

When it comes to specialized equipment, Goodfellow has the goods. Among many state-of-the-art facilities, Goodfellow mentioned a high tech drying facility. “We have a unique drying facility with three vacuum kilns,” Goodfellow commented. “With a combined capacity of 51,000 board feet in just these three kilns, we can accommodate 25,000 board feet of thicker stock in the larger vacuum kiln alone. It accelerates the drying process threefold, but it also ensures keeping the bright white color of Hard and Soft Maple, and Yellow Birch.”

As for steaming capacity, Goodfellow operates a 70,000-board-foot steamer. “Goodfellow primarily steams Walnut and a bit of Cherry,” he explained. “The Cherry is a niche market and the Walnut is a given that it must be steamed. In terms of value-added products, the market seems to be coming back to purchasing width-sorted stock first and foremost, ripped material secondary and thirdly, into the cut-to-size dimension products. We have the assets and the machinery to accommodate the demand with four rip-saws lined up to do custom ripping and surfacing, and a dimension facility to do the cross cutting. Demand for certain dimension products decreased in 2008, but we’ve seen it building back up month-by-month, and we’re prepared to meet that demand.”

Carrying a sizeable inventory of tropical and exotic Hardwoods, as well, he noted, “We import approximately 250 containers annually of exotic Hardwoods. Seventy percent of that is Sapele and African Mahogany, which is what the market is demanding right now. We supply the entire array in another 25 species beyond that, but the volume and demand is not as significant.”

Goodfellow also offers Hardwood slabs. “The slabs are a unique endeavor. There’s a fashion demand for slabs, which are live sawn large pieces of domestic Hardwood. We offer domestic slabs of Walnut, Cherry, Red Elm, White Ash, Red and White Oak, Hard and Soft Maple, white pine and the entire array of domestic species. They’re generally anywhere from 24 to 60 inches wide with a live edge on either side, and anywhere from 4 to 20 feet long. Ideal for anyone who wants to make a boardroom table, a coffee table, or any kind of furniture with the live edge look, which is popular right now.”

The full line of Goodfellow’s Hardwood slabs is available online at www.goodfellowinc.com. “You can view every slab front and back, and dimensionally on our website. Just pick your slab and have it put on any mixed load anywhere in the U.S.”

Transportation is handled through a fleet of the company’s own trucks, a company owned rail spur, along with common carriers. “Our fleet of curtain side trucks is mainly for distribution within Canada. We started using curtain side trucks 20 years ago. They’re recognized throughout North America, because our trailers are very distinctive. They carry our logo and they represent the identity of our company, that we’re delivering everywhere all the time.”


Known as ‘The Wood Specialists’—Goodfellow Inc. handles a broad base of products that gained them recognition as a specialty one-stop-shop. “The Wood Specialist is a characterization that’s not based solely on the products we offer,” Goodfellow commented. “It’s based on our



Lumber is being inspected by U.S. Sales Representative Stefan Sobczak, U.S. Lumber Manager Gabriel Laplante and Patrick Goodfellow after being processed through the planer.



values and having our representatives very well trained and versed in the various products we carry. Being a specialist in terms of the variety of stock we carry, yes, there are not many places where a customer can put together a just-in-time load of 12 items within a 15-minute phone call. Those are the kinds of services we offer. That’s what makes us ‘The Wood Specialists’, our ability to condense what may have been a three to five-hour procedure for a purchaser to meet all of his purchasing

Continued on page 22



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GOODFELLOW – Continued from page 21

needs, and within 15 minutes we can cover his needs.”

Goodfellow takes extra measures to ensure the quality of their products. “We treat our green lumber with white gloves,” he explained. “When you



Patrick Goodfellow and Zhili Cheng at the Drummondville, QC, facility, which is the largest drying operation in Quebec. Over 80 percent of the production from this facility is exported.

have 50,000 feet of 12/4 Walnut on sticks, that’s a quarter-million dollar investment. We pride ourselves on our amount of covered space that protects our lumber. Our dry kilns are also under cover. We load and unload the kilns and put it on the truck, all under cover to protect it from the elements.”

Offering multiple products that contribute towards the Leadership in Energy

and Environmental Design program, the company has a solid commitment to environmental concerns. In 2005, Goodfellow obtained the

SmartWood certification from the Forest Stewardship Council.

Due to the fire risk nature of the lumber business, the operation has 30 volunteer firemen on its staff, and has 6-fire trucks at the facility.

Involved in recycling efforts, Goodfellow’s 31 buildings in Delson are steel structures that come from former buildings, including the Centre Paul Sauvé in Montreal, Canadian tire stores and former government buildings. All wood waste including cut offs, cut backs, shavings and chips, are considered a resource and are recovered to serve as fuel in low-emission boilers used to heat the buildings and operate the kilns.

With a 24/7 mentality, Goodfellow Inc. operates 24 hours a day Monday through Saturday. “We can serve people overnight 400 miles away; that’s what it’s all about,” said Goodfellow.

Goodfellow Inc. is a member of the National Hardwood Lumber Association.

For more information visit www.goodfellowinc.com. ■

NEIMAN REID – Continued from page 9

Forest Stewardship Council chain-of-custody certified, the company is also certified in heat treatment to fulfill the needs of export markets. Banks said, “Our product lines are always changing with market demand. Lumber is a natural resource and, as inventories run low, we are seasoned at developing new programs and maintaining responsible forestry.”

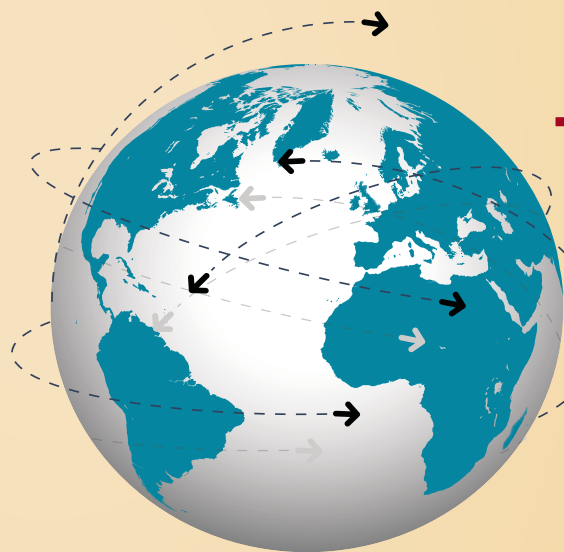
Founded in 1948 by Robert M. Neiman and Robert L. Reed, Neiman Reed began as an idea between two U.S. Marine officers who met serving their country during World War II. During this period of time, Neiman and Reed developed a close relationship and decided upon leaving the Marines, they would go into business together.

