

Lightwood ^[1]

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by [William S. Powell](#) ^[2], 2006; Revised October 2022.

Lightwood (pronounced "lite'ood"), also called "rich pine" or "fat pine," is wood that generally comes from the stump, roots, or heart of long-dead pine trees in which rosin has accumulated. It is highly flammable and is used as kindling or as a torch for light. The term seems to have been used in Barbados in the late seventeenth century and in Virginia by 1705. [John Lawson](#) ^[3]'s *A New Voyage to Carolina* ^[4] (1709) refers to its use by Indians. The will of Thomas Boyd of Bath County in 1725 directed that his owned enslaved people "be constantly kept at Work on Lightwood." John Boone of [Bertie County](#) ^[5] willed his wife and son-in-law his "Light wood" in 1733. Several owners spoke of their "lightwood land" as if it were regularly productive. In 1774 Scottish visitor Janet Schaw observed that the poorer people of North Carolina burned lightwood while "people of fashion use only Spermaceti [candles]." The production of lightwood was profitable, and small bundles of it have long been available in markets.

"*The Light'ood Fire*" by [John Henry Boner](#) ^[6] was published on the front page of the *North Carolina Review* on 7 Nov. 1909.

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[Powell, William S.](#) ^[8]

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