

Wartime Marketing of Products of Iowa's Woodlands

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IF WE are to consider the marketing of products of Iowa woodlands, we must first take considerable time to look into the events of the past which have had vital effects upon the condition of the woods.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE WOOD RESOURCE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES

There stands a colossus in Iowa. His name is Agriculture. His gigantic stature overshadows the land. He is unchallenged. While some states of our Union may have had Lumbering as a colossus, only to have him tumbled from his pedestal, in Iowa Lumbering never was more than mansized. Yet Lumbering suckled the colossus of Iowa.

Early pioneers of Iowa built their homes of Iowa wood. Log cabins housed the first Iowa farmers. From Iowa's woods came the cribs to store the first corn crops. From Iowa's woods came the posts and rails to enclose the first Iowa pastures.

More than that! Settlers in many Iowa counties bought land, cut timber from it, sold the lumber and received enough from the sales to recover the entire purchase price of the land, and, in addition, have enough money to buy all the agricultural implements and livestock necessary to start themselves in the farming business. All this from the timber—the land free of debt, houses, barns, cribs, shelters, livestock, seed for the crops—all paid for by the timber. Even to this day in parts of Iowa this can be done, where only a portion of the land is a transaction may be in timber.

TREATMENT OF THE TIMBER STANDS

Whatever else the pioneer was, once he had settled in Iowa he became a farmer. When he surveyed his land he saw only fields of grain or pasture. If there were remnants of the woodlands they must go! Every acre must be in grain or pasture!

Wave after wave of timber cutting passed over the land. Each wave carried on its crest the best trees from the woods, and when each wave had ebbed there stood only stumps—stumps or the unwanted trees, trees too crooked, too old, or too diseased or infested. Even the young trees were taken. If the youthful tree would provide a post or a pole it fell before the axe. The smoke of brush burning hazed the hills in the fall, and made the horizon blue and indistinct in spring.

Yet, despite the cutting, there still were woods in Iowa. Whereas there was in early days within Iowa's borders 6,680,000 acres of timberland (one-fifth of the state), more recent tabulations indicate nearly two and a half million acres remaining. Each wave of cutting had cleared more, until at the present practically all land originally in timber and suitable for crops or pasture have been removed. The present acreage of Iowa timber is on land which is best suited for timber growing.

Yes, Iowa's present timber acreage is timber land—not crop land or pasture land. We will not consider here that some of the cleared land was never suitable for crops or pasture or ever will be. Not that we could not. We need only to look over thousands of acres of worthless lands, with top soil gone, deeply gullied, abandoned farm houses, collapsed barns, toppling cribs, and sagging or down fences, for proof that much cleared land failed as agricultural land in spite of the "stake" which timber gave it.

Lumbering is not bitter over what has happened in Iowa's timberlands. Rather, it is with pride that Lumbering will count and recount the farm homes, barns, cribs, churches, schools, towns and even cities which it has helped to build on once timbered slopes. Great pride swells, too, with the thought that most once-timbered lands can produce bumper crops of grain and fatten herds of cattle, sheep and hogs.

But what of the present timber acreage of Iowa? *Is it really timber? Is it good timber? Does it produce good crops of wood?* We must answer these questions.

Not content with the contribution Iowa's timberlands have made to its growth and power, Agriculture has exacted a heavy toll from the remaining stands of timber. The woods have suffered the indignity of being pastured. Year in, year out, young trees have been cropped to the ground until their places have been taken by grass or brush. The woods, *never* a pasture, became less and less a woods and more and more an unprofitable pasture. Owners admit the worthlessness of timber pasture, but feel forced to keep the livestock in "to get something

off the land." Roots of the remaining trees are damaged by the trampling of sharp hoofs, each wound an entry for root disease. Even fire is used "to improve the pasture."

And so the woods, forced to serve as a slave in pasture, denied its right to reproduce, becomes less and less a woods. The trees which stand represent the leavings, the cast-offs, the unwanted, the rejects.

IS THE INCOME FROM FARM WOODS COMPARABLE TO OTHER AGRICULTURAL INCOMES?