By April of 1948, Neiman Reed Lumber and Supply Co. was born. Taking over the former site of Alert Lumber in Van Nuys, CA, its primary markets were wholesale lumber and plywood.

In 1963 the company created a subsidiary called Neiman Reed’s Lumber City to operate a home and garden improvement center on a five-acre site in Chatsworth in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. Two years later, the decision was made to go ahead with multiple Lumber City locations. Lumber City #2 opened in 1967 on a site adjacent to the original wholesale operation on Burbank Boulevard in Van Nuys.

Prior to that time, and almost from the beginning, the company operated what had become an active retail “do-it-yourself” business in front of the wholesale operation. At first, the retail aspect of the company business sold only lumber and operated only on weekends, when all traditional lumberyards were closed. In 1948 and for some years, Neiman Reed was the only lumberyard in the area to stay open for weekends. That “new” concept in retailing back in 1948 came from the request of nearby owners of a new housing tract who had plenty of projects to complete. The “cash and carry” business was so successful that first weekend that they never again closed on a weekend. Slowly, paint and hardware and building materials were

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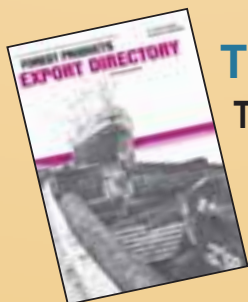
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added to the product mix.

With dramatic changes in the home-center market during the late 1980's and early 1990's, Lumber City repositioned itself with the onslaught of the "big box" stores. With a strong commitment to quality in service and products, their affiliated home centers (averaging about 30,000-square-foot per store) redefined their strongest market areas and have locations in Thousand Oaks, Agoura Hills, Moorpark, Simi Valley, Burbank, La Crescenta/Tujunga, Glendale, South Lake Tahoe, Mammoth Lakes, and Big Bear. Formerly known as California Do-it Centers, all stores have been undergoing a design and name change as DIY Home Centers with their distinctive red and black colors. The Glendale store retains its original name: Virgil's Hardware, Home and Garden Center.

Today Neiman Reed Lumber Co. employs 40 people in sales and operations at the Panorama City yard. It's headed by Vice President Ed Langley, General Manager Tim Cheney, Sales Manager Scott MacKechnie and Operations Manager John Maraganis. Support personnel are located at the company's general offices.

Owner and President Jess Ruf keeps tabs on the 10-store-home-center chain with locations in South Lake Tahoe, Mammoth Lakes, Big Bear, Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, Simi Valley, Agoura Hills, Burbank, La Crescenta and Glendale, and the wholesale lumber operation. The general offices also oversee an affiliated 10-store chain, Patioworld.

Offering just-in-time delivery, Neiman Reed specializes in mixed truckloads to its broad base of industrial accounts in the southwestern U.S., most serviced by its own fleet of trucks. "We have seven 18-wheelers and two bobtails that go out twice a day for delivery," said Purchasing/Sales Agent John Banks. "About 90 percent of the operation is covered with sheds. Most stock comes in paper wrapped so the wood is not affected by weather elements to begin with," he continued. "Our lumberyard is covered, taking that extra measure to ensure quality of the product when it arrives."

When asked what sets Neiman Reed Lumber apart from other distributors, Banks commented, "The Neiman Reed Advantage, as we like to say, makes us one of the largest stocking distributors in the United States. We carry a diverse inventory and we are a custom one-stop-shop. For example, if a customer is building a high-end custom door, they can get any species of lumber in softwoods or hardwoods they're



Offering just-in-time delivery, Neiman Reed specializes in mixed truckloads to its broad base of industrial accounts in the southwestern U.S., most serviced by its own fleet of trucks.

going to need, plus we can provide the lower grades of lumber to crate it."

Neiman Reed's distribution center is served by the Union Pacific railroad. Stock arrives daily by truck, van, rail and container, including overseas shipments originating from six continents. Lumber and plywood are sourced from many domestic mills, but a large percentage of the inventory mix now includes imports from South America, Canada, China, New Zealand, and Europe.

"Neiman Reed is a name synonymous with service and integrity," Senior Vice President Ed Langley states on the company website. "We are keenly focused on meeting our customer needs each day by building strong ties with both suppliers and customers. As the laws of supply and demand dictate our industry, we work diligently to have the vast inventory available, priced competitively, to ensure next-day deliveries for most orders. We pledge to be good listeners, to act responsively, and to come to you when you need us. We appreciate long-standing business relationships. By building these relationships and understanding the dynamics of a fast-changing marketplace, Neiman Reed pledges to be poised for the challenges of the future."

For more information visit www.neimanreed.com. ■

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CHB Photos – Continued from page 10



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Indrajit Majumdar and Ralph Spaans, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Forest Industry Division, Sault Ste. Marie, ON; and Iain Macdonald, UBC Center for Advanced Wood Processing, Vancouver, BC



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Rick Ekstein, Weston Forest Products, Mississauga, ON; Rod Renwick, Northland Corp., Montréal, QC; and Elizabeth and Darren Lindsay, Empire Forest Products, Burlington, ON



René Richard, Produits Forestiers Saint-Armand Inc., Saint-Armand, QC; Serge Noel, PG Model, Saint-Édouard-de-Lotbinière, QC; and Richard Morin, LCN Inc., Saint-Félix-de-Kingsey, QC

Continued on page 27

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Denis Sarrazin Jr. and Sonia Pelchat, DM Sarrazin Inc., La Conception, QC; and Claude Cadrin, C. A. Spencer Inc., Laval, QC



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MONTREAL WOOD CONVENTION – Continued from page 11

At the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, the Montreal Wood Convention held conferences on economy and markets. Participants received presentations by David Crowe, chief economist and vice president of the National Association of Home Builders, on the U.S. housing market; Bob Berg, Senior Economist, of RISI, on the timber market outlook in North America; and Charles Tardif, vice president of Maibec and member of the Softwood Lumber Board (SLB), on the results of the promotion program led by the SLB in the United States.

