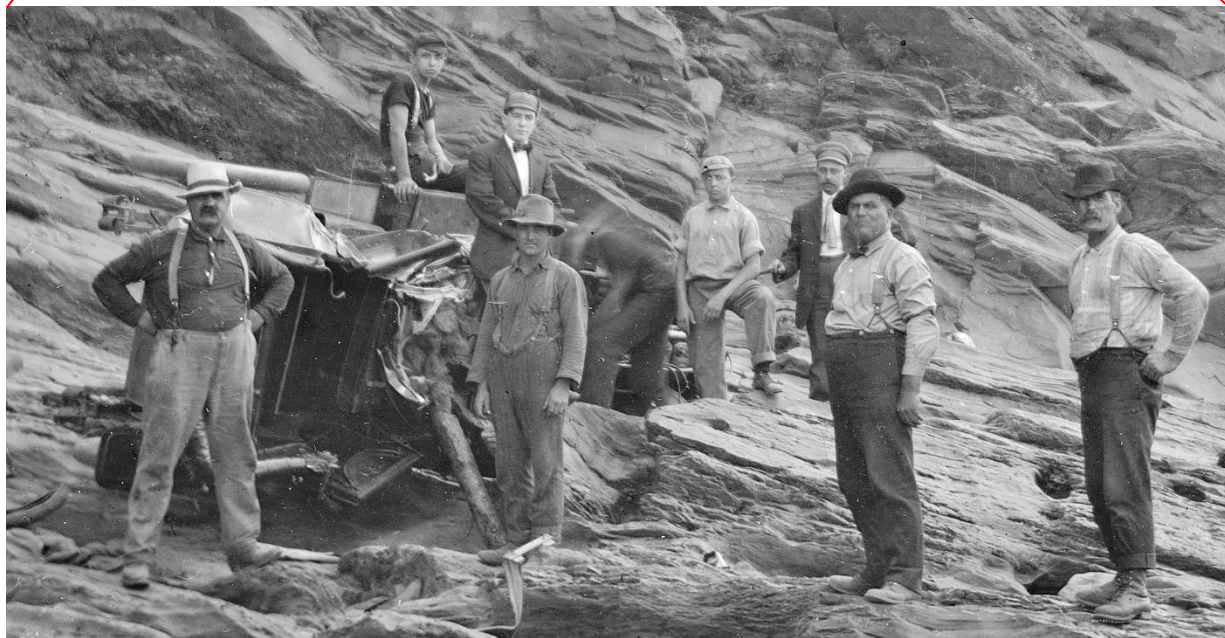




Glass plate image courtesy Historical Society of Greenfield.

cut & enlargement by *c.g.*

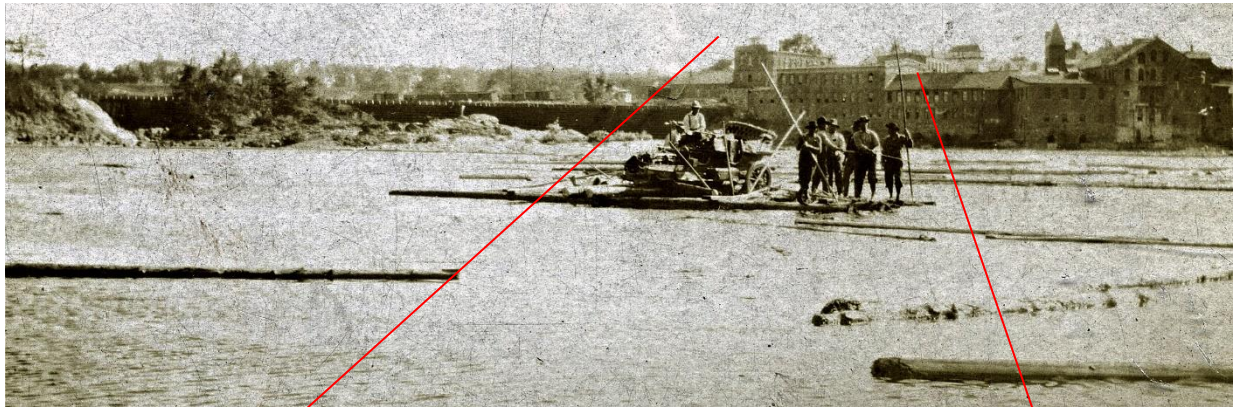




Glass plate image courtesy Historical Society of Greenfield.

cut & enlargement by e.g.

## Ancillary Information



Van Dyke's wrecked automobile is rafted to ???

