

Rare Wood and Veneers Are Company's Specialty

By RITA REIF

BEHIND the leaded glass windows of an eighteen-nineties building at 11th Avenue and 25th Street, Thomas Resolved Williams and his son Ichabod T. oversee an international lumber operation that directly affects the interiors of homes and furniture design.

The revival of the use of rare woods and burls in furniture, accessories and architectural backgrounds in recent years has focused renewed attention on this century-old concern called Ichabod T. Williams & Sons. The father-son team are, respectively, president and secretary of the lumber company, dealers in rare woods and veneers since 1838.

From their headquarters at 220 11th Avenue, the Williamses direct teak from Thailand, vermilion from India, okume from Ghana, narra from the Philippines, black beam from Australia and Carpathian elm from Yugoslavia to furni-

ture manufacturers, architects, craftsmen, sculptors and do-it-yourself artisans across the country.

During a recent call, the elder Mr. Williams reviewed highlights of the company's history. Noting that his great-grandfather, also named Thomas, founded the business in 1838, the 82-year-old lumber dealer recalled:

"Duncan Phyfe maintained a workshop on Broad Street in those days. We had our shop and yard on the site of what is now the New York Stock Exchange. We moved up here in 1871 when my grandfather, Ichabod T., was president."

Has Mill in Jersey

Reputed to be one of the largest dealers in exotic woods and veneers in the country, Williams also specializes in fine hardwoods such as mahogany, rosewood and walnut. Aside from its block-front West Side site, the company owns a 70-acre mill and lumber yard in Carteret, N. J., and a second mill in Iquitos, Peru.

The company's offices are on the three lower floors, where mahogany and vermilion paneling, oak and maple floors and tiled fireplaces create an atmosphere of Edwardian elegance.

From the four floors above, which house tons of veneers, issue a variety of fragrances that knowledgeable lumber merchants can separate and identify. "That sweet, heady aroma," said Ichabod T. Williams, "comes from the rosewood veneers."

150,000 Feet Stored

Visitors in search of a sheet of veneer or a slab of lumber are conducted through either the veneers warehouse or the adjoining yard where 150,000 feet of lumber is piled two stories high. Shoppers select the wafer-thin woods or the planks from the generous selection and must buy a full flitch of veneer or uncut board. Each piece, the younger Mr. Williams said, is priced individually. Teak, considered expensive today because of the diminishing supply and great demand for the wood, would be \$1.50 to \$2 a square foot for boards. African mahogany veneers are 6 or 7 cents a square foot.

Aside from serving top furniture manufacturers (Kittinger, Herman Miller, Drexel, American of Martinsville and Thomasville Chair are among their clients), Williams is frequented by craftsmen who specialize in making salad bowls, trays and the like as well as sculptors from all over the country. (The warehouse and yard are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. but are closed between 12 and 1 P.M. daily.)