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1898

Review of the Lumber Trade of the Year.

GENERAL SURVEY.

By a study of the data bearing upon the lumber trade of the year 1898, the conclusion is reached that the aggregate volume of business was somewhat below that of the previous year. British Columbia shows a falling off in exports to foreign countries of about 10,000,000 feet, and the Maritime provinces of nearly 150,000,000 feet, while the exports from Ontario and Quebec were no greater than in 1897.

Yet, considering the conditions, the record of the past year is not one which shows a backward tendency. Manitoba, which does not rank as an exporting country, consumed more lumber than in any previous year in the history of the province. The production of spruce in the Maritime provinces in the year 1897 was too great for the requirements of the then exploited markets, and the business of the following year suffered as a consequence. But this was not an unmixed evil, as the low price of spruce permitted it to secure a foothold in markets where it was previously unknown.

The war between Spain and the United States seriously interfered with the trade of the year, not only in lumber, but in other lines of commerce. Contemplated improvements on the eastern seaboard of the United States were entirely stopped, and the demand for vessels caused freight rates to advance sharply, making it difficult to secure lumber tonnage at a rate which would permit of chartering.

The experience of the past years leads to the conclusion that in foreign markets the demand for lumber is giving place to that for the more finished product, just as timber in the log has been replaced in late years by boards and deals. To this the attention of Canadian lumbermen is directed.

ONTARIO.

Lumbermen in Ontario will look back upon the year 1898 as one in which business showed a substantial improvement over that of the previous few years. In nearly every department of the lumber industry the returns were greater in proportion to the volume of trade. Notwithstanding that lumber exported to the United States was subject to a duty of two dollars per thousand feet, prices advanced considerably during the latter part of the year, when there was a strong demand, in the face of light stocks.

The position of the pine trade will first be considered. In the winter of 1897-98 lumbermen owning mills in Ontario operated in the woods only moderately, as it was desirable that stocks of lumber then in the yards should be reduced.

There were two principal markets in which lumbermen hoped to dispose of their stock, viz., Great Britain and Ontario. The British market had been heavily stocked in 1897, but it was found possible, nevertheless, to dispose of about the usual quantity of Ontario lumber for consumption in the Mother country, and at the usual prices. The feature of that trade was the urgent demand for Norway, or red pine, which seems to be gaining ground, and replacing other woods. Sales of the Ottawa valley production were made last winter at favorable prices.

The consumption of lumber in the local market more than counterbalanced the loss in the volume of the United States trade. Building operations opened unusually brisk in the spring, and continued active throughout the season, resulting in a greatly increased demand for pine lumber, and especially for the lower grades. This improvement in building was not confined to the country districts and small towns and villages, but extended to the cities. In Toronto the buildings erected in 1898 were valued at \$1,701,630, as compared with \$951,130 in the previous year. United States buyers also entered the Canadian market in search of box lumber, which, partly on account of the Spanish-American war, had become scarce in the United States. This was a further drain upon the common grades, and as a result prices advanced fully two dollars per thousand. At the close of the year stocks were greatly reduced as compared with the holdings of previous years, a condition which cannot but strengthen the position of manufacturers in 1899.

The hardwood industry was in a flourishing condition throughout the year. The trade of the spring and summer was characterized by active buying and a heavy movement of stock. Towards the fall it became evident that the available supply would not be equal to the demand, and consequently there was a marked advance in prices. It soon became a question of where to obtain the stock rather than the price to be paid for same. Manufacturers who held any quantity of dry hardwoods were in a position to dictate terms to buyers. There was quite a heavy export of hardwood lumber to the United States, notwithstanding the duty, which was paid in nearly every instance by the consumer. Hardwood prices made a gain during the year of from \$2 to \$3 per thousand, but it cannot be said that the full benefit of this was realized by the manufacturer, as the cost of logs for 1898 sawing was considerably greater than in the previous year. This winter prices even higher than those of last year are being paid; a step the wisdom of which is open to doubt.

The shingle industry was prosperous in 1898. Pine and cedar shingles were in good demand on account of the increased building, and higher prices were obtainable. The production of shingles was also much heavier than 1897, and a number of new mills were put in operation.

The reports from the lumber manufacturers in Ontario are almost unanimous on one point, viz., that the business was more remunerative last year than in any season for many years. The volume of trade was perhaps no greater, but business yielded a larger margin of profit. The production of lumber was curtailed both in the Georgian Bay district and in the Ottawa valley. For the purposes of comparison, we give below

the average cut for two years of a few mills in Western Ontario:

CUT OF SOME WESTERN ONTARIO MILLS.