Image source unknown. cut & enlargement by *e.g.*

Atlantic Monthly, July, 1963

THE Connecticut River drive ended in a burst of glory. The Connecticut Valley Lumber Company owned most of northern New Hampshire and much of adjacent Vermont and Maine. The company was owned and headed by George Van Dyke, a two-fisted ex-riverman of the old school. He didn't own a pair of shoes until he was twelve years old, but in the spring of 1909 he died a millionaire in a tragic accident when his chauffeur-driven car backed over a cliff at Turners Falls, having come too close to the bank so that he might view the driving crew picking a jam in the river.

## ANNUAL LOG DRIVE ON THE RIVER.

How Over 36,000,000 Feet of Lumber Are Floated Down the Connecticut From the Headwaters--Mr. Van Dyke's Career.

The one great event of interest to the dwellers along the banks of the Connecticut between Holyoke and Turners Falls at the present time and to hundreds of automobilists and excursionists is the annual log drive of the Connecticut Valley Lumber company, which this year amounts to 36,000,000 feet and which is now nearing the end of its tedious journey at the mills at Mount Tom, having passed the dam at Turners Falls--the last chief hindrance in the far journey from the waters of the upper Connecticut. The main part of the drive is now reaching its destination and the mills at Mount Tom which have been closed, waiting for a new supply, have started up again.

The Connecticut river presented a fine spectacle as it carried along off its broad bosom, swollen with the recent rain, the millions of logs, which have lain stranded up the river. Under the Hadley bridge the logs were rushing fast, directed in their course by boatmen, who were keeping them from jamming against the bridge piers. These comparatively few river drivers are being augmented in number by a small army of rivermen who will stay at Mount Tom just long enough to safely deliver their logs and then return to the woods of the North to begin again the work of cutting the lumber in preparation for another drive in the spring.

As the spectator looks at these logs, now finishing their long sail, his mind reverts naturally to the many changes which the wood has undergone since it left the primeval forest. Doubtless the process of logging in the woods and the drive in the river is familiar to most of our readers. First come the skirmishers of the army of invasion that is to conquer the pinery, who put up the shanties and open a tote road. Then the main log road with its branches is built. Next the skidways are made, on which the logs are to be stacked. Then the tree is attacked and the trunk measured off and sawn into logs 12, 14, or 16 feet in length. Then come the swamping and the skidding and the piling of the logs to await the spring. Now comes the drive, with life on the crib for the riverman it may be, and the handling of the logs as they float down the river and the use of the slide and the averting of the jam with its many dangers.

Though the process of converting a forest into lumber and its transportation by water, thus saving every house-builder a sizable amount of money, is interesting, no drive in the east is more interesting than the one on the Connecticut, for with it has been associated the name of George Van Dyke, the lumber king of New England, known to every Springfield lumber merchant and builder.



Ever since the early spring Mr. Van Dyke had been superintending the big drive of logs from the source of the Connecticut river until his tragic death in the automobile accident at Turners Falls, Sunday, Aug. 8, while superintending the forcing of the logs over the dam at that place. For 50 years Mr. Van Dyke had been breaking log jams on this river and here he amassed a fortune aggregating millions, doing work which he said was his only fun in the world. He spent his life wrestling with difficulties on the Connecticut river and seemingly doing impossible things. He was a man utterly devoid of fear.

Only last year in the course of one day down in his section, where the Connecticut river runs between tamed banks, Mr. Van Dyke was seen to drive an automobile over logs and sent his horse and buggy down at almost perpendicular bank, over well grown willow bushes. But these were nothing at all to a man who for 50 years had been breaking up log jams right in the midst of the danger. In places worse than he would send the hardy woodsmen that follow the log down the Connecticut, the use of which river had been the source of Mr. Van Dyke's great fortune. Mr. Van Dyke was absolutely without fear. He knew better than most human beings how to take care of himself by thinking and acting quickly in times of danger.

The present Connecticut Valley Lumber company so closely connected with the trade here and of which Mr. Van Dyke was president, was the successor of three older large companies and its origin dates at the year 1876. Some New York men owned much the largest tract of timber lands around the sources of this river and being ready to begin bringing their lumber to market in 1876 they bought and improved an old saw mill at Dutch Point, Hartford, and cut and drove a lot of timber to that place. But the distance from the woods to Hartford and the dams at Holyoke and Windsor Locks, besides the trouble made by logs with so many inhabitants in Holyoke, Springfield and Hartford, as the logs floated without protection for many weeks past these places, soon convinced these men that Holyoke, was the lowest place on the river to which logs could be profitably driven. In 1879 this company bought the Mount Tom mill and all the business interest, connected with it from the McIndoes Lumber company. They also leased the Holyoke mill from the Holyoke Lumber company. In 1879 this company bought the Mount Tom mill and all the business interests connected with it. They also leased the Holyoke mill from the Holyoke Lumber company. In 1884, they united all their timber lands and mill interests with those owned by George Van Dyke, who had built and carried on the mill at McIndoes Falls after the old mill owned by the McIndoes Lumber company was burned in December, 1875.

