
Trees, Treaties and the Timing of Settlement: A Comparison of the Lumber Industry in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 1784-1867

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The lumber industry in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick during the period from 1784 to 1867 was influenced by certain common forces, yet the trade had a marked difference on the economy of the two provinces. New Brunswick became almost solely dependent on lumbering while the Nova Scotian economy was more diversified. In New Brunswick the trade in wood permeated the social, political and economic life. One estimate of this involvement during the Napoleonic Wars has about one-quarter of the population "engaged or interested in the production of wood,"¹ while another assessment holds that "seventeen-twentieths of the New Brunswick population were dependent on the timber trade for their maintenance."² In Nova Scotia, the lumber industry was important and for some years dominated the economy in certain areas, notably Pictou County, but the province as a whole did not become reliant on this one staple product.

The material recorded here represents the marshalling of many scattered and diverse sources, in order to give a general comparative view of the lumber trade in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick for a period of about eighty years, overlapping the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The purpose of this record is to provide a background for studying and understanding the material history of lumbering and related industries such as shipbuilding. This background includes a look at geography, both physical and social; government policies and regulations with respect to timber reserves, bounties, crown lands and preferential tariffs; lumber contractors and timber merchants; products and markets; and other facets of the lumbering industry which affected the lives of the people.

It is inappropriate to talk about an Atlantic Provinces lumbering industry, for the area was not, and is not now, a political unit. Several colonies, at times as many as five, made up this part of present-day Canada. In addition, the forest itself is different. Newfoundland is included in the boreal forest region; Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are each in the Acadian forest region, while a portion of northern New Brunswick is included in the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence

1 Bryan Latham, *Timber, Its Development and Distribution: A Historical Survey* (London, 1957), p. 134.

2 W.S. MacNutt, "The Politics of the Timber Trade In Colonial New Brunswick, 1825-1840," *Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces*, ed. G.A. Rawlyk (Toronto, 1971), p. 122.