	1897 Feet.	1898 Feet.
Holland & Emery Lumber Co., Byng Inlet		37,000,000
Georgian Bay Lumber Co., Wauhaushene	23,000,000	26,000,000
Victoria Harbor Lumber Co., Victoria Harbor	23,000,000	21,500,000
Spanish River Lumber Co., Spanish River	14,600,000	13,000,000
A. McPherson & Co., Longford Mills	6,750,000	5,000,000
Mossom Boyd & Co., Bobcaygeon	6,000,000	1,000,000
Loveland, Roys & White, Midland	7,500,000	
Huntsville Lumber Co., Huntsville	4,500,000	4,000,000
John Harrison, Owen Sound	3,000,000	4,000,000
Blind River Lumber Co., Blind River	2,000,000	2,500,000
Snider Lumber Co., Gravenhurst	3,000,000	5,000,000
Cockburn & Sons, Sturgeon Falls	3,000,000	
Keeling & Bower, Warren	1,500,000	1,000,000
Michel Bros., Berkely	2,000,000	3,500,000
John P. Newman, Warton	3,500,000	2,500,000
J. E. Murphy, Hepworth Station	2,200,000	1,000,000
Goderich Lumber Co., Goderich	3,500,000	3,000,000
C. Beck Mfg. Co., Penetanguishene	1,000,000	1,500,000
Reid Bros., Hepworth Station	800,000	600,000
J. A. Shaver, Ancaster	750,000	750,000
Pickard & Rowan, Owen Sound	800,000	1,500,000
Jones Bros., Warton	1,500,000	1,500,000
Anderson Furniture Co., Woodstock	2,000,000	2,000,000
John Carew, Lindsay	3,000,000	3,000,000
H. Cargill & Son, Cargill	5,000,000	4,000,000
A. G. Seaman, Warton	3,500,000	3,000,000
Wm. Young, Warton	4,000,000	4,000,000
Milne & Hefferman, Trout Creek	2,500,000	2,000,000
Robert Watt, Warton	1,500,000	2,500,000
Toner & Gregory, Collingwood	5,000,000	2,500,000

The lumber production of the Ottawa valley in 1898 was about 115,000,000 feet less than in the previous season, being, as nearly as can be estimated from the data at our disposal, 633,000,000 feet. It will be observed that practically all the larger firms reduced their output. The production of the different mills for two years was as follows:

OTTAWA VALLEY PRODUCTION.

	1897 Feet.	1898 Feet.
J. R. Booth, Ottawa	130,000,000	118,000,000
Gilmour & Co., Canoe Lake	55,000,000	33,000,000
Hull Lumber Co.	60,000,000	55,000,000
McLachlin Bros., Arnprior	70,000,000	65,000,000
Bronsons & Weston Company, Ottawa	50,000,000	12,000,000
Hawkesbury Lumber Co.	55,000,000	52,000,000
W. C. Edwards and Co., Rockland and New Edinburgh	68,000,000	75,000,000
St. Anthony Lumber Co., Whitney	70,000,000	45,000,000
Gillies Bros., Braeside	50,000,000	20,000,000
Gilmour & Hughson, Hull	40,000,000	35,000,000
Canada Lumber Co., Carleton Place	12,000,000	12,000,000
R. & W. Conroy, Deschenes Mills	12,000,000	17,000,000
Wm. Mason & Son, Ottawa	12,000,000	12,000,000
Pembroke Lumber Co.	15,000,000	17,000,000
Ottawa Lumber Co., Calumet	11,000,000	16,000,000
Ross Bros., Buckingham	10,000,000	10,000,000
McLaren Estate, Buckingham	12,000,000	15,000,000
R. H. Klock & Co., Aylmer	14,000,000	5,000,000
J. R. & J. Colles, Arnprior	3,000,000	3,000,000
A. Hagar & Co., Plantagenet	5,000,000	5,000,000
A. & P. White, Pembroke	4,000,000	4,000,000
McLaren & McLaurin, East Templeton		7,000,000
Total	748,000,000	633,000,000

The above figures are, in the main, reliable, although in one or two instances where no reply was received to our request for data it has been assumed that the cut was the same as in 1897. In making a comparison with 1897, it must be remembered that the cut of that year was an unusually heavy one, and showing an increase over 1896 of 114,000,000 feet.

The export of forest products from the consular