Too often in this depleted condition the woodland is challenged to prove that its products can compete with those of agriculture. The years have brought new owners who saw not the woods when they were productive. Reason with them to give the woods a chance to prove that it can grow profitable crops? "First," they say, "show us where we can make some money from the already standing trees before you ask us to attempt to grow future crops of wood." Is it proof to them that the farm itself was born at the sacrifice of the forest? Recently an agricultural worker demanded that a forest worker prove that the forest crop could compete with the agricultural crop. Reasoned the agriculturist, "This is wartime. Lumber is scarce, prices are high. If ever there was a time that woodland products should be profitable it is now. Yet no one is able to sell logs." Replied the forester, "The woods you speak of are not woods. Agriculture has forced them to be pastures. The trees therein are the remnants of former woods. There is not a good log among them. For your agricultural crops you have prepared the ground carefully, you have developed the best seed, you have invested much money in implements to till, tend and harvest, you have built barns and cribs and bins, and you have cooperated with your neighbors to get the best possible price. What have you done to your woods? You have developed your livestock as purebred, you have purchased and grown for them the best of feed, you have sheltered them from weather, immunized them from disease, protected them from insects, and cooperated with other livestock men to develop the best market for your animals. What have you done for your woods? How can you expect to compare the products of the woods which have suffered continuous exploitation and enjoyed no development with the products of industries which have been developed to near perfection without sparing the expense?" The wonder of it—is that the woods have survived at all. The truth is that, with all its mistreatment and neglect,

the woods have continued to yield fence posts, poles, fuelwood, occasional batches of logs, and are capable of yielding more material now that wartime demands have forced us to look to our Iowa woods for lumber and timber which cannot be had from other regions.

MARKETS FOR IOWA WOOD

As has been indicated, Iowa woodlands have contributed greatly to the development of Iowa's chief industry, Agriculture. The presence in eastern Iowa and western Illinois of supplies of ample hardwoods suitable for use in agricultural implements was largely responsible for the development of the implement manufacturing business about Rock Island, Moline and Davenport. With the dwindling of the supply of hardwood in this region the implement business turned more and more to metal.

George B. Hartman in "The Iowa Sawmill Industry," in the Iowa Journal of History and Politics, January 1942, Volume XI, Number 1, showed that the decline in the production of lumber in Iowa was due to: 1. Decline in forest area; 2. Decline in quality of the timber; 3. Reluctance of Iowa's wood-using industries to use lumber sawed in Iowa.

The presence in Iowa of hardwood species with durable wood contributed greatly to the extension of railroads throughout the state by providing ample supplies of ties, piling and bridge timbers.

Sawmills of all types have served the farmers more than industrial plants. At present there are about a thousand mills in Iowa, a considerable reduction in the last twenty years. Most of the mills are portable and move about to wherever farmers may have a few trees to saw. Their method of doing business is usually crude. They will charge probably from \$5.00 to \$10.00 per thousand board feet for sawing. Very few sawmillers buy logs, and fewer buy standing timber because they have no outlet for the material. Few keep records of the amount of material they cut and many do not keep accounts.

The portable mills rarely saw material which is true in dimension. In this way they are wasteful because the lumber they produce can be used only for the crudest structures or for the crudest uses in common farm buildings. Few mills have auxiliary equipment which might enable them to resaw slabs for small dimensions or to plane, resaw or otherwise remanufacture lumber. Rare indeed is the millman who dries his lumber

before it is used or sold, and he is incapable or disinterested in advising the farmer for whom he saws how the lumber may be piled for proper air-drying. Furthermore, the millman has become an advocate of the use of green lumber, for he finds that it is easier to get custom sawing where the log owner can immediately use the newly-sawed lumber. This practice appears to the millman as the only one which will enable him to compete with the lumberyard who delivers lumber on demand. So ingrained has become this practice that many millmen actually believe that native Iowa woods can only be used green. They have accepted the arguments, against the use of it dry, as unsurmountable, actually using the arguments to get orders for green lumber or to convince the farmer that he should use native lumber green.

The portable mills have been called upon to "clean-out" the woods, thereby cutting small, thrifty, growing trees without getting much lumber, but at the demand of the farmer who wants more grass in his woods in order that they will be better pastures. Few millmen have realized that this practice has made them little if any profits, and has, in addition, lessened their chances to establish and maintain a good business for themselves as sawmillers. Many millmen maintain that the only way they can get custom sawing is to take the "clearing" jobs, or to saw small trees.

Some few sawmillers buy tracts of timber. Rarely do such millers buy timber by scale, but their purchases are on the lump sum basis. A walk through the timber with mental notes on what it contains results in an offer which is usually in the \$100 class, seldom are the offers on a board foot or piece basis. The farmer who sells rarely knows the volume contents or the quality of the materials he sells. More often he is primarily interested in having the land cleared and getting a "little something for the trees," than in selling a product for all it is worth. The buyer, under such circumstances, is urged by the seller to "take everything" regardless of size. The buyer therefore makes an offer which will enable him to cut both the small and large, good and bad trees. Sales of timber are so few that no established stumpage prices have been developed for many years. However, sales range from \$1.00 to \$20.00 per thousand, with the majority from \$5.00 to \$10.00.