Now the getting out of sixty million feet of timber, which required about 600,000 trees to be cut and hauled to the river, was an undertaking such as few can comprehend yet Mr. Van Dyke was always equal to the task. He always maintained that the first necessity for logging was a road good enough for sleds to run on and he was very particular that his roads did not get thawed. He personally superintended the building of shelters for his choppers and teams and made neat log houses, each built with low sides and steep roof, with a platform along each side on which his men slept in blankets. At first he heated his camphouse by leaving an open space along the ridge-pole for smoke to escape, keeping a fire on the ground nearly the whole length of the building in the middle, then having a door

at the end and drawing in logs the full length for fuel. The sleepers would lie on the platforms each side with their feet towards this fire. An additional room was made for the cook.

From 25 to 40 men lived in each of these camps, all through the woods wherever he was cutting timber and here would be gathered the choppers, teamsters and sometimes a scaler or the man who measured the timber. Although it was impossible to make very long days in the northern woods, everybody worked as early and as late as they could see and none harder than Mr. Van Dyke.

In those early days the logs were piled upon sleds and hauled to the river or lake only by horses and if there was room they were put on the ice so that a thaw would leave them afloat ready to be started on the drive. The longest roads on which spruce timber was hauled on to the Connecticut river was not much more than five miles. Now that timber within that distance from the river has become more scarce the railroad and cars are used wherever the land is reasonably flat. Mr. Van Dyke's camps possessed this advantage in that unlike the camps in Maine they were near enough to the settlements, so that teams could go every day from the camps to places where provisions could be obtained.

In the early days, as now, the cutting of timber was kept up as long as snow held on the roads, which was quite late in those northern latitudes. When the river opened and there was a good height of water the logs were taken in hand by the drivers. With about 20 batteaux to take the men anywhere that the logs lodged and plenty of hands to start the masses, beginning with those down stream to make way for those behind the men would hurry along the drive.

A gang of cooks would go along shore and get meals ready wherever the drivers were at the hungry hour and the men needed good food and plenty of it, for they lead a strenuous life. They worked often in the water from daylight to dark, seven days a week, from 125 to 150 days until they brought the last logs to the mills. They ate four times a day and at night would lie down in their clothes under shelter tents with fires to dry their feet and clothing. Their labor has not been as severe as it was along in the early 70's. however, for the reason that Mr. Van Dyke and his family spent a handsome fortune within the years from 1885 to 1890 in clearing the river from obstructions so that the current would not pile timber into such jams in so many, dangerous places as formerly.

There was another danger which was obviated. The low meadows all along the river over which a sudden freshet would drift logs and then as suddenly falling would leave them often half a mile from the channel were formerly the most dreaded of any places. Just above these meadows there always are narrow places where booms can be hung across the river to hold drives. Mr. Van Dyke, at great expense, built booms at six such points and if the river rose so fast as to lift the logs over the banks men were stationed at these booms to close them and hold the logs until the water fell.

In former years the breaking of jams on starting of piles of logs was risky and often fatal work. Men went in batteaux below the jam, found some logs which might be cut to let the mass start and chopped enough to free the movement of the whole. As the body generally started gradually, the shoppers had warning and time to jump into the batteaux and be rowed ashore or down stream in safety. But sometimes the jam moved suddenly

and every year one or more men would fail to get off the logs and would be drowned. But Mr. Van Dyke introduced a new and safer method by which the men would find the log which barred the passage of the others then bore a hole in it with a long auger, put a charge of dynamite in and with a long fuse from the shore, blow up the logs which held the mass. Often it would be necessary to throw the dynamite loosely into the water, let it be sucked under the pile, and exploded so as to lift the whole jam over the shoals or other obstructions. [Springfield Homestead.]

The harvesting of logs reached a peak in the first decade of the 20th century. George Van Dyke, whose recent death is eulogized here, owned the Connecticut Valley Lumber Company. It was one of the large timbering firms created in the late 1800s that began systematically harvesting timber from upper New England. The resulting deforestation, not only in New England but all over the country, gave a huge spur to the conservation movement. This movement was begun by President Theodore Roosevelt during his two terms as president (1901-09). Roosevelt, along with Division of Forestry head Gifford Pinchot, sought to regulate timber harvesting. The first steps to prevent wide-scale deforestation were taken. It was not until the 1960s that any serious effort was made to stop poorly conceived timber harvests and regulate the taking of lumber in the United States.



