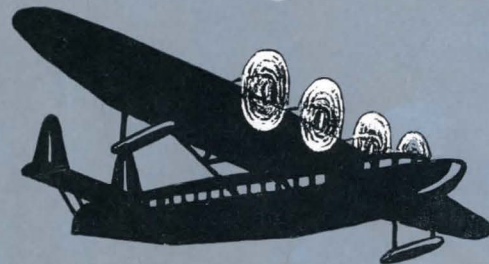


MAY, 1938

# Hardwood Record



100 YEARS OF SERVICE

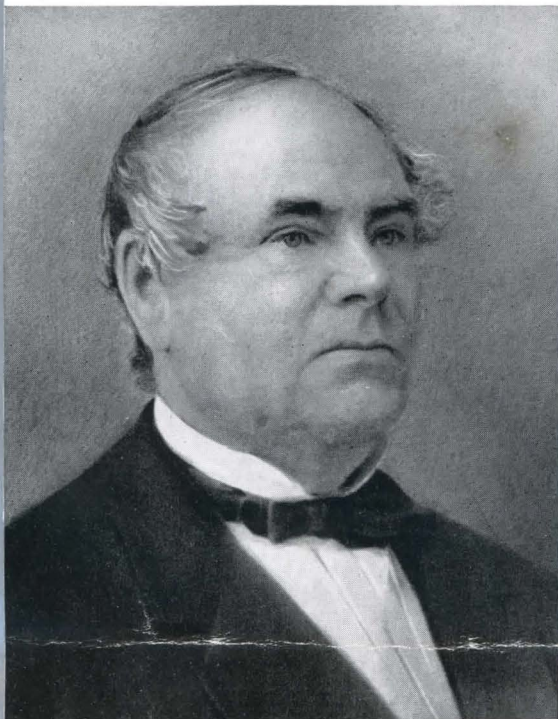


*A Century of Leadership in Fine Woods*  
**ICHABOD T. WILLIAMS & SONS**

READ "FROM TOW-LINE TO STREAMLINE", PAGES 17 TO 24



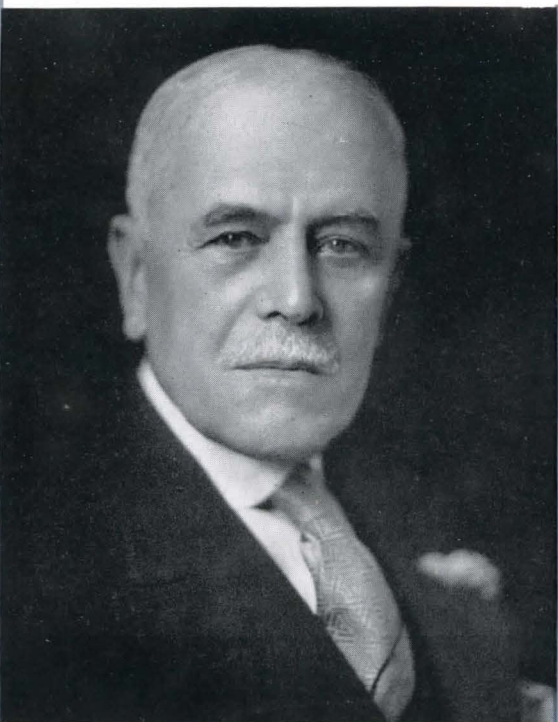
ONE HUNDRED YEARS ago a New Yorker changed his mind. Thomas Williams, the cabinetmaker, had decided he was ready to retire, although he was only 37; and he did retire. But just a few months of idleness convinced him that he had to be doing something worth while, so on May 1, 1838, he and a young partner, Isaac E. Smith, established a lumber yard in the very heart of that thriving metropolis of 400,000 persons. As casually as that it started; but today the cabinetmaker's great-grandson, Thomas Resolved Williams, is the head of America's leading firm manufacturing and distributing fine domestic and foreign hardwoods, and the great plant of Ichabod T. Williams &



