

'Forestry 95% Common Sense', Says Tom Alexander At Cataloochee

Ranch Woods Gives Men Winter Work

By TOM ALEXANDER

Owner of Cataloochee Ranch
Our woodlands at Cataloochee Ranch make it possible for us to provide year-round work for the three or four men who help us on the farm in summer. We try not to have the winter layoff that many farmers do. We find it a great advantage to keep the men who know our place and us, and whom we know.

We have several hundred acres of woods. For the most part, these are low-grade ridge-top timberlands, though we do have some small really good wooded spots. Most of our lands had been culled over for the good sawtimber before we acquired them.

A great deal of the woodlands are covered with laurel or rhododendron, with only scattered trees sticking up through the dense undergrowth. But it is surprising how much salable material we have been able to salvage from these cut-over or brush-covered lands.

In the early days of lumbering these laurel thickets were passed over because it was very tough logging to get the trees out and because most of the timber growing in the thickets was low-grade and defective. Even on the best sites in the north coves only the best trees were taken. Those that had hollow butts or were crooked or a bit small were left. There was no market at all 40 or 50 years ago for hardwood pulpwoods, except chestnut.

During the past 19 years we have gone back over these formerly cut-over areas and into these laurel beds and have salvaged a great deal of valuable material. On one 20-acre tract that had been cut over for the good sawtimber 20 years before, we got out 40,000 feet of logs and over 300 cords of chestnut acidwood. The logs came from crooked and even hollow trees, and from species that were considered no good in the earlier days.

Today, on this same 20 acres and thanks to Champion and Mead for creating markets for hardwood pulpwood, we still have enough salable material to be worth at least \$20 an acre, while there is enough younger timber below salable size now but slowly growing into merchantable size to double this value in a very few years. This particular tract faces to the north and is always cool and damp. North exposures grow the best timber and grow it more rapidly than do the south facing lands.

We cut our woodlands very conservatively—that is we are not trying to get all our wood and logs out in a few years. Even during winter there is always lots of farm work to be done, feeding cattle, mending fences, repairing machinery, and building and repairing barns or other farm buildings. Our woods work takes second place to all these other activities, so that our men actually have only a few weeks to put into woods work even in winter.

We are trying to cut our timber at such a rate that we average taking about 1/20th of our total stand each year. Our idea is that in 20 or 25 years we can go back



EVERYONE loses when cattle are allowed in the woods, forestry experts point-out. This is a typical picture, showing underbrush gone, no leaves on the ground, soil dry and hard, with tree roots exposed and injured. The ultimate results are evident here—dead trees are not saleable.

Two Other WNC Counties Lead Haywood In Planting

According to the latest forestry report, Haywood County received 116,300 white pine seedlings prior to 1950-51 from the N. C. Forest Service and 469,500 from TVA.

In 1950-51 there were 152,000 white pine seedlings distributed in Haywood; 312,050 in the following year, followed by 83,000 in 1952-53; 231,000 the following year, and last year 345,000, making a total for the 5-year period of 1,123,050.

Only Macon and Cherokee counties received slightly more than did Haywood.

over the same areas and get about as much material as we did the first time.

We have not accurately estimated our timber, but have a rough idea of how much we have in all. Actually I doubt if we are averaging 1/20th of our salable material each year. Some winters our whole time is spent on other jobs and we do not get out any timber at all. Possibly the next year we will not have these other jobs and will get out more than 1/20th of our stand that year, but that doesn't worry us. The whole plan is quite flexible and we do not consider it at all important to cut just the exact amount each year. If it averages over a five or ten-year period it is all right.

On some of our woods work, in low-grade timber and where the logging conditions are hard, we do not do any more than break even as far as cash income is concerned. We may even lose a little money.

But we figure that since we are holding our men and are improving the woods we will be ahead in the long run. The idea is a little like the big corporations are coming to in their Guaranteed Annual Wage plans.

We are clearing some very small spots, but only where the land is fairly flat and joins some of our other fields. On the other hand we have planted some patches of cleared land back into trees. These are spots where the land is really too steep for farming, where machinery can never be used, or where the soil is poor and inclined to wash. We get our seedlings free through the county agent's office, which gets them for us from the TVA. Although our fields as a whole are much steeper than most farms in the county, we believe that we will eventually have to come to machinery farming and are trying to get ready for that day.