The next day of the MWC, delegates were invited to attend a technical seminar where manufacturers shared their vision for the future in regard to innovation and technology.

In the future, the fourth edition of MWC will take place on March 22-24, 2016, at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. For more information, visit online at www.montrealwoodconvention.com. ■

SHOT SHOW – Continued from page 13

ment and tactical products and services only.

The SHOT Show is owned and operated by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, a trade association for the firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting sports industry. ■

SURFACES – Continued from page 12

of the flooring, stone and tile marketplace. Surfaces is promoted as the largest event in North America showcasing design and construction surface product for the residential and commercial industries. This year, Surfaces also took part in Design & Construction Week, with attendance growing by 5 percent, which brought together five shows co-located in one city, creating the largest showcase event for design and building products assembled in North America.

More than 750 exhibiting companies filled 350,000 square feet of space at Surfaces. The Wood Floor Covering Association is the official sponsor of Surfaces.

Additionally, more than 90 educational offerings for attendees at Surfaces included traditional classroom format sessions, show floor demos and walk and talk tours. Topics were designed specifically for floor cov-



Richard Rooney, Rooney Hardwood Floors, Morrison, CO; and Barbara Titus and John Klepper III, Sheoga Hardwood Flooring, Middlefield, OH

tendees participating in certification programs at previous events, some new certification programs were offered at Surfaces 2015. The International Standards & Training Alliance (INSTALL) Carpet and Resilient Certification was performed along with a demonstration of the INSTALL/NWFA Wood Certifi-



Jessica Hickman, Allegheny Mountain Hardwood Flooring, Emlenton, PA



Brian McGee, Mid-West Floor Co. Inc., St. Louis, MO; and John Straw and Wade Bondrowski, Mercier Wood Flooring, Montmagny, QC

cation on the show floor. The National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA) also offered the Sales Counselor Certification. Additional certifications offered included ACT, CFI, CTI, ICRI, NALFA and NFIC.

The next Surfaces show is scheduled for Jan. 19-22, 2016, at Mandalay Bay Convention Center, Las Vegas. More information is available at www.tisewest.com. ■

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BUSINESS TRENDS ABROAD

Italian Woodworking Biesse S.p.A. Updates Business Plan

The Board of Directors of Italian woodworking company Biesse S.p.A. approved the update to its three-year 2015-2017 business plan as a result of the initiatives included and following an analysis of the international macro-economic situation.

According to the updated business plan, annual compounded growth in consolidated revenues will be 8.1 percent, with an absolute value of



EUR540 million in 2017. Under this new plan by 2017 EBITDA should reach EUR71 million with an EBITDA margin of 13.1 percent. The new plan also includes total investments in excess of EUR53 million in the three-year period of 2015-2017.

"The plan is starting from the solid basis coming from 2013, that Biesse closed substantially in line

with those of the previous year, but with incoming orders in spite of an economic climate that remains clouded by stagnation, the credit crunch and an increase in risk relating to emerging market economies," general director of the company, Stefano Porcellini commented.

"From this starting point we have approved the necessary initiatives and projects to guarantee the development of Biesse during the three year period 2014-2016, focusing more than ever on technological innovation and extending our commercial reach. The plan that has been approved anticipates average growth of 7 percent in the three year period, though it is more prudent for 2015 (in particular for the first half) where we expect to encounter increased risk relating to so-called emerging economies, confidence is higher for the two-year period 2015-16 that we believe could benefit more from the expected recovery in the economic cycle," he added.

Russia—Two major events in Russia changed the outlook for production and exports of forest products. First came Russia's involvement in Ukraine last spring, which resulted in an array of sanctions by govern-

ments in the U.S. and Europe. Later, the world market oil prices fell by over 50 percent. This price drop had major ramifications for Russia because oil is the major export commodity for the country.

Together, these two events have shaken the Russian financial institutions and will likely result in a 3-5 percent contraction in the Russian GDP in 2015, according to Fordaq Timber Network.

The real income for households in Russia is expected to decline this year for the first time in over 15 years and as a consequence, there is likely to be some serious belt-tightening throughout the country. Reduced disposable income, declining investments in construction and infrastructure, and an abysmal outlook for economic growth over the next few years are all factors that are going to negatively impact domestic consumption of wood products in Russia during 2015 and 2016.

Reduced demand for wood products domestically and cheaper Russian goods in the export market, as the result of the Rouble having lost almost 50 percent of its value, are encouraging the manufacturers of forest products to explore opportunities for increasing exportation of logs and lumber during 2015.

From August to December of 2014, the export prices for Russian softwood logs, hardwood logs and softwood lumber increased by over 50 percent in Rouble terms, while the prices in U.S. dollar terms stayed practically unchanged for logs and even fell for lumber, as reported by the Wood Resource Quarterly (WRQ).

Despite the prospects of substantially higher profits in the export market, there has not yet been a surge in export volumes of forest products from either Eastern Russia to the major market in China, or from Northwestern Russia to consumers in Europe. The shipments in the fourth quarter of 2014 were practically unchanged from the same quarter in 2013.

Inadequate ability to promptly increase timber harvests when opportunities arise, limited excess of manufacturing capacity, lack of loggers and truckers, and logistical bottle necks in the entire supply chain from the forests to the ports have made it difficult for many logging companies and sawmills to take advantage of the improved export markets so far.

France—According to officials, French sawmills are hitting hard times. "The situation is very serious, I have never been so pessimistic!," Bruno Ronzel, the head of Bois et Connexes from France's region of Franche-Comté said. Ronzel marketed 450,000 tons of wood chips, sawdust, bark and other slabs from 130 suppliers in eastern France last year. According to some professionals, the prices of sawmill by-products have experi-

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BUSINESS TRENDS ABROAD - Continued from page 29

enced a dramatic fall in France since late 2014.

