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PROCEEDINGS OF
NATIONAL NORTHERN WHITE CEDAR
CONFERENCE

Department of Forestry

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Solomon replied with a proposal about the Temple of the Lord he wanted to build. His father David, Solomon pointed out to Hiram, had not been able to build it because of the many wars going on, and he had been waiting for the Lord to give him peace.

"But now," Solomon said to Hiram, "the Lord my God has given Israel peace on every side; I have no foreign enemies or internal rebellions. So I am planning to build a Temple for the Lord my God, just as he instructed my father that I should do. For the Lord told him, 'Your son, whom I will place upon your throne, shall build me a Temple.' Now please assist me with the project. Send your woodsmen to the mountains of Lebanon to cut cedar timber for me, and I will send my men to work beside them, and I will pay your men whatever wages you ask; for as you know, no one in Israel can cut timber like you Sidonians!"

Hiram was very pleased with the message from Solomon. "Praise God for giving David a wise son to be king of the great nation of Israel," he said. Then he sent this reply to Solomon: "I have received your message and I will do as you have asked concerning the timber. I can supply both cedar and cypress. My men will bring the logs from the Lebanon mountains to the Mediterranean Sea and build them into rafts. We will float them along the coast to wherever you need them; then we will break the rafts apart and deliver the timber to you. You can pay me with food for my household."

As merchants of cedar we have a great heritage. Cedar was the first choice of the world's wisest and richest man for the paneling and beams of the temple he built to his Lord God and, incidentally, wherein he entertained the most glamorous Queen of Sheba.

THE CEDAR VACATION HOME INDUSTRY

John Walbridge

AMERICAN TIMBER HOMES, INC.
Escanaba, Michigan

My talk is billed as the Cedar Vacation Home Industry. Frankly, I'm not sure there is any such thing anymore. The oil embargo in the fall of 1973 and the mortgage crunch of 1974 just about dried up the market for vacation homes no matter what they were made of. However, there is a definite appetite in the primary housing market for cedar and, since most of the companies in the vacation home industry that are still around have changed over to making primary homes, I am going to expand my topic to include cedar in the housing industry in general.

Our company may or may not be typical of the industry, but I think it might be interesting to trace its development as it relates to cedar.

When we first went into business in 1961, the market we envisioned was slightly glorified log cabins with and without indoor plumbing. Our first model had 384 sq. ft. and retailed for \$1,460. Over the years, as we gradually migrated into the primary housing market, the homes got larger and more elaborate. Our average home last year had almost 2,000 sq. ft. and cost just under \$40,000. Our largest had 8,000 sq. ft., five bathrooms, and cost \$250,000.

The increase in size, however, has not meant a corresponding increase in amount of cedar used. That first 16 x 24 ft. model was a cedar cabin from top to bottom. The subfloor was cedar, the walls were cedar, the trusses were cedar, the roof deck was cedar, the partitions were cedar. Even the doors were cedar. We were in the cedar business and were giving the customer a cedar house! While cedar was a remarkable material in many ways, it wasn't necessarily the best material for every application, as we learned. We found that pine was stronger and less expensive for roof deck material, and the combination of pine and styro-foam produced a stronger, better insulated roof at a lower cost. We found that plywood made a better subfloor than cedar lumber. We found that spruce and balsam made stronger trusses and that many species made better studs. But we have found nothing that matches cedar for the parts of the building that are exposed to weather. We believe that there is no species that enjoys the reputation in the marketplace for durability, insect and decay resistance, and freedom from maintenance that cedar enjoys. As we moved from vacation homes to primary homes, we found that the customer appeal of cedar was still important; but it is relatively less important than some other considerations such as architectural appeal, good floor plans, and total cost.

Our vacation home business had been founded on our dry spline Timber-Wall system. This system consists of solid cedar wall timbers 2 3/8" thick, grooved on each side to receive precisely machined splines. The wall timbers are kiln dried to a moisture content of 10% to 12% and treated with a water-repellent wood preservative. The splines are dried to 6% moisture content and sealed in plastic bags so that they can't pick up moisture from the air. When they are fitted into the grooves in the wall timbers, they swell and form a tight seal. This system has performed very well for many years in all kinds of climates, but as we moved into primary housing around the metropolitan areas, we began to encounter building code problems. To overcome this and to make it easier for our dealers to erect the homes faster, we developed a panelized wall consisting of 3/4 in. treated cedar siding, impregnated felt, 1/2 in. exterior plywood, 2x4 studs, 3 1/2 in. fiberglass, and interior finish wall of paneling or drywall. This system provides the benefits of a cedar exterior with the additional advantage of a very high "R" value, fast construction, and the opportunity for a variety of interior wall finishes. It also makes the cedar go three times as far.

The switch to the panelized wall system meant that instead of sawing 2 3/4 in. cedar lumber, we were sawing 1 in. One benefit of this is that we can use some lower grade old growth cedar and still get a reasonable yield of 1 in. lumber from outer parts of the logs even though there is quite a bit of rot in the heart. When you have to saw for 2 3/4 in. lumber, you can't do this.

In closing, I would like to share with you one important piece of information about sawing cedar that we have learned over the years. It is expensive. By its nature, white cedar is a small tree and when it begins to get to reasonable size by sawmill standards, it develops all kinds of defects that you have to saw around. Our experience has been that we get about half the footage per shift sawing cedar as we do sawing other species, and it takes half again as many cords per thousand feet of usable lumber. This makes cedar lumber expensive but, used in applications that take advantage of its unique qualities, it is a good value and a salable one.