

# THE LUMBER TRADE IN 1896.

VIEW OF THE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR. STATISTICS OF THE VARIOUS PROVINCES. A MARKED INCREASE IN THE VOLUME OF FOREIGN TRADE.

## GENERAL SURVEY.

THE year 1896 was one of unusual uncertainty in business circles. It was a year of political disturbances both in Canada and the United States, and in the latter country the depression in the commercial interests was aggravated by the fact that the adoption of a national monetary standard was made the basis of the election. The lumber trade suffered as a consequence of these conditions. The closing down of industries followed the Presidential nominations across the border, and this in turn caused a falling off in demand for lumber. Large stocks were held at the mills in the white pine districts, and as a result prices gradually weakened, until before the close of the year they had reached the lowest point known for many years. Wholesale dealers were not disposed to purchase on a declining market unless good prospects were presented of placing their stock, and the only lumber which met with ready sale was the better grades. Large failures in Michigan induced still greater caution on the part of purchasers.

The foregoing presents the conditions of the trade so far as the United States market is concerned. The year did not pass, however, without its encouraging features. The depression in the United States was counteracted to a large extent by an increased foreign demand, as will be observed by the statistics of the various provinces published below.

The British market was particularly active, and large quantities of spruce and pine deals and boards from Ontario and Quebec and the Maritime provinces were placed at good prices. A larger amount of thin lumber was shipped than heretofore. The trade is fast declining from the port of Quebec, although the sailings in 1896 show a slight gain over the previous year. The annual report of the Harbor Master at Montreal shows that there were shipped from that port during the year, to the United Kingdom and Continental ports, 219,032,178 feet b. m. of lumber, showing an increase of 50,360,150 feet, and to River Plate, 7,790,166 feet, a decrease of 583,834 feet from the previous year.

The foreign trade of British Columbia was of a wide distribution and considerably greater in volume than in 1895. The formation of the Central Lumber Company enabled manufacturers to obtain better prices, but unfortunately the combine has been broken and the market is now in a state of uncertainty. The Manitoba market was firm throughout the year.

Speaking generally, the lumber trade of the year was not characterized by the severe depression which is generally believed. All things considered, it must be admitted that the volume of business was satisfactory. What conditions will prevail in 1897 it is difficult to predict, although indications point to an improvement unless tariff regulations should disturb the market.

## ONTARIO.

The unsettled financial conditions which prevailed in the United States account in a large measure for the depression which characterized

the lumber trade of Ontario in 1896. Taking the province as a whole, lumbermen look back upon the year as one of unsatisfactory results and disturbing features. Although the output of logs in the winter of 1895-96 was less than the previous season, and notwithstanding the fact that many mills were not operated, the quantity of lumber placed at the disposal of purchasers was too great for the limited demand, and prices suffered in consequence. The volume of trade compares favorably with that of the previous year, but profits have shown a wide diversity.

Manufacturers in the Ottawa valley catered largely to the British trade, and succeeded in closing contracts in the fall of 1895 for a large portion of their output of the following season at satisfactory figures. In the west, particularly in the Georgian Bay district, where large stocks were held by both Canadian and American pine manufacturers, sales necessarily depended largely upon the United States market. Late in the spring season the demand increased somewhat and continued fair until early in the summer, when the effects of the then approaching Presidential election across the border simply demoralized trade in general. This condition continued until after the election early in November, during which time prices were reduced to almost the cost of production. This was particularly the case in the lower grades of white pine, of which there were very large stocks at the mills. After the election a better feeling prevailed, and sales increased as a result of a desire to obtain stock before the close of navigation, but the improvement proved to be only temporary, and the closing month of the year exhibited little activity.

Our enquiries from manufacturers regarding the season's trade met with a hearty response. From these it is learned that the total output of lumber was slightly less than the previous year. Sales also show a falling off, while 75 per cent. of the replies tell the one story of small profits. Pine stocks carried over at the mills are large, and consist principally of box and common lumber.

In hardwoods a noticeable feature was the enquiry for mixed lots, indicative of the hand-to-mouth policy which purchasers had pursued throughout the year. Maple and elm sold quite freely early in the season, the latter for bicycle purposes.

The shingle trade was not active early in the year, but during the fall there sprung up a demand which pretty well cleared out stocks and placed the industry on a stronger footing.

The absence of transactions in timber limits was a feature of the year. No sales of any importance were negotiated. The sale in Toronto in July of 110 square miles, to close up the partnership existing between Messrs. Beck, McSherry and Spohn, proved almost a total failure. The Ontario government placed upon the market 60,000,000 feet of burnt timber in the Nipissing district, and received satisfactory returns.