Price of wood chips dropped by 20 percent, and is now stagnating. In contrast, the price of sawdust dropped by 30 percent, and continues to fall. These products have some importance in the business of sawyers.

In late 2013 and early 2014, the prices literally skyrocketed in France. Sawyers forgot the state of the timber market, which is directly dependent of a well-depressed construction market. "The high level of prices for sawmill by-products has without any doubt helped to buy very expensive logs without digging in our treasuries," said Gilles Grandpierre, head of the same sawmill in Jura region.

How do you explain this abrupt reversal of the market, which occurred at the end of the financial year 2014? "This downward trend is caused by the collapse of demand in sawdust and chips for wood pellets," he said. Bruno Ronzel also spoke about two consecutive mild winters, of which 300,000 tons imported and only 150,000 tons exported.

Some sawyers think that prices of sawmill by-products in France, which have reached these highs, have lost sight of the true nature of the sawmilling business. This is the case of Fabien Salles, a sawyer from Lozère, in southeast France. "In my opinion, I would much prefer to see a market that values my sawmill products and not my sawmill by-products. It's not bothering me if the prices of by-products are dropping, if at the same time, those of sawnwood are increasing."

Mexico—The federal government announced that wood exports are expected to increase after Mexico agreed to recognize Canada's heat-treated lumber certification program.

Under this new arrangement with Mexico, Canadian lumber producers accredited under a heat-treatment program overseen by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) are now able to export wood such as Spruce, Pine and Fir to Mexico without a phytosanitary certificate.

"I am pleased that we were successful in achieving easier access for world-class Canadian lumber," said Ed Fast, Minister of International Trade. "This will help Canadian exporters tap into the Mexican market, creating jobs and prosperity at home. Mexico offers great opportunities for Canadian businesses, this is very good news for Canada's forestry workers and their families."

This agreement between the CFIA, Natural Resources of Canada and Mexico's Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources comes as a result of discussions under the North American Plant Protection Organization Cooperative Agreement, which encourages cooperation in facilitating safe trade of plants and plant products between the United States, Mexico and Canada.

China—President Xi Jinping has signaled that all natural forests should be protected. According to Zhao Shucong, Head of the State Forestry Administration (SFA), China will stop commercial logging in natural forests in three stages.

In the first stage, commercial logging in natural forests in the state-owned forests in the Northeast and Inner Mongolia will be halted. These areas provide around 2.56 million cubic meters of logs annually. At the same time logging bans will be piloted in state-owned forest farms, collectives and individual natural forests falling outside protected forest areas.

In the second stage, commercial logging in other categories of natural forests will be phased out, but logging will continue non-natural forests falling within collective and individual non-natural forest areas. The final stage will be the cessation of commercial harvesting in all natural forests by the end of 2020.

China has implemented a Natural Forest Protection Programme (NFPP) for the past 16 years, but the forests in many provinces have not recovered as anticipated. It is estimated that almost 200 million hectares of natural forests need to be protected, but currently only 64 percent fall with the NFPP.

The loss of around 50 million cubic meters of annual harvests from the natural forests in China will add to the already huge gap between demand for timber and supply and greater reliance will fall on imports until sufficient plantation areas can be established.

Japan—Total volume of logs and other wood products in Japan is currently 10,310,000 cubic meters, which is the same volume of 2009 when the demand dropped by the Lehman shock and is 3.7 percent less than 2014. Japanese officials say the reasons are that housing starts for this year will be less than 2014 and the climbing costs of imported products by weak yen about 120 yen for the dollar.

The overall view is that demand for building materials will decrease and imports will be curtailed. Log volumes are expected to stay unchanged,

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BUSINESS TRENDS ABROAD - Continued from page 30

but lumber volume would drop compared to 2014 because the import of lumber in the first half of 2014 was heavy in an anticipation of active demand before the consumption tax increase. As a result, a decrease of North American, European and Russian lumber imports is expected to be rather large. ■

BUSINESS TRENDS U.S.A.

Lake States

According to sources in the Lake States region, demand is down in certain species of hardwood lumber. In Indiana, a hardwood supplier commented, "If you have certain items, you can move them. Prices are falling and from what I can tell the demand is falling. Poplar and Red Oak are our two biggest species. Sycamore, Sassafras and Poplar are still pretty strong. Red Oak has diminished along with upper grade Hickory."

As for availability of raw materials, he said, "We're not having trouble getting logs right now, but I do expect some shortages as we move along. Inventory levels are up a little bit from where they have been the last few months."

When asked about prices he said, "The cants went up for a little while, but I think that has leveled off now. If fuel prices stay down we'll see some major improvements in pricing."

He indicated his export markets are strong.

As for other issues he said, "The refineries that build wood roads from timbers are probably going to slow down, which will decrease demand on those items and soften pricing."

Marketing to distribution yards and end users, the supplier said, "We've been getting faxes offering green items and that's not a good sign. That usually means that log inventories are up and they are looking to move some lumber. Most of the market conditions today are controlled by what species mix you have and are able to offer."

A hardwood supplier in Wisconsin said his overall market activity is a little worse than it was six months earlier. "Over production is part of the problem," he noted. "I think the market will improve over the next couple of months as some of that inventory moves out."

At press time the source said his export markets were slower than normal. "It's standard for overseas markets to slow down during Chinese New Year, but this year was noticeably different. They halted ordering before, during and after Chinese New Year. In the past, orders have been plentiful before the New Year because they are trying to get as much in as possible. This year was different and I think a lot of people have some pent up inventory as a result."

Handling 4/4 Ash, Beech, Birch, Cherry, Hickory, Hard and Soft Maple and Red and White Oak, the contact said, "4/4 Ash is moving well in all grades. No. 1 Common, 4/4 Hard Maple and 4/4 Select and Better Hard Maple have slowed down. Our inventory levels are about average for this time of year. We don't expect to really start moving volumes until the third quarter."

As for prices, a contact in Ohio said, "Hard and Soft Maple are down a little bit but I expect them to improve in a couple of months. Everything else has been pretty steady across the board."

