

THE VIC OAK



Another wagon of timber, collected from the foot of the incline pauses for Mr Godber's camera along the Karekare Road in the summer of 1914.

— Alexander Turnbull Library

- Rubicon - not Vic Oak VO had wooden rails

SAWMILL PRO.

FORWORD

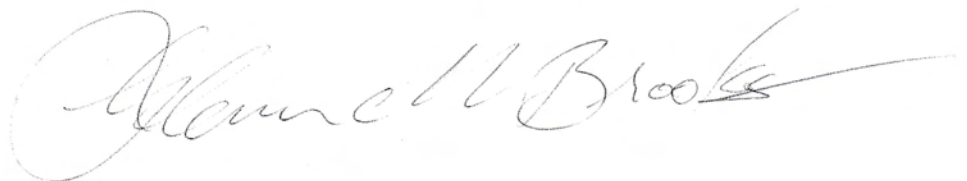
In introducing the following material on the history and potential reproduction of the Vic Oak sawmill I have concentrated on explaining and catching the spirit of the timber milling activities in the Marysville valley around the turn of the century as far as my knowledge takes it. I have not included much of the actual history or finer details of the milling activities of that era but have mainly tried to catch the potential that the Vic Oak mill site and surroundings hold in being set up again as it once was to catch the prototype picture of the early sawmilling days and retain some of Marysvilles unique history and pride to the edification of those who visit it.

I have included plans, drawings and photographs that will help in producing more clearly a picture of its potential with suggestions in many things that might aid its overall character.

I have included a personal supplement to express my desire and interest I have in the early timber milling industry accounting for my enthusiasm toward the reality of the project.

Also in the supplement I have expressed my personal achievements, talents and abilities that I have attained through experience in my life that might be of some help through my participation in the project.

It is my sincere hope that this project may be an instrument and encouragement of ideas in bringing to pass a small touch of Marysvilles unique timber milling history.

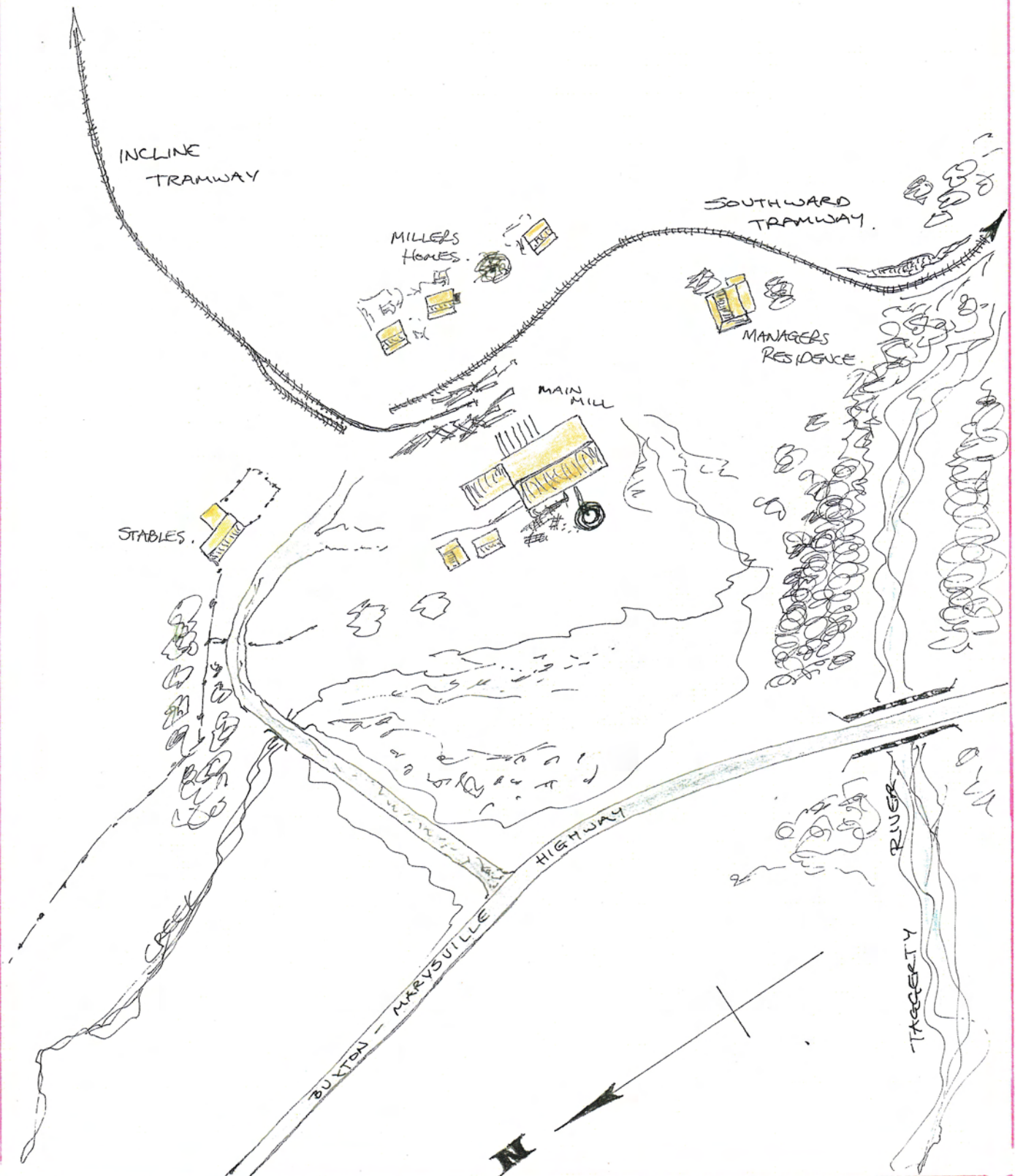
A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Glenn M. Brooks". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

GLENN M. BROOKS

June, 1978

THE VIC OAK

SAW MILL



THE VIC OAK SAWMILL

THE SAWMILL LOCATION

What still lives at the Vic Oak sawmill is the original site with the surroundings of its forested hills. The remains of the buildings that still exist there play an important role of giving a little idea of what the early mill complex may have looked like and an idea of its original locality. The old mill that is there now, is not the original but lends character to the similitude that the old one may have held.

The very locality of the Vic Oak lends itself to potential reproduction. Being right in the Marysville valley next to the Taggerty river and holding still most of its forested locality, it sets the scene of what it may have held sixty years ago. The right arm branch of the tramway following the river also holds its forgotten remains of buried sleepers and overgrown passage through the bush.

The site is perfect to catch a true piece of Marysville's sawmilling heyday.



PHOTO 1: LOOKING NORTH. A VIEW OF THE REMAINS OF THE MAIN MILL BUILDING.

THE MILL

I do not have too much evidence or information as to the nature of the original main Vic Oak mill building as it once stood early this century. The essence of the idea to restore its character does not need to come through exact reproduction but rather recreate as near as possible that which once stood. By having the mill displayed much like it once was will give, I feel, a portrayal of the earlier timber days in Marysville. (See photos 3 & 4).

The original main mill building was about 60 feet by 40 feet with an extension for the steam engine and boiler of about 20 feet by 15 feet to one end of the main building. A blacksmith shop was also located here. Basically the mill operated a breaking down, rip and docking saws, all driven by a sixteen horse power portable steam engine bolted to large log bearers. There exists a similar steam engine in the Rubicon Forest. The boiler and steam piston to fly wheel being separate but still in good condition and should still be there today as I saw it 18 months ago. It was used as a winch for the tramways. Also there is the original boiler used to drive the same mill in the Rubicon forest which is still there (see photo No.5) and could be used if it were pulled out of the bush and restored as a replica engine in the Vic Oak mill. The saw-dust burner for the mill was a Pickering chimney. Off cuts from the mill were put through the docking saw and sold to the local guest houses in one to two foot lengths. The rest were used as fuel to feed the boiler.

Whether the original building had a gable roof pitch or a sloping pitch as the existing building has now I know not. However I feel the gable roof would lend more to the character of the mill and so might hand split wooden shingles or pailings compared to corrugated iron. The material for the roof would be an item of consideration as more information is gathered about the original mill.