Newspaper; article and date unknown. Possibly the Recorder.

facsimile e.g. archive

Caption:

Tragic accident<sup>8</sup>

The tragedy shown on this old postcard took place in 1912 or 1913, according to Robert Horrigan of Turners Falls who loaned the picture. A Mr. Van Dyke, first name not known, made a fortune sending logs from Canada down the Connecticut River to Turners Falls. One day his chauffeur parked the car above the rocks on the Gill side of the river. The story goes that Van Dyke told his chauffeur to back up a little more. When he did, the car backed over the cliff, crashing to the rocks below and killing both men.

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Horrigan's account of the "Tragic accident" is incorrect on most accounts.

## *Find a Grave* (internet)

George was the son of George Van Dyke and Abigail H. Dixon.

He was a Lumber Baron and one of the best known lumbermen in New England. George was the famous logger, timberland owner and millionaire President of the Connecticut Valley Lumber Co.

George did not own a pair of shoes until he was eleven and attended school for only four years. As a youngster he left home to find work and took a job as a logger on the Connecticut River. He became a river-driver working on the log drives which floated timber down the river each year. He soon became a foreman of the log drives and passed along the western border of Cheshire County many times as his crews worked their logs down the river. He soon went into business for himself and opened his own mills.

Even after he became a millionaire lumberman and passed his 60th birthday, however, he continued to follow the drives down the Connecticut. The drive of 1909 was his biggest ever, containing 53,000,000 feet of timber. In August of that year, as he walked the drive through Bellows Falls, Van Dyke sprained his ankle very badly in the river bed. As a result, he had to follow the drive in his Stanley Steamer the next week. At Turners Falls, MA he and his chauffeur pulled up in the Steamer to watch the drive from a bank 75 feet above the river. No one knows what happened next, whether Van Dyke ordered the chauffeur to drive closer to the edge or the driver made a fatal mistake, but the car plunged over the edge into the river 75 feet below. George Van Dyke died later that day after plunging into the river of which he had been King for so many years. His chauffeur, Fred B. Hodgdon, of Lancaster, NH also died. They are both buried here in Summer Street Cemetery.



In 1888, George had purchased the large historical 400 acre Baum Farm in Canaan, VT. He then, in 1889, deeded the farm to his sister, Lucy Vancore. The Vancore family lived there for many years.

In his will, dated Aug 1899, he left money to surviving siblings Philo B. Thomas H, Lucy Vancour, and smaller amounts to their children. He left a trust and insurance policies to his mother, to be given to sister Eva if his mother was deceased (which she was when he died). He left smaller amounts to the children of deceased siblings Dickson Joseph, James H, and Abigail Jane Wheeler. He left money to his friend, Marietta Cross, of Colebrook; Edward Lawler, his confidential clerk in McIndoe Falls, VT; Fitz Symonds, his hired man, of Lancaster; \$5000 in a trust for Summer Street Cemetery to maintain their plot (next to the Shurtleff plot); \$1000 to each the Methodist Church in Canaan, VT, Methodist Church in Lancaster, Episcopal Church in Lancaster, Congregational Church in West Stewartstown; and \$500 to the Advent Church in Hereford, Canada. The residual was to be divided between his four surviving siblings.

Age: 65yrs

Cause of Death: Injuries from Automobile Accident.

*Find A Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com>; accessed 9 February 2020), memorial page for George VanDyke (1844–8 Aug 1909). Find A Grave Memorial no. 166650094, citing Summer Street Cemetery, Lancaster, Coos County, New Hampshire, USA.



**Wednesday, July 22, 2015**

Posted by Unknown at 4:35 AM. Labels: Connecticut River history, Connecticut river log drives, George Van Dyke

### George Van Dyke - Gilded Age New England Lumber Baron

After the end of the Civil War, the United States went on a growth and building spree that demanded huge amounts of lumber. In the west, this lumber came from the upper northwest corner of the country, from Oregon and Washington. In the east, it was shipped down the Connecticut River from Maine and the Connecticut Lakes region, in huge shipments of logs managed by log drivers, who “rode the logs” down the river, risking life and limb to make sure the logs kept moving, breaking up any log jams that occurred along the way. David Sumner, the river’s first log baron, had made a fortune moving logs downriver. He died in 1867, and his enterprises were small compared to the huge companies that dominated the lumber trade during the Gilded Age.

