THE EIGHT O'CLOCK WHISTLE

By Sam Patton

Preface

This one year story is to preserve the memories of a unique time. All who love down-home history will appreciate these data and the simple way they are presented. Share these cherished thoughts with me.

Mr. O. P. Willingham, Sr. was 72 years old at this time. Mr. O. P. Willingham, Jr. was 44 years old. Mr. R. W. Clark was 35 years old. All in the story were under 45 years old.

Note

Prices adjusted for inflation as of February 2025 and are listed in parentheses.

Fall is a beautiful time in Macon and this September 2, 1929 was the beginning of a great year for me. The dogwood leaves are turning rust-colored, the roses and mums are blooming with all their fall glory soon to be browned by the winter cold. Arising that Monday morning I boarded the streetcar at Vineville Avenue and road to Mulberry and Broadway and then walked from there to my new place of employment, Willingham Sash and Door Company, located on Seventh Street at the corner of Cherry Street. It was a beautiful day and I was ready to begin my new job with enthusiasm and determination to do well. Mr. R. W. Clark, office manager, welcomed me and introduced me to everyone as the new clerk typist, Mr. Patton. My desk was pointed out to me, the one Mr. Tom Maddox had, it being vacant, for he was transferred to the paint store at 457 Third Street. Orientation was completed and I began working on papers on my desk. My father, before his death in December 1928, owned City Realty Company in Macon and City Lumber Company and we had worked as boys at the City Lumber Company yard. Consequently, I knew something about the building industry.

Having just finished high school and no college in sight, I went to work in what I knew something about. I would work a year at this great factory with many most interesting people.

Mr. O. P. Willingham, Jr., the current president of the company was a fine gentleman, dressed most properly each day with a dark suit, stiff detachable starched collar and stiffly starched shirt, and a beautiful tie. His hat was the unusual broad-brimmed felt hat and either gray or dark black. He was almost 6'1" tall, walked erect, was stern, kind, and most accustomed to having his way. Each day he arrived at the office through a back door, unannounced, at varying times of the day, and through that back door to which no one had a key. He had a master key to everything in the area but no key that we had would fit his back door. We all referred to Mr. O. P. Willingham as Mr. O. P. Jr. This name is the one we all used in his absence. Other times we called him Mr. Willingham. Mr. O. P. Jr. addressed all of us salaried ones as Mr. or Mrs. according to whom he was speaking. Soon after I began work at the factory office, Mrs. Lena Rutland came to do the typing because our business orders and production were increasing so much. Mr. O. P.'s office was upstairs over the main office. From there he ran the entire business, the factory and the paint store. He would come down to our area at times, maybe twice a day. All of the president's orders went to Mr. Clark who was the executive office for the factory. Our two incoming phone lines were such that Mr. O. P. Jr. could talk from his phone upstairs without our eaves dropping on his conversation, a new phone service in Macon, and it was his privilege to do whatever he wished in this area also.

During my indoctrination period, break-in time, I calculated the board feet of lumber in truck loads of lumber from small area sawmills, or from carlots [*sic*] from Milledgeville, Albany, or even the state of Washington or Oregon. The tally sheets were recorded on sheets of graph paper in groups of five marks, four upright marks and one hash mark on lines designated for each specific size and length of framing, sheeting, flooring or just plain boards, whatever was in that shipment. Also the material was graded according to grade, A, B, or C indicating whether or not the lumber was the best grade or the lowest grade. Having calculated the board feet recorded on each sheet, the record was turned over to Mr. Clark for validation and then the records were forwarded to the business and financial office on Third Street. Here Mr. Bob Hatcher would check the tally sheets further and authorize payment and the bookkeeper, Mr. Deveraux, would pay the amount

determined by Mr. Hatcher to the supplier of the lumber. Payment was made by check or cash according to what the person wished and sometimes the payment was made by mail. Lumber in those years sold for minimal prices. Sheating was $12.50 per M.B.F. (**$233.25**) Framing was $18.00 per M.B.F. (**$335.88**), with 4" flooring B grade $22.50 per M.B.F. (**$410.51**), and weather boarding ½" X 5½" and was $22.50 to $25.00 per M.B.F. (**$419.84-466.49**) Nails were 5¢ per pound (**93¢**), even in 100 pound wooden kegs. Workers on home buildings or jobs, wherever there was carpentry work or any other kind of masonry work, used the wooden nail kegs as water coolers. A cleaned, water-swollen nail keg and 5¢ worth of ice from the ice man made a good cool water barrel and these were used on many jobs. I know about the nail kegs and used as water coolers for we had used them when we were boys working for my father building and repairing houses.