The prototype of the replica Vic Oak sawmill with new logs and the whole building reconstructed to the original having the complete rebuilding of the interior with saws, belts, pulleys, trolleys, steam engine, blacksmith and miscellaneous would certainly restore a wonderful piece of history that might otherwise be lost. The machinery need not function but be on display to give a complete over all view of its roleplay.

Photo 2 : LOOKING NORTH EAST FROM MANAGERS RESIDENCE



THE MAIN MILL BUILDING

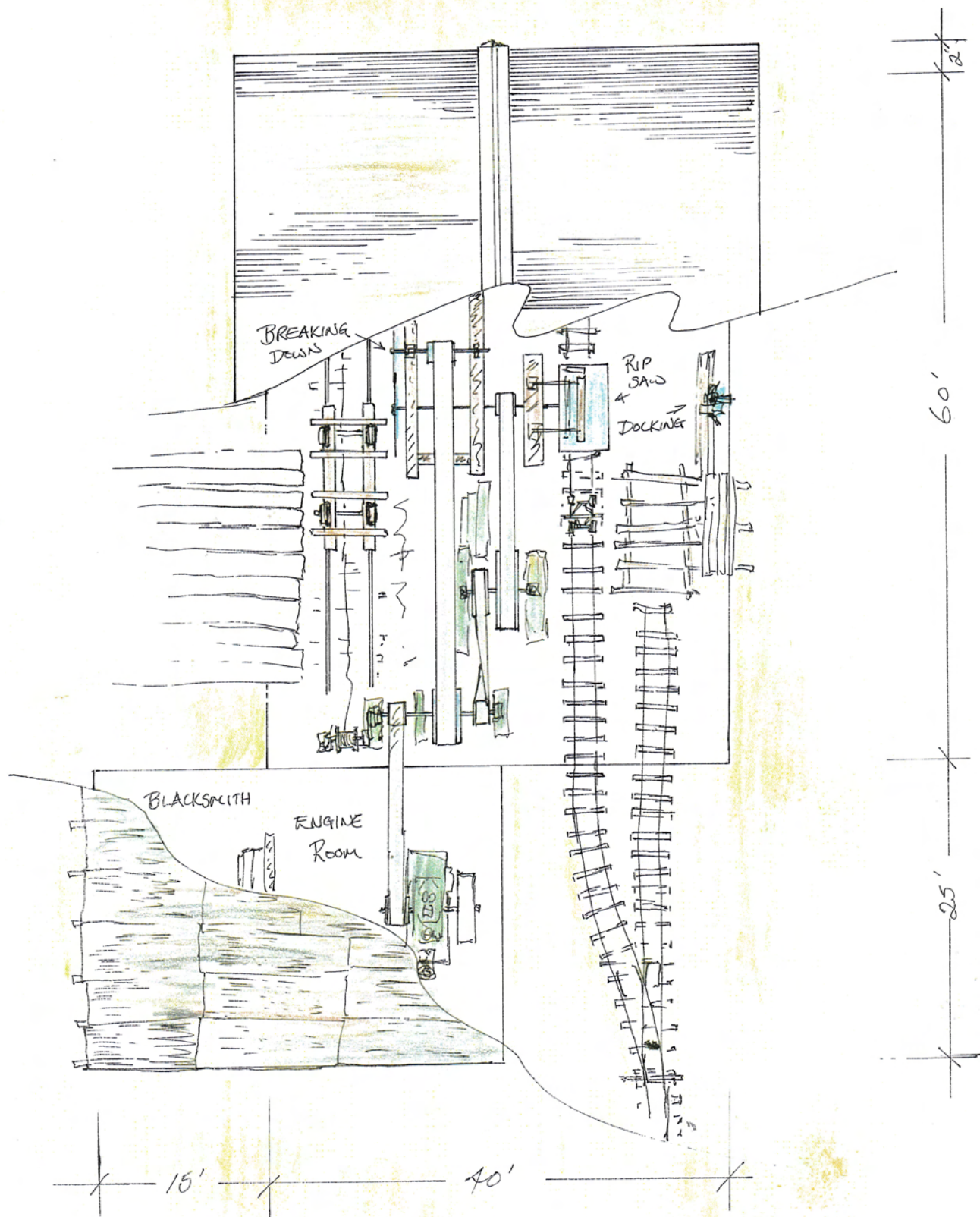
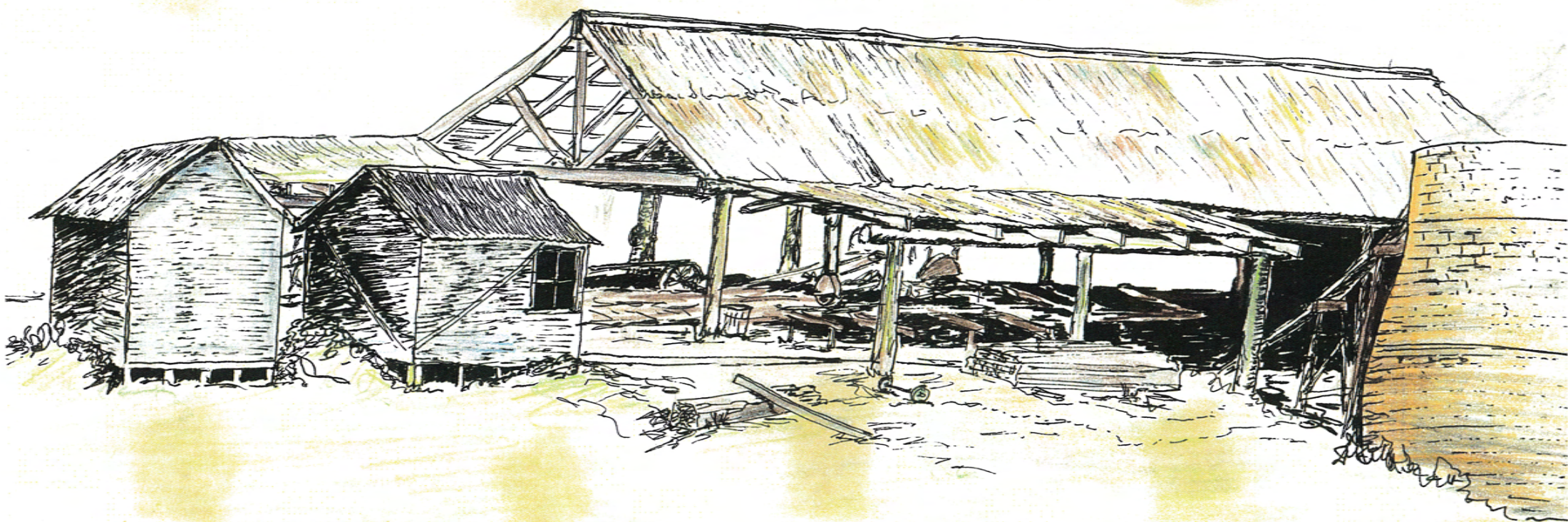


