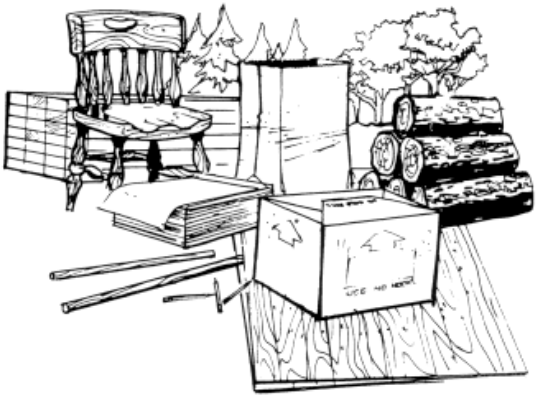
Trees, Forests, and Forest Products

Take a look around you. No matter where you are—in your home, at school, at church, on a farm, or in your yard—you will see wood being used. Wood is an important natural resource, and it's renewable.

Since the United States was first colonized, billions of board feet of timber have been used to build homes, farm and industry buildings, and other wood products, too many to mention. Yet it is estimated that there is still two-thirds as much land in forests as there was when America was discovered.

Trees and forests not only provide wood products for us, they also provide other benefits such as recreational areas for picnicking, hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing. They provide homes and shelter for wildlife. Trees help keep the soil from washing away and protect our valuable water supply. They also help to purify our air and give us fresh, clean air to breathe.



Our forests are called a "multiple-use" resource because they provide so many benefits. Trees, and the wood from trees, are important resources. They provide more than 5,000 beneficial products useful to humans. How many ways can you think of in which wood is used? Remember that paper products also come from wood.

Trees must be harvested to obtain wood products. Through proper forest management and harvesting methods, we can have the wood products we need as well as the many other benefits of the forest.

From Trees to Wood Products

The forest products industry is a large and complex industry. Forest resources are converted into usable wood products. This industry is an important part of our nation's economy.

Some regions of our country are almost totally dependent on it for income and employment. About 1 out of every 20 people who work is employed in some part of the forest products industry. Let's take a look at this industry to see how we get our wood products.

Growing the Timber

The first step in the forest products industry is growing the timber. This is called **forestry**. Professional foresters manage the forests to increase growth and to protect them from fires, insects, and diseases. Keeping forests healthy ensures their usefulness to humans.

To learn more about our forests and growing timber, you may want to enroll in the 4-H forestry project.

Harvesting and Transporting the Timber to the Mills

Harvesting and transporting the timber to the sawmill is the next step in the forest products industry. Harvesting actually involves several steps. Before reaching the mill, trees are cut down, limbs are removed, then the trees are cut into logs. This is called **harvesting**. These steps are sometimes done by one person using a chain saw and a truck. However, large operations employ many persons and use large machines to cut the trees and haul the logs to the mill.

Processing

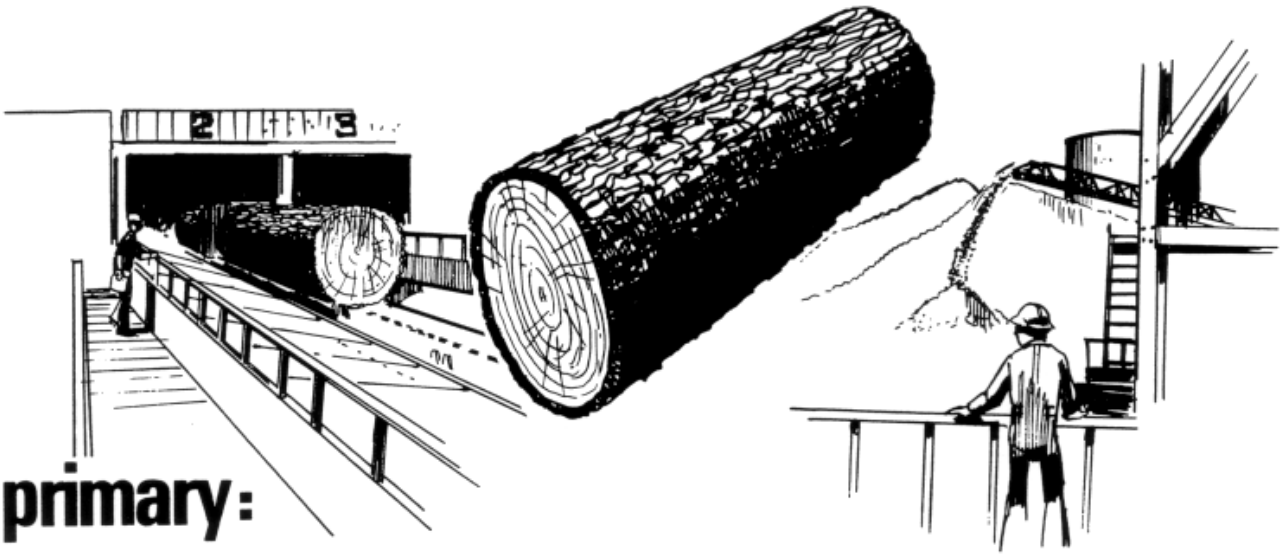
Processing is the third phase. It is divided into two segments: (1) primary processing, and (2) secondary processing. **Primary processing** is the sawing, chipping, or slicing of the log to convert it into lumber or other raw wood products. Examples of primary processing would be sawmilling to produce pulp and paper, veneer, plywood, or particleboard.