During these times we had 96 pound sacks of cement, 86 pound sacks of mortar mix and 50 or 100 pound sacks of cement. All were a dollar each or under. No one ever said at the lumber yard, I can't pick up that 96 pound sack of cement. Everyone was capable of doing this or he would seek employment some other place.

Other jobs were assigned to me since Mrs. Rutland did all the typing. Courier or runner or carrier; I was it. There were phones in the main office and Mr. O. P. Jr.'s office and no other. There was no means of communication between the factory, the sash warehouse, or lumber yard except by someone delivering a message. Someone had to carry the messages, remarks, and suggestions to all the department heads. A slow but most interesting work for me, and at times amusing. Early in the times I learned to adjust. The Department Heads, Mr. R. W. Clark, office manager; Mr. C. W. Wilder, shop superintendent; Mr. R. T. Girardeau, a newcomer shipping clerk; Mr. Collins, sash and door warehouse foreman; Mr. B. Y. Shelley, lumber checker and mechanic. There were truck drivers, Theo Hardin who was assistant shipping clerk and driver; and Clifford Webb and Step Hardin.

Messages were carried five to six times daily to all the departments from Mr. Clark from one department to another. I was the go-between, cushion, or shock absorber, and at times it was rough but most of the time amusing. This was the second year of the beginning of the Great Depression—terrible depression. There was nothing great about this terrible financial crisis, which began in 1928. This year when I started at Willingham Sash and Door was 1929 as noted above and it was a year of fear, frustration, despair, and almost futility. It was truly not the happy days of the mid-30s [mid-20s] As carrier of messages, I carried the meaning of the message without the hostile, profane, ugly remarks, and put-downs spoken and at times shouted to me. I never got upset. I just said, "yes sir" and "thank you". And then I said, "I will do what you say." I always edited the messages, changing the inuindos [*sic*] and wording, without altering the substance concerning the business at hand and deleting personal messages from one to another. We never had a Monday morning sales meeting. We might have needed more than my first-aid had we had Monday morning sales meetings.

Willingham Sash and Door Company, organized in 1882 by Mr. O. P. Willingham, Sr. was a great manufacturing company for doors and windows. In 1882 the factory began manufacturing windows, sash, and doors and all other kinds of mill work and producing dressed lumber and molding. Many homes were beautifully built with mill work second to none. All was well made, quality craftsmanship, and of the best grade materials. The machines and tools and delivery system were cumbersome and slow but excellence was always the goal.

In 1929 our power tools and delivery trucks were effective, "light weights" and took a great deal of care. Our buildings for the mill office and the factory were great in 1929. The factory was large, a brick building with big doors at each end and many windows for light and air especially in the summer. Lighting in the building was fair with the drop lights discussed previously. The ceiling was very high probably 30 feet and this helped exhaust some of the dust and some of the heat in the summer. There were adequate exhaust systems to take the dust and chips to the boiler room for fuel. Of course, all exhaust systems lack some perfection especially in this type of work. Also the high ceilings provided an area for the many drive shafts and pulleys and dual pulleys to run the idler wheels and the drive pulleys of each individual machine. The idler pulleys, drive pulleys, belts, belt shift levers, and many other items using the power system were amazing and great. These things converted the power from the massive steam engine to the individual machine. The only electrically powered machine at that time was a Dewalt saw which was designed by the Dewalt Company in about 1926. It still is a good brand of radial arm saw. This saw cut down on a great deal of hand saw work.

Entering the factory one heard the noise of these shafts and pulleys and belts all day, for they ran all day from 8:00 to 4:30. The shop office was on the right, with all the paperwork, blueprints, layouts of the take off of plans, plans and specifications of homes, schools, hospitals, public buildings, and many other buildings being built in this our great Empire State. Here in the office in the factory was the nerve center of the production and it was a production if ever I saw one. Orders were many, in spite of the fall in available finances. Mr. C. W. Wilder was the superintendent of the factory and Mr. L. A. "Red" Shaw was foreman. Mr. Shaw was a newcomer and very proficient in taking off the items to be produced. He worked on the plans and "specs" and "took off" all the items to be manufactured. Mr. Lyles was the "old timer" who really knew the ins and outs and peaks and pitfalls of machinery, machinery set up to produce millwork, sash and doors, mantels, cabinets, balusters, stair rails, lathe work, and all designs in wood work to enhance the function and beauty of a home or building. Some of Macon's homes and buildings are as elegant as any in our great nation.

