



## Ship Facts

Prince Edward Island was an ideal place for the shipbuilding industry because of its sloping shorelines, good harbours and plentiful woodland.

In Summerside, a major source of the timber needed in trade and shipbuilding came from the Acadian Forest. The Acadian Forest is one of eight forested regions in Canada, which covers most of the Maritimes. With both the Northern Hardwood and Boreal forests, creating a diverse blend of hardwood and softwood species. The Acadian Forest is home to 32 species of trees ranging from saplings to mature trees, and dead wood. In the 1700s, when settlers first arrived, almost 95% of the Island was covered by Acadian Forest. By 1900, only 30% of the Island was home to the forest due to mass deforestation for homes, agricultural operation, and lumber use.



The Acadian Forest is found only in eastern North America and is the transitional zone between the coniferous region to the north and the deciduous region to the south. It forms a diverse ecosystem filled with trees, shrubs, wildflowers, berries and wildlife. In the higher ground areas of an Acadian Forest the species of trees are sugar maple, yellow birch, white pine, eastern hemlock, American beech, red spruce, red oak, white ash, oak, and balsam fir. And in the lower wetland areas you can find elm, ash, cedar, hemlock and black spruce.

Shipbuilders were resourceful, quickly catching on that each species of tree and its wood could be used in building different parts of the ship. But the quality of a ship depended on the quality of the lumber that went into its construction. In the early days of shipbuilding, builders could use the best of lumber, but as the local resources began to be used up, they couldn't be so particular. By the 1870s nearly all the lumber for ships was being imported from places such as the Miramichi Valley in New Brunswick.

Builders would use hardwoods below the waterline of the ship and softwoods such as juniper and spruce above the waterlines. Other materials such as canvas for the sails, metal, and rope that were required for outfitting a ship were imported from Great Britain.

Ironwork was essential for a ship's construction. It was used for everything from nails and spikes to bolts, chain plates, and mast and deck hardware. In later years metal began to be used for knee supports and spars. Meanwhile Oakum, a loose hemp or jute that would be pressed in between the planks and then sealed with pitch; a dark, sticky substance made from distilling tar, coal, or oil residue, was used for caulking the ship to prevent sinking.

Cordage was cords or ropes used in the rigging of the ships. Cords or ropes typically made from hemp were called cordage. It was a top pick supple since it was a tough, coarse fibre.