Within recent years the mills have protested that the farmers cannot cut logs correctly, consequently they cannot buy logs from the farmers.

The mills who buy and sell material dispose of their prod-

ucts to tie buyers, to box factories, for bridge timbers, for foundry forms, and an occasional sale is made to the few wood-working or wood-using industries which remain. The latter, however, prefer to buy material from mills who do a better job of sawing, supply dry material, and supply it consistently, all of which few Iowa mills are capable of doing.

The most regrettable practice is that of the so-called "tie-hacks." These are ordinary portable or crude stationary mills, financed usually by an out-of-the-state firm. The hackers buy pieces of timber by lump sum, or with the tie as the unit of measurement. Prices paid vary from 4 cents to 25 cents per tie. The contract, if the parties bother to write one, stipulate that payment is to be made for the timber at so much per tie. Rarely is mention made of the clear lumber which a log will yield outside of the inner tie timber, which goes to the tie-hack "for producing the ties." This lumber is shipped to the financing company or sold locally to any takers, usually at fair prices. Since such lumber is from the outer portion of large logs it grades high. The piece of timber is left worthless as producing timber, any tree small, or large, which will make at least one tie is taken. Tie-hackers have been fortunate enough to be the only ones bidding for many good timber tracts. Invariably the sellers have, too late, regretted the sale.

WARTIME MARKETS FOR IOWA FOREST PRODUCTS

Raw Material—Stumpage prices have not become any more clearly defined in spite of more demands for the materials of the forests. Nor have the sales been for a higher price. Sales have been for the low range of from \$10.00 to \$20.00 per acre. (Note the continued practice of selling without knowledge of the true content of the stand.) Stumpage deals have been from \$4.00 to \$10.00 per thousand board feet, Doyle scale.

Mills continue to dislike to take logs from farmers. This in spite of shortage of labor to get out the logs themselves.

In northeastern Iowa war industries have been actively buying basswood. Basswood has been bought at \$10 stumpage; red and white oak and hard maple, \$7 to \$12; cottonwood, ash and elm, \$8, by mills who convert the logs into box material. Basswood and maple logs sell at \$35 per M at the mill, cottonwood at \$25 per M. Basswood and maple lumber at mills will sell at from \$35 to \$45 per M., and cottonwood \$25 to \$30.

White oak has been sold only in very limited amounts. Specifications for war purposes have been so high that little suitable material is found in Iowa.

Numerous buyers are asking for logs and lumber at prices too low to induce a large flow of material. Species sought are basswood, oak, birch, elm, cottonwood and ash. Most mills consider it more profitable to saw on custom for farmers or saw for the farmer trade. This is more true in southeast Iowa than in the northeast. Farmers are paying from \$30 to \$50 per thousand board feet for native lumber, according to grade, size and species.

Black Walnut—Walnut has an individual status. A material which has always commanded a good price for good material, walnut is now sought in considerable quantity for gunstocks, war-planes and fighter boats. Five mills turn out gunstock blanks, two at Dubuque, and one at West Des Moines, Burlington and Council Bluffs. Many small mills saw walnut flitches to supply to these or other plants. In addition there are several buyers, notably at Des Moines, who buys for shipment to Kansas City. Prices to the owners vary from \$50 to \$250 per thousand board feet at mills. Walnut buyers encounter many difficulties in obtaining material. For gunstocks the material must be clear of all defects, even small sound knots. A good price is paid for trees which will produce gunstock material. Sales at good prices lead tree owners to think they have high value material in every walnut tree on their place, whereas, high quality trees are not common. Unfortunately the sales at high prices have received considerable publicity which has not emphasized the fact that high-value walnut does not “just grow,” but needs to be developed under favorable forest conditions. Walnut trees in yards, along fence rows, and in pastures are rarely high quality trees. They are apt to be short-trunked, crooked, defective, or to contain metal. Buyers spend much time, travel and money locating material, much of which is spent in looking at trees which they will not buy. Furthermore, walnut owners who have good material may hold out for higher prices and occasion more and more travel, time, and expense on the part of several buyers, in efforts to buy the logs to meet their contracts. During wartime when travel is restricted and labor conditions are a big factor, there is a great need to determine where merchantable material stands and in what quantity it can be obtained in order to speed up production of a material badly needed for the war effort.

MARKETING PROGRAM OF PUBLIC AGENCIES

Extension Service of U. S. Department of Agriculture

This work is carried on by extension foresters attached to

the staff of Iowa State College. The extension foresters devote their entire time to farm forestry education. With the advent of World War II the extension program was modified to enable the greatest contribution to the war effort. Stated in outline form the objects of this program are:

- a. Prevent serious destruction of the woodland resources.
- b. Promote local use of home-grown wood to replace wood from other regions or other materials in war industries and to release shipping facilities for war purposes.
- c. Supply farmers with building material needed to produce, harvest and store larger wartime stocks of food.
- d. Stimulate production of fuelwood to avoid critical fuel shortages and to relieve transportation facilities.
- e. Protect farmers from unscrupulous buyers and help them market woodland products at fair prices.