The supplier said his export markets have been affected recently due to container availability shortages. "The demand for the product is there, but we can't ship it if containers aren't available."

Looking ahead, the source has a positive outlook from his customers' perspective. "All markets seem to be doing okay right now. My customers think the economy will continue to improve and so will business." ■

Northeast

Hardwood suppliers in the Northeastern region report spotty business activity heading into the second quarter of 2015. "The year started off a little slow for us," a contact in New York noted. "We've seen some inconsistencies compared with last year. Business has been noticeably slower."

He continued, "There was a spike in the economy last year and a pent up demand for most items. When the economy was really down, people held off on spending and purchasing the things that they needed, so there was a pent up need for things for about 10 months. I think it just ran its course up until last fall and then things settled down. Last year was a better year through even the winter months that are not normally strong. This year I think the recovery has leveled off a little bit, coupled with bad weather. We had snowstorms that affected wholesale and retail businesses this year. So a portion of it is weather related."

Distributing domestic and imported hardwood species, a source in Con-

Continued on page 32

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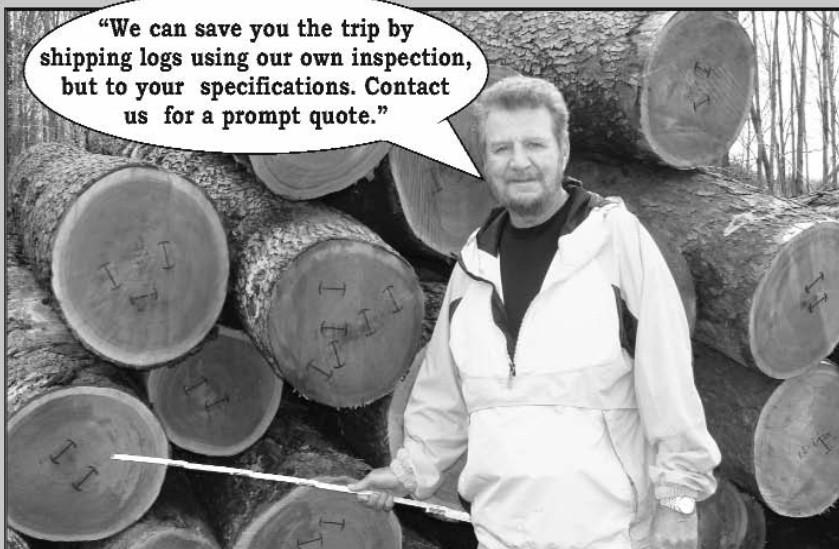
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necticut said, "Cherry is still strong. Despite its spike in pricing, Black Walnut is still very strong. Hickory is moving well and Yellow Poplar continues to be in good demand. Soft Maple is pretty hot because a lot of the kitchen cabinet manufacturers are making paint grade products, where something like Soft Maple is utilized a lot. Hard Maple and Red Oak are slow right now. Although Ash is strong mostly due to exports, domestically there is not a great demand for Ash."

A contact in Massachusetts said his inventory levels are a little lower. "Sales are slower so we reduced our inventory proportionately according to sales activity. Prices have stayed pretty steady for the last few months except for Walnut, which continues to rise. Some of the imported hardwoods like Mahogany have been moving so they've gone up in price. Most everything else has stayed pretty steady since the beginning of the year."

As for availability he said, "Lumber supply seems to be pretty good. Most mills and people that we buy from have good inventories, whereas a year ago going into last spring, lumber supply was tight and we had trouble getting what we needed. The only items that we're having trouble with today are specialty items like Birds Eye and Curly Maple."

In reference to export markets he said, "We don't export, but everybody is affected by exports. The exports are absorbing most of the Ash production in our part of the country right now. When exports slow down the availability of some species will get better for a while."

Handling transportation with his own fleet of trucks, the supplier said, "All of our markets are regional in the New England area. In general, transportation is very expensive. Bringing in lumber from outside of New England is a challenge."

As for what remains in 2015 he said, "Once we move into the warmer months business activity should pick up considerably. I think it will be a good year overall." ■

Southeast

Hardwood suppliers in the Southeast said market activity is a little off from the same time period last year. "Inventory levels are about the same and prices are a little down," a contact in North Carolina noted. "We anticipate they will continue to be down going forward."

Primarily handling Poplar, he commented, "The lower grades are a little weak. The Asian market for Chinese New Year was a little more lengthy earlier this year."

As for transportation issues, he said, "Transportation has been a nightmare so far this year. It's a combination of the West Coast strikes that were affecting the East Coast shipments, and just overall exports were competing for space. Where we used to be able to get a container in a day, it was taking up to a week's notice."

He added, "Springtime will improve conditions."

A Tennessee hardwood distributor offered, "The market for hardwoods is fair right now. I think the economy has slowed down since last year, especially in the export markets."

As far as moving lumber he said, "The best two items we have currently are Ash and Poplar. Our inventory levels are higher and green prices are down. I think prices will continue to drop."

He said his customers are busy but not robust. "They are staying busy, but nobody is working overtime or ordering extra."

He continued, "I think business will improve as the weather gets warmer, but I don't think it will be as good as it was last year."

In Georgia, a contact said logging conditions and log supplies are above normal levels. "Green lumber production is about the same as last year's levels, maybe slightly higher," he explained. "Demand for low grade Oak is higher right now from the flooring markets. Ash and Cottonwood species are moving at a strong pace, but log decks on those species are lower than normal."

As for transportation issues, the hardwood supplier said, "Fuel rates went down earlier this year, which helped for a while. They are starting to rise again, and as we get into spring and summer they will continue to go up. Availability of trucks hasn't been an issue up until this point. Again, the spring and summer months will probably change that as the produce season moves in and competition for trucks increases."

Serving mostly end users, he said his customers are looking forward to a busy season. "Most of our customers are expecting to be busy this year. Personally, I expect activity to be about the same as last year. If we see any increase it will be minimal." ■

West Coast

With the recent Longshoreman's strike tentatively settled at presstime, hardwood suppliers on the West Coast report slower activity in recent weeks. A contact in California said he is seeing a general slowdown in

Continued on page 33

BUSINESS TRENDS U.S.A. -Continued from page 32

the economy. "There's a political climate in California right now that's not great," he said. "We experienced dock problems and were unable to get containers unloaded due to the strike. That was a real problem with our imported species."