THOMAS WILLIAMS—1838



ICHABOD T. WILLIAMS—1851

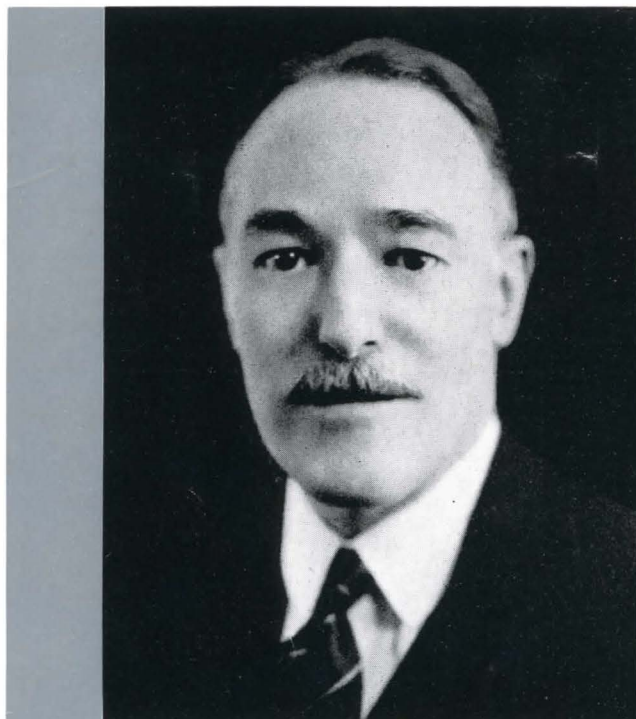


THOMAS WILLIAMS—1880



THOMAS R. WILLIAMS—1905

FROM  
TOW-  
LINE  
TO  
STREAM-  
LINE



THOMAS BLAGDEN—1918



ICHABOD THOMAS WILLIAMS—1938

(DATES REFER TO YEAR WHEN EACH MAN BECAME OR WILL BECOME A PARTNER IN THE FIRM)

Sons, at Carteret, N. J., is known to the entire wood industry as a model of efficiency, and production, and quality.

It is inconceivable that Thomas Williams could have envisioned the ultimate vastness of the enterprise which he was starting, for this has been a truly stupendous century in the history of the world; but he knew a great opportunity when he saw it, and was strong enough to act. He knew that barges could bring timber from the Great Lakes, through the Erie Canal. And in that same year a crew of valiant men brought the little side-wheeler "Sirius" into New York harbor from England, to inaugurate transoceanic steam navigation. We may laugh at that little vessel today—for it has been estimated that she would just nicely fit into the main dining room of the "Queen Mary"—but to New York her arrival was a momentous occasion, heralding a new day in commerce. To the users of wood it meant that New York was in a position to take its pick of all the available woods in the world. And down on Broad Street were Duncan Phyfe and other famed furniture craftsmen.

So to Broad Street, also, went Thomas Williams and his partner to open their new lumber yard, which should supply these men with whatever they might require in wood, as only a man who was himself a skilled cabinetmaker could know their needs. Intimate, practical knowledge of the customer's own requirements in wood—that is the service which is the pride of the Williams personnel today, and the immediate success of the Williams & Smith enterprise demonstrated that it was just as indispensable then as now. Soon they had to have more room, but it was not to be had in what was already on the way to becoming the world's most congested commercial area—their yard was located approximately on the present site of the New York Stock Exchange—so they moved to more commodious quarters at the corner of White Street and Broadway. Even that sufficed for a short time only, for most of the domestic lumber was coming in by barge, down the river, and also there was the growing business in fine cabinet woods from foreign shores.

Cabinetmakers and furniture craftsmen were demanding mahogany and more mahogany—because their customers were demanding it—and then as now they knew that they could find exactly what they wanted in the varied stocks of Mr. Williams and his partner. But to maintain such a business properly and make it continue to grow, waterfront facilities were required; so the next move was made to the North River waterfront at Washington and Desbrosses streets. Here, in 1851, an important change was made in the firm.

Ichabod T. Williams, son of Thomas, had grown up in a tradition of cabinetmaking and merchandising of fine woods—he was 12 years old when the lumber firm was