Our factory layout consisted of many well placed machines, all of top quality and effectiveness. All these machines were laid out by Mr. O. P. Willingham, Sr. some years back and Mr. O. P. Willingham, Sr. who had recently retired was an expert manufacturer, producer and man of knowledge and effectiveness. About fourty [*sic*] feet from the entrance to the shop in the middle section of the front was the shaper, to mold lumber in curves and various shapes. This shaper was great and it is comparable to our shaper, and our hand held router at the present time. It is a dangerous machine, especially to newcomers. On the right of the shaper were rip saws and cut off saws, followed by more complicated machines. The mortising machine and tendon cutting machines were next and these cut mortises and tendons to join door stiles to the cross rails of doors and windows. The cross and upright members of windows; the muntin or mullion, as sometimes called, were joined to the side and upper and bottom rials of the windows with tendon and mortis joints. This method of manufacturing windows was used until about 1930 when the use of dowels began. This method of completing a joint is faster and easier and more cost effective than the mortis and tendon joint. The mortising bit for the machine was the fore-runner of our present day chain saw bit, but it had to cut a finer than fine cut. Mr. Lyes set up this machine and it had to

cut a perfect cut. Yellow pine is more brittle and harder than white pine and the bit had to be super sharp.

The door panel cutters and sanders were behind the mortising machine.

Further back were the pressure clamps and clue pot where windows and doors were put together. The glue pot contained glue that had to be heated and melted to be used and it was made from animal protein and was very foul-smelling so we did not heat the pot up until we absolutely needed it. All parts of the sash and doors had to fit perfectly and the clamps produced a perfect piece of mill work. The clamp was operated with steam power.

The sander was a very large machine and could, with precision, sand very wide doors and windows. I believe it could sand work six feet wide and, of course, any length and this sanding was near perfection.

The clamps put the multi-paneled doors together quickly and then the door was sent through the sander. These doors consisted of cheaper cross paneled doors, and upright paneled doors such as Colonial doors were also made. The cross paneled doors usually had six panels, with top and bottom rail, mid rails and two up right stiles. A door with six cross panels was made up of six panels, seven rails, and two stiles, a total of fifteen pieces. Some of these doors sold for as little as $3.00 (**$55.98**). This was quite a feat putting this much work together but it was every day for Mr. Lyles and his work group. Colonial doors were beautifully made, following many different designs.

During these times the stiles of the doors were 1 to 1-½" longer than necessary. These doors were cut on the job with a hand saw to fit the frame opening. When plans were sent in with orders, the door frames and window frames were manufactured first and sent out to the "job". When ready, the contractor would order the windows and doors to be delivered. We always had these completed just after the frames were made to special order so that we could ship them on a moments notice. All this was coordinated and usually perfect.

The schoolhouse at Forsyth was an exception. A rare exception it was. The High School building was on New 41 in Forsyth. It is a beautiful building yet. We sent the windows and door frames up by truck and all was well. Then in two weeks we received a request to ship the windows and doors to the job. The building was weathered in and all frames were up and we were ready to ship the windows and doors to be put in these frames that we had manufactured. Well, we sent the order up and received a rush request for someone to come and inspect our work. All the windows were 1-½" too short for the frames that we had made! Our checker and inspector, probably Mr. Shaw, went to the site to check and sure enough the windows were 1-½" too short for the frames. You have never heard such grumbling, groaning, shouting, cursing, blaming, "No, I didn't", "Yes, you did", and then a sudden hush all over the world. Then a sudden realization that the windows had to be made correctly in two weeks. I continued my duties as courier, and as usual revised the wording of the command, order, or response. These revisions or editings were necessary to be fitting for the various egos, feelings, and for the betterment of the easy production of the replacement for the error in the sash. The windows were remade in two weeks and this shock passed also! This is really the only error remembered in the twelve months I worked at Willingham Sash and Door Company but it was a window jammer!

The lathe production for the balusters and columns and things of that nature was just to the left of the rip saw and behind the shaper. These men could turn out a hundred balusters perfect by hand and they did not have a precision bit to cut these things with. They could turn out a round column very effectively and they could turn out build up columns very effectively which were beautiful and some are still standing on beautiful Colonial homes. The bases and caps were also turned out at Willingham Sash and Door Company and some of these you can see in Macon which are very beautiful.