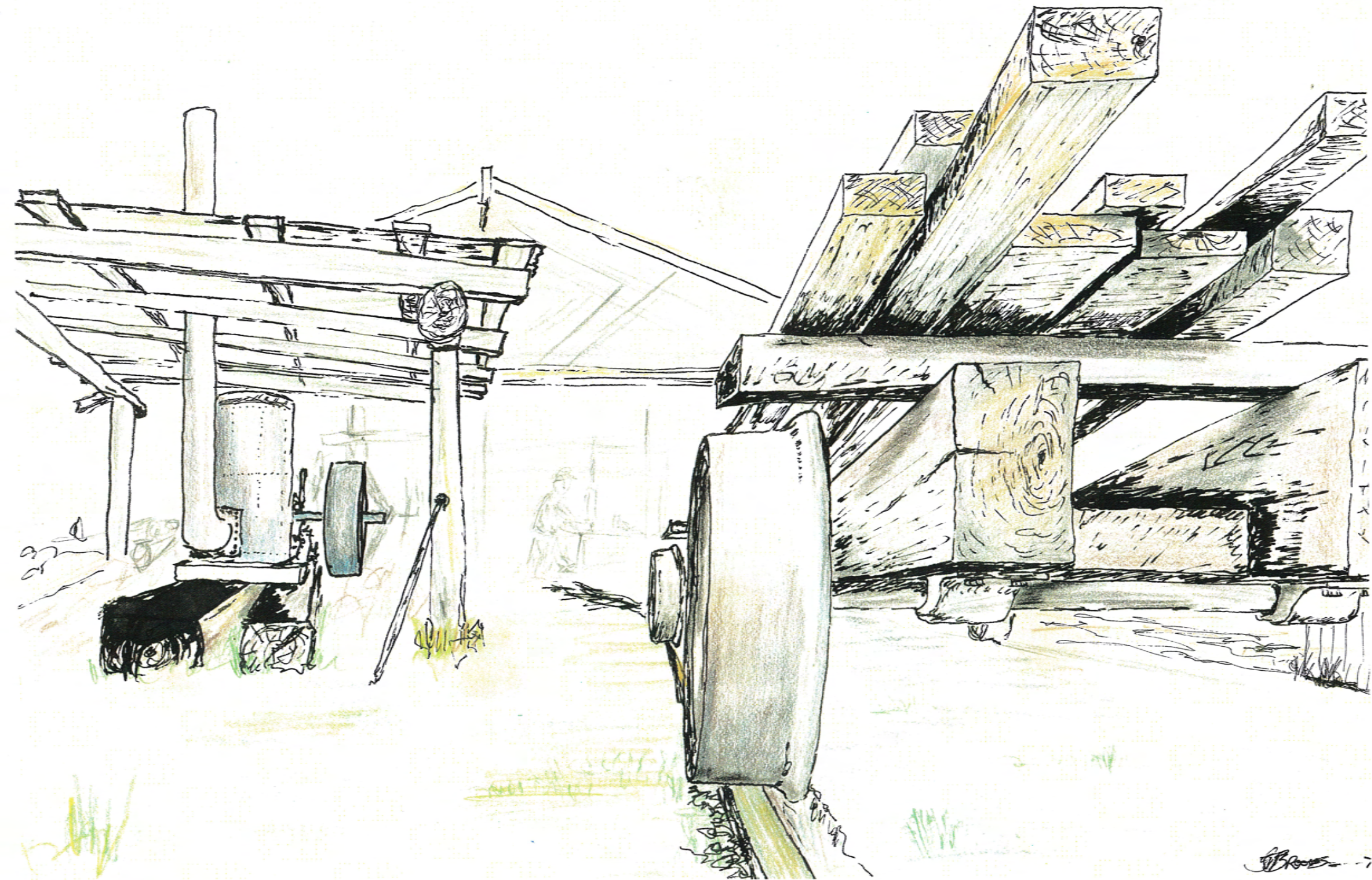
PHOTO 3: THE EXISTING MAIN MILL BUILDING.

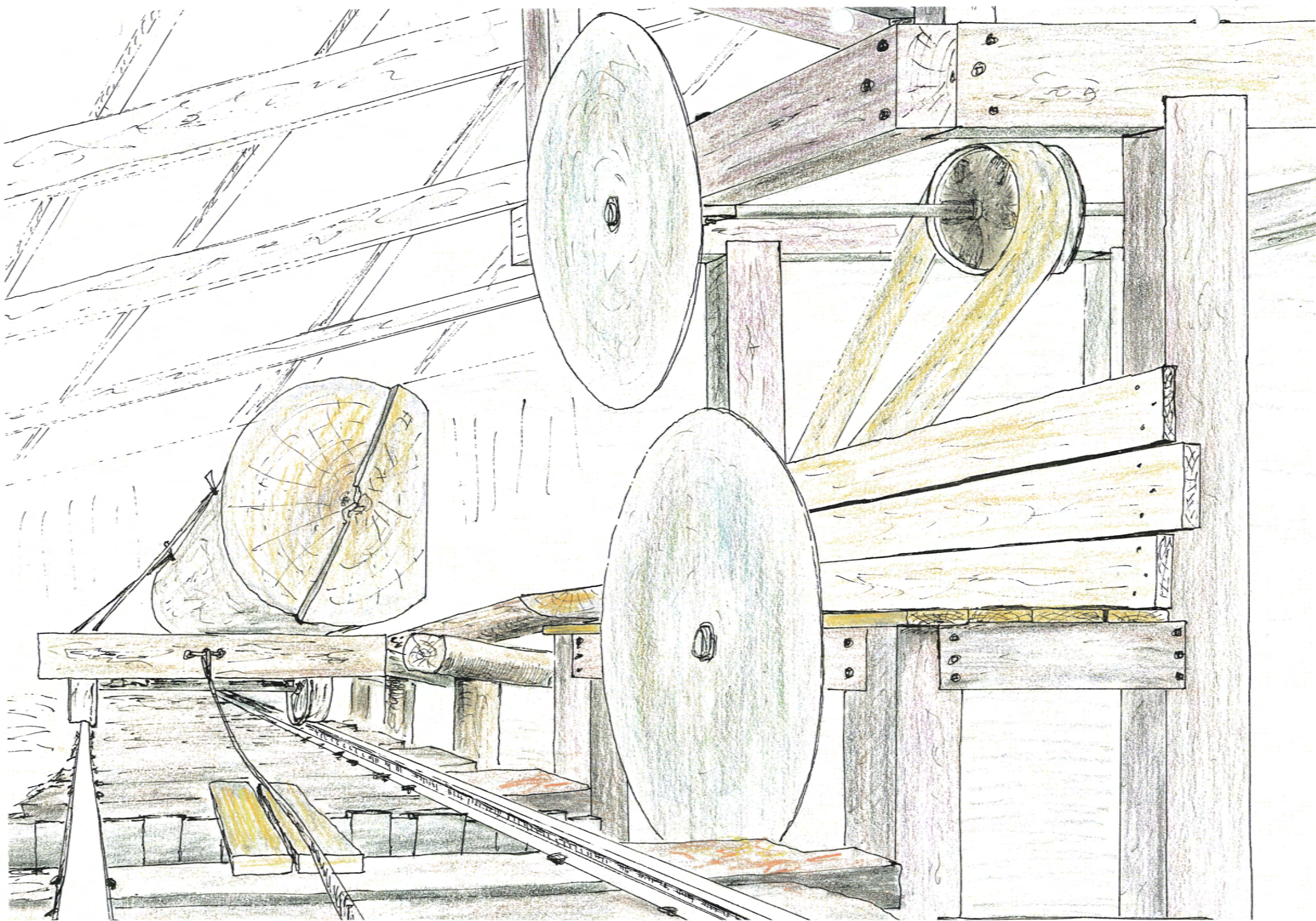


PHOTO 4: THE MAIN MILL LOOKING SOUTH WEST.









THE OTHER BUILDINGS

Along with the main mill building itself are all other subsidiary buildings that added to the operation and function of the sawmillers output of timber. Some of these buildings remain at the Vic Oak, namely 2 sheds, one maybe an office the other a store shed and the managers house. (see photos No. 6 & 7). Even though they would have to be reconstructed they are valuable in telling a little of what once was there and what can be rebuilt to catch the early sawmillers scene.

MANAGERS RESIDENCE

The remains of the manager's house is still evident. How old it is or whether it was the original to the Vic Oak I don't know but its reproduction could be used as a good example of the managers living quarters. It could be reconstructed to almost the same, interior as well with appropriate artifacts to enhance its original existence. An idea of the interior can be seen in photo No. 8 with the rough cut sawn timber lining.

MILLERS HOMES

Scattered around the mill area were the mill hand quarters. Knowledge of the existence of some of these buildings is known to have been located east of the mill (see main map plan) up the hill a short distance from the tramway. I do not have any evidence at the moment of the nature or dimensions of these buildings. If only a small amount of information can be gathered on their original design and substance then other material can be used as well, such as photographs and plans of other old mill huts around the same era as the Vic Oak to catch as near as possible what they once were like.

Basically the millers' huts were about 30 feet by 16 feet with sometimes a lean to extension off the back. A good sized home would have contained 2 bedrooms, a living area and kitchen. These huts were usually constructed of rough cut timber and split ~~pa~~llings depending on the time corrugated iron was used for roof and chimney.

Millers Homes (Cont.)