The markets for hardwood pulpwood provided in recent years by The Champion Paper and Fibre Company and the Mead Corporation are a tremendous boon to the mountain woodland owner. As a result of the steadily increasing consumption of hardwood pulpwood the value of the average acre of mountain woodland has been increased from \$5 to \$20 an acre or more.

We can now cut and market the small, the crooked, and even the partly rotten trees that formerly were left standing to take up woods space and prevent better trees from growing. Where formerly we were able to get out maybe a thousand feet of logs per acre, worth \$10 or \$15, now we can get these logs out and also 5 to 15 cords of pulpwood from the same acre. Our unit road costs are reduced, and we have to go over less than half the territory to get our winter's cut.

Our woods owners owe a real debt of gratitude to these paper concerns for their research and experimental work that has made it possible for them to make their papers from hardwoods instead of exclusively from spruce, balsam or pine.

A new and very important step has just been taken by Champion, beginning the first of this year. That is the measurement of wood by weight instead of by scale. It will take some time for this very important change to have its full effect, but it will eventually mean much closer utilization in the woods.

Under the old system of measurement, all wood had to be cut in even five-foot lengths so that the pile could be accurately measured. Under the weight system wood can be cut in any length from 30 inches upward, and many sticks can be put on the truck that are shorter than five feet. The producer will get (See Alexander, Page 8)

North Carolina Ranks Well In Survey Of Forest Fires

North Carolina was second lowest behind Virginia in number of forest fires in an 11-state survey for December.

The survey, conducted by the Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association, Atlanta, Ga., showed that 235 forest fires burned 2,701 acres in the state during December.

According to the State Division of Forestry, the largest number of forest fires were attributed to campers and hunters, with debris burning second.

The survey showed 11 states and

Region Eight, U. S. Forest Service, reporting 5,720 forest fires, burning 69,708 acres. The majority of states reported adverse weather conditions, increasing the forest fire hazard.

The Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association warns that high winds and lack of rainfall increases the forest fire hazard greatly. Vegetation that normally would not burn easily becomes highly inflammable. Once ignited, this fuel rapidly spreads from a small flame

Clay Countians Could Get Along On Pine Income

HAYESVILLE — Back in the 1930s when Allen J. Bell started planting pine trees, many of his neighbors probably thought he was wasting his time. They could make more money "right now" doing something else.

But many of them would probably be happy to help Bell harvest his "crop" now.

Clay County Agent R. G. Vick

into a raging forest fire causing thousands of dollars of damage.