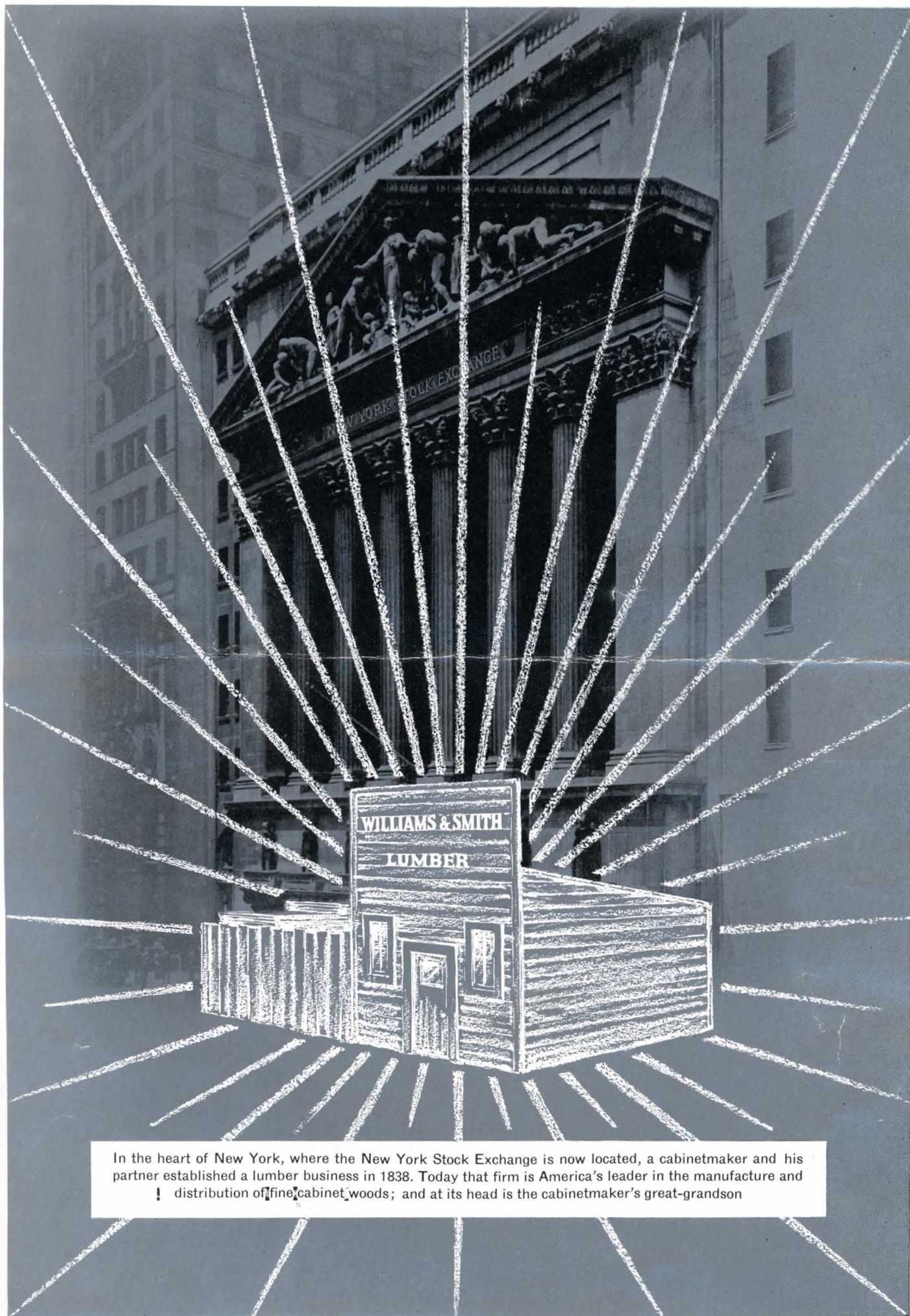
founded—but he resolved to take a look at another line of work first. His partner in this venture went to California in the gold rush of the '49ers, and young Williams followed him, but by the middle of 1850 he had had enough of gold mining, and arrived back in New York in time for Christmas with his family. And now the man who had thought to retire at 37 determined to actually retire, so in 1851 his place in the business was taken by his son Ichabod, and the firm name was changed to Smith & Williams. This continued until May 1, 1870, when the partnership was dissolved and Mr. Williams continued under the style of Ichabod T. Williams, which in turn was changed to Ichabod T. Williams & Sons, in 1882; for Thomas Williams II became a partner in 1880 and Henry K. S. Williams was admitted to the firm in 1882.

That has now been the name of the firm for fifty-six years. Two other sons, Waldron and Lloyd Williams, became partners in the early nineties, but Lloyd Williams retired in 1908 and Waldron and H. K. S. Williams retired in 1911. In the meantime, however, Thomas Williams' son, Thomas Resolved Williams, had become associated with the firm in 1900 and had been admitted to partnership in 1905. Further addition to the firm was made in 1918, when Thomas Blagden and Frederick C. Leary became partners. Mr. Leary withdrew ten years later.

Today the only partners are Thomas Resolved Williams (who became senior partner upon the passing of his father in 1935) and Thomas Blagden. However, Ichabod Thomas Williams, son of T. R. Williams, is to be taken into the firm July 1, becoming the fifth generation in the partnership.

He will have a remarkable tradition to uphold. For one of the major problems of every other generation of his family in the firm has been to find, to have and to hold a plot of ground large enough and with adequate facilities for handling the steadily expanding business of this great lumber and veneer organization. Mention has been made of the waterfront facilities of the Desbrosses Street yard; but soon the Pennsylvania Railroad established its Desbrosses Street ferry terminal, and gone were all possibilities of expanding the lumber business in a neighborhood rapidly becoming more congested.