Included in the Vic Oak reproduction of these buildings could also be their interior detailing complete with homely artifacts used by the miller of that time. Also outside in the backyard one would find such things as water tank, wood heap and chopping block, toilet, clothes line, chicken pen, a few fruit trees and a small garden.

THE STABLES

The stables were an important part of the Vic Oak function. The stable buildings were located north east of the mill (see main map plan). Its construction would have consisted of logs and possibly hand split pailings or rough cut sawn timber. The roof with shingles or corrugated iron. An interesting scene would be captured with the stable, corral, harness and miscellaneous items that are appropriate. Perhaps even a horse or two.

There were most likely other buildings located around the mill complex that I have not included so far. These can be taken into consideration when looking at the finer details of the project.

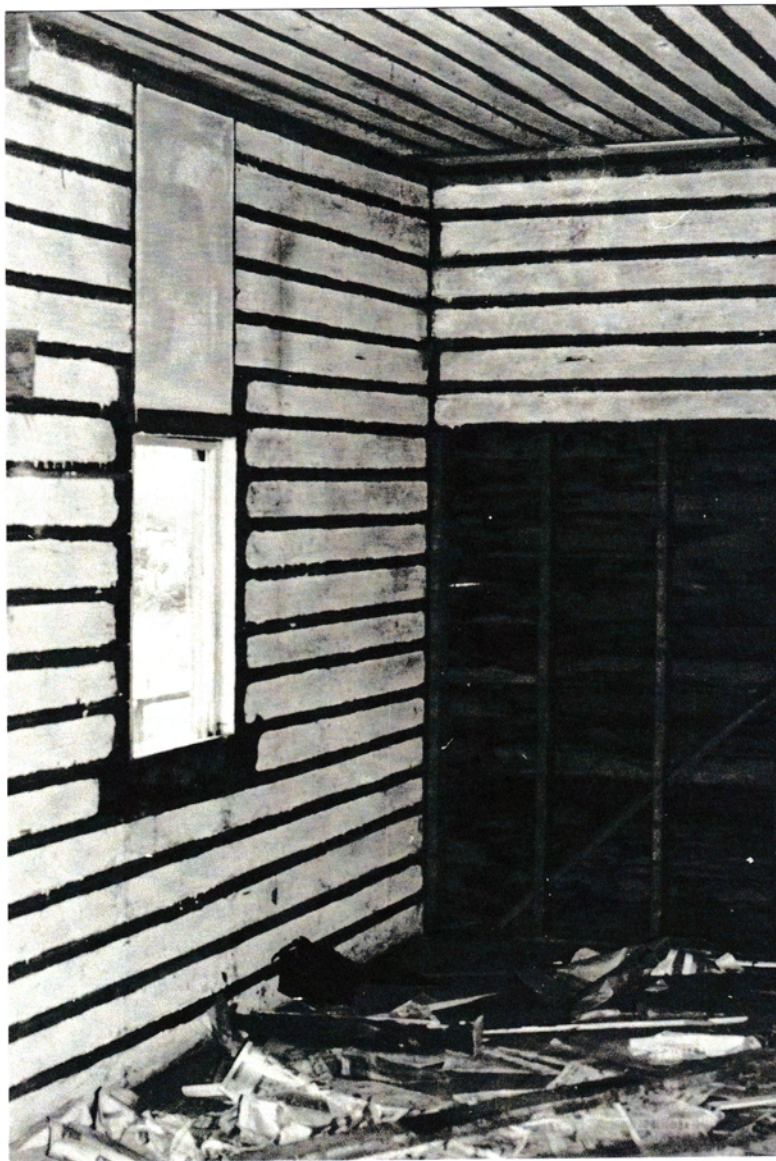


PHOTO 5:
THE OLD
STEAM ENGINE
STILL IN THE
RUBICON FOREST.

Managers

Residence

No iii/ THE INTERIOR OF
THE MILLER'S HOME;
ROUGH CUT SAWN TIMBER
COVERED WITH HESSIAN
AND WHITE WASH.



No iv/
THE MANAGERS
RESIDENCE.
LOOKING SOUTH.

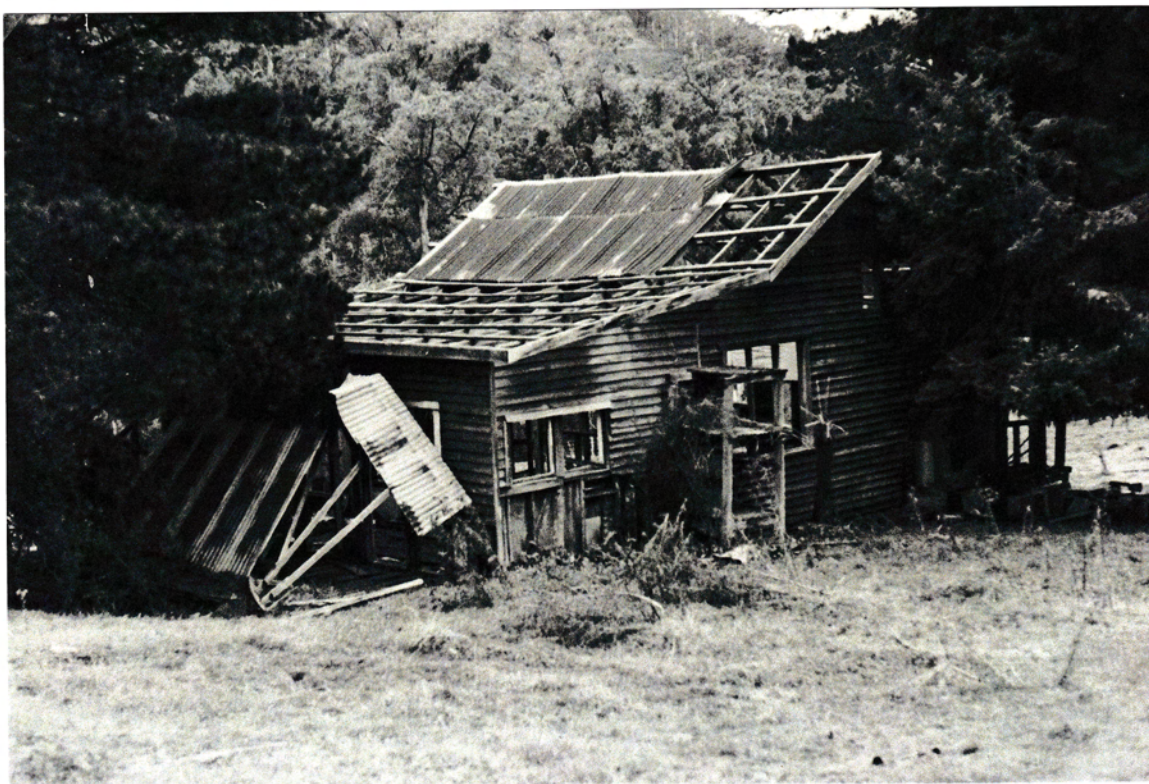
Managers

Residence

PHOTO 6 i) THE MANAGERS RESIDENCE
CLOSE UP LOOKING SOUTH.



ii) A BACK VIEW OF THE MANAGERS
HOME.