To enable the extension foresters to cope with the varying problems in different parts of the state, the state is divided into ten geographical units. Each unit is suitable for handling by one extension forester.

In each county where extension work in wartime marketing of forest products is carried, a committee on farm forestry is set up by the County Farm Bureau. The Farm Forestry Committees consist altogether of farmers, but a business man or a sawmill operator may be one member. These committees formulate (a) a long time plan for farm forestry in the county; (b) formulate policies under which the work will be carried out, and (c) make contacts for and grant authority to the farm foresters.

Woodland Phase—The plan involves a woodland phase by which the farmers are given assistance in (a) estimating merchantable timber; (b) measuring and marking timber for various wood products; (c) estimating home-use needs; (d) estimating surplus material which could be sold; (e) aid in locating sawmills; (f) aid in cooperative use of tools, equipment and labor; (g) recommendations on methods of falling; log-making, transporting, peeling or barking of logs; and the use to be made of poor logs and slashings; (h) recommendations for future use and care of woods.

Marketing Phase—The marketing phase of the work involves the direction of woodland products to the home market, the farm, preferably the farm on which it is grown or in the immediate neighborhood, and to war industries. In each county lists are to be maintained of (a) farmers having timber, lumber and timber products for sale; (b) "outside markets;" (c)

sawmills; (d) wood or lumber needed by farmers. Every possible aid is given to farmers who need lumber or timbers, posts or fuel-wood in order to keep them producing a maximum amount of food.

Aid is planned for groups of farmers in arranging financial backing to accumulate and season native wood on their farms or for immediate local distribution.

The farm forester or extension forester assists in contacting sawmills, furnishing information on mill, drawing up sales contracts, and furnishing information on uses of native wood on farms.

As a sub-phase of the marketing phase of the program special attention is given to the marketing of black walnut for gunstocks, war planes and fighter boats. The feature of this is an inventory of the existing merchantable black walnut which will place in the hands of the government the exact location of all standing black walnut trees. This could be used in case an organized plan of getting the material is necessary.

All producers of walnut and all manufacturers of gunstocks will be located and their needs determined. Efforts will be made to direct a steady flow of black walnut to supply demands to keep the guns, planes and ships rolling off production lines.

Farmers will be given instructions by groups or by printed material, radio and newspaper articles on how to determine if they have suitable walnut material, on how to get it out, and to contact markets.

Sawmill Phase

This phase is predicated on the premise brought out in 1926 by C. L. Harrison in a thesis for Master's Degree at Iowa State College that, "Iowa produced lumber will not regain its lost prestige until improved methods of sawing, grading, and seasoning have placed it on the same quality level as lumber imported from other sections of the United States."

All sawmills are located and information secured on their facilities, abilities, capacities, and practices. Information is supplied to mills on methods of improving their methods of manufacturing and increasing their capacities. Mills are encouraged to practice seasoning of lumber. They are supplied information on logging equipment and methods. Aid is given in locating available timber and in the exchange of equipment and labor. Information is given on markets for lumber and woods products. Sawmillers are acquainted with the objectives of timber management and their cooperation is solicited

in attaining the objectives set up by the county farm forestry committee.

Fuelwood Phase

Anticipating the possibility of a fuelwood crisis during war-time, the program provides for (a) the production of fuelwood in all localities where the material can be had; (b) promoting wood cutting projects by farmers, neighborhood groups, 4-H Clubs, rural youth groups, and others; (c) and distribution of fuelwood to distressed communities.

In the entire conduct of the extension program full use is made of newspaper and radio facilities.

Special Marketing Facilities

Late in 1942 the United States Forest Service initiated special action programs to expedite the flow of woods material to war industries and to farms where it would aid the farmer to keep his food production up. This work was conducted in cooperation with the Iowa State Conservation Commission under direction of G. B. MacDonald, State Forester. Three farm foresters were placed in three districts in eastern Iowa under this program. A farm forester of the Soil Conservation Service located on a special woodland management project in Allamakee County works cooperatively with both the Extension Service and the Forest Service-State Conservation Commission Marketing Programs.



A FOREST HYMN

The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave
And spread the roof above them—ere he framed
The lofty vault, together and roll back
The sound of anthems, in the darkling wood,
Amid the cool and silence, he knelt down
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication.