Report on Native Woods and Lumber imported in this Consular District.

Reply to a circular from the Department of State dated Washington, December 15. 1893.

Palestine within historical times has never been a wooded country. At present there is practically no native wood suitable for building purposes. The celebrated oak and terebinth which once covered the highlands with considerable forests are now represented by a few dwarfed specimen of their kind. The olive still lines the hillsides and valleys, but does not furnish any building material, being used solely in the manufacture of olive wood ornaments and trinkets.

There is very little wood used in the construction of buildings of any kind. Stone, so abundant, is used for every part of the structure. A very few of the modern buildings are having wooden floors & ceilings. For this purpose pine is generally used. There is no reason why native woods should not be grown to an extent to supply the local demand. The present administration cares nothing for tree culture or economy of forests. On this account 99% of all lumber used is imported from foreign countries or from other districts of Turkey.

The native woods are olive, oak orange & fig which are used almost entirely for fuel.

Quite a box trade has grown up at Jaffa, boxes being necessary for the shipping of the oranges grown there. The kinds of lumber wanted for this, and also for the small demand for building purposes, are pine & fir.

The value of the lumber annually imported at the port of Jaffa is from $ 60.000 to

to $ 100.000. This lumber comes from Austria, Sweden and other parts of Turkey. Austria controls the great bulk of the import trade, sending to Jaffa nearly, if not altogether, three quarters of all the lumber that comes there. From Jaffa it is distributed to such other places as desire it.

The amount of duty upon imported lumber is 8% ad valorem.

The prices ranges from $8.00 to $10.00 per cubic meter. From 6000 to 10000 cubical meters are unloaded annually at Jaffa.

No American wood has as yet found its way into Palestine. This is probably due to the long transportation necessary. But there seems to be no reason why, with direct conveyions between American ports and Jaffa, our own dealers should not compete successfully with those of other countries & command their share of the lumber trade of Palestine.

The climate of Palestine is generally warm. There is a wet & dry season. The wet season corresponds to the winter months in the northern states of America. The summers are very dry & hot.

There is some activity in general building, but no ship or railroad building now going on in this district.

R. S. V.
Consul

U. S. Consulate,
Jerusalem, Syria,
February 5. 1894.