Other Buildings

Photo 7: i, AN EXISTING BUILDING
NEAR THE MAIN MILL

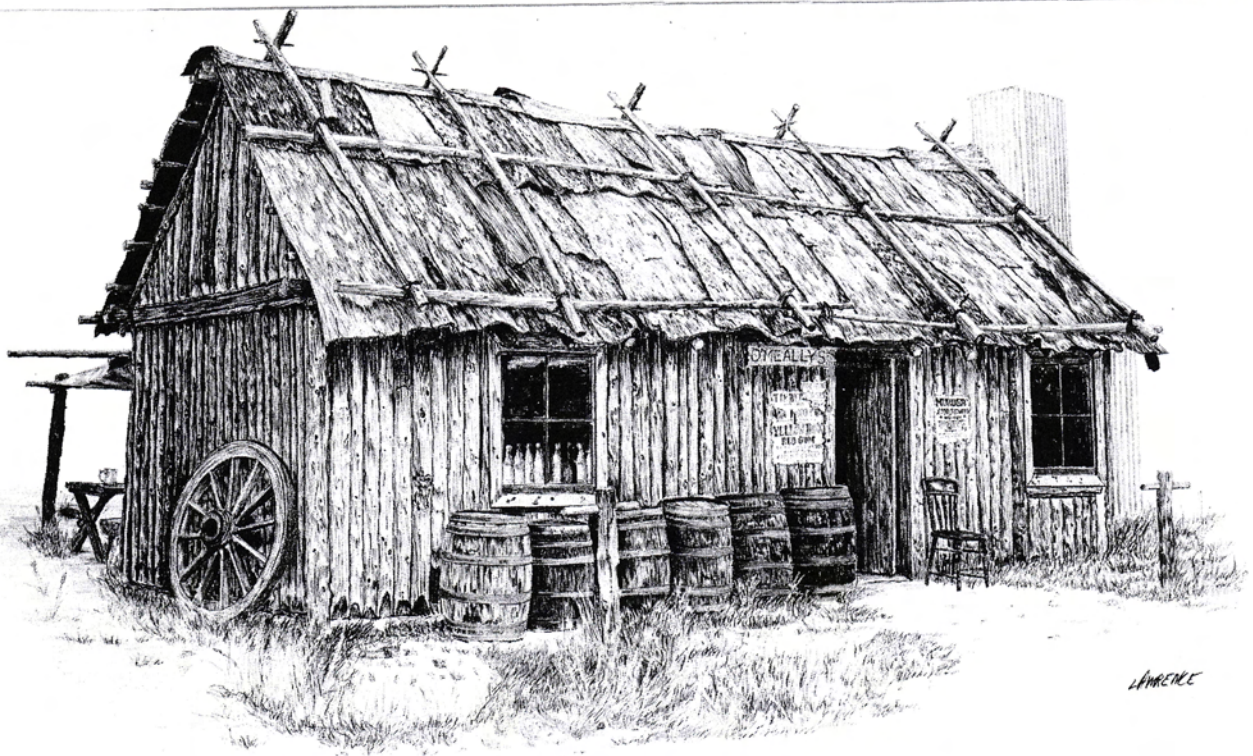


ii, LOOKING SOUTHWARD AT SOME OLD
EXISTING BUILDINGS. BRICK BURNER CAN ALSO
BE SEEN.





AN EXAMPLE OF AN EARLY AUSTRALIA BUSH
HUT THAT COULD BE USED ON THE VIC OAK.



O'Meally's Shamtry

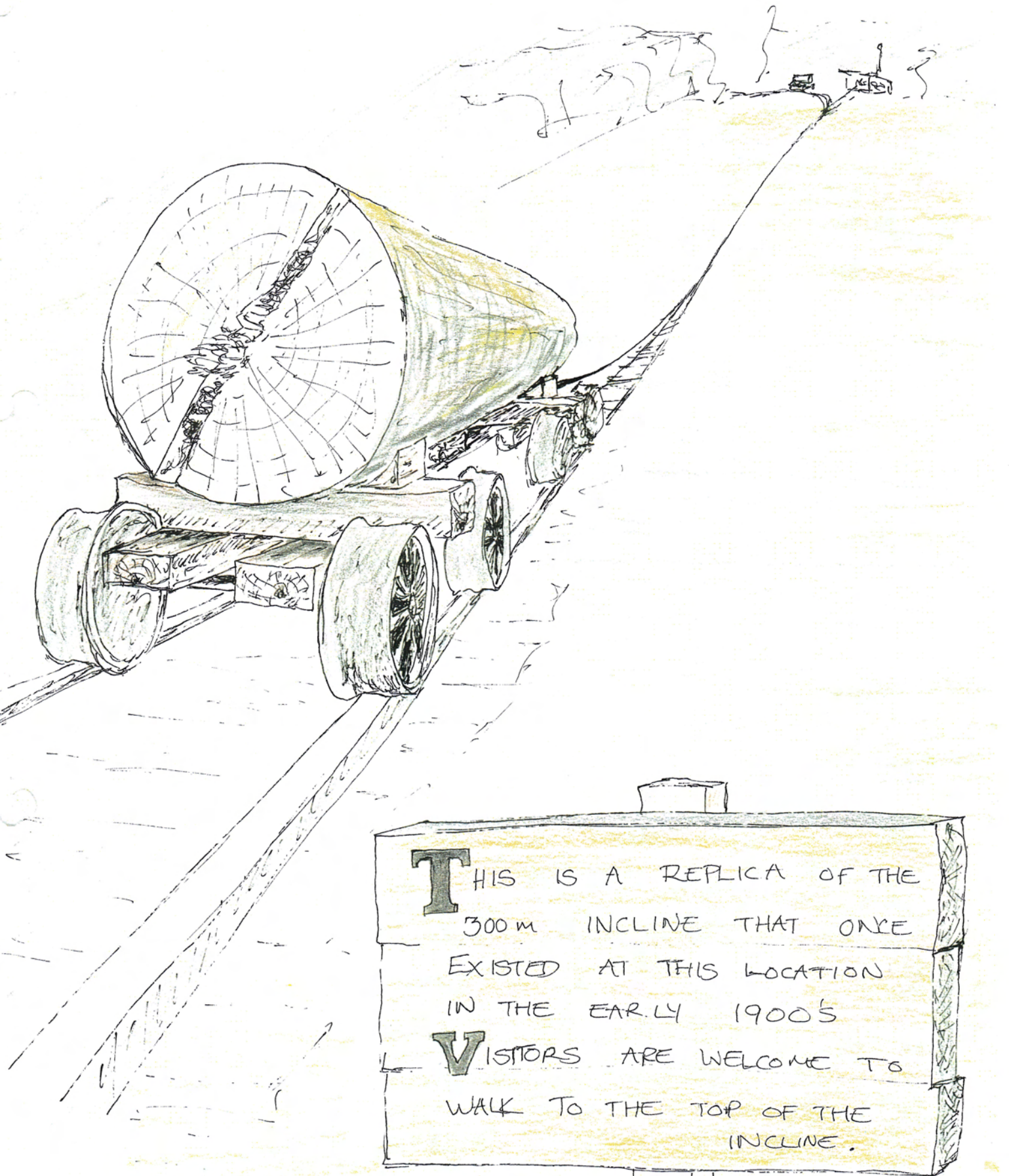
THE TRAMWAYS

The tramways played one of the most important roles in the function of the early sawmills. The Vic Oak had two main tramways. One was an incline east of the mill operated mainly by winch and cable decending logs loaded on boggies down the hill. There was probably an extension of this tramway at the top of the incline which travelled around the side of the mountain with a horse team. The other one went south and then followed the Taggerty river to wherever good timber was found. This tramway, to my knowledge was operated by horse. The Vic Oak stables supported about 8 horses to haul timber out of the bush.

The rebuilding of the tramways would truely restore a beautiful piece of history. Whether both were to be rebuilt and one were to function is a matter of consideration but as a note of suggestion and in the light of capturing as near as possible the original Vic Oak scene I have outlined each tramway separately with ideas for each. These can be discussed and modified according to more detailed consideration.

THE INCLINE TRAMWAY

The tramway going up the hill east of the mill. This could be set up so as not to function but to give an idea of how an incline operated. Most probably the original was constructed of wooden rails nailed onto sleepers as was the general case with the early tramways. Later steel rail was often used. In rebuilding this incline wooden rail could be used extending from the mill area up the hill to a point where the winch was located or thereabouts. At this point a shed could be built having a roof and perhaps one wall containing a small steam engine and winch, (often referred to as a "donkey engine") where those who enthusiastically desire to climb the incline on foot can have a look at the cable drawn and winch set up. From the winch a cable would extend down the hill laying along in the centre of the incline tramway track to a point where the ground levels out and connected to a set of boggies loaded with a large log. The boggies would have to be fixed to the rails so no danger of accident would occur. This overall scene would give a very good effect and capture how the loggers decended timber to the mill on an incline.



THIS IS A REPLICA OF THE
300 m INCLINE THAT ONCE
EXISTED AT THIS LOCATION
IN THE EARLY 1900'S

VISITORS ARE WELCOME TO
WALK TO THE TOP OF THE
INCLINE.

