Selling woodlot products on Michigan farms

Frothingham Earl Hazeltine
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

IN CO-OPERATION WITH

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN COMMISSION

OF THE

STATE OF MICHIGAN

SELLING WOODLOT PRODUCTS ON MICHIGAN FARMS

By E. H. FROTHINGHAM,
Forest Examiner, Forest Service.
JULY 10, 1915.
To the Farmers of Michigan:

It is always a pleasure for the Public Domain Commission to cooperate with any of the United States departments in giving to the people of this State information which will be of benefit to them. This publication entitled "Selling Woodlot Products on Michigan Farms" is the result of such cooperation, and we feel that the data which has been so carefully gathered and intelligently compiled by the Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture will be of untold value to the farmers of Michigan, not only in advising them as to how best to harvest and dispose of the products of their woodlots, but in stimulating a greater desire for larger and better woodlots.

Very respectfully yours,

JUNIUS E. BEAL,
ALFRED J. DOHERTY,
ORAMEL B. FULLER,
FRED L. KEELER,
WILLIAM KELLY,
COLEMAN C. VAUGHAN.

Members of the Public Domain Commission.
A woodlot serving a double purpose: Protection to the orchard and wood production.
SELLING WOODLOT PRODUCTS ON MICHIGAN FARMS

CONTENTS

Page

Purpose of the bulletin 7
The woodlot situation in Michigan 8
The common woodlot trees 8
Marketing woodlot products 8
Sizing up the woodlot 9
Choosing the market 10
Lumber 11
Sawlogs 12
Veneer 13
Handles 14
Vehicles and vehicle parts 15
Copperage 16
Railroad ties 17
Poles and posts 18
Small rough products 19
Wood for pulp 20
Fence-lot 20
Wood for distillation 20
Firewood 20
Conducting the sale 21
Conducting for the sale 21
Selling the logs 22
Selling out "defects 23
Shipping by railroad 23
How to prevent the deterioration of cut woodlot products 25
Some of the principal uses of the common woodlot trees 26
Directory of Michigan firms which buy wood products 30
Conclusion 47
SELLING WOODLOT PRODUCTS ON MICHIGAN FARMS

PURPOSE OF THE BULLETIN

One of the essentials of successful farming is to know how, when, and where to market crops. Farmers are all deeply interested in this; yet when it comes to selling wood products, most of them are at such a disadvantage through ignorance of markets and methods of estimating and selling, that they lose sometimes two-thirds the value of their timber. Many Michigan woodlots still contain timber which represents the growth of a century. No farmer should let this valuable possession pass from him "for a song."

The advantage to be gained through knowledge of marketing timber is best shown by an actual example. An 80-acre farm in south central Michigan had on it a 10-acre woodlot containing about 48,000 board feet of basswood and about 12,000 feet each of hard maple, soft maple, red oak, soft elm, ash, and beech. The trees were overmature, many of them were hollow, and the owner knew he ought to "sell them to save them." Timber on an adjacent 10 acres had previously been sold for $100 per acre, or a total of $1,000. Instead of selling on the first bid made, the owner, acting on the advice of an expert attached to a nearby forestry school, wrote to a number of wood-using firms in different cities, from some of whom, after examination of his timber, he secured bids on the different species in his woodlot. As a result of this bargaining he received stumpage values amounting, in the aggregate, to nearly $2,000. For his red oak, bought for quarter-sawing by a firm outside the State, he received $21 per 1,000 board feet. His other trees were purchased by a veneer company, the basswood returning $19 per 1,000 board feet, ash $16, elm and hard maple $14, soft maple and beech $12.

Few farmers are so situated as to be able to secure the assistance of capable, impartial advisors; and this bulletin is an attempt to supply the deficiency by acquainting them with the uses of different kinds of woodlot timber, the location of some of the principal Michigan markets, and the more important details in the sale of the products.

THE WOODLOT SITUATION IN MICHIGAN.

Michigan farms which cut woodlot products in 1910 (43.7 per cent of all the farms) sold on an average about $50 worth apiece and consumed about the same amount.* The total value for the State was over $7,900,000 (not including maple sugar), or about one-twentieth of the aggregate income from all Michigan crops. The total area of Michigan farm woodlots is nearly three million acres, which is 15.5 per cent of the total farm area. Woodlots will therefore continue for some time to be important sources of income to the State and to the farms on which they exist.

* Bureau of Census Reports.
In spite of this evident importance to the State, woodlots are being cleared at a rate which would threaten their virtual extinction if continued for the next half century. In the 30 years between 1880 and 1910 the decrease was over 142 million acres, or at a rate of more than 1 per cent per year, so that while in 1880 the average area of woodland on each farm was about 29 acres, in 1910 it was only 14 acres. This process of clearing was inevitable and perfectly natural wherever it opened up good tillable soils for cultivation. On poorer soils financial necessity often compelled farmers to cut their timber. There has, in fact, been little or no inducement to hold salable timber or even to protect and care for young growth for the uncertain value it might have 40 or 50 years in the future.

The only efficient means of stemming the tide of forest destruction seems to be organized community or State effort directed toward promoting the private holding of woodlots on poor lands by equitable tax laws or to establishing community or State forests by the purchase of existing woodlots or of land which should be in woods. The State is already providing for future forest growth through the holding of lands which have reverted for taxes. It is probable that a more general appreciation of the value of woodlots on poorer soils would go a long way toward perpetuating them. The best way of bringing this home to the farmers is to give them the information necessary to get the highest returns from their salable wood products.

THE COMMON WOODLOT TREES.

In general, oaks and pines are the commonest species in woodlots on dry, sandy soils. The pines—white, Norway, and jack—are unimportant or entirely lacking south of an east and west line drawn through about the middle of the lower peninsula. The oaks are most important south of this line, though some small species grow abundantly on sandy lands to the north of it. On heavier or moister soils throughout the State, maples, birches, elms, and basswood, and, in the north, hemlock are the species which predominate in the majority of the woodlots. In the swamps, tamarack is found throughout the State, while arborvitae (white cedar) and a little black spruce occur in the North. On cut-over and burned lands in the North, aspen and sometimes paper birch often form dense thickets, usually too small to be of any immediate value, but sometimes big enough to supply excelsior stock, box lumber, etc.

These are the prevailing species, but there are others which, though less abundant, may be much more valuable, among them white ash, black walnut, butternut, hickory, and (very sparingly in the South) yellow poplar. Marketable trees of these species are becoming very scarce. They are eagerly sought out by buyers for special industries; and the farmer who owns good trees may, in prosperous times, expect good prices for them, even when at a considerable distance from the point of utilization.

MARKETING WOODLOT PRODUCTS.

The woodlot owner should not allow valuable trees to deteriorate on his hands, but he should fully satisfy himself that the deterioration has actually started before accepting a low bid for the timber. Even if signs of damage are found it should be remembered that timber does not