

# Canada and the Timber Trade of France

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Hungary and Turkey. The domestic sleepers are chiefly oak, Maritime and Scotch pine.

The prices of the imported sleepers in 1912 were:—

Oak .....66 cents each (containing  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cu. ft.)

Others (chiefly beech).....58 cents each (containing  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cu. ft.)

Until the war Douglas fir had not been used in France for sleepers. During the war large quantities have been used, both in maintenance and extensions of the established railway systems and in the building of purely military lines. Standard sleepers have in nearly all cases been purchased for the latter lines with the object of turning them over to commercial railroads when the need for the temporary military roads no longer exists. These sleepers are all used without any preservative treatment.

Untreated Douglas fir sleepers will have had a fair trial. Samples have also been sent to the various French railroads in order that they may be creosoted and given a trial. All sleepers imported into France are imported before creosoting.

The engineers of the French railroads give preference to a hard sleeper.

Immediately following upon the war there may be a demand for imported sleepers. Otherwise the market in France will remain limited to about one-tenth the annual requirements of the country. The other nine-tenths will continue to be supplied from the French forests, where only the poorer trees and the lower grades of timber are made into sleepers.

Before Canadian sleepers can compete in the French market it will be necessary to demonstrate that they have the necessary life. This can best be done by actual trial of the sleepers in France.

Sleepers from Eastern Canada would find a ready market in France if they could be delivered c.i.f. French ports to compete with the prices quoted. Beech and maple particularly would find a ready market.

A Canadian exporter wishing to develop a business in sleepers with France should make arrangements through the office of the Commissioner-General for Canada to secure as representative in France some one acquainted with the sleeper business and favorably situated for doing business with the State and private railroads. Both such representation and trials of sample lots of sleepers are necessary to the developing of a successful business.

Pitchpine has always been cheaper in France than Douglas fir, owing to the great difference in freight rates on the two timbers before the opening of the Panama Canal. Douglas fir up to the present has only been purchased in large sizes and long lengths, for use near the coast. The forests of France furnish nearly all the large or long timber used in the interior of the country.

The Panama Canal will certainly in a few years make a great difference in the quantity of Douglas fir used in France. The annual consumption should within a decade increase by over 500 per cent. The chief uses are likely to be timbers for false work and dimension for rough building purposes. Very little wood is used for interior finish in France. Such as is used is painted pine, spruce and balsam; oak is used in natural finish in offices and some public buildings.

Douglas fir is unlikely to be used industrially in France because of the great quantity of oak in the country. An interesting object lesson will be provided by the freight trucks, manufactured of Douglas fir, which are now being sent from Canada for the French railroads.

The imports of Douglas fir to France are handled in the same manner as pitchpine by timber brokers in London working in conjunction with agents in France.

The other classes of timber imported could not be supplied from Canada at prices to compete with those prevailing before the war.

Softwood logs less than  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, large quantities of which are used for pulpwood, are imported from Russia and Germany. The price in 1913 was  $7\frac{1}{2}$  cents per cubic foot or approximately \$6.80 per cord.

Rough wood, poles, mining props, faggots, are secured from Russia, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland, at prices averaging 4-2-3 cents per cubic foot or about \$4.20 per cord.

Match splints, chiefly of aspen, poplar and white pine are imported at 85 cents a cubic foot. Four per cent. come from the United States and the remainder from various European countries.

All timber entering France from foreign countries is dutiable. The rates of duty are based upon the sizes imported. The duties upon important classes of timber are given here:—

	Duty per 2,200 lbs. weight.
Rough logs .....	\$1.30
Railway sleepers .....	2.00
Sawn 3 1-5 inch more in thickness .....	2.00
Sawn 1 2-5 inch, 3 1-5 inch thick .....	2.50
Sawn less than 1 2-5 inch thick .....	3.50
Match splints .....	3.00
Poles, props .....	.60
Softwood logs less than $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet long .....	.04

The low rate of duty for short softwood logs is to allow the importation of pulpwood, a trade amounting to 17,000,000 tons weight per year.