Carrying Alder, Poplar and Basswood, he indicated the upper grades are what seem to be moving. "We don't seem to be moving very much Red Oak. Rift and Quartered White Oak is moving fairly well, especially in the flooring industry."

He mentioned he's keeping inventory levels low. "There are a lot of re-load centers here on the West Coast and we can just pick things up as we need them. Most people are keeping their inventories similar to their customers, on an 'as-needed' basis."

In Washington, a hardwood supplier said prices are steady. "Prices went up for a little while but everything seems to have flattened out now. The weather is going to be getting better so there will be more logging going on."

Marketing to flooring, moulding and millwork, and hospitality furniture manufacturers, the source said, "People manufacturing high-end furniture are dying on the vine right now. The only furniture that is being sold is at discount stores. Upholstered furniture seems to be doing really well though."

Going forward the contact said he expects conditions to improve slightly.

Another contact in California indicated his overall activity was good, but he is cautious about the remainder of the year. "Hardwood activity is very good right now," he offered. "We ended and started the year very busy but are cautious moving forward, almost waiting for the other shoe to drop."

Handling 4/4 through 16/4 Alder, Ash, Red and Sap Birch, Cherry, Hickory, Hard and Soft Maple, Red and White Oak, Poplar and Rift and Quartered White Oak, the source isn't having many issues with availability.

"We are getting everything we need except for the thicker stocks, like 10/4 through 16/4. Walnut is a problem child. Our customers don't care what is in the rulebook for Walnut, they just want maximum heartwood and minimum defects. I think Walnut should be graded like an Oak board and let the market take care of the price."

When asked about transportation, he said, "Shipments have been running a little slow until just recently."

While his operation is Forest Stewardship Council certified he said he hasn't received many inquiries for the products. "We're not being asked as much about certification unless it is a government job where money is no object. We may end up dropping our certification because of the decline in interest from most of our customers."

He concluded, "I'm really not certain about what the rest of the year will bring, but we will be keeping any debt to a minimum going forward." ■

BUSINESS TRENDS CANADA

ONTARIO

Sawmills report that flooring manufacturers delayed purchasing Oak and Hard Maple, causing sawmillers to amend their production of these species and that of Red Oak, by using other species. Some areas reported a shortage of Ash and Aspen, with marginally adequate supplies of Basswood.

Ash maintained its strong market demand, even though there was a hold on Chinese exports due to their New Year holiday. Prices were reported to be firm. Production of Aspen did not increase to match the growing demand for this species on the market. Competition from paper mills limited the volume of logs for lumber production, resulting in kiln dried inventories being affected as well. The low supply affected wholesalers' business with their customers and potential customers. This caused price pressure for this species, with some upward movement being noted.

Basswood sales were described as solid, and business being good. Contacts reported activity involving the blind and shutter market was mostly steady with some gains compared to over a year ago. Demand from millwork and moulding manufacturers has also increased, due to the improvement in the residential construction in the U.S. In consumer trends, it has become fashionable to use painted finishes. This is noted especially in the cabinet sector, which prompted more business for decorative trim and parts. Buyers increased their winter purchasing in anticipation of future needs. Production is readily being absorbed for green No. 2B and Better production, and prices are reported as firm.

Birch demand was reported as steady, with the Common grades appearing to attract more interest than the upper grades. Inventories were described as manageable and prices stable for both green and kiln dried

Continued on page 34

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stocks.

Recently, the U.S. National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) projected housing starts for 2015 and 2016. The forecast pegged total units at 1,162,000 for this year and 1,463,000 for next year; the year-over-year increases are 15.5 percent and 25.9 percent, respectively. They estimate single family construction at 804,000 units for 2015 and 1,102,000 units for 2016; the gains are 25.4 percent and 37.1 percent.

Compared to historical results, these estimates for total and single family housing starts are still below normal levels. Consequently, this is a positive trend, and one that bodes well for Canadian manufacturers of Hardwood flooring and other products, with the upside potential in new residential construction south of the border. However, two obstacles noted are transportation shortages and available skilled labor that the industry faces. Those same two challenges would face flooring manufacturers and distributors, as well as all other suppliers of building materials and components.

The houses already under construction are to be considered as well; that number is much higher at the start of this year compared to the beginning of 2014. The growing amount of money invested in new home construction is even more evidence of expanding market opportunities for flooring. The annual rate of expenditures at the end of 2014 for single family housing was \$202.5B, up 11 percent from a year earlier. Investments in multifamily housing hit \$46.6B during the same timeframe for a gain of 26.8 percent from a year earlier.

The remodeling sector is another major contributor to solid wood flooring demand. Unlike last year's investments in new residential construction, repairs and remodeling tanked in the U.S., continues the NAHB report. Month-over-month drops throughout 2014 ended with December being down 30.6 percent from December 2013. The loss was almost as much money as multifamily investments. The average annual rate for repair and remodeling expenditure since 2003 is \$124.7B (US); December 2014 investments were \$100.5B (US), the lowest amount since June 2003.

In early February of this year, The Honorable Dr. K. Kellie Leitch, Minister of Labor and Minister of Status of Women, along with Nina Grewal, Member of Parliament for Fleetwood-Port Kells, announced Government of Canada funding for a project to promote the advancement of women working in the Canadian woodworking industry through mentorship.

"We know that when women succeed, our entire country prospers," said the Minister.

The Wood Manufacturing Council will receive \$298,788 for their project, which will create and test a sustainable mentorship model for women employed in the woodworking industry in Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Through this project, the Wood Manufacturing Council will work with local stakeholders to develop and share the model, which will be designed to meet specific needs identified by women working in the industry. ■

QUEBEC

Over the winter, sawmills controlled Hard Maple inventory growth by shifting to other species. Hard Maple upper grades are now more in line with market demand. Flooring manufacturers are reported to have reduced their orders as they are overstocked as well. Supplies are still ample for the volume production thicknesses of No. 1 Common. Reported prices are mixed, but unchanged.