But this lumber business just had to have plenty of room, and it had to have a waterfront. So the waterfront property between 25th and 26th streets was purchased. There wasn't much additional room, for the bank of the Hudson River then was located about where Eleventh Avenue now is; but with the waterfront property came the Dongan Grant, which permitted the lumbermen to fill in the river as fast as the city moved its own waterfront line out into the stream. Through the years they filled in an entire block, providing land for both Eleventh Avenue and Twelfth Avenue. Tall stacks of mahogany and other fine woods towered on both

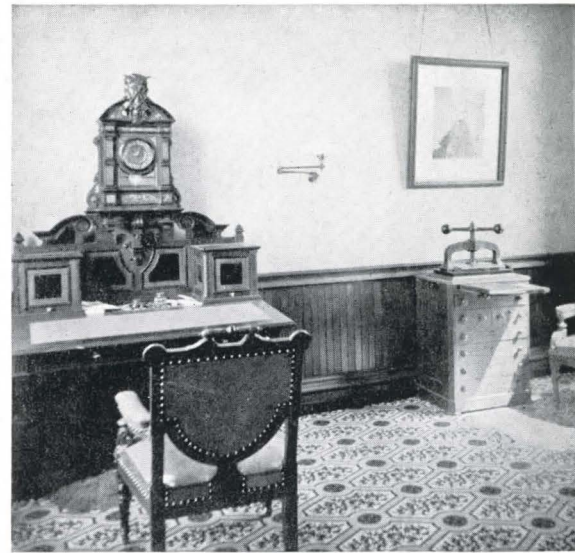


In the heart of New York, where the New York Stock Exchange is now located, a cabinetmaker and his partner established a lumber business in 1838. Today that firm is America's leader in the manufacture and distribution of fine cabinet woods; and at its head is the cabinetmaker's great-grandson





For many years the firm, then "Smith & Williams" occupied this office on Eleventh Avenue



Mahogany desk and chair built for Ichabod T. Williams—it's still in use

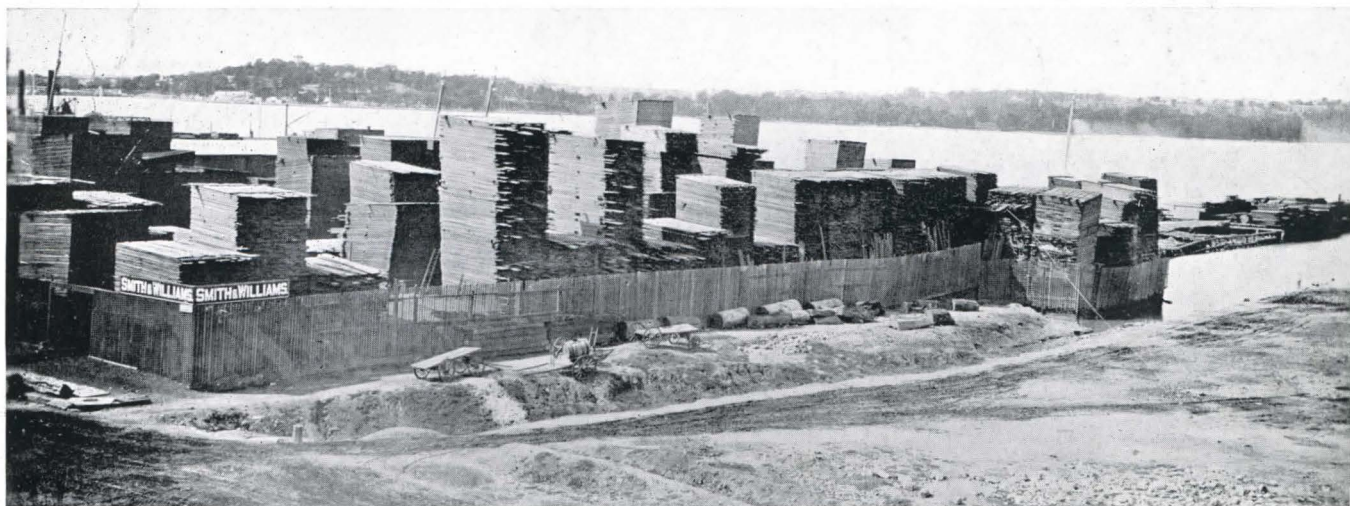


The general office fixtures and paneling were mahogany, too

sides of Eleventh Avenue, and to the firm's wharf came barges of hardwoods and white pine from the Great Lakes (trans-shipped from lake freighters at Buffalo). Came also ocean vessels with precious cargoes of rare woods from the Orient, the West Indies, Europe, South America. Wherever there was a wood species with grain and figure demanded by designers, architects or craftsmen, there was a Williams buyer prepared to send it on its way to New York. Mahogany especially was in demand, and for many years it was the custom for this to come from Africa's Ivory Coast or the American tropics by way of London or Liverpool; but with expanding volume of sales, and increasing British handling costs and double freights, the American importers began what is today the standard practice of

owning or chartering their own vessels to bring the fine mahogany direct to New York.