This was a marvelous production facility, and I was proud to be a part of it. Mr. Lyles was a gentleman, mild-mannered, easy going, determined to do things right. He had never said a cross word. He performed any task quickly, willingly, and expertly. He was Mr. Millworker. He could do lathe work, set up any machine, grind any type of molding bit, use a shaper, and do all work in that manufacturing plant. Mr. Wilder, the shop superintendent, was short and stout and very bossy and a bit short tempered, especially when Mr. Clark, the office manager, tried to give the shop superintendent an order or make a suggestion about an order or any work that was too slow. When work was coming up slow for shipment everybody got short-tempered. The messages from Mr. Wilder to Mr. Clark and from Mr. Clark to Mr. Wilder had to be tossed up into the air to cool off and then were edited by me. This kept the lines of communications lukewarm, but they were kept open.

Mr. Shaw was younger than Mr. Wilder, a bit red-headed, and called "Red" by some people. He was an expert technician and was very great at "taking things off plans and specs". He did much of the work setting down the exact specifications and design of millwork, taking some of the work off Mr. Lyles. These two people worked well together.

The shop and manufacturing plant could not have functioned without a great power plant, the boiler room, and the engine room. The massive engine was housed in the boiler room and from there came all the power needed to produce all the things that we did. The engine was a horizontal 200 or 250 horsepower steam operated machine. The flywheels were about 12 feet in diameter as well as I remember. The governors and gauge on the engine and the boiler fascinated me. The oil cups all about shown with the oil used to lubricate the bearings and help the engine run smoothly. The governors were brass and they whirled all the time to keep the engine running at the same speed. The large boiler was fired by Otis Haines, a thin black man about 5'9" tall, sparingly dressed usually in white. He seemed to be sweating always, even in winter time. He was a great worker; never talking much; taking his job most seriously because of the great responsibility of keeping water in the boiler, fire in the box, oil for the engine and managing the fuel supply correctly. The fuel consisted of sawdust, shavings, and scrap lumber, and sometimes maybe coal. We call the shavings wood chips today.

Otis would come to the office every Thursday asking me to get a dose of Epsom Salts for himself. First aid and medication dispensing was one of my jobs. Otis would hold out his black hand, I would pour about two teaspoons of Epsom Salts from the box into his hand and he would immediately put the medicine in his mouth and he would dart out the door back to his duties. I did not see how he could swallow this strong medication without water but he did.

The massive engine transferred the power to a system of rods and pulleys that covered the entire overhead area of the shop. This wide belt in the main engine was about 14 inches wide in

order to carry the load that it must carry to run all the shafts to provide energy to run all the machines. In 1930 Mr. O. P. Jr. bought an electric generator and steam boiler from the Navy Surplus in Savannah for the total of $25.00 (**$466.49**). This was an electric generating plant that had been in a submarine in the U.S. Navy. They used the submarine generator to generate power for the batteries on the submarine so when they submerged they would have power from the batteries but every time it surfaced they would start up this steam boiler with coal to generate electricity to recharge the batteries. Our truck driver, Step Hardin, was sent to Savannah to pick up the machinery. This generator was used by us to make the electricity for us during the daytime. After we got the generator set up in the boiler room we piped steam to the steam motor to run the generator. We did not use that upright boiler. Mr. B. Y. Shelley, our mechanic and others, set the generator and boiler on a base and the electricians wired everything needed so that we could have 32 volt lights during the day in the plant and in the office and then at night we would have Macon Railway and Light Company energy to light our lights. After this generator was functioning, Otis would throw a switch at 7:30 each morning for our own generated lights and he would disengage the switch at 5:00 p.m. Our factory lights were drop lights on pipes or long cords with a shield about 12 inches in diameter over each light so it would reflect light down to the worker. The bulbs would burn on 110 volt or 32 volts. We probably saved money with this new electric power source but I'm not sure about it. Back in those days we did not have anything but sunlight and 32 watt bulbs to shine over our work. We had no electric typewriters, no electric adding machines, so we did not have to have very much energy from the electrical source.