In David Sumner’s time, logs were floated all the way down the Connecticut River from the headwaters near the Canadian border to the mouth of the river into the Atlantic in Old Saybrook, Connecticut. By the late 1800’s, people in Springfield, Massachusetts and Hartford, Connecticut had more leisure time and more money. They enjoyed using the river for recreational boating, forcing lumber companies to process their logs further upriver. As a result, several lumber companies combined resources and started lumber mills in Holyoke and at Mount Tom in Northampton. In a logical sequence of events, these companies merged and became the Connecticut River Lumber Company in 1879.

The Connecticut River Lumber Company was the biggest lumber company that had been seen on the river. David Sumner’s goal in business was to support his family, and he managed to do that in very well, even building a mansion that stands to this day. Sumner’s fortune and his “mansion” were small potatoes compared to the fortunes that the CRL Co amassed in the late 1800’s. Business owners in the Gilded Age weren’t called “robber barons” for nothing. They let nothing stand in their way, and George Scott and Thomas Pearsall of CRL were no exception.

CRL was not, however, the only company driving logs on the river. The Turners Falls Lumber Company and the McIndoe Falls Lumber Company also floated their stock down the Connecticut. The season was too short for log drivers and their bosses to sit around and wait for other log companies to clear the water. When CRL tried to drive out their competition, they found the owner of the McIndoes Falls Company to be extremely stubborn and difficult. In a prime example of cutthroat competition, the story is that George Scott told one of his managers to “go back up there and kill him off”. Apparently the McIndoe Falls guy was too tough even to kill, so the next best thing was to hire him. In 1884, CRL’s general manager retired due to failing eyesight, and the company hired George Van Dyke to replace him.

George Van Dyke was born in 1846, in a log cabin in Quebec. He was the fifth of eight children. His family was poor, and he started working in a lumber camp in Maine at age 14 and by age 19 was managing a crew on the river. Although he did not have much formal education, George had a sharp business mind, a strong will, and a drive to make money fueled by his impoverished childhood. These attributes, with practical experience working with lumber and the powerful physical strength acquired through years of arduous



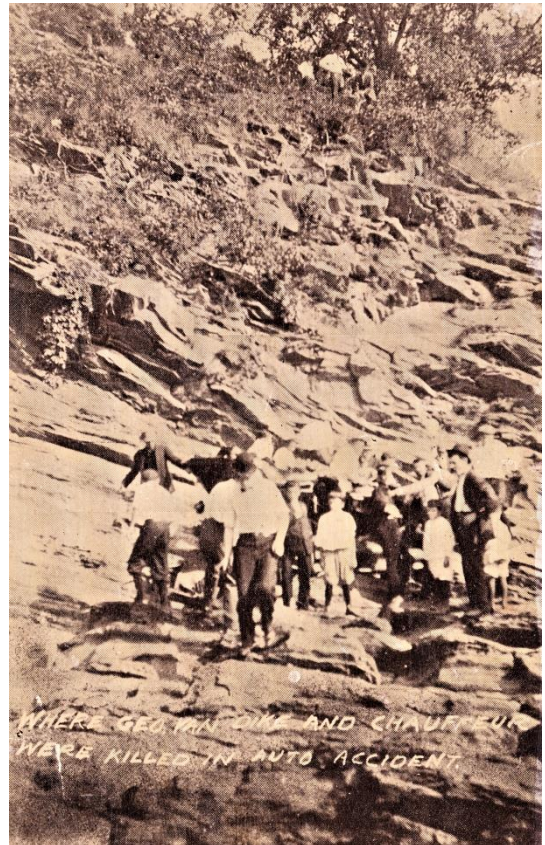
labor, combined to produce the most powerful and aggressive timber baron in New England history.

By 1870, George was working for himself, and bought several sawmills along the Connecticut River. Through business deals and hard work, and probably some underhandedness as well, he began amassing a fortune. Bill Gove, in his book “Log Drives on the Connecticut River” describes one of George’s first business deals. “In 1879, Van Dyke found himself unexpectedly in temporary possession of another sawmill on the river. He made a \$100 purchase of a timber lot in Hereford, Quebec and parlayed that into a cut of about a million feet of logs. (Translation: The adjoining landowners probably had some of their logs removed also.)” One gets the impression that this was typical of George Van Dyke, ruthless and not above a little extra-legal maneuvering, especially if he could get away with it.

It seems that things always worked that way for George Van Dyke during that decade. He took that million feet of logs and drove them to a sawmill in South Lancaster, New Hampshire, just as the mill went bankrupt and none of the sawmill crew would work. As the bank took ownership of the mill, George commandeered his own crew of drivers to operate the sawmill and cut up his logs. All this just when lumber prices had skyrocketed, leaving George with a profit of \$10,000 when everything was said and done.