Furniture Makers Cite Rejection Of Some Lumber

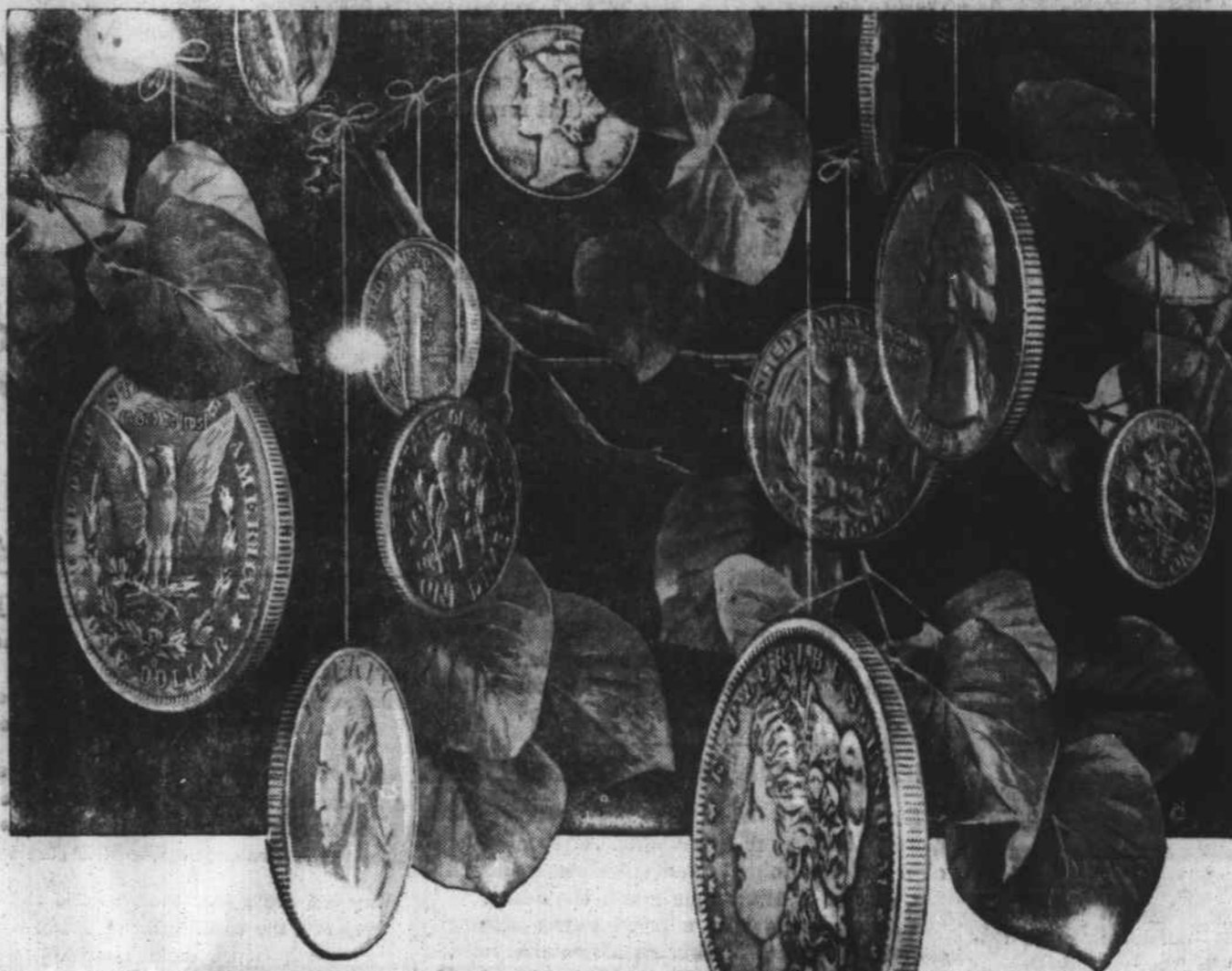
More than 14,000,000 board feet of hardwood lumber must be rejected or remanufactured by the furniture plants of North Carolina each year. This causes a needless loss of income to the sawmill operators.

And Bell says, "My wife and I would never starve even if we had nothing but those pine trees."

ators and the furniture manufacturers.

According to a survey recently conducted by the Furniture, Plywood, and Veneer Council of the North Carolina Forestry Association in cooperation with the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station of the U. S. Forest Service, almost 10 per cent of the 4/4 or 1-inch lumber purchased at 10 furniture plants within the state in 1955 did not meet the National Hardwood Lumber Association Rules for size.

Of the lumber inspected in the study, 4.8 per cent was thick (oversize), 1.6 per cent thin (scant) and 2.7 per cent was of uneven thickness (miscut) for a total of 9.1 per cent of the volume.



*Money
doesn't grow
on trees!*

But Trees Grow Into Money!

Yes --- right here in Western North Carolina, farmers are harvesting valuable tree crops every year --- and they are doing it in a manner that not only meets the approved practices of the United States Forest Service but assures continued yearly harvests of fine forestry products.

A great majority of all mountain farms could be improved with the addition of a well-balanced forestry program. Besides the monetary value, trees contribute greatly to the prevention of erosion, protection of wild life, and helps stabilize and perfect the water-flow. In addition, forests offer to the people of Western North Carolina and the thousands of visitors who come here annually, varied recreational opportunities. These things we must consider in planning our farm programs.

We, at Champion, have a great interest in the forestry development of Western North Carolina and our Foresters will be happy to lend their assistance in helping you establish a tree lot that in a very few years will yield a profitable income.

Yes --- trees do grow into money! --- And they grow faster than you think!



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