In 1885, however, New York City condemned the firm's waterfront property to build new piers and docks and establish what is now Twelfth Avenue. So this time the firm—now Ichabod T. Williams & Sons—Retained only its general offices, veneer storage and show rooms and retail yard on Eleventh Avenue, and moved the major portion of the business off Manhattan Island entirely. Purchasing about a half-mile of waterfront property on Staten Island (it was located between Tompkinsville and Stapleton, at the main ship channel in New York Harbor, providing wonderful facilities of deep water and rail-connections), the firm built i



The Eleventh Avenue yard itself, with the Hudson River and the Jersey shore forming a backdrop for tall stacks of fine woods



Here, at 220 Eleventh Avenue, are (at left) the retail yard and (center) the veneer warehouse and show rooms, and the general offices of Ichabod T. Williams & Sons

first metropolitan sawmills, and the largest mahogany and hardwood yards in New York City.

But by 1919 New York City had absorbed Staten Island into the corporate limits, and in that year the city condemned the Staten

Island waterfront to make way for municipal docks, and the prosperous, well organized business once more had to find a new home. Up and down the Atlantic coast and the Gulf coast the executives traveled, prospecting for the best possible site, that should provide all the facilities and room which a vigorous busi-



Airplane view of the great plant at Carteret—seventy acres devoted to the modern manufacture of fine woods into lumber and veneers





Discharging two cargoes of mahogany logs—African (in background) onto wharf, and Honduras (foreground) into pond

ness might require. After considering the entire coast line they determined on a 70-acre tract at Carteret, N. J., a part of New York Harbor, as the finest possible site for this business, and there was built the world's largest plant for the manufacture and distribution of fine cabinet woods and veneers. Begun in 1922, it was completed in 1925.

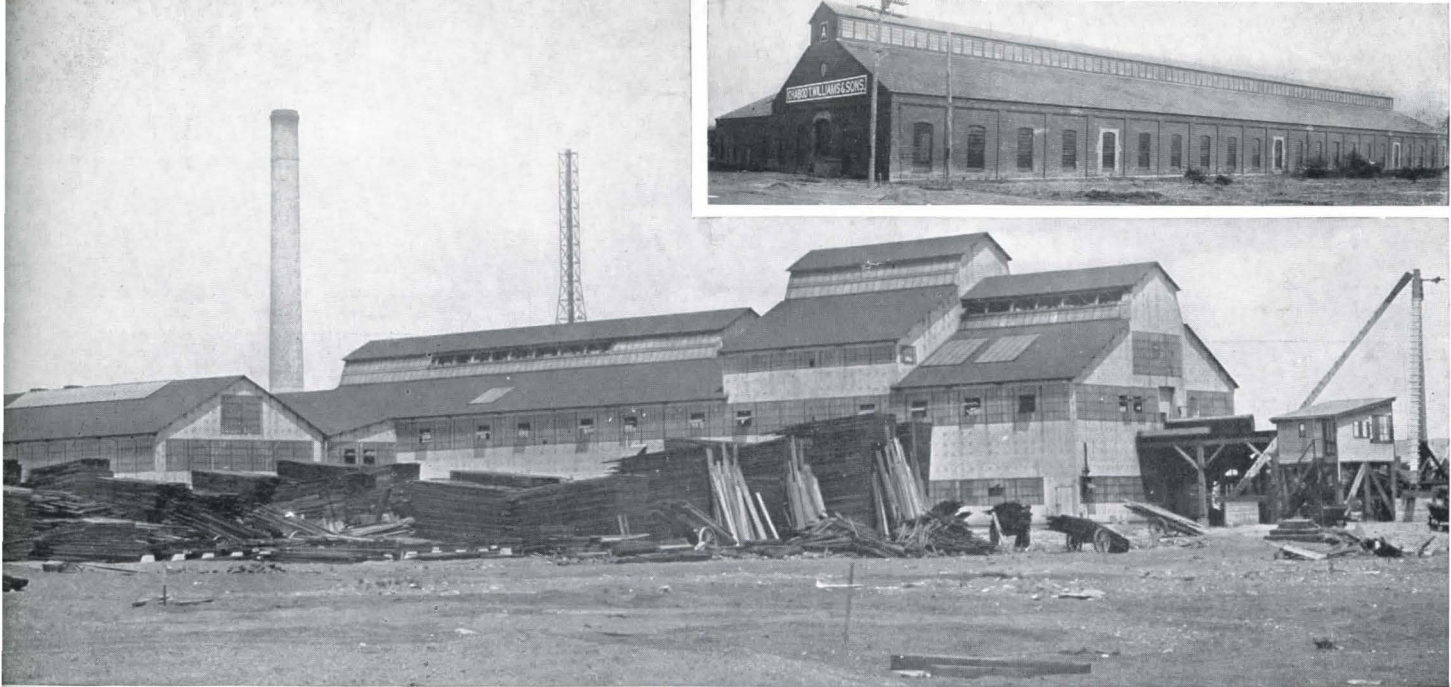
The great timber basin, ten acres in area, has an 850-foot frontage, large enough for three ocean-going steamers to discharge