In 1877, he and his partner Henry Merrill took over the sawmill at McIndoe Falls when that mill’s former owners went bankrupt. It wasn’t long before George bought out Henry’s part of the business and became sole owner. A few years after becoming general manager of the Connecticut River Lumber Company, he bought a part ownership of the company and became company president. In 1897, George paid George Scott and Pearsall \$1.5 million dollars and became sole owner of the company.

As the years went by, George recognized that it would be easier to cart supplies and equipment up and down the river by railroad rather than by water. Established railroad lines did not want to expand to the North Country, fearing there wouldn’t be enough business. Undaunted, George built the Upper Coos Railroad and the Upper Coos and Hereford Railroad, which extended all the way to Sherbrooke, Quebec. Although he still shipped his logs down the Connecticut River, he did build some railroad spurs east and west of the river, to access even more timber.



Post card shows “*Where Geo. Van Dyke and chauffeur were killed in auto accident.*”

Source unknown. e.g. archive

## George Van Dyke's Upper Valley Court Cases

By the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, George Van Dyke was the undisputed lumber king of the Connecticut River. Born into a huge impoverished family in Quebec, Van Dyke combined physical strength, sharp intelligence, and ruthless ambition to make sure he would never experience poverty as an adult. By taking advantage of good business deals, and creating good deals where they weren't any, he made a fortune shipping lumber down the Connecticut River, and used that fortune to gain control of the lumber business through the Connecticut River Lumber Company.

The Connecticut River Lumber Company ran lumber camps at the Connecticut Lakes in northern Vermont and New Hampshire. Lumbermen lived in these camps and cut down timber to move downriver when the spring thaw came. Some of these men were farmers who left their families after the fall harvest, worked for CVL in the winter and then went home for planting season. Some stayed on as log drivers. CVL hired 500-700 crew members at the start of the log drive season. Not all of these men were drivers. Some were support workers—cooks to feed the crew, men to drive and care for the horses, and even bookkeepers to keep track of transactions and handle payday.

The first part of the drive was easy until the logs got past Lancaster, New Hampshire and started down the Fifteen Mile Falls, a series of rapids that lasted about 20 miles. Milliken's Pitch and the Twenty-Seven Islands were the next hazardous spots. Once the logs were past these spots, about half of the crew were let go. Another group left after Woodsville, with the rest continuing until the end. At the southern end of the drive, more logs tended to get washed out of the water and beached on the banks of the river, requiring men to climb up the riverbanks, dig them out of the mud and return them to the water. For a more in depth look at life in the logging camps and on the river, read “Log Drives on the Connecticut River” by Bill Gove. It's a fascinating, detailed and well-written history of logging in northern New England.

CVL did have some impact on people in the Upper Valley. The arrival of the logs every year was a source of entertainment for the inhabitants of the river towns, where there was usually very little excitement. Townspeople could hear the booming and crashing of the logs before the main body of logs came through, and there were also a few logs that arrived ahead of the pack. Spectators flocked to the river to watch the show. The log drivers were a tough, flamboyant bunch, riding the logs, risking their lives to deliver the lumber down river. Their reputation and mystique rivaled that of the cowboys of the same era.

Many of these log drivers had spent all winter in the log camps, and were anxious to get off the river for a few days to experience civilization. When they went into the towns, the excitement was ratcheted up a few notches. Bill Gove describes a scene in Woodsville, when one of the log drivers, Ed Smith, was walking drunkenly down a sidewalk when he spotted a blonde girl inside a store window with nothing on but her stockings. He drove through the showcase window and grabbed her, only to discover that she was a naked mannequin.

George Van Dyke and CVL were involved in several lawsuits in the Upper Valley. In 1891, George brought a suit against the Olcott Falls Company of Olcott Falls. The

Olcott Falls Company, also called White River Paper or the Wilder Brothers Mill, was a papermill on the Connecticut River. The mill produced primarily newsprint paper. At its height, the mill ran 24 hours a day, producing 45 tons of wet pulp and using nearly 300 cords of timber a day. Of course, the mill operated on water power provided by the Connecticut River.

Mills that operated by water power diverted the water to turn their water wheels. When the logs arrived at the site of a mill, a conflict ensued between the lumber companies and the mills, if the water flow available in the river channel was insufficient to float the logs. Mills could shut down production and return the water to the river channel for long enough to float the logs by, or the mill managers could refuse to cooperate with the log companies. If the shutdown was going to take a few hours, usually the mills would comply.