Some products need additional manufacturing before use, such as making furniture from lumber, particleboard, and plywood. Other examples include producing cardboard boxes or bags from paper, or making flooring from lumber. This is called **secondary processing**.

Marketing Wood Products

Marketing forest products also is important to the industry. Many individuals handle the products from manufacturer to user. Much of the lumber is delivered to the lumber yards or building supply stores where customers choose what they need. This is where you may find materials for your woodworking project. Other forest and wood products are sold at commercial and retail outlets, such as office supply stores, furniture stores, hardware stores, etc.

Wood construction and building trades also are part of the forest products industry. Much wood is used in homes and other buildings. Some homes are partially or totally built from lumber in factories, while others are built by carpenters on the site.



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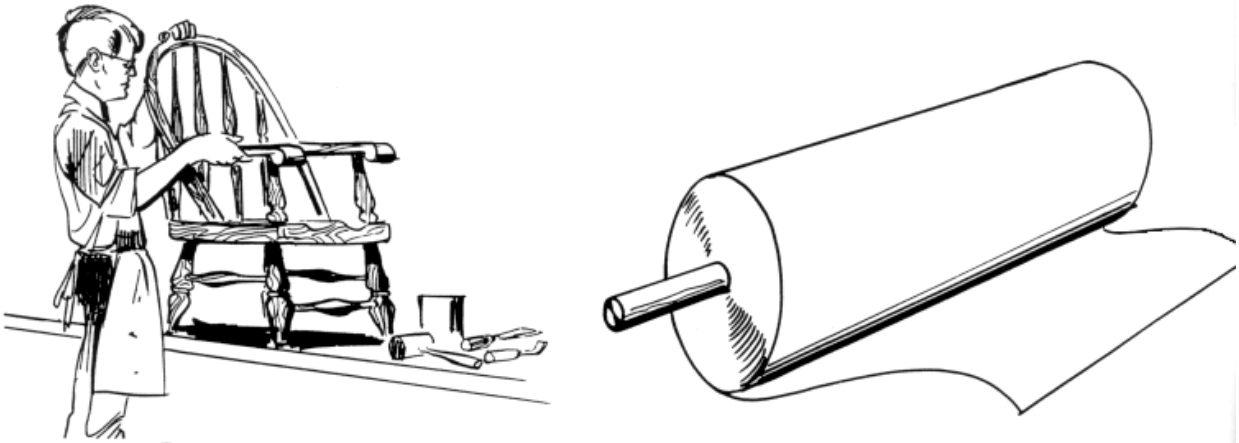

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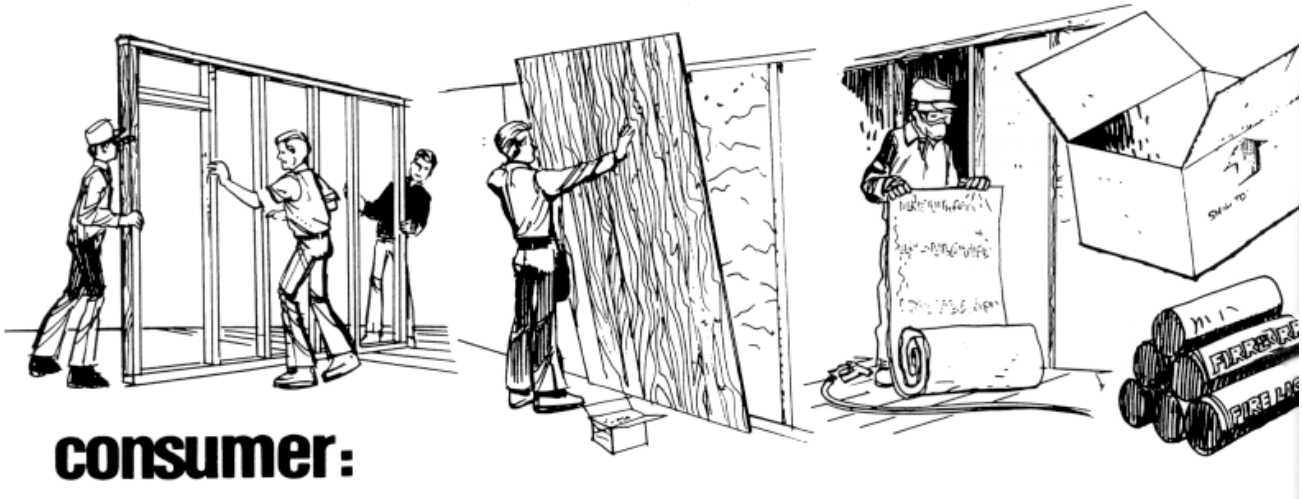

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