Back of the boiler room was the big planer where lumber was dressed. A great deal of the time our stock was dressed on four sides before we received it. We dressed framing such as 2x4's and 2x6's; 3/4" stock and 1-1/8" stock (now known as 5/4 stock). All sizes of lumber were done by this planer in our factory building. Inside the factory building was a molding machine. We did planing work for other people on order. A special job from the Central Georgia Railroad came in and was brought in by a gondola car and it was a load of 12" x 12" rough green pine lumber. Each piece was 12 feet long. This special day this carload came in we knew that we would have a challenge to dress all this lumber. It was beautiful yellow pine lumber, but being green and this size it was heavy and it was a task for the large crew of men to take the timber out of that car to the planer and back to the railcar. The shop and shop foreman accepted the order knowing it would be a big job. When the planer was set up for the job and a timber carried into the jaws of that machine, it balked like an old mule. The boiler puffed and the engine almost shouted. When we put a piece of lumber in there 12" x 12", we were dressing 48" of lumber at one time. This size timber, I believe, is the biggest we ever dressed on that planer. When the first piece was fed into the planer, there was a terrible roar for 30 seconds; then silence from the machine and a groan from the workers. Adjustments were made to the planer, the fire punched up in the boiler, and all other machines cut off. Another try and the same results; a terrible roar and in 30 seconds silence from the machine. This went on for about two hours. Then the machine took one piece at a time, a loud roar, then a loud humming groan, then a hum until another timber was fed into the planer jaws. Then there was another groan, a roar, and a hum then the piece came out. The balky planer, the head of steam, and the men all worked fine and the job was completed in about six hours. The car full of the newly dressed lumber was sent out the next morning. The entire factory was exhausted. The office did no work that day because of the stress of this work. Everyone was jubilant but tired and willing to move on to something else after

this work had been done. During this planing session the planer could be heard as far as a whistle noise. It could be heard at the Dempsey Hotel, to North Highlands, to Vineville, and to South Macon.

Willingham Sash and Door Company's whistle had it's own particular sound and tone and note. The whistle blew at 7:45 each morning warning everyone to be ready to go to work in fifteen minutes. At 8:00 o'clock it blew announcing that work begins at this hour. Mr. Wilder would come out of his office and speak loudly and firmly to the crew. "Let's get this courthouse order completed and loaded for delivery in the morning. Let's begin work on the Hazelhurst School frames next week and the windows and doors the next week. Let's move, men!"

The big engine began running at 7:30 a.m. and all the shafts and pulleys were operating. When the men walked in, the power was ready to go. Broken belts were a headache. The ends were joined by wire clamps and a steel pin placed to connect the ends of each belt. The little submarine generator gave us light!

To the rear and east, northeast of the factory was the kiln to dry the green lumber quickly and usually with no warping. The fresh green lumber was stacked on rail carts with spaces between each layer of lumber. Then the little cart or car loaded with lumber was pushed into the kiln, doors were closed, and the steam from our boiler was let into the heating elements to dry the lumber quickly. After several days in this kiln the lumber was dry and was removed for use or for shipment. This type dried lumber was easier to work with and gave a better, prettier finish.

The lumber yard was on both sides of the railroad track switch. This was back of the factory and back of the dry materials warehouse. There were stacks of lumber and sheds full of all kinds and sizes of lumber and moldings. Here was stored oak, walnut, some mahogany, gum, pine, and all varieties of materials. On rainy days this was a sloppy area with mud but it was always hard ground and easy to go on. We used canvas pitch impregnated tarpaulins for protection of lumber on trucks in wet weather.

Lumber came in on railcars and trucks. Mr. Ben Shelley checked all shipments piece by piece and sent the tally sheets to the office. One winter day in January we received a boxcar load of white pine from Oregon. It was beautiful lumber and some of it was 18" wide and some of it was 2" thick. Most of this lumber was used in producing millwork such as windows, doors, panels, and baluster. In the cold winter months the people in Oregon would usually send a full box of beautiful red ripe apples to the president of the company in these boxcars, for they knew that the apples probably would not freeze inside or get too hot on the journey to Macon. After Mr. Shelley checked one of the cars from Oregon for grade and board footage, then Mr. O. P. Jr. thought he should check this car of lumber. After he checked the load he felt the water content was too high, so he notified the shipper. The shipper immediately sent an expert lumber inspector from Chicago to judge the grade and water content of the lumber. The inspector sent was from a National Lumber Association, a professional inspector. This gentleman arrived, a tall, stately, rigid appearing, intelligent looking, unmovable person. He was dressed in a black suit, black tie, high starched collar, black shoes, black umbrella with a cane handle and a high crown black hat. He judged for the shipper at this time, after Mr. Shelley and two men moved the carload of lumber piece by piece over to another area so that the man could see each piece. During this three day period we realized

that this man was going to judge for the shipper. After this inspection we did not receive any more apples from the Oregon state shipper. Of course, we had to pay all the costs of having this man sent here since we lost the case, per diem, railroad expenses for travel, and we had to pay the man a fee for each day he was tied up with this particular venture. This adjuster did his job correctly in my opinion.

