

Boro Lumber banking on city's sole heavy mill

By KATHERINE BODOVITZ

CRAIN'S NEW YORK BUSINESS

As a 40-foot-long, 12-by-12 inch timber churns through the mill, three generations of Susseks watch the sawdust fly.

Their new \$1 million timber re-manufacturing mill in Maspeth, Queens, marks a giant leap for Boro Lumber Co., which John Sussek founded with \$1,500 in 1925.

The two-month-old mill is the only one of its kind in New York City. The city's last heavy timber mill closed in 1976, when New York's fiscal crisis crippled the construction industry.

"This (mill) was born out of a real need that we knew existed," says John Sussek, 53, Boro's president and son of the founder. It is

that afternoon," says Mary Ellen Connolly, purchasing agent for builder Lehrer McGovern Inc. of Manhattan.

Ms. Connolly says her company gives about 75% of its business to Boro. This has included the scaffolding planks that Lehrer used in the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island renovations.

Another customer, Yonkers Contracting Co. uses Boro wood on about 60% of its heavy construction and highway work. In renovating the Henry Hudson Parkway, for instance, Yonkers used Boro's lumber between its concrete sections.

Several other retail lumber companies in New York City also have mills, but Boro's is the only one large enough to cut the big cants of wood—trees that are

enue to rise an additional 25% to \$15 million, which would include half a year of mill operation.

The Susseks say it's too early to tell what volume of business the mill will need to cover its operating costs, although their best guess is about \$3 million a year. The biggest expense will be electricity, since the mill is automated. The operation requires only two people to run it—one to operate the controls and one to drive a forklift to load wood on and off the mill.

The mill is now operating eight hours a day, and the Susseks hope to add another night-time shift, confident that demand for their milled wood will climb.

"Construction is a basic industry," the second Mr. Sussek says. "I believe there will be 10 good solid years of (it) in New York City."

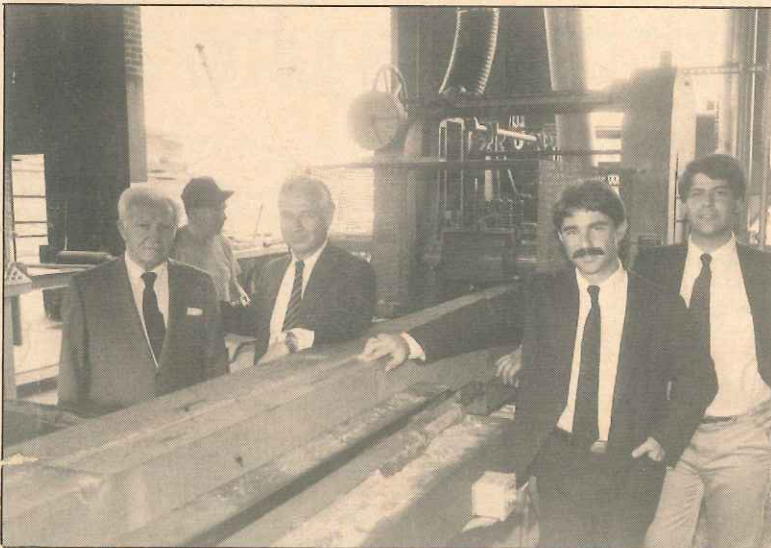
That does not mean, though, that there's enough demand to support other mills, he says. "I don't think there's room in New York for more than one."

The senior Mr. Sussek, now 81 and chairman, started Boro Lumber as Boro Hall Lumber Co., located near Brooklyn's Boro Hall. When the company expanded, the "hall" was dropped because he thought it sounded too parochial. His son founded his own lumber company in 1959 to prove to his father that he knew lumber, and then sold it in 1965 and joined Boro.

The third generation of Susseks includes 30-year-old John (Jack) Sussek 3d, vice president-operations and sales, and 29-year-old Greg, vice president-computer operations and finance. Both joined the company in 1980, after stints of their own in West Coast lumber mills.

Boro's mill sits on 25,000 square feet of land in a heavily industrial section off Maspeth's Maurice Avenue. Half a mile away is the company's main lumber yard, with 70,000 square feet of land and more than two million board feet of wood. (One board foot is one inch by one foot by one foot.) The company's 60,000-square-foot Deer Park, L.I., yard has another million board feet in inventory.

Despite the family's high expectations for their new mill, Jack Sussek notes that the company is not putting all its wood in one basket. In addition to milling specialty orders, Boro offers wholesale wood that it buys already cut, and it sells wood for theater scenery and billboards. □ **CNYB**



SHERRIE NICOL

Lumber Jacks plus one: There are three generations of Susseks at Boro Lumber Co. of Queens: founder and chairman John (left); his son John, president, and his sons Jack and Greg, both vice presidents.

part of the \$12 million company's plan to fill a gap it sees in the wholesale lumber business.

Before the mill opened in May, whenever Boro and other timber wholesalers needed odd-sized lumber not normally kept in stock, they had to order it from the big lumber companies like Weyerhaeuser Co. of Tacoma, Wash., and Georgia-Pacific Corp. of Atlanta. The new mill enables Boro, which serves contractors and builders, to cut lumber to any size and shape a customer desires.

Thus, New York area builders can order odd-sized timber without waiting through a six-week, cross-country train trek for delivery, and without paying a steep freight bill.

So far, the mill has been a big success. "I can call them in the morning, and they can deliver

squared off but kept as large as possible—used in construction. As Michael Miron, president of competitor Miron Lumber Co. of Brooklyn, says, Boro "went in lock, stock and barrel" with its new mill.

Mr. Miron isn't worried that Boro's new mill will affect his own business. "They're not going to take any bread out of my mouth," he says.

In fact, he predicts, "I think (the Susseks) are going to do very well." Mr. Miron says he may even throw Boro some business from customers whose orders his mill can't handle.

The younger Mr. Sussek expects the mill operation to generate \$3 million in revenue during its first full year of operation. Last year, Boro's sales grew 30% to \$12 million. For 1986, he expects rev-