their cargoes at once, either into the log pond itself or onto the 350-foot concrete wharf, where is a railroad track directly connected to the Central Railroad of New Jersey; also there is a slip for lighters. The finest possible facilities for receiving lumber or logs from ships—and what a contrast it presents, to the primitive methods by which some of those ships are loaded.

For the forest riches of the entire world contribute their quota to the woods arriving at this timber basin. At this wharf a

From the mill deck one may view a young ocean of fine logs, with Staten Island Sound and Staten Island in the background





The mill is efficiently laid out, and houses the most modern equipment. Inset—One of the veneer warehouses

ship from Grand Bassam, headquarters for the African department of Ithabod T. Williams & Sons, may nudge against another ship from the mahogany and cedar operations 2,300 miles up the Amazon River, in Peru; or the cargo in that other ship may be from India or Mexico, from Australia or Honduras, from Burma or Brazil, from England or Java, from France or Japan—or the Philippines—Ceylon—Russia—Cuba—Austria—Colombia—Borneo—or perhaps from some United States port.

In many of the tropical logging operations the methods are likely to be quite primitive, even today, but when once the steamer splashes a log into the log pond at Carteret, that stick of wood (which may weigh as much as ten or fifteen tons) thenceforth is handled by the most modern and efficient machinery and equip-

ment known to the wood industry. Steam or electrical power moves it about the yard or the six acres of floor area in the mill and warehouse buildings, and manufactures the log into the finest quality lumber or veneers obtainable. These fine hardwoods are used for a great variety of purposes, and the immense Williams plant is equipped with such a variety of machinery as will provide the best type of machine for each purpose.