The problem was that sometimes the log drives could take days or weeks, especially if there was a log jam. Companies like Olcott Falls employed huge numbers of workers around the clock, and were responsible for producing orders of newspaper print for newspapers from big cities. If production had to be shut down for any length of time, the workers would be without pay and orders of paper would be unfulfilled.

In 1880, the Olcott Falls mill was sold to Herbert and Charles Wilder, of Boston. Charles moved north to personally supervise the expansion of the mill on the Connecticut River. At the year later, when the log drive came through, the mill operators, probably at the direction of Charles Wilder, refused to shut down to let the logs go through. As a result, George took the Olcott Falls Company to court to try to force them to let the logs go down.

The verdict in the case Connecticut River Lumber v Olcott Falls Co was that the paper mill had to allow the logs to pass by, no matter what. The decision of the court was crystal clear. "The canal gate must be open and the demand of the second lumberman is complied with, whether the number of his logs is ten or ten million, whether their passage stops the mill for an hour or a month, and whether the number of mill operators is one or one thousand, the lumberman is entitled to a free way as good as he would have had if no dam had been built." This ruling was entirely based on the act of incorporation for the Olcott Falls Company in 1807, in which there was a proviso that specifically stated that lumber companies would have the right to freely float logs down the river, forever.

A court case that George lost involved the destruction of the Windsor Railroad Bridge in 1897. In June, the logs were coming down the river just as a heavy rainstorm caused the river to rise with a rushing current. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, a log jam of twelve million board feet covered an area of about six acres around a railroad bridge owned by the Boston and Maine Railroad. It destroyed a pier, and the portion of the bridge supported by that pier. The railroad company sued Connecticut River Lumber, claiming that the company was negligent during the log drive. Although this was inaccurate, the court still ruled that the company was liable for the damage to the river, to the tune of \$50,000. The logs involved in this particular log jam were owned by the Connecticut River Manufacturing Company, a subsidiary of CRL, but not specifically CVL. George tried to quickly dissolve that

corporation during the trial, but that ploy was unsuccessful, and in the end, CRL had to pay the railroad company the whole \$50,000.

From the [Turners Falls Reporter](#)

[June 20, 1906](#)

-Some two million logs are here. The booms were rotten. New booms, Delay. Boatmen mad. The officers of the law are being brought into line. Court case. Logs will lay a week while rivermen get ready.

July 4

[The Log Blockade at Turners](#)

It is possible that to the officials of the Connecticut Valley Lumber Company, the protest of the boatmen of Turners Falls against the blocking of the river by logs, appears a very trivial and unpractical thing. They perhaps may value a river by merely commercial standards, computed according to value logs rafted down, as compared with the value of the boats that ply its waters. As their logs are worth more dollars than any pleasure craft at Turners Falls, perhaps they think the logging business should have the larger consideration.

The possession of a beautiful stretch of river at its very back door is a boon for Turners Falls of countless value in more ways than dollars. It means a never ending source of recreation, and it may have a commercial value, too, in making the town more attractive for residence. It is no small thing, in the sight of the summer season, when a boat ride up the river brings the cooling and the healing of nature to tired men and women, that this means of refreshment should be cut off for weeks by the obstruction of logs, which we are led to believe is much longer than is necessary. — [Greenfield Gazette](#).

-So far the boats on the river have seen little use. The high water all spring kept them in dock, and now the logs stop the fun. It is said too that as playthings little launches soon lose the charm of novelty.

November 14

[The Indictment of the Lumber Company](#)

Judge Fessenden of the Superior Court gave a hearing Saturday on the motion of Brooks & Hamilton, counsel for the Connecticut Valley Lumber Company, to quash the indictment found against the company by the Grand Jury last July for maintaining a nuisance on the Connecticut river at Turners Falls by allowing its logs to obstruct navigation and the ferries. It was contended that the company was a foreign corporation, being chartered under the laws of Connecticut, and as such could not be indicted in this state. Judge Fessenden ruled that a foreign corporation doing business in this state may be indicted.

It was contended that the Connecticut river was not a navigable stream. District Attorney Irwin claimed that the river is a highway for the people, and any obstruction of it is a nuisance, and also that the lumber company had used it as a navigable stream by



floating logs and sailing boats in it for 30 years. At the suggestion of Judge Fessenden the question was again presented to the grand jury in an amended form.

June 19, 1907

**License Granted by the Land and Harbor Commission to Allow the Stringing of Booms**

1. The license shall authorize the said company to maintain said booms for the period of one year from the date of this license.

2. A sluice for the conducting of logs over the dam at Turners Falls shall be installed and ready for use before any logs are floated or driven to said Turners Falls.

3. The aforesaid booms shall be constructed and hung in proper places before any logs are floated or driven below Bellows Falls on said river.