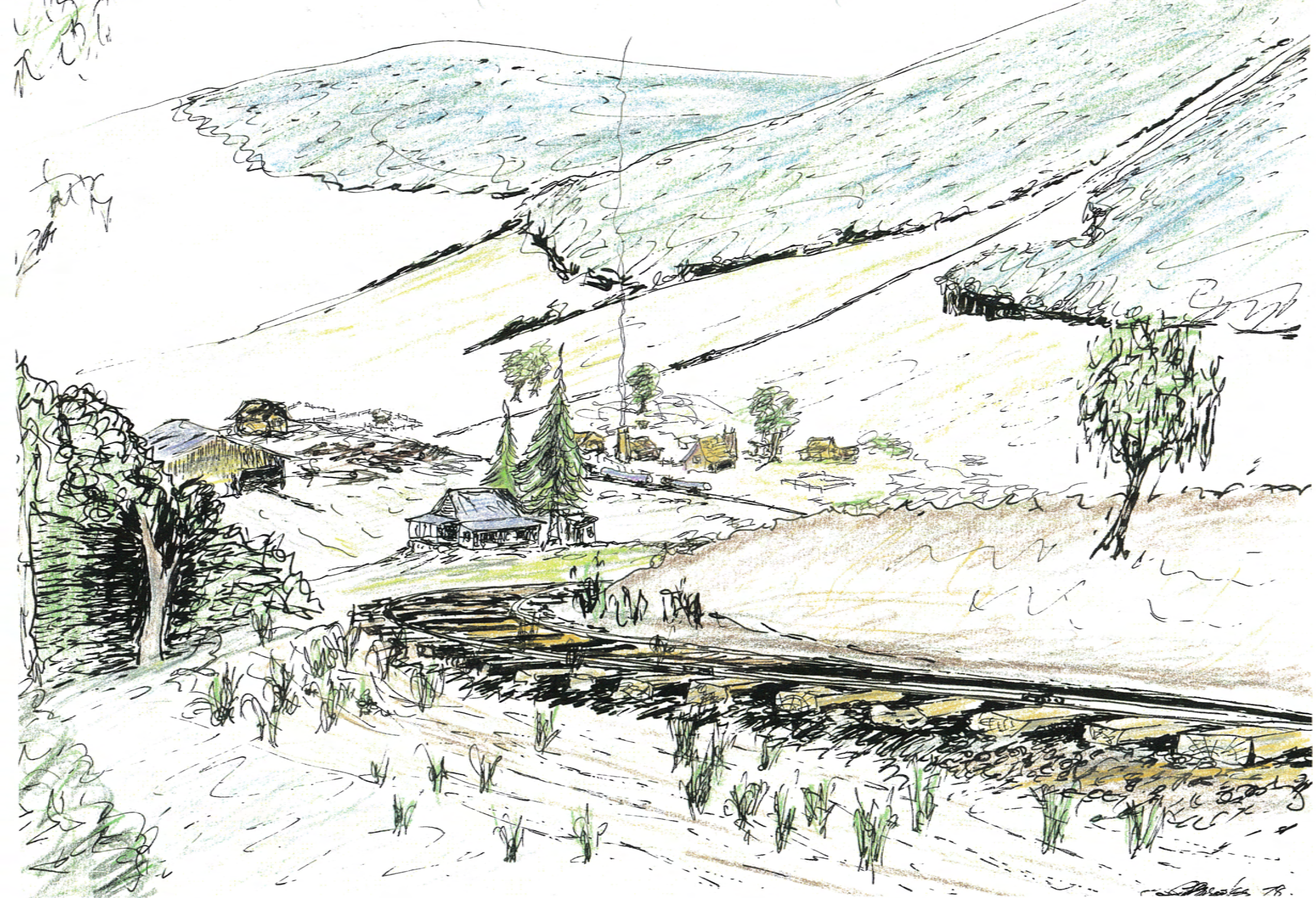
THE SOUTHWARD TRAMWAY

The tramway going south and then following the Taggerty river. The route of this tramline is ideal in being rebuilt to follow its original tracks through the bush. It could be made to function either by horse or tractor engine. Although the original would most probably have been constructed of wooden and steel rail combined, its reproduction would be better suited to steel rail (for reasons see appendix). The tramway could travel, starting from the log dump at the mill, south following its original path going behind the managers residence on a slight incline around the side of the hill into the bush and then following the Taggerty river for a distance. If it were to function a beautiful scene of tramway heyday could be captured along its path. As it travelled along the river in the virgin bush complete with the eucalyptus fragrance, tall trees, ferns, wildlife and mountain air it may cross a trestle bridge or two, pass a scene of simulated logging activity, continue along its path to a point of new logging activity. Here the horse drawn boggies or tractor engine would be turned while those who have endeavoured the pleasant journey could have a look around. At this point a scene of interest, education and early logging livelihood could be captured. Simulated prototype reproduction would be seen in the log loading ramp with a number of logs ready for loading, a loggers hut made of split pailings and shingles with an old stove and different items inside, a piece of ground showing stacks of split pailings and shingles and maybe a few tools showing how they did hand splitting, an area used for barking logs, a shed with steam engine and cable used to drag the logs to the site, a workers camp fire with billy and camp ovens. Also another loggers hut could be located nearby with information inside on different aspects of the loggers world for example a display of photographs or actual samples of the different variety of trees cut for timber.