The personnel of the factory, yard, and office were always busy each doing his assigned duty. The work force was a good, good one.

The office faced the factory and a side door opened to the street. Behind the office on the same level parallel to Seventh Street was the Sash and Door warehouse. There was a viaduct overhead that was used to carry finished products from the factory to the warehouse. In this warehouse all the glazing was done. Between the office and warehouse was a small area for hardware and paint. The Third Street store carried paint and hardware so we had a minimal amount at our place. If we had an order for any special hardware or a large order, say several 100-pound kegs of nail, we had our truck pick them up at Peeler Hardware Company. This kept us from keeping a large stock of hardware, nails, hinges, locks, etc. The price of nails then was 5¢ as we said before.

The Sash and Door department was run by Mr. Collins, a dark complexioned, jet black hair, black-eyed, man of German or Central European decent. He was anti-social; stern looking; said very little; and was volatile when he did speak. As a courier I would go ask if Mr. Collins had a certain order ready to go to a certain school or other place. He would ask in a very gruff demanding voice, "Who wants to know?". I answered, "Mr. Clark.". He would always respond with this almost paranoid remark with a hostile tone, "You tell that Clark that this order is not ready and I don't know when it will be ready. He makes my bowels suck wind!". I would thank Mr. Collins for that remark and report to Mr. Clark that the order would be ready in a week. Mr. Collins was the only difficult person around. He looked like he was mad all the time and he probably was. He had a big problem apparently. Some would say that he was the most even-tempered person I ever say, he stayed mad all the time.

There were two black girls in the Sash and Door warehouse that did the glazing of the windows and doors. They put brads in the areas for the window lites and door lites and then applied putty. They did their work quickly and to perfection. Their work was so clean and neat, consequently that we never had complaints about their work. When Mr. Collins would blast off to me, not at me, those young girls would smile indicating their amusement at his talk and disposition. There is usually one person like this in any organization, including the church. All our sash and doors were of excellent workmanship.

Customers are always right. One physician ordered a screen door from us to be custom made to his measurements. He had used a broken yardstick to measure his opening which was 3x7. We took the order and the measurements were 4x8. However, we didn't know. We had a signed order sheet, made the door and delivered it. He screamed but we had the signed order. It's hard to see a 4x8 door or eat one.

One hot July day. Mr. O. P. Jr. bought a second-hand four-door Buick sedan, a 1928 model and he was so proud that he had gotten such a pretty dark blue car and had saved some money. He decided the brakes needed adjusting so he asked Mr. Shelley to adjust the breaks. Mr. Shelly and I

spent the entire afternoon adjusting the four wheel brakes which were mechanical breaks. In the yard, unpaved, between the office and cement warehouse I drove the car 75 feet forward, applied the breaks vigorously to stop. Then Mr. Shelley would check the skid marks and adjust the brakes appropriately. Then the car would be backed up 75 feet, then driven forward again applying the brakes roughly and stopping again. After almost three hours, we had the breaks as near perfect as possible. With this type braking mechanism it was hard to adjust brakes. Mr. Shelley was a great guy, easy-going, a hard worker, and good at mechanics, lumber grading, and overall supervising of the workers in the yard. After we got the car fixed Mr. O. P. Jr. was pleased with our work and thanked us graciously.