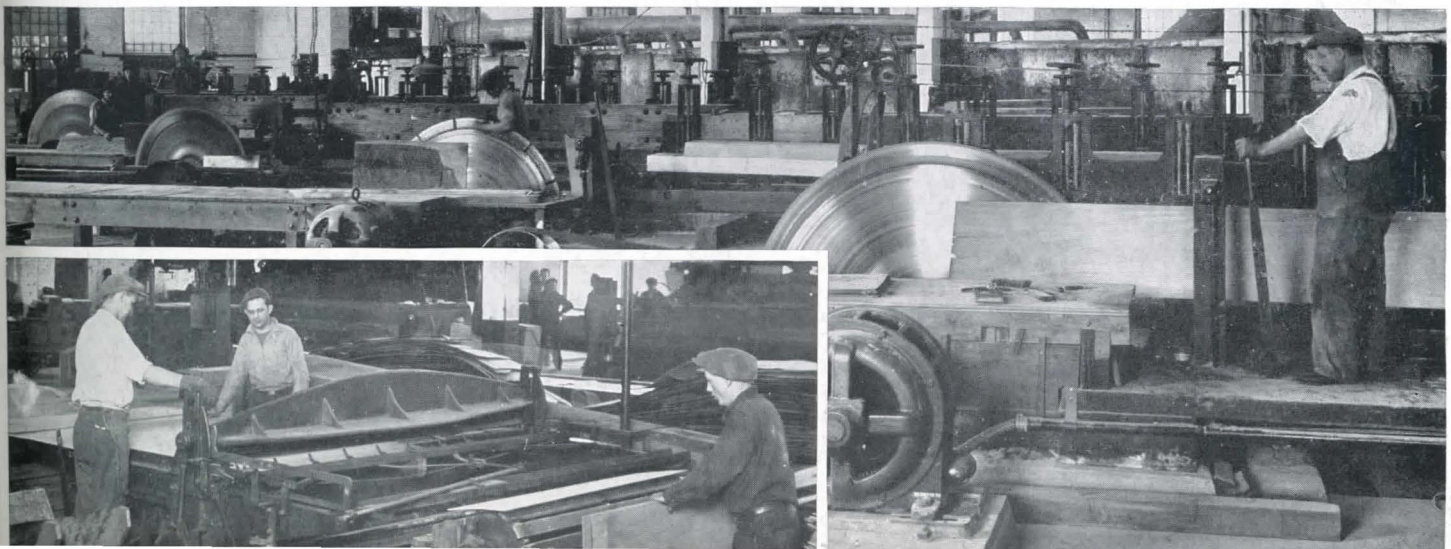
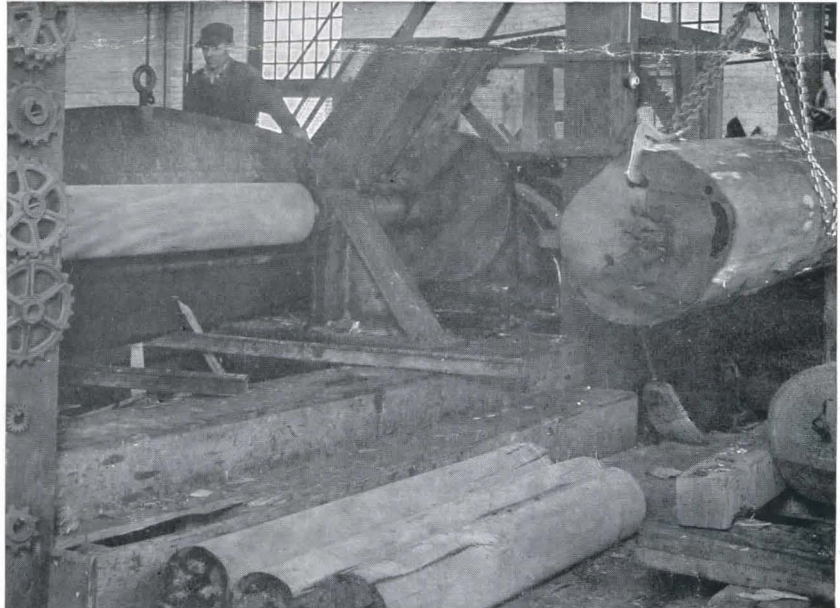
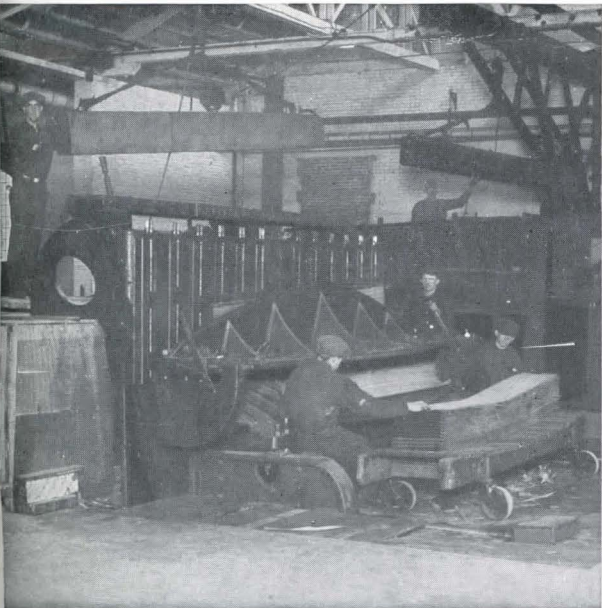
That is the Carteret plant of today—a wonder of mechanical efficiency operated by men long skilled in their varied fields of operation. It is a far cry from the little yard that was established on Broad Street a hundred years ago. But will this plant, too, prove too small within a generation, just as the other five homes of this