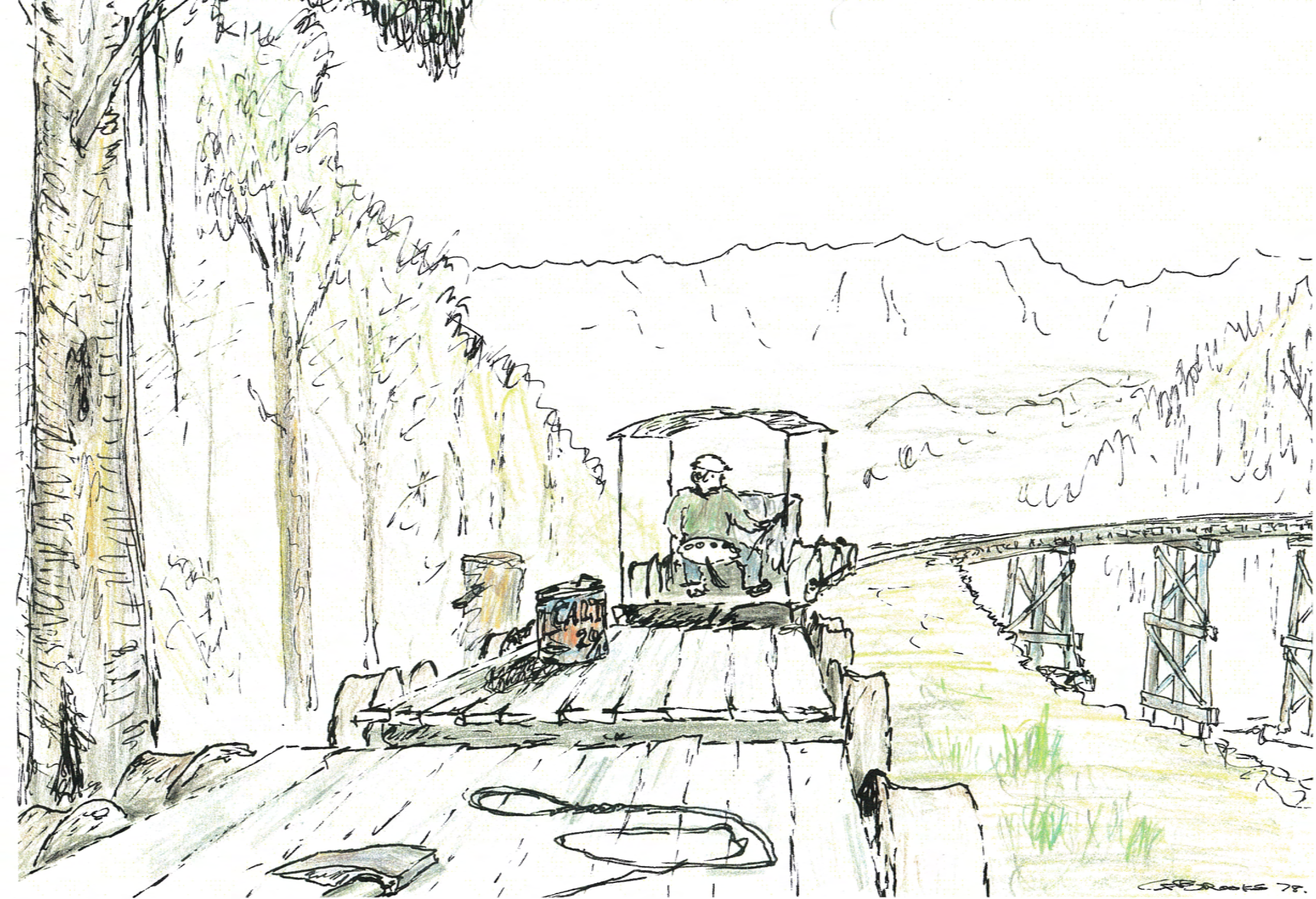
SUMMARY

I have briefly gone over the main aspects of the Vic Oak mill and tried to catch what the visitor might see as he views its resurrected state. Sharpness of originality is not full but if what I have discussed were to be built to catch the desired effect it would certainly bring to light for many people a bit of faint history on the early timber milling industry.