Business for Soft Maple is similar to that of Hard Maple. Consumer trends are favoring light-colored hardwoods, which influenced strong demand for this species. Also trending are the painted finishes, which provided opportunities for the lower priced species as alternatives. Supply is keeping pace with demand for this species, and mills and wholesalers noted that Soft Maple production and inventories were down. Pricing has resisted sustained pressure. It was noted that activity for kiln dried materials had not changed much.

Now that China resumed activity, the business outlook for kiln dried No. 1 Common and Better Red Oak appears to be more promising following the New Year's holiday. With a somewhat contained supply of this species since the beginning of the year, supplies range from adequate to ample depending on regions contacted, with prices being mixed. With the customary winter slowdown in construction, flooring manufacturers also reduced their purchases for the lower grades.

Overseas markets in Europe and Japan have also affected sales of White Oak.

In 2012, when the federal government tightened mortgage rules, in an effort to rein in the overheated condo markets in Toronto and Vancouver, just over two years later, many smaller cities are bearing the brunt of stricter regulations. All these factors directly impact not only single-family

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BUSINESS TRENDS CANADA - Continued from page 34

home construction, but the once robust condo construction market, which consumes significant lumber when a healthy market exists.

Winnipeg, Montreal and Moncton are now grappling with a surplus of unsold condo units driven by a surge in new construction and a dwindling supply of first-time buyers, following Ottawa's decision to limit mortgage insurance to amortization periods of 25 years or less from 30 years.

The downturn has been heavily felt in Quebec, where the boom in condo construction started in 2011 and 2012 with young buyers entering the housing market with very low-rate mortgages. Approximately a third of Quebec buyers took out mortgages with 30-year amortizations – and that number rose to 40 percent in Montreal, noted the manager.

According to a recent housing market forecast from Re/Max, similar problems affected Moncton and Halifax markets. Similar conditions were also reported in Regina, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg. The level of unsold inventory has been rising, as have rental vacancy rates, sparking concerns about overbuilding. "That's something we're keeping an eye on," said a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. senior market analyst. "At this point levels are above the five-year average in terms of completed and unoccupied units."

Montreal has been grappling with unsold condos for the past two years as builders haven't scaled back production with the softening demand. The city had a backlog of nearly 3,000 unsold units last year, yet construction starts in Montreal rose 19 percent, defying analyst expectations for a slowdown in new construction.

Desjardins' expects to see a slowdown in new construction this year if the city is to avoid a serious downturn in its condo market. However, not everyone agrees. In Montreal, a joint venture backed by Chinese investors recently broke ground on one of the city's most ambitious condo projects, a two-phase, 800-unit project known as YUL Condominiums.

"This is a world-class city which is still not seen as a condo market," said Steve Di Fruscia, CEO of Tianco Group, the Vancouver-based company developing the project with Montreal's Brivia Group. "It's just a question of time to get the local community out of the rental market and into condos."

"We are very bullish on Montreal," he said. "We think it's a great time to plant seeds. We are very hungry for some more real estate in the city." ■

NEWSWIRES

Tacoma, Washington—Northwest Hardwoods Inc. (NWH), headquartered here, has recently completed the acquisition of Industrial Timber & Lumber Company (ITL) based in Beachwood, OH.

ITL is among the largest global suppliers of North American hardwood. It sells over 200 million board feet of high quality hardwood lumber annually and has approximately 400 employees. ITL owns two integrated sawmills, four concentration yards and one dedicated service center with operations in Ohio, West Virginia, North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

"We couldn't be more pleased to acquire a great company like ITL to better serve our customers. NWH is adding a business with highly motivated and experienced employees, outstanding quality products, highly automated and efficient mills, and an attractive worldwide customer base that relies on ITL for essential products and industry-leading customer service. The highly respected ITL brand name is the perfect compliment to the NWH brand, which has been recognized as the 'Gold Standard' for hardwood for nearly 45 years," said T.J. Rosengarth, President and CEO for NWH.



T.J. Rosengarth

"Our employees are very excited about this combination of two great companies. Our customers have grown accustomed to the high quality products and industry leading service model that ITL provides. This combination with NWH will allow us to better serve those customers with an even wider array of products," said Larry Evans, president of ITL, who will continue to lead the ITL organization for NWH as it operates as a wholly owned subsidiary of NWH.

Northwest Hardwoods Inc., with approximately 1,600 employees, is a manufacturer of high quality hardwood lumber in North America. It manufactures and sells 15 species of hardwood lumber, including Alder, Oak, Maple, Cherry, Yellow Poplar and Walnut. Operations include a network of 15 primary sawmills, five concentration yards, one remanufacturing plant and regional warehouse locations to serve the customer base.

For more information visit www.northwesthardwoods.com. ■

Continued on page 36

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NEWSWIRES - Continued from page 35

Tigard, Oregon—Industry veteran Steve Erickson has landed at Bridgewell Resources LLC, headquartered here.

Bridgewell Resources is a global supplier of domestic and international wood products. With the speed and convenience of a single point of contact, Bridgewell Resources offers an in-house logistics and compliance team to help take the hassles out of importing and exporting some of the world's highest quality wood material and deliver it reliably.

With more than 25 years of experience, Erickson joins the Domestic Wood Products sales team and concentrates on selling U.S. hardwood lumber from Ash to Walnut throughout the country. He started his career with Dickerson Lumber Sales out of Wausau, WI, where he spent 15 years with the family owned lumber wholesaler. From there, Erickson went on to work for both Besse Forest Products Group, Gladstone, MI, and Tri-State Hardwood Company, South Milford, IN.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, Erickson served three years in active duty with the Army as well as an additional 10+ years with the National Guard. Erickson enjoys spending his free time golfing, fishing, hiking and camping with his wife and two kids.

Bridgewell Resources serves retailers, manufacturers and other customers. With its national network of distribution yards, reloads, and mill direct offerings, the company offers prompt delivery at competitive prices. The sales team provides a full range of services, which helps to assure quality in every purchase. Bridgewell offers port-to-port service, which includes in-house logistics, international documentation and customs compliance. It is an operating company of Atlas Holdings LLC, a Connecticut-based company that owns and operates businesses in a number of industrial sectors.

