



ATTENTION

NHLA Members/Pennsylvania Forest Products Association  
And Others in the Hardwood Industry

**THEFT BY DECEPTION**

By: Jeremy McVicar  
Mendocino International LLC. Cofounder and Member

Many companies throughout Pennsylvania know of my wife Rebecca and I and our company Mendocino International LLC we operate out of Port Matilda, Pennsylvania. We have been exporting logs and lumber since 2004 and buying from companies throughout Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and states on the west coast.

As exporters to Asia we dread hearing about products that are turned down at the port of Shanghai or other ports which lead to US companies dumping or unloading their products of logs or lumber taking huge financial losses. Companies such as Global here in PA come to mind and the tragedy that led to their demise in part due to a lack of law and regulations in China. Many are proud and take comfort in the idea that conducting business domestically is safer in that we adhere to a strong sense of ethics, honesty and morals in business which combined with legal ramifications, prevent fraud from taking place at the level we see elsewhere in the world. I would like to share with you a case which has recently happened to us by a domestic company located right here in the USA.

Toward the end of September 2010 we made contact with America's Hardwood LLC located in Lewes, DE. having found their contact information on Alibaba.com. and following up with their listed website. (<http://www.americashardwood.com>) Despite not being impressed with the lack of detail and information on their website, we spoke with America's Hardwood LLC salesman Glen Fambro. After some time he insisted that because our D&B report wasn't up to date the owner, Henry Thomas, wouldn't extend us credit terms and insisted on payment before loading. On October 14th 2010 after some verbal negotiations with Mr. Fambro we agreed upon a deal of 4 loads of 5/4 Red Oak 2A to be purchased.

Having filled out a purchase order we traveled to Dover, NC. to a yard owned by Bailey Lumber Co. (World Wood owned by American Lumber) We looked at green 5/4" 2A lumber which Glen Fambro would broker to us through Bailey Lumber Co. There we signed a purchase order for the agreed upon price and loads specified in the contract.

Since starting in 2004 we have never been able to do business with Bailey Lumber Co. as we couldn't agree upon a price that worked for everyone. Curious, I asked Mr. Fambro how he managed to broker us such a deal where we couldn't negotiate a decent price. He explained that his Grandfather, who started Americas Hardwood LLC had a great working relationship with the owners of Bailey Lumber Co and that the business relationship went way back for many years. He also stated that some of the Red Oak was traded from some Maple to Bailey's. Although Mr. Fambro seemed like a smooth talker and drew some suspicion he seemed to be sincere about the wood business and have a decent knowledge of producers to include knowing several companies in PA who's he alleged having dealt with.

On October 22 we received the signed invoice and tally sheets from our order to America's Hardwood LLC. In addition we received the phyto certificate number and a tentative appointment date for inspection of the goods. Based on this information on October 26th 2010 we wire transferred full payment to their bank, Bank of America in New York, NY in the amount of \$42,055.09 so that preparations for loading and shipping could get underway.

We soon called to follow up on the progress of inspection with the USDA. On October 28th an inspector with the USDA returned our call to say that not only was there no record of our phyto number in the system but that the information given to him was from a different yard. (Edwards Wood Products located in NC.)

The following day we became suspicious and suspected we had been deceived but didn't know the extent. It could have been that Americas Hardwood LLC was protecting their supplier from us. Despite this however we knew that we were deceived as we had traveled down to NC to inspect a product that would never be purchase on our behalf.



We contacted Glen Fambro at Americas Hardwood LLC who explained he didn't know what happened but he would fix it and get back to us immediately. While we waited however for his returned call we confirmed all our worst fears.

1. There was never an order placed by America's Hardwood LLC or from their sales representative Glen Fambro to Bailey's Lumber Co. to any yard they own in the United States.
2. There was never any information sent to the USDA or appointments made for a phyto inspection of any goods outlined on the signed purchase order by America's Hardwood LLC.
3. We confirmed our wired transferred amount had already been withdrawn from their bank in NY the same day they received it or near to it.
4. Based on further research of the company they had no "sales staff" to assist with anything and the numbers listed appeared to be nothing other than cell phones.

We received an email from Mr. Fambro claiming that their suppliers had notified them we contacted them and was interfering in their business. Glen Fambro asked us not to contact their suppliers nor inquire about the goods we purchased. We figured they were simply attempting to stall us for time and impede on our investigation into where our products were or ever existed.

