

TURTLE MOUNTAIN FOREST RESERVE.

ROLAND D. CRAIG, F.E.

During the past summer the Forestry Branch made an examination of the Turtle Mountain Forest Reserve in southern Manitoba, with a view to obtaining definite information as to the condition of the present stand, the possibilities of timber production and the steps necessary for the protection of the forests growing thereon.

The Reserve covers 69,920 acres of rough, hilly, and sloughy country in Township 1, Ranges 19, 20, 21 and 22, and as is almost always the case in the middle West where there are hills or water you will find timber, as a result of these natural fire breaks protecting the trees from the fires which sweep over the prairie. The general elevation is only 300 to 500 feet above the surrounding prairie. Lakes and sloughs cover about 15,000 acres, leaving 55,000 acres of timber producing land. As a glance at the accompanying map will show, the country to the north and east is watered by many streams which rise in these hills. Some of these form the head-waters of the Pembina and Whitemud rivers, but a number of others lose themselves on the prairie.

The mature stand is composed of aspen, 43%; balm of Gilead, 14%; white birch, 21%; scrub oak, 9%; ash, 8%; elm, 5% and an occasional Manitoba maple. There was originally a much larger proportion of oak, but the demand for oak logs and posts has been so great that now very little remains.

Since the advent of the settler fires have been so frequent and so destructive that now only 1,600 acres remain uninjured; on 6,400 acres the forest has been partially destroyed and the remainder is devoid of large timber, but is covered with a dense reproduction which if protected from further fires will in a few years produce even a better stand than the original.

Several small sawmills have in the past operated in these forests, but at present only one is left and it takes only a small number of logs for a very limited local trade. The day of the log buildings is past in that region, so that now the main uses of the reserve are to supply fuel and fence material, to protect the watershed, to harbor game, to serve as a pleasure and health resort, and for its general ameliorating effect upon the climate.

Farmers living within a radius of 50 miles come to the Reserve every year for their supplies of wood and during the last