For more information visit www.bridgewellresources.com. ■

Vancouver, British Columbia—Interfor Corporation recently announced it has reached an agreement with Simpson Lumber Company LLC to acquire Simpson's sawmill operations in Meldrim, GA, Georgetown, SC, Longview, WA, and Commencement Bay, WA. The sawmill operations are located within geographic proximity of Interfor's sawmills in both the U.S. Southeast and Pacific Northwest and will fit within the company's existing operating infrastructure.

As a result of this transaction, Interfor's total capacity will increase by 30 percent to 3.1 billion board feet. The company's lumber capacity in the U.S. Southeast and Pacific Northwest will total 1.2 billion board feet and 900 million board feet respectively, representing 67 percent of the company's total pro forma capacity.

Interfor is a growth-oriented lumber company with operations in Canada and the United States. The company has a current annual production capacity of more than 2.4 billion board feet.

For more information visit www.interfor.com. ■

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IMPORT/EXPORT CALENDAR

April

Dubai International Wood and Wood Machinery Show, Dubai World Trade Center, Dubai, India. For more information: www.dubaiwood-show.com. April 14-16.

National Wood Flooring Association, Annual Convention & Wood Flooring Expo, Edward Jones Dome, St. Louis, MO. Contact: nwfa@experient-inc.com. April 28-May 1.

May

Interzum Cologne 2015, Cologne International Expocenter, Cologne, Germany. For more information: www.interzum.com. May 5-8.

Expo AMPIMM, Expo AMPIMM, Centro Banamex. For more information: www.expoampimm.com. May 26-28.

June

AHEC Hardwood Seminars, Hanoi, Vietnam. For more information: www.ahec.org. June 22-23.

20th AHEC Southeast Asia/Greater China Convention, Nanning, Guangxi. For more information: www.ahec.org. June 25-26. ■

NEWSWIRES - Continued from page 36

McDermott, Ohio—Taylor Lumber Worldwide Inc., based here, recently acquired the former Merillat Cabinet factory in Jackson, OH. The location was vacated last spring when Merillat ceased operations after more than three decades.

At press time Taylor's specific plans for the new facility had not been announced. However, the company did announce it intends to employ between 25 to 75 employees and the facility will be lumber-related.

Taylor Lumber specializes in Rift and Quarter sawn lumber. Parent company Ohio Valley International employs over 100 people in Pike and Scioto, Ohio, and Greenup, KY, counties in the forest products industry. ■

Vancouver, British Columbia—Brian Fehr, chairman and managing director of the BID Group of Companies recently announced Alistair Cook as chief executive officer.

Cook became chief executive officer after a 23-year career with Canadian Forest Products Ltd. where he served as senior vice president of operations in Canada before joining the BID Group of Companies. According to Fehr, Cook's extensive experience in the forest products sector places him in an ideal position to lead the BID Group of Companies as an industry leader in providing customer solutions for a rapidly changing, technology driven industry. He is a chartered professional accountant and has a Bachelor of Science degree in Business from Michigan Technological University, Houghton, MI.

The privately owned BID Group family of Companies has over 30 years of experience in providing industry leading solutions for its customers through such companies as Comact, PHL Equipment, Deltech, Nechako Construction Ltd. and SEC. Specializing in the forest industry, the company provides innovative, efficient and reliable equipment. The company's aim is to provide a turnkey solution that includes engineering, project management, installation, startup, and after-sales service to further its strategic services to their customers. The company has offices in 14 locations across continental North America.

For more information visit www.bidgroup.ca. ■

Alexandria, Virginia—After a quarter-century since its founding, the Tropical Forest Foundation (TFF) headquarters closed its operations. Major demonstration, training, research, and outreach centers established by TFF in Brazil, Guyana and Indonesia would continue to operate independently. TFF was founded in 1990 by the International Wood Products Association. TFF was an unprecedented partnership formed between the conservation community, government, and industry. Together, programs and projects were developed in cooperation with those in tropical countries that sought to build upon local knowledge and existing models of responsible forest management. Initial work led to identification of the potential of reduced impact logging (RIL) techniques and practices in reducing impacts linked to harvest activity. The first step was to investigate the costs and benefits of RIL, an investigation that yielded positive results. That, in turn, resulted in demonstration, training, research, and outreach centers focused on forest management and reduced impact logging, first in Brazil, then Indonesia, Guyana, and Gabon. Extensive on-the-ground training was provided to those working in industry and in government oversight agencies, students, and community enterprises. Programs introduced new concepts and practices designed to minimize forest impacts while emphasizing protection of non-timber forest values. As these centers developed they provided training and outreach services to surrounding countries, greatly expanding their influence.

More than 10,000 individuals have received TFF RIL training in the tropics since such training began in 1996. In 2013 alone, TFF's affiliated training centers in South America, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region impacted nearly 3.5 million acres of forest across three continents.

For more information visit www.tropicalforestfoundation.org. ■

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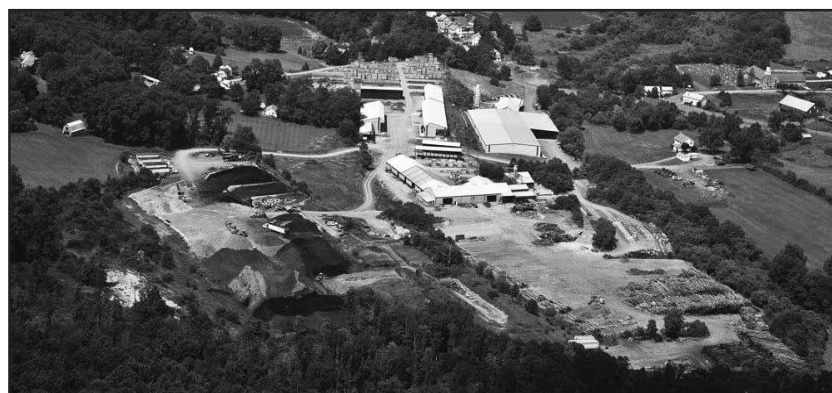
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