After trying to contact and follow up with Mr. Fambro with Americas Hardwood LLC our calls weren't answered nor messages returned. A person claiming to be a manager of one of the departments called us around mid day to say that Glen Fambro would unfortunately not be available as he would be in meetings all day long. When I tried to explain the problems to him he brushed us aside and pretended to be ignorant of the entire situation.

About a half hour later we received an email from Mr. Fambro at America's Hardwood LLC. stating he would be "out of the country in Europe" from that day until the following week. We then received another mail from a Tammy McRoe at America's Hardwood LLC stating that our funds would be returned by Monday November 1st 2010. This was followed up with a fax stating the same thing and we sent her our specific bank account information to transfer the funds. A day later we contacted our bank to see how the progress of a refund was going. We were told the papers that were faxed to us were nothing of the sort which is required to have a refund issued. Put simply it was just another fake document meant to deceive us and buy time. Needless to say we still have not recouped our funds.

We originally notified the Pennsylvania State Police in this matter on October 29<sup>th</sup> but unfortunately there isn't much they can do. They told us the case would be referred to the FBI as it is a multi-state scam. It is not known yet if the FBI will take-on this case.

It is not known yet how this financial set-back will affect our ability to continue business but we have learned a lot from this bad experience. We hope that all companies in the hardwood industry who are both our competitors as brokers, suppliers and producers know that we'd inform the industry of our experience if there was any chance for another company to avoid this situation. It is ironic that the very agreement we made with America's Hardwood LLC to pay 100% cash before loading up front was meant to protect them from this happening; yet it was us who turned out to be the victim. We recently became members with the NHLA and hope the organization will assist us to make known what has happened to the industry by getting the word out. We are also notifying all our business partners and suppliers of our experience. We wish you well and hope your business experience never results in what we just went through. For us at Mendocino International LLC., we have truly learned the hard way but will push on and remain determined to succeed in the wood export industry.



**BEWARE of THIS FITICIOUS COMPANY**

**Americas Hardwood**

**Aka: Hardwood Resources in NY.**

**Aka: World Trade Lumber in FL.**

**Aka: Southwest Lumber in FL.**

**Aka: TRC Builders in NY.**

16192 Coastal HWY

Lewes, DE 19958

Tel: (302)358- 2021

Fax (302)504-4875

(The address listed as their place of business belongs to Harvard Business Services. Harvard Business Services is a company which helps others set up a company and requires NO documentation to do so. They are permitted to use this address to conduct all mail forwarding and business related services and it is 100% legal under Delaware law. This company represents a dream come true to any criminal organization seeking to establish a legal business.)

It may take me five years of lobbying but by the time I'm finished, this practice will be illegal in DE.

**Here are names associated with this scam but most likely not real names:**

Glen Fambro (assistant sales manager) possible aka: Hermy Chestnut

Glen is African American 5'8" tall about 35-40 yrs old. He most likely resides in New York city. He's a real smooth talker and claims to have extensive relationships with many yards to include Bailey. Bailey has no idea who these guys are.

D. Chance (claimed to be management)

Tammy McRoe (said to be accounts payable for Americas Hardwood)

Henry Thomas (said to be owner of Americas Hardwood)

Nita (said to work in the accounting department for Americas Hardwood)

Nelson (this guy is out of Georgia and told us he worked in FL as well. Although he isn't involved with *our* scam we found him through dialing extensions of Americas Hardwood)

Other names to be aware of given to us by reputable suppliers in the industry:

Tim Thomas

Lawrence Wells

Ashley Hymson

This case is going to be referred to the FBI by the Pennsylvania State Police. Any information you have for now can be referred to the contact person below. I'm not too confident the FBI will be able to catch these guys. Law enforcement is simply too slow and inadequate. In addition the FBI doesn't have the man power to investigate efficiently not to mention that most law enforcement in general know little about how our industry works. By the time the FBI gets a lead on these guys they'll drop their cell phones and change contact information. Don't be surprised if these guys show up on your yard/mill with a rental car. We've discovered they use check cards a lot which are issued by their bank. Tracking disposable check cards is extremely difficult just like disposable phones. All attempts from us and our bank in Los Angeles to notify Bank of America in NY of the situation have gone ignored and unresponsive. These guys are real pros and they know about the industry and who is who. According to the USDA these guys do have a record of shipping wood. It's not known how those transactions have went or if others were scammed as well.

IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON THIS CASE PLEASE CONTACT:

**Pennsylvania State Police**

Trooper: Cpl. Joe Cigich

Contact Number: (814) 342-3370

Case Number: G08-1217251