Left: Veneer Slicer

Right: Rotary-cutting Lathe

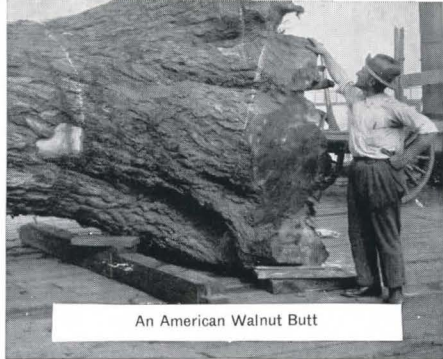
Center: Sawing Piano Rims

Bottom: Automatic Power Clippers

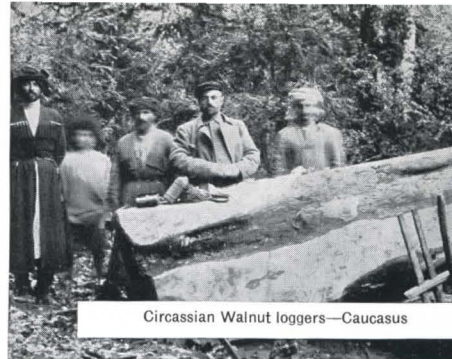




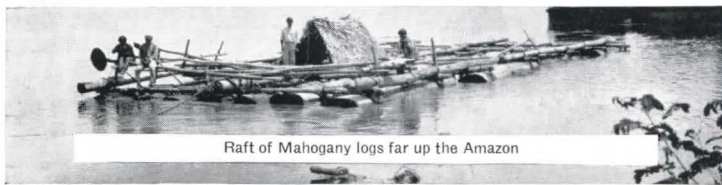
Air view, New Orleans mill



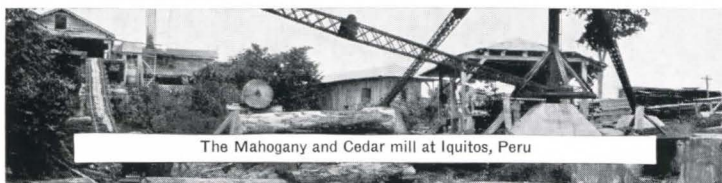
An American Walnut Butt



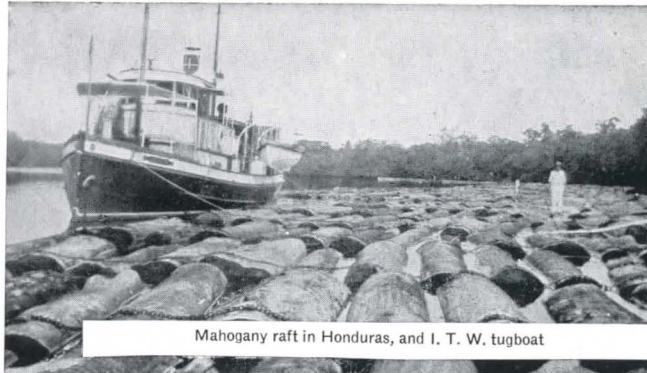
Circassian Walnut loggers—Caucasus



Raft of Mahogany logs far up the Amazon



The Mahogany and Cedar mill at Iquitos, Peru



Mahogany raft in Honduras, and I. T. W. tugboat



century-old firm have done? We would hesitate to predict. Why try to predict? That has not been the Williams policy in the past. Seemingly it has been—as exemplified in turn by Thomas Williams, Ichabod T. Williams, Thomas Williams II and Thomas Resolved Williams—"Solve your own problems today, maintain your own leadership today, and raise up sons who can do as well when they take over."

Already, since 1930, Ichabod Thomas Williams has been associated with the company as an assistant to his father, laying a firm foundation of management, against the time when—next



July it will be—he, too, will be a partner in the firm. And HIS son Thomas, we'll wager, already can identify a piece of mahogany when he sees it, even though he is only four years old; for that matter, maybe Tommy's little brother, Samuel Dunstan Williams, age a year and a half, can do it, too.

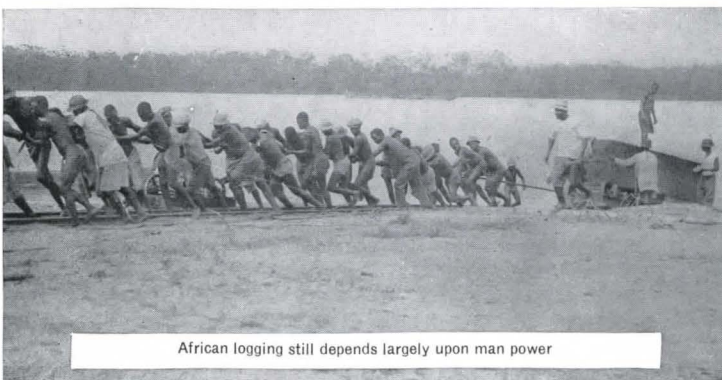
One hundred years—in that span the nation has advanced from tow-line to streamline. What will it be when these youngsters "take over"? No matter; be assured they will be ready to carry on with the second hundred years of leadership in fine woods.



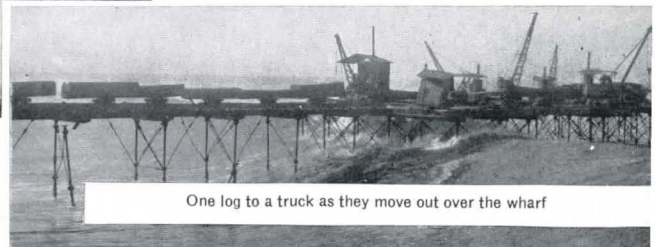
Headquarters of African department, Grand Bassam



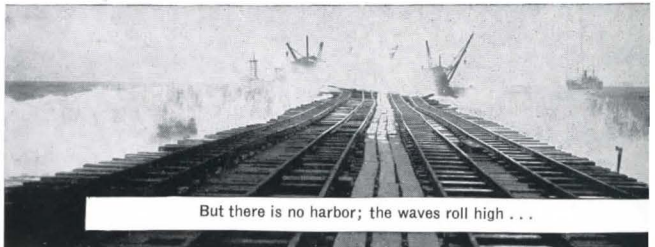
African logs ready for shipment



African logging still depends largely upon man power



One log to a truck as they move out over the wharf



But there is no harbor; the waves roll high . . .

