



SUPPORTING THE MINING INDUSTRY

FOR DECADES

Sussex Machine Shop, Sussex, NB

BY LINDSAY LUMINOSO

Straddled between New Brunswick's two major cities, Moncton and Saint John, the area surrounding the town of Sussex has among the largest deposits of potash in the world. In 1978, Don Nancekivell was

lured away from his hometown of Ingersoll, Ontario to set up shop in Sussex. Although the town is small, Nancekivell recognized a great opportunity ripe for the taking.

"The guy I opened this shop with, we worked at a factory together in Ingersoll," recalls Nancekivell, the president and general manager for Sussex Machine Shop. "He came here [Sussex] in 1964 and he was very successful, and he always wanted me to come down. I owned a farm with one of my brothers, and I held a job at the time. My original training was in tool and die. When our property was taken over to be used as a new landfill site, that's when I decided to make a change and come over here. And the two of us started up the business."

Nancekivell, now in his 70s, explains that the first two years were extremely tough, and eventually his partner no longer wanted to be part of the business. At the time, the potash mines were just being set up and acquiring new customers proved difficult. However, "after the first two years, I settled in and it turned out to be the best move I ever made," he says. At the time, there was really only one other shop in the area. And even today, Sussex Machine Shop is one of the most longstanding and largest shops.

Today, the company is located on the same lot that it was back in 1978, but the shop itself has undergone significant expansion to accommodate the growing opportunities. The initial building was 3,000 square feet and can still be seen today in the expanded structure, which has grown to more than 25,000 square feet with a 4.5 acre outdoor laydown area. But one thing has remained the same; Sussex Machine Shop is still servicing the mining industry, specifically the Potash Corp (PCS) mine at Penobsquis, which is their largest customer.

"We service the local potash mine and we've done some extensive work for them," explains Nancekivell. "We also work with the forestry and agricultural industry. We do from very



Above: Don Nancekivell, the owner of Sussex Machine Shop, stands in front of the shop he founded in 1978.

Left: The company offers a wide range of machining capabilities in its machine shop.

Right: A view of the original building from 1978, which is now used to hold materials and equipment.



small jobs to some fairly large jobs.”

Sussex Machine Shop offers a wide range of services to its various customers, which has allowed the company to remain successful over the years. The machining side of the business focuses on accurate custom machining of small to large parts with extreme intricacies. The shop floor consists primarily of manual lathes, but the company has also acquired some CNC machines.

When it comes to fabrication, the company has a 70-ton hydraulic press, a 175-ton press brake, plate roller, plasma cutting table, shear, and saws, among many other machines. The facility has expanded to be able to handle large projects. Welding is another area the company has focused on. Nancekivell stressed that the shop is CWB (Canadian Welding Bureau) certified. The company does a lot of custom steel fabrication, particularly for the mine including pipe work, bins, hoppers, conveyor systems, cat walks, stairs, and pretty much anything you can think of, they’ve done it.

“We do lots of steel projects but we also do stainless and aluminum,” he explains. “We keep a fairly large inventory of steels with a

wide range of shapes like channels, angles, plate, and pipe. For the machine shop we have lots of shafting material.”

At the moment, the company has just under 20 employees. Over the years, and with special projects, Sussex Machine Shop has employed up to 45 workers. Nancekivell said the 90s was one of his strongest times as the company was working on a major project with the Department of Defence. It was one of his most unique projects and very unusual for the region.



Sussex Machine Shop recently invested in a state-of-the-art paint facility, boasting top safety features. They also added a grit blast facility.



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Left: Pieces of metal that has recently been grit blasted in the company's new facility. Right: the company boasts a wide range of fabricating processes, including a CNC cutting table.



"We were converting trucks into refuelers and water tankers. They went all across Canada, but some of them went to the U.N. It was a big project," he added.

Sussex Machine Shop has always had familiarity with projects like these. In the early days, one of the projects they worked on was trailer conversion for the forestry industry. "That was before they built any specialty vehicles, so you basically had to convert a trailer to whatever you wanted. We did a lot of that, today you can order and get it built how you want," says Nancekivell.

Today, Sussex Machine Shop is still doing work for the mines. One of the big projects on the shop floor is retrofitting underground transportation vehicles. "In the last couple of years, for underground transportation, they are using RTVs. In order to meet safety regulations for underground, they had to make a lot of conversions for them," explains Nancekivell. "They didn't have doors or roofs, for example, so we make those."

In order to do all these unique projects and accommodate a wide range of industries, the company has undergone significant

expansion over the years. The most recent expansion is the addition of new 1,500 square foot grit blast and painting facilities. The grit blast facility was primarily put in place to meet specifications for the mining industry. The materials going into the mine need to have a certain profile to them in order to hold paint. A new 1,200 square foot state-of-the-art paint shop was also added. The company made the decision to expand and modernize to meet environmental and safety regulations.

That's a necessary operation for anything that goes up the mine, it has to be blasted, coated in primer, and a top coat of paint on it," says Nancekivell, explaining why they upgraded with two new state-of-the-art booths.

With incredible growth and a longstanding commitment to the local economy, Nancekivell is looking to branch out into the larger New Brunswick area as well as across Canada.

"People keep referring to us as a job shop, but we really are more than that. We do custom work, there is some repeat work, but every customer that walks in the door has got something different," explains Nancekivell. Every day is a new experience and never boring.

Nancekivell has dedicated his career to servicing a wide range of industries and customers in Sussex, New Brunswick.

"You know if you come by on a regular day, you'll find Don in front of a piece of equipment," explains an employee. Nancekivell smiles at the thought, making it clear that that's exactly where he wants to be. **CM**



Fabricating is a large part of Sussex Machine Shop's business. The company can handle large part fabrication and welding projects.

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