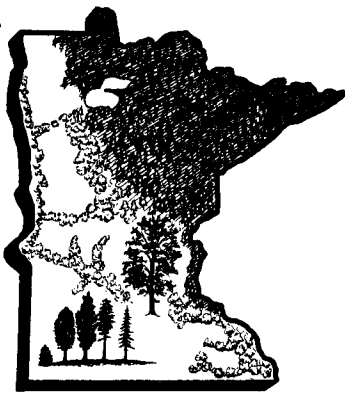
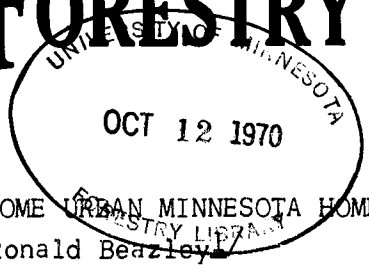


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# MINNESOTA FORESTRY NOTES

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PREFERENCES FOR OAK PANELING BY SOME URBAN MINNESOTA HOME OWNERS  
Roger Long and Ronald Beazley

In the summer of 1958, 48 urban Minnesota home-owners were interviewed to determine their preferences in oak paneling as a wall covering. This survey was conducted in the St. Paul suburb of Roseville as a part of a regional study made by the North Central Woodland Products Marketing Committee<sup>2/</sup>. As set forth by this Committee, the purpose of the study was to find new ways to utilize the oak timber resource of low quality, including the determination of consumer preferences for oak.

A sample of home-owners from the Village of Roseville was selected from a stratification of the Village based on four criteria: (1) the value of houses, (2) the age of houses, (3) income of the occupant, and (4) the age of the occupant. Using this method of stratification, three typical characterizations of the residents of the village emerged, each of which is described in the column headings of Table 1. The stratified random sample had a total of 48 observations.

Personal interviews were conducted with each of the home-owners selected in the sample. Actual samples of various types of oak paneling, as well as colored slides illustrating particular characteristics, were used to determine preferences. The conclusions that follow were drawn from the preference responses shown in Table 1.

Wood paneling was found to be most prevalent in the homes over five years old and/or over \$20,000 in value. Such homes were usually owned by somewhat older individuals with higher annual incomes than were found in the newer, less expensive homes.

All classes of respondents thought wood paneling improved the appearance of a room. Only the younger owners with incomes between \$4,000-\$7,000 expressed a definite species preference, that being for mahogany; the other respondent categories showed no pronounced preference.

Within the grades of oak, in general the clear grades<sup>3/</sup> were preferred by all classes of respondents for use in the living room, bedroom and dining room. A definite preference for either clear or character marked oak paneling was shown by these same owners for use in the den; however, the recreation room would be the most likely for use of the character marked grades of oak.

Preferences for widths of paneling boards were quite varied among the different groups of respondents. The use of oak paneling as wainscoting<sup>4/</sup> was not preferred by any group. Light finishes were definitely preferred over dark finishes by all respondents. The younger respondents (20-35 years old) living in new houses showed a preference for blonded oak finish while other groups of respondents indicated preferences for either natural or blonded oak finish.

1/ Formerly Research Assistant and Associate Professor, respectively, School of Forestry, University of Minnesota.

2/ Smith, R. C., Lee Paulsell, and L. Leney, July, 1959. Oak Paneling: Its Processing and Marketing. North Central Regional Publication No. 101. University of Missouri Agricultural Experiment Station.

3/ The four grades of oak paneling used in this study were developed by the North Central Woodland Products Marketing Committee using definitions adopted or modified from the National Hardwood Lumber Association, 1959 publication, Rules for the Measurement and Inspection of Hardwood Lumber, Cypress, Veneers and Thin Lumber.

4/ Finishing the lower three or four feet of an interior wall differently from the remainder as with oak paneling.

The following approximate retail prices were shown respondents for 8' by 12' walls: \$45, extremely clear grade; \$35, moderately clear grade; \$24, moderately character marked oak; \$22, extremely character marked oak. Only the clear oak grades received general acceptance with these prices. Since all respondent categories showed no strong preference for character marked grades versus the clear grade, even for use in dens and recreation rooms, and because only the moderate income group found the lower price of the character marked grade important, its sales potential would not seem to be large in a population such as Roseville's.

While this sample is not representative of the State or even the large metropolitan areas in Minnesota, it appears that a limited market possibility for low quality oak as wall paneling exists, so long as the cost of materials and installation is kept low relative to other wall coverings.

TABLE 1. Typically Characterized Respondents\*

Item	Respondent Categories		
	<u>Houses:</u> \$10-20,000 5 or fewer years old <u>Respondents:</u> 20-35 years old \$4-7,000 income	<u>Houses:</u> \$10-20,000 over 5 years old <u>Respondents:</u> 20 years or older \$4-7,000 income	<u>Houses:</u> over \$20,000 5 or fewer years old <u>Respondents:</u> 35 years or older \$7,000 income or over
Presence of paneling	no	in half the homes	yes
Paneling improves the room's appearance	yes	yes	yes
Species preferred***	Mahogany	No preference**	No preference**
Grade preferred in the living room	Clear	Clear or None	Clear
Grade preferred in the den	Clear	Clear or Character Marked	Clear or Character Marked
Grade preferred in the recreation room	Clear or Character Marked	Clear or Character Marked	Character Marked
Grade preferred in the bedroom	Clear or None	None	Clear or None
Grade preferred in the dining room	Clear or None	Clear	Clear or None
Acceptance of oak at quoted prices	Clear or Character Marked	Clear	Clear
Preference for board width	Other than 7½ inch	7½ inch	No preference**
Preference for Wainscoating****	No preference**	No preference**	None
Finish preference*****	Blonded	Light Finish	Light Finish

\* Statistical significance above the 30% probability level.  
 \*\* At least no preference which the size of sample could pick up, probably no strong preference.  
 \*\*\* Respondents were shown four species of wood, which were: mahogany, western red-cedar, ponderosa pine, and red oak.  
 \*\*\*\* Wood paneling that covers the lower half of a wall.  
 \*\*\*\*\* The four finishes shown respondents were: Blonded, clear or natural, a light stain and a dark stain.

5/ These prices were selected for use in this study by the regional project leader and used by Minnesota and other participating stations for comparability of results.