The cut of the mills in the Ottawa valley compares favorably with the previous season, being, perhaps, a few million feet less. The production in 1895 was 627,000 feet, while the estimate given below for 1896, although not including one or two of the smaller mills taken into account in

the 1895 calculation, places the cut at 614,250,000 feet.

## PRODUCTION OF THE OTTAWA VALLEY IN 1896.

	Feet
J. R. Booth, Ottawa	115,000,000
Hull Lumber Co.	55,000,000
McLachlin Bros., Arnprior	54,000,000
Bronsons & Weston Co., Ottawa	52,000,000
Hawkesbury Lumber Co.	52,000,000
W. C. Edwards & Co., Rockland	43,000,000
St. Anthony Lumber Co., Whitney	40,000,000
Gillies Bros., Braeside	35,000,000
Gilmour & Hughson, Hull	30,000,000
Shepherd & Morse Co., New Edinburgh	25,000,000
Canada Lumber Co., Carleton Place	20,000,000
R. & W. Conroy, Deschenes Mills	16,000,000
Wm. Mason & Son, Ottawa	15,000,000
Pembroke Lumber Co.	12,000,000
Ottawa Lumber Co., Calumet	12,000,000
Ross Bros., Buckingham	11,000,000
McLaren Estate, Buckingham	10,000,000
R. H. Klock & Co., Aylmer	8,000,000
J. R. & J. Gillies, Arnprior	3,500,000
A. Hagar & Co., Plantagenet	3,250,000
A. & P. White, Pembroke	2,500,000
Total	614,250,000

The export of forest products from the consular district of Ottawa to the United States, as furnished by the United States Consulate General, shows a difference in favor of 1895 of \$289,361.53. The detailed figures are as follows:

## EXPORTS FROM OTTAWA CONSULAR DISTRICT FOR YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1895.

ARTICLE.	Or ending March 31.	Or ending June 30.	Or ending Sept. 30.	Or ending Dec. 31.
Bark	\$ 6,477.70	\$ 28,102.29	\$ 6,518.00	\$ 4,215.00
Lath and Shingles	152.95	152.95	1,587.26	1,717.25
Logs and Timber	151,751.32	586,114.47	625,716.15	597,993.64
" in bond for export	3,583.69	17,232.95	30,311.07	47,046.93
Match Blocks	1,420.20			
Pulp, Sulphite	17,572.57	18,239.19	14,478.94	19,309.10
Pickets		3,650.73	3,406.74	6,254.64
Railroad Ties	450.00	5,950.10	3,397.30	4,818.40
Total	\$381,245.46	\$601,482.88	\$715,303.99	\$704,312.50

## EXPORTS FROM OTTAWA CONSULAR DISTRICT FOR YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1896.

ARTICLE.	Or ending March 31.	Or ending June 30.	Or ending Sept. 30.	Or ending Dec. 31.
Bark	\$ 1,704.00	\$	\$	\$
Lath	3,572.20	27,497.94	27,415.38	22,283.65
Lumber	297,365.15	638,803.82	514,979.02	503,229.41
Pulp, Sulphite	16,078.95	12,112.28	8,039.53	3,762.12
Cordwood	50.00			14.75
Shingles	2,160.05	6,651.19	6,957.48	15,178.25
Railroad Ties	9,591.81	5,469.84	838.20	6,500.00
Logs	129.00			
Timber	425.83	1,960.50	5,245.82	154.32
Pickets	5,191.96	749.90	954.74	
Curtain Sticks		3,583.73	3,704.92	
Match Blocks		2,739.45	731.25	900.00
Posts and Poles		93.00		32.00
Pulpwood		357.50	297.00	
Total	\$333,349.02	\$720,228.95	\$569,223.34	\$548,101.52
Total, 1895			\$2,460,352.23	
Total, 1896			\$2,170,990.80	

The total output of saw logs in the Ottawa valley during the season of 1895-96 was 480,000,000 feet, b. m., and the estimated cut this winter is 375,000,000 feet, or 22 per cent. less than last year. In other sections of the province the production is being curtailed to a greater extent, and probably not more than half the usual quantity of logs will be taken out. With a fair demand a more prosperous season is therefore looked for, although tariff changes may affect the market to some extent.

## QUEBEC.

The trade of the province of Quebec has depended almost entirely upon the markets of the United Kingdom, which have remained firm for nearly every class of Canadian goods. The shipments of pine and spruce deals have been made largely from the port of Montreal, and were slightly less than in the previous year, but prices advanced early in the season, and business was conducted on a more remunerative basis than in 1895. From the United States the principal demand was for spruce wood for the manufacture of pulp.

The following table will show the quantity of