



History of the Lumber Industry of America, Vol. 2 (Classic Reprint)

James Elliott Defebaugh

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Excerpt from History of the Lumber Industry of America, Vol. 2

The first volume of this work was devoted to certain general subjects and to eastern Canada; this volume takes up the history of the lumber industry of the United States in detail. An appropriate beginning is found in connection with white pine. It is possible that the first trees cut on American soil by white men were yellow pine; and during certain periods the southern wood, perhaps, contributed more largely to the export trade of the colonies and of the United States than did white pine; but the latter was earlier the basis for an industry of magnitude, and, until the close of the Nineteenth Century, furnished more than any other one species, or more than any group of related species, to the internal commerce of the country.

While the southern pines were and are famous in the export trade, they supplied at home, until within a generation, hardly more than a local requirement; whereas white pine was in demand almost everywhere throughout the continent and sold in large quantities, not only in the states in which it grew but even in states which were abundantly supplied with pines of their own growth, and, furthermore, it furnished the chief building and finishing material necessary in the development of the great prairie regions west of the Mississippi River. It was the white pine that of all the timber resources of the North American continent first attracted the attention of explorers, and it was the white pine that was first the subject of Royal or legislative enactment.

This volume of the "History of the Lumber Industry of America" is, therefore, devoted very largely to the history of the white pine industry. This history is appropriately considered in its geographical relationships, and, for the sake of convenience, a beginning is made with the white pine State farthest east - a Commonwealth known for generations as the Pine Tree State, although for more than a half century pine has been second to spruce in volume of product. Beginning with Maine, the other New England states appropriately come after and then the white pine belt is followed across New York and Pennsylvania.

The history of those wonderful, virgin forests which stretched from the St. Croix River of Maine to the Red River of the North has almost been finished, and there survive only the remnants of those great resources in scattered groups of trees or in decimated woodlands, which stand as reminders of once magnificent forests of an extent and of a value to man never excelled, if equaled.

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