4. Excepting as hereinafter provided, said booms shall not be closed and the said Connecticut river shall at all times be kept open to the navigation of boats therein.

5. An adequate crew or crews of men shall, from and after the first arrival of logs at "The Narrows," so called, in said Turners Falls, be employed by said company to drive the logs down the river over the dam, and the river at that point kept open to navigation.

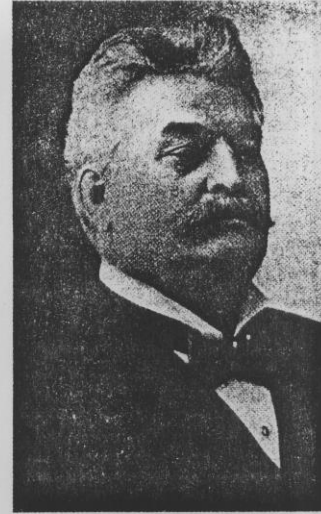
6. Said booms shall not at any time be closed or drawn together by the said company so as to impede the navigation of the river by boats, except in the event in the sudden rise in the river, or such other unforeseen emergency as said company may not be able to control, and then only when in the opinion of Hon. Charles W. Hazelton, of said Turners Falls, the situation and conditions on the river are such that the safety of property, or the rights of the persons or parties concerned, require that some or all of said booms shall be closed; and when so closed the said company shall forthwith open the said booms whenever the said Hazelton directs so to do. The opinion of said Hazelton as to when the booms may be closed and his directions as to when they may be opened, he may convey to the company through any of its officers or agents, either verbally or in writing, as he may elect.

7. The said company shall make such arrangements as may be satisfactory to the selectmen of the several towns in Franklin County wherein ferries are operated in, on or over said Connecticut river as a highway, relative to the operating of such ferries in said towns, during the periods of time that the company's logs are floating in said river, copies of which agreements shall be filed with the board.

8. This license may be modified or revoked by the board after notice and hearing, and said company shall comply with the terms of such revoking or modifying order as the board may issue, at said company's expense, and shall receive no compensation thereafter.

June 24, 1908

-The annual log drive of the Connecticut Valley Lumber Company is expected to show up in a few days. The hearing in Boston last week before the Harbor and Land Commission on the right of the lumber company to maintain booms in the river was attended by C.W. Hazelton and K. McCKnickerbocker. The company gave assurances that the conditions for the boatmen on the river would be better than last year. Mr. McCKnickerbocker strenuously objected to the granting of a five year lease. It is hard to keep the logmen on their good behavior year by year.



COURTESY OF ROBERT E. PIKE

### Out of the Attic

The scene of a tragedy always attracts the onlooker, the curious, even the morbid trophy hunter. The photo on the left depicts the remains of a fatal car accident and its accompanying throng of spectators.

The owner of the car was George Van Dyke, pictured at right. Born in a log cabin in Stanbridge, Quebec, in 1846, Van Dyke worked his way up from riverman to become the best-known and wealthiest timber baron in New England. Van Dyke was a legend, a great hulk of a man with a booming voice and a size-19½ collar.

On a Sunday morning in the summer of 1909, George Van Dyke and Fred "Shorty" Hodgdon, his chauffeur, drove out to inspect the biggest log drive ever to float down the Connecticut River. Near Turners Fall, Massachusetts, they parked their red 1908 Stevens-Duryea at the edge of a 75-foot cliff to watch rivermen sluicing Van Dyke's timber through a dam. After two hours the men were ready to leave, and they got back into the car. When Hodgdon started the car, it jumped over the bank, crashing to the rocks below. Apparently Van Dyke had time to leap from the car when it started forward, but he landed so near the edge of the precipice that he fell after the car. Both men died later that day. Before he died, Van Dyke said, "Don't blame Shorty."

Our thanks to Irmair Jones of Greenfield, Massachusetts, for sending the old photo of the wreck. Jones is a reporter on the *Greenfield Recorder-Gazette*, a daily newspaper whose predecessor, *The Recorder*, published the story of the Van Dyke accident on August 11, 1909.

S.R.S.

COUNTRY JOURNAL will print old photographs from our readers' attics. We will pay \$50 for any picture we use. Pictures should be postcard size (3½ x 5½ inches) or larger. Send them to COUNTRY JOURNAL, Out of the Attic, Box 870, Manchester Center, Vermont 05255. We will return all photographs, so please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Although we cannot assume responsibility for loss or damage, all photographs will be treated with care while they are in our possession.

/ JUNE 1986

This account appears in June of 1986 via The Country Journal.  
Article text block transcription follows . . .

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1908 Stevens Duryea

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