The chief ports through which the import timber trade of France is handled are Havre, Dunkirk, Bordeaux and Marseilles.

The chief interest for Canadians in the timber situation in France is in the necessary rebuilding of devastated areas.

The population of the fireswept area in Northern France is 7,000,000. An equal number of people in Belgium have suffered a wholesale destruction of their buildings. Reconstruction at some period or other is inevitable. The effect that reconstruction on such a colossal scale may be expected to produce on the lumber trade can only be surmised. There are, however, certain well defined bases from which an estimate may be formed.

The population of 14,000,000 in Northern France and Belgium have lost a great proportion of their dwellings, industrial and commercial establishments and public works. The ruins will afford little salvage.

The restoration of peace will be the signal for a burst of rebuilding throughout the land. The people will immediately require shelters; temporary industrial, communal and public works will be matters of first concern for the Government in order to prevent emigration, start production and absorb the disbanding armies.

Wood has not been used to a great extent for building in the war-swept countries. Stone, brick, and cement tiles are the native materials. These lie ready at hand, the population is skilled in their manufacture and use, their manufacture will afford labor, their use will obviate sending money abroad to pay for foreign purchases.

Nevertheless the use of these materials on a large scale requires time; when Belgium and Northern France are rebuilt, wood will be used to a greater extent than ever before. It is the only building material that can be quickly secured in large quantities.

Rebuilding on such a scale would at any time tax the resources of the forests of Europe, which do not suffice from year to year in normal times to meet the maintenance requirements of the continent.

There are two reasons why after this war European forests will not meet the demand.

During the war timber outside of Russia has been cut and destroyed at an annual rate hitherto unknown in Europe. The western battle line is stretched through one of the most productive forests of France. Elsewhere in Europe war has obliterated forests. Behind the lines of the enemy and the Allies timber has been cut for war purposes in quantities far exceeding the requirements of peace time. The European neutrals have greatly increased their cut to reap the harvest of high prices.

Nor will Belgium and France be the source of the only call for timber. Twice as great a population is homeless in Poland, East Prussia and Northeast Hungary as on the Western front. There only the naked land remains. The timber requirements will be enormous, particularly because it is a country where wood has always been the most important building material and where the instinct of the population will be to rebuild in wood.

The timber for rebuilding this eastern and interior region will not come from North America. It will be supplied from Russia, the Baltic, and the enemy countries. The immense quantities of timber to be required in this, the more accessible market to their forests, will decrease the quantity of Russian, Scandinavian and enemy timber likely to find its way to France and Belgium, and will also tend to raise the level of European timber prices.

It is a safe conclusion, therefore, that large quantities of timber from North America will be required in France and Belgium. The general requirements will be for lumber suitable for portable buildings, common lumber for sheathing, studding, joists, rafters, cheap doors, sash, and timbers for falsework and temporary reconstruction of railroads, bridges and other large works.

Roofing will be in great demand. The competition will be between galvanized iron, prepared roofings, and possibly shingles. The prospects do not look good for shingles, because the galvanized iron and felt roofings are cheap, quickly laid and on the spot, and because the European cannot think in terms of a wooden roof.

It has been considered by the authorities purchasing timber for the Allies that vast quantities of the timber taken to the front for war purposes will be available after the war for rebuilding the country. The quantity, were it available, is insufficient, and moreover the wastage has been enormous. In spite of all that may be done, great quantities of timber will be necessary from outside Europe.

The present is the time to arrange for the supply. It is possible that, in order to keep prices down and to systematize the work of reconstruction, the purchases will be made through Government channels. If not, British and continental firms will buy on their own account in the usual manner. Canadian exporters should be prepared for either eventuality, and should have arrangements made so that in any case they may receive inquiries through competent reliable sources the moment demand appears.