

Thomas Model 8020 Bandsaw Mill

The Thomas mill is manufactured by a two-generation family business in Brooks, Maine. Founder Dale Thomas began a steel fabrication business 24 years ago, producing farm equipment and eventually a line of portable band mills and edgers.

By BILL GOVE

Paul Spender of Salem, Massachusetts, has been in the tree service business for 40 years and until recently has had a problem familiar to those in the business. In a well-populated area such as his, how does one dispose of all of the tree material that has to be carted off? With clients scattered throughout eight towns, his company, Sharon Tree Service, accumulates plenty of material.

As with others in the tree service business, part of his solution was the creation of a firewood business. But there were some occasions when some decent sawlogs came into his yard, and that is what prompted Paul to acquire a sawmill. Between the limited space available in his yard and his concern about town ordinances, Paul opted for a small mill that would be quiet and unobtrusive, yet capable of processing large logs.

Two years ago he purchased a Thomas band mill, model 8020, which is the largest of the three models available. I found the mill tucked away in the rear of a yard overflowing with machinery, logs, and firewood. Paul was in the



Paul Spender with his Thomas Model 8020 band mill. He chose the optional "no flex" track with a roller at the end for ease in removing boards after sawing. Note that the saw carriage has two vertical posts on each side for extra stability.

process of sawing some pine logs which he had purchased to produce lumber for the construction of sheds and corral fences. Also noticeable in the log pile were some good-looking oak logs soon to become side boards on truck bodies and some hemlock logs that would make clapboards.

Production is not fast with a manual push-feed mill such as this one, but that's fine with Paul. He stated, "This mill is just the right size for working alone and it cuts fast enough, like cutting through butter." With the 20-hp Honda motor he wasn't lacking for power.

Paul chose to install the "no flex" track which is offered as an option.

There wasn't any give in the 2-inch x 4-inch iron, further strengthened by a tube underneath. At the end of the 20-foot track, Paul has installed a roller for ease in removing the boards after sawing. He also added a couple of extra bunks to the frame, an easy matter to do. The logs are secured in place against the adjustable posts on the frame bunks with a clamp, tightened easily by means of the cam action.

I noted that the saw carriage had two vertical posts on each side, which provided more stability than is sometimes present in small portable mills. The sawhead lift is done by means of a hand crank and the No.

Thomas Bandsaw Mill

Tracks 3 in. x 3 in. x 3/8 in. angle iron
"no flex" optional track 2 in. x 4 in. x 3/16 in.
tube length—20 ft. standard

Saw carriage 4 post, 2-1/2 in. x 2-1/2 in. x 3/16 in. tube

Motor 20-hp Honda

Bunks 3

Saw blade 1-1/2 in. x 13 ft. 6 in.

Wheel 20 ft.

Log length 16 ft. 6 in. (on 20-ft. track)

Log diameter 36 in. max

Weight 1,400 lbs. without extras

Price (basic) \$6,750

- Options**
- "No flex" track
 - Trailer package
 - Hand-operated log loader/turner
 - Clapboard attachment
 - Shingle attachment
 - Blade support system (bottom)
 - Track extensions

Model 8020



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MANUFACTURER'S STATEMENT:
For the past 24 years, we have been manufacturing custom-designed equipment and selling band saw mills. Nine years ago, we began manufacturing our own mill. Our mills are rugged and durable enough to endure daily use for commercial application, yet affordable for the average do-it-yourselfer. A second-generation family company, we are focused on quality, low prices, and customer satisfaction.

40 roller chain, an improvement over cable lifts. A braking system is in place to slow the downward movement of the sawhead. The older Thomas mills used a 1/13-inch increment on the setworks, which many operators did not like. The new Thomas mills, however, are using the more familiar 1/8-inch increment, a welcome adjustment.

Paul reports that his blades usual-

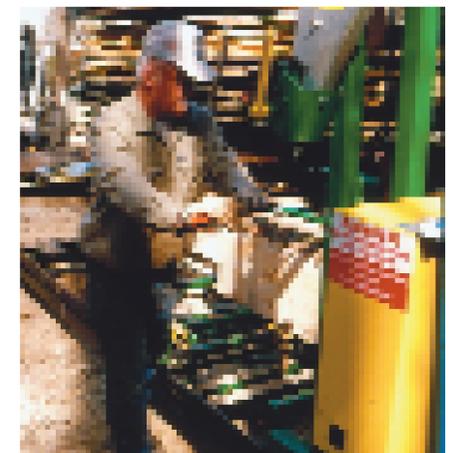


The attachment for making clapboards is a simple framework set on the track frame to tilt the log for making clapboard cuts.

ly last through seven sharpenings. He uses kerosene in the gravity-fed lubrication system. The moveable neoprene saw guides can spread apart as much as 32 inches, allowing space for wide cuts. Another recent improvement by the manufacturer is the increase of the size of the blade wheels to 20 inches, which is a heavier wheel that creates more of a fly wheel effect.

Paul also demonstrated the attachment for making clapboards. It's a simple framework that is set on the track frame to tilt the log for making clapboard cuts. He provides hemlock clapboards for siding on sheds.

Needless to say, Paul is happy with his mill and says that it plays a profitable and functional role in his tree service business. At the time that I was there he had a roof over one end of the mill and kept the saw carriage under that cover when not in use. But now, he tells me, he has extended the roof over the entire



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mill. Even relatively inexpensive machinery needs to have adequate care, of course, with due respect for the rigorous effects of inclement weather. ■

Bill Gove is a regular contributor to Sawmill & Woodlot magazine.