

Norwood LumberLite Band Sawmill



Left: Interior shed view of Buster Jones's sawmill.

“You can measure a man by the number of toys he has,” says a popular bumper sticker. True or not, there’s one big toy that has brought many smiles to hobbyists— a practical yet compact portable sawmill.

There are a number of different makes of small sawmills on the market that are suitable for the hobbyist, but in the cases of two individuals I recently visited in different areas of New York, the sawmill they use is a Norwood LumberLite. The manufacturer classifies this mill as a mid-sized band sawmill.

Both happy hobbyists are successful in their own careers, but I detected their pride in having their own little sawmill, providing the care that the mill deserves, and enjoying the satisfaction of producing lumber to supply their hobby or

their basic needs and sawing logs cut on their own property.

Buster Jones

My first meeting was with a cattle dealer named Buster Jones. We met at his home outside of Little Falls, New York, and then traveled to his family camp in the southern part of the Adirondack Mountain region. The country quickly became quite rural, but I believe the camp was in the town of Stratford. We relaxed a bit in the comfortable and attractive camp, situated next to his large pond.

Out back, situated among the trees, was an attractive little build-

ing, built specifically to house his Norwood LumberLite sawmill. The LumberLite is the smaller of the two band sawmills made by Norwood Industries, and is able to handle logs up to 24 inches in diameter. It appears to be a good size for needs such as Buster's. He does not operate the mill a lot, but does enjoy a number of summer weekends turning out various lumber sizes for his own use. Included among his projects at the summer camp site are some buildings, a covered bridge, and a footbridge.

When purchasing a new mill from Norwood, it arrives in knock-down form and packaged in crates. It took a while for Buster and his adult daughter to assemble it, but he stated that it was not difficult. Although he has now had the mill for two years, it still retains a new appearance. This is due in part to good maintenance as well as to being housed in a protective shed. But the appearance is also a result of a superior coating on the metal. I commented that almost every Norwood mill I have seen always looked new. This is obviously because the metal is treated with an orange-colored commercial powder-coat process that reportedly has superior rust-resistance and longer wear than paints. This orange surface along with the shiny zinc plating creates an attractive mill.

Buster processed a few boards, demonstrating how easy it is for him to operate the mill. As with the larger Norwood band mill, the saw carriage is fed manually through the log. Buster made a statement that I have heard from

other small sawmill operators; he prefers the fingertip feel gained by manual saw feed to that of a crank feed. He is better able to judge the best speed through denser wood and through knots. Simplicity of operation is important to Buster. Of course nobody is perfectly satisfied, but the only dissatisfaction that I could discern was his dislike for the tightener on the post securing the log.

John Hricik

Another introduction to a contented small-mill owner happened down in the southern tier of New York near Binghamton. John Hricik of Johnson City, New York, is retired from IBM, has owned a Norwood LumberLite for five years, and enjoys using it to supply his hobby interests. We took a tractor ride out to the back end of his 50-acre property where he has the sawmill mounted on a small platform and well-covered.

John's LumberLite is mounted on a 12-foot bed, meaning he is limited to 8-foot lengths, unless he adds on the 4-foot extension, which he has standing nearby. But for almost all of his needs, 8-foot lengths are sufficient and easier to handle. The original models of the LumberLite came mounted on 12-foot beds, but the standard bed mount on new models is now 16 feet, allowing a 12-foot log cut without the addition of an extension bed.

John purchased the sawmill new with an 8- or 9-hp motor, but soon found that he was not content with the power. He now has a 13-hp Honda motor, which is one of the three power selections now provided for the model by Norwood. As John ran the saw through a few cuts, he mentioned the same thing I had heard previously: He likes to be able to move the saw through the log by hand, using fingertip control to gauge the speed through knots or dense wood.

The thickness scale worked well for him, but he did mention he would like to have a scale for 1 1/4 inches. The mill is designed so that

NORWOOD LUMBERLITE SAWMILL

Length	16 ft. (without bed extension)
Width	6 ft. (widest point)
Weight	550 lbs. (with heaviest power selection)
Blade	1.25 in. x 0.042 in. x 144 in.
Bandwheels	19 in.
Drive	centrifugal clutch
Set display8/4, 4/4, 3/4, and standard scale
Maximum log diameter	24 in.
Maximum log length	12 ft. (longer with bed extensions)
Maximum board width	17 in.
Power selections	8-hp Briggs & Stratton OHV recoil 9-hp Honda GX270 OHV 13-hp Honda GX390 OHV
Prices	\$2,990 (with 8-hp Briggs & Stratton) \$3,490 (with 9-hp Honda) \$3,790 (with 13-hp Honda)

Options

- 4-ft. bed extensions (\$179), lap siding and shingle jig (\$495), carriage cover (\$185)

Prices do not include shipping costs.

MANUFACTURER

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John Hricik's mill. Note that it is set on an elevation rather than on the ground.



Buster Jones has added a 4-foot extension to the bed for sawing longer logs. The mill sits at ground level for easy log loading.

cuts can be made within 1 inch of the bed. John also observed that it would be handy to have a log post with a cam lock installed.

As John covered up the mill, he mentioned another woodlot property he owns where he occasionally harvests logs. At his home he pointed out his new arrangement for transporting the sawmill to the other location. He has welded together another bed to set up at the second woodlot and has outfitted a trailer to transport the saw head. The saw head is removed from the bed and transported, while secured on a 4-foot extension bed. The mill only weighs about 500 pounds with the bed attached.

Before we parted, John had to show me his well-equipped woodworking shop. A few pieces of finely crafted furniture rested in the corner. He is truly a hobbyist with many practical toys.

For owners such as Buster Jones and John Hricik, a small band sawmill such as the LumberLite is clearly a source of joy. As another Norwood mill owner once told me, "I have lots of toys! But the LumberLite is the only one that makes money!" ■

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