

Bulk of World's Pencil Stock Comes From Area Tree Farms

Central Point - Southern Oregon and northern California produce the bulk of the world's supply of wood for that basic tool of modern civilization—the pencil.

About three quarters of the world supply of pencil stock comes from this region, according to Bernard Parent, manager for Gulf Red Cedar company, Central Point.

Parent's firm, which has its main manufacturing plant at Stockton, alone makes about a third of the world's pencil stock. Some 60 per cent of the logs the Central Point mill turns into pencil material comes from forest industry Tree Farms, where timber is grown as a renewable crop, in the Medford-Klamath Falls area.

More than half of the company's output is shipped to foreign nations.

To Iron Curtain Nation

Some of the firm's pencil stock even goes to such Iron Curtain countries as Czechoslovakia, which apparently prefers to buy Oregon wood rather than timber from Russian sources since the U.S. removed pencil slats from its list of strategic materials.

"You can buy a better pencil today for a nickel than you could at any price when I went to school," Parent observes. "The skills of scores of different craftsmen and materials from all over the world go into the finished product."

The pencils which make up the No. 1 writing tool for millions of Americans and others begin as stately incense cedars in the forests of southern Oregon and the northern tip of

California. Incense cedar is the preferred species among East Coast pencil manufacturers today because of its soft, even texture and its marvelously straight, knot-free grain. While it is soft enough to whittle easily, it is strong enough not to break in your pocket. The wood has little pitch and resin.

Until it was discovered in the 1920s that the West Coast's incense cedar had all these properties, however, the only acceptable pencil wood for many years previous was red cedar from the South.

Today almost all pencils are made of incense cedar—except those for the United States Senate, which still insists on southern red cedar as a tradition. The main difference in appearance of the two woods lies in their color, and since people have historically become accustomed to the reddish hue of the southern species in their pencils the manufacturers cater to this traditional public fancy by dyeing the west's lighter-colored incense cedar red.

Paraffin is also cooked into the wood to keep the pencil from "frizzing up" when it is sharpened.

Parent puts between 15 to 20 million board feet of logs through his mill each year, cutting them into cants as the first step in the pencil making process. He figures that it takes roughly 2.8 board feet to make a gross of pencils. An average three-foot diameter log may thus produce about 33,000 pencils.

At the firm's stockton mill, the cants are milled again to make slats, and each slat is

grooved to make eight pencil "halves." With the lead in place between slats and adhesive applied, the individual pencils are then cut out of the slats.

Each pencil may receive up to 15 coats of paint, says the Central Point mill manager.

The "rubber" eraser which goes on next actually has little rubber in it, according to Parent. Its main ingredient is a rubber-like product called "factice," made by reacting rape seed oil from the Dutch East Indies with sulphur chloride. It also contains pumice from Italy and is colored with cadmium sulphide.

The wooden pencil is still

State Will Auction Vehicles on Friday

Salem—(AP)—The state will conduct its first public auction of state vehicles in Portland this year on Friday at 12:30 p.m. at the State Liquor Control Commission facilities in southeast Portland.

A total of 67 vehicles will go on the auction block including 40 sedans, two station wagons, nine dump trucks, three scoomobiles and 25 other commercial vehicles.

the most widely used writing instrument, having an estimated 10 to 15 sales ratio over all other writing devices. More than 1.5 billion wood pencils are used each year in the United States—an average of about nine apiece for every man, woman and child.

Invented in France some 150 years ago, the commonplace pencil is today responsible for jobs and income for many an Oregon tree farmer and forest industry wage earner.



ILLUSTRATE STEPS—Illustrating steps in pencil making, Bernard Parent, manager of Gulf Red Cedar company, Central Point, shows section of incense cedar cant, at right, which has been sawed to make pencil "slats." At left are slats that have been grooved to make pencil halves. With lead in place, two slats will be glued together, then cut into eight pencils. —(AFPI Photo)



'PENCIL' WASHED—A "Paul Bunyon Pencil" is washed down as it goes into the mill at Gulf Red Cedar company, Central Point, where it will be cut into stock for an estimated 33,000 pencils. The company figures it mills about a third of the world's supply of pencil stock. Some 60 per cent of the logs for the Central Point mill come from forest industry Tree Farms where timber is grown as a renewable crop. —(AFPI Photo)

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