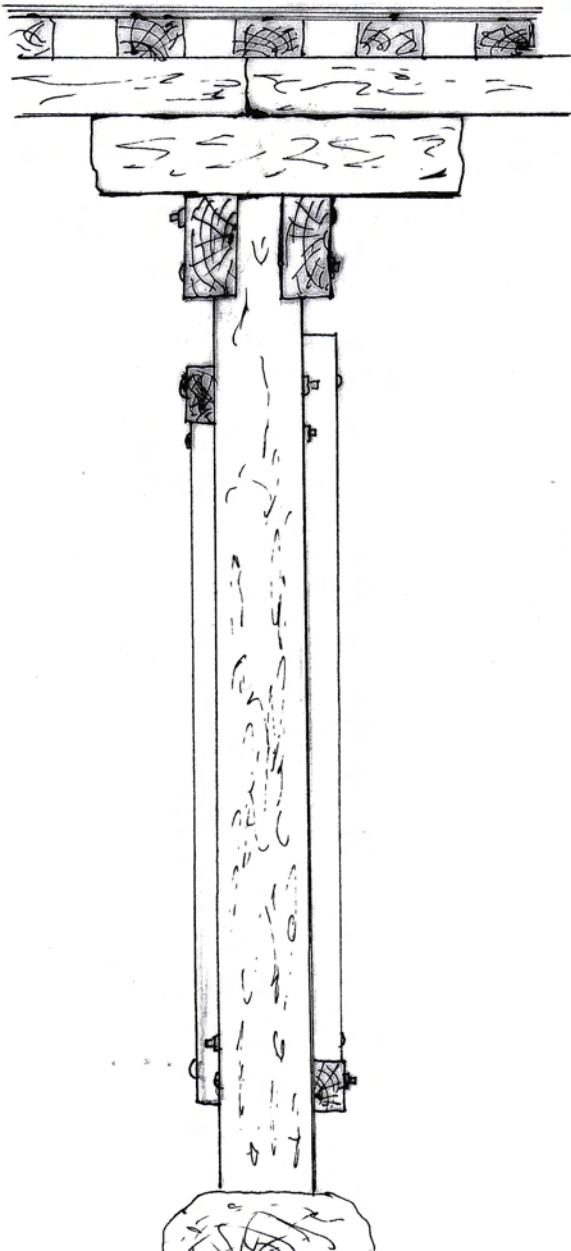




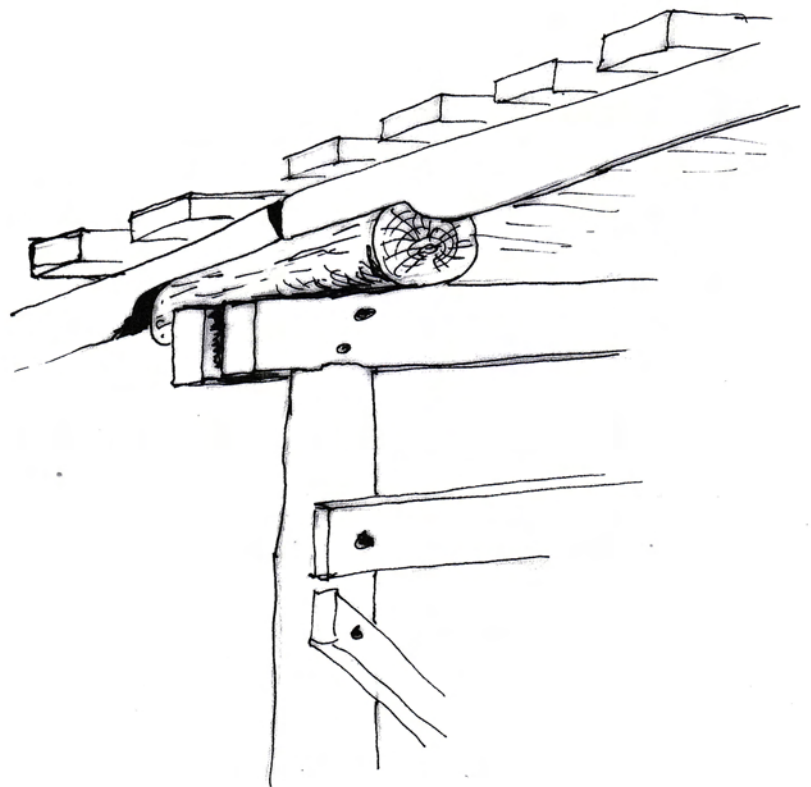




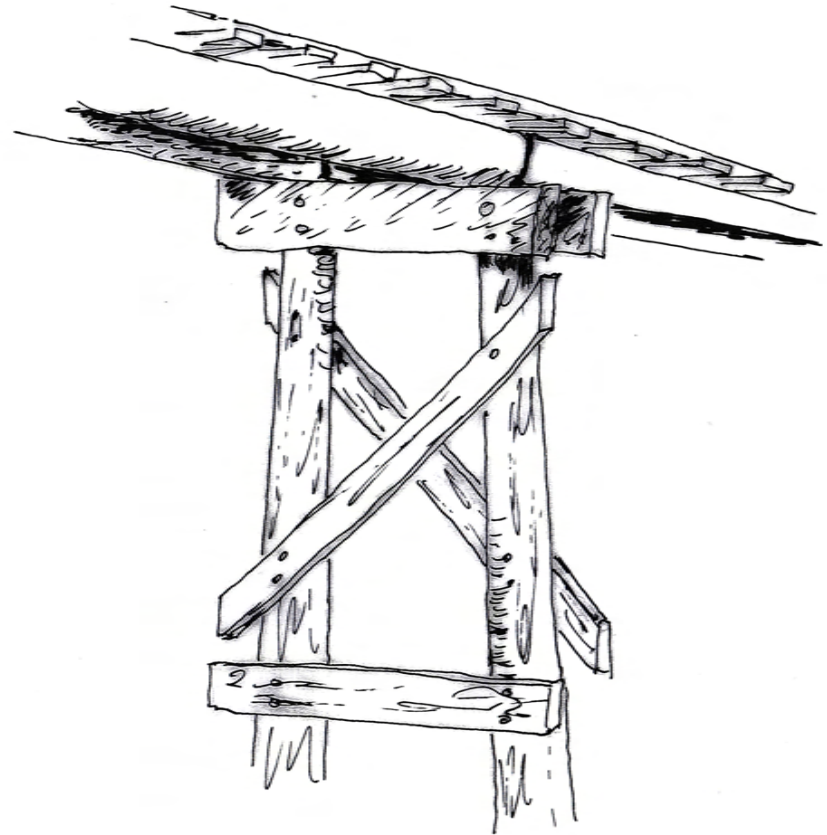
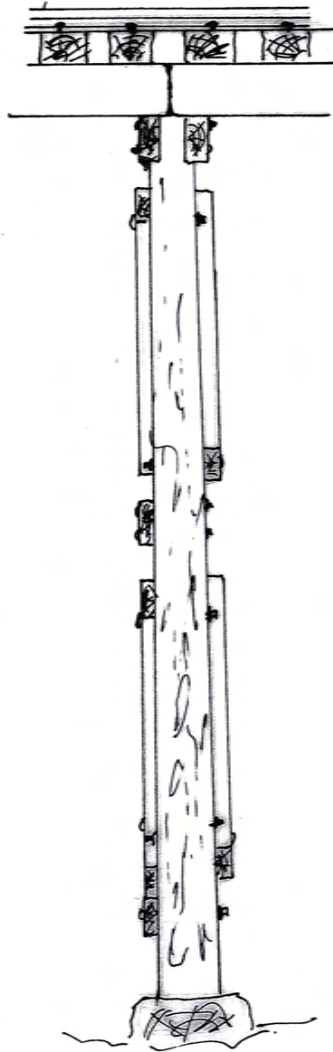
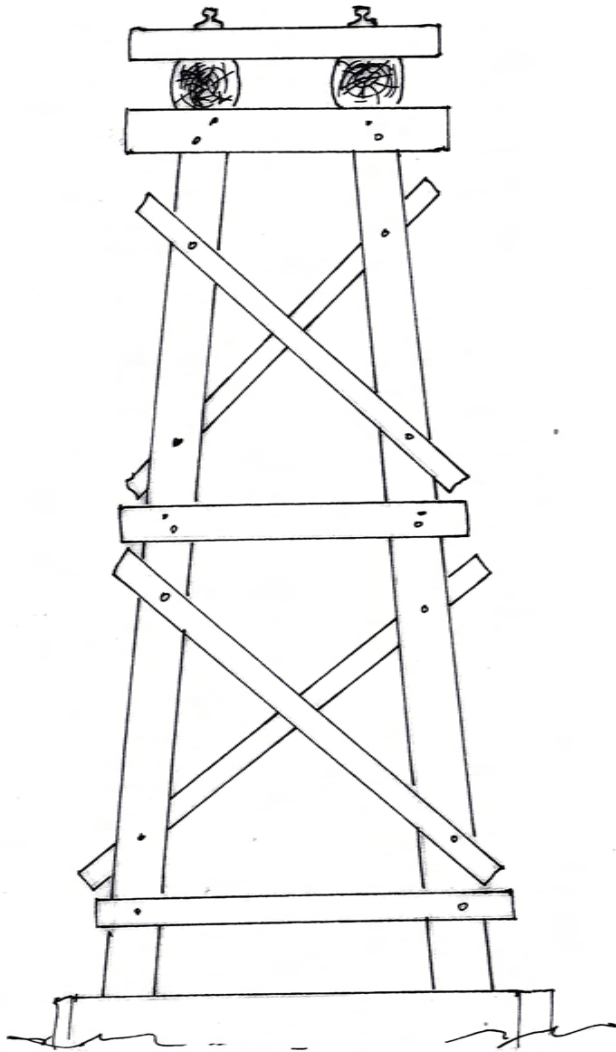
A VIEW OF ONE OF THE TRESTLE BRIDGES
THAT IS STILL IN THE RUBICON FOREST.



ITS DESIGN IS ONE FOUND
COMMONLY ON THE EARLY
LOGGING TRAMWAYS.



THIS TRESTLE DESIGN WAS ALSO USED
MUCH IN THE RUBICON FOREST (SEE PHOTO
IN PERSONAL SUPPLEMENT) IT WAS EFFECTIVE
AND GOOD. MANY STILL STAND TODAY.



THE VIC OAK SAWMILL

APPENDIX

Personal note to MR LLOYD GOULD

Dear Lloyd,

In the main assessment I have so far given an overall view of the Vic Oak and as mentioned the finer details need discussing after the okay on the project is given.

Some points of advantage I thought I might mention are:

- i) The possibility of a Government subsidy which would come under the department of Tourism. I know such projects as "Old Sydney Town" and a friend of mine who knows the person involved with "Sovereign Hill" and "Kryal Castle" all received Government grants. To what extent I don't know but this possibility can be looked into.
- ii) The location of the Vic Oak is ideal as far as tourists are concerned as it is right next to the main road being easily accessible and seen, not far out of Marysville, situated in a beautiful setting and still on the original site. Actually it is indeed literally part of the Marysville municipality, potentially creating an advantage for the tourism business and livelihood of the Marysville township.
- iii) A great asset to the reality of the Vic Oak project is the fact that much of the tramway and milling antiquities needed are at hand already awaiting only whatever restoration is needed. These include the 20 lb/yd steel rail which is at your main mill in Marysville. There must be a good mile or two of it there. Also from my observation here I noticed a rip saw which could be used in the building of the Vic Oak. At the "Anderson mill" location just out of Marysville is a wonderful pile of 'railroadine' and old timber milling apparatus such as the old Ford railroad truck, trolleys, metal conveyor belt trestles, cable drums, winches, gears and pulleys all of which could be sorted out and used valuably. Even at the Vic Oak itself there are some usable bits and pieces

such as the winch mounted on the old chassis, trolley wheels, old docking saw plus odds and ends around. I know of the location of many railroad spikes hidden in the Rubicon forest that were once used on the tramway there. I discovered them on one of my searches through the bush for old tramways and in a matter of about 100 yards I collected approximately 200 spikes lightly buried in the undergrowth stuck in rotten sleepers. They are in good condition and can well be used again. I know where many more are and they could be valuably used on the Vic Oak tramway. It came to my mind also that the old Fordson tractor tramway engine used by Andersons mill that you restored and is now in central Marysville could be used to carry tourists along the Vic Oak tramway route. It looks to be mechanically curable.

- iv) I also mentioned to you before I left for New Zealand of the lady I know who collects old wagons and buggies and in whose collection is an old log wagon that was once pulled by bullock. It is to my memory in good condition and would be an asset to the makeup of the Vic Oak.

Also some items that need discussing that I thought I might introduce are:

- i) How to let people view the mill building and its interior awe without presenting danger from such things as the sawblades or temptation for eager climbing children. I will not discuss the problem/solution here but merely bring it up as a matter of awareness to situation. I did however take a trip to Korrumburra, Gippsland, Victoria before I left for New Zealand and visited "Coal Creek" where they have built an historical mining town. One of the displays they have there is a small flatroofed sawmill. Even though it operates and they cut timber from it, no real danger seems apparent to the visitors. They have a walkway with railing on either side through the middle of it, having on one side a wood turning lathe. Perhaps with restriction to safety the Vic Oak mill itself could also operate. Of course maintenance, supervision, the source of power to operate it and economic costs are influential factors of consideration.

- ii) The southward tramway if it were to operate would have to have carriages suitable to safety regulations and be reasonably comfortable, yet hold the characteristics of the bush tramway boggies. Many designs can be sketched and aesthetically looked at. I have included a couple of such drawings as examples in this.
- iii) What manner and degree of supervision is needed for the whole Vic Oak once it has been reconstructed?
- iv) Is it to be free entry to all who visit and in the similitude of a public display park without supervision?
or Free entry but supervised viewing?
or A suitable entry fee (car or per head) to cover supervision, maintenance and construction costs?
- v) Seeing the whole Vic Oak sawmill project would be an educating factor to all, both young and old, organised tours from many parts within the state could be arranged with such organisations as primary and high schools, senior citizen clubs, youth clubs and church groups. Ample and suitable supervision would necessarily have to be arranged for such but may be a profitable angle for the mill itself (and the Marysville township) and yet provide a valuable piece of first hand historical education of Victoria's early sawmilling operations.
- vi) In the light of the fact that the number of original buildings is not exactly known that made up the whole Vic Oak others could be planned for and looked at to develop the character of the mill more fully. Even the possibility of a few stores could be considered, like a butcher and a general store. Of course suggestions such as this would need to fit into the overall character of the original Vic Oak and of a timbermilling establishment.

There are other items that need discussing. These are the main ideas that have come to my mind in connection with the rebuilding of the mill and its function.

Hoping that this material might be of substantial influence.

Yours sincerely,

GLENN M. BROOKS.