On Saturday in August of 1930, Mr. O. P. Jr. asked me if I would chauffeur him and Mrs. Willingham to Atlanta. I told him that I would be glad to and I would ride the bus back. Mrs. Willingham, "Miss Hellen", as most people called her, was a most beautiful red-headed lady, graced with charm and gentleness. That day she was dressed beautifully and very appropriately for motoring to Atlanta. She had the poise of a great Southern lady. Mr. O. P. Jr. was dressed as a dapper Southern gentleman. They invited me to their home at 11:00 a.m. to have lunch. We were to motor to Atlanta after that. Their house on Jefferson Terrace was very fine and well appointed. The dining room was spacious with a table setting of fine china, flatware, and crystal and, of course, linen tablecloth and napkins were most fitting for "every day". The three of us dined on baked chicken, boiled potatoes, green beans, peach half and mayonnaise, rolls and tea. There was apple cobbler and whipped cream for dessert. After "freshening up" before our trip, we packed the luggage in the car trunk and began our trip to Atlanta. Mrs. Willingham sat in the front with me and Mr. O. P. Jr. rode in the back on the back seat. He talked about everything that day. New 41 was heavily traveled at that time, for it was the only "hard surface" road to Atlanta. In Griffin, Mr. O. P. Jr. announced that he would take a nap while we were riding from Griffin on. I didn't see how he could curl up on that back seat. He was 6'1" tall. But he did. After a sound sleep, he waked up as I was driving down Stewart Avenue in Atlanta, just north of Hapeville. He said, "Mr. Patton, haven't you been driving mighty fast?" I replied, "Mr. Willingham, I have been driving at or below the speed limit." He commented, "You have made good time. You have averaged 52 miles an hour." That old 8-cylinder, overhead valve engine ran mighty good and the breaks were most reliable. I drove to the Atlanta bus station where I was dropped off to return to Macon and they continued to their host's home. Mr. O. P. Jr. gave me $5.00 (**$93.30**) for expenses back to Macon, bus fare, and a bite to eat. Of course, I was in his employ until Noon each Saturday and that day also. Monday he reported to me that their visit was pleasant and he thanked me for my good driving and my help with his trip to Atlanta.

The days at the factory were most interesting. Smoking outside the factory building before the eight o'clock whistle was done by some. There were no Monday morning hangovers to speak of. The week began with everyone happy to see each other and to be at work, except Mr. Collins. Orders came in from real estate offices who had rental property and these small orders had to be out quickly for home repairs and painting. This business was small but sort of a bread and butter asset. Requests for some school building orders or courthouse orders were received.

At noon daily the whistle was blown softly for beginning of the lunch period and blown again at 12:30 to announce the end of the lunch period. The truck drivers ate between deliveries. We had three drivers and about 10 workers in the lumber yard and these were great black men. Most

everyone brought a lunch in a pail or a paper bag and we had water to drink from the cooler in the factory and in the office. Bottle drinks were not available at the place and even at 5¢ a bottle they were too costly for most people to use daily. Our water fountain in the office was in the hall; it being on a 4-legged stool with a built on ice tray and an area to receive an inverted 5-gallon glass demijohn. This demijohn was filled with ordinary water and the ice would cool it as it sat there during the day. The little spigot was the turn kind and functioned well. Ice was purchased from Atlantic Ice and Coal Company delivery wagon, which was horse drawn, each morning. The jug was filled and put into the cooler by guess who?—me. Some days, several of the higher ups would order lunches from one of the boarding houses on Plum Street. The lunch was good and nourishing. The lunch consisted of one meat, chicken, roast beef, or pork chop; two vegetables, corn, beans, peas, or black-eyed peas; bread consisted of cornbread and biscuit; dessert, usually bread pudding; and a glass of iced tea. This was sent to the factory to each individual who ordered one in a market basket with a plate, flatware, glass tumbler, and a cloth napkin, all for 35¢ (**$6.53**)! One of drivers, usually Step Hardin, took the order to the boarding house and brought the food to us. Later, on another delivery Step would return the baskets with the utensils. Few of us could afford the 35¢ for lunch every day.

One interesting person at the factory who was not seen very often was the night watchman. A Mr. Norris, I believe, came at 5:00 p.m. each day and left at 7:30 a.m. the next day. On Saturday and Sunday he had someone come to fill in at noon Saturday during the day and all day Sunday. They carried a time clock and went to several stations located in the yard, warehouse, and factory, to record on a clock that they carried, that they had visited this station. I don't recall any trouble or robberies during the 1929-1930 period when I was there. As the week went on all factory people and laborers and drivers punched a card with a time clock on checking in to work and out of work. Early Friday morning the time cards were sent to the Financial Office on Third Street where Mr. Devereaux calculated each person's time and pay due for that week. Cash money was placed in an envelope with the employee's name, time made and the date recorded on it. These "pay envelopes" were returned to the factory office and at 4:35 all employees came to the pay window adjacent to the office door and picked up their money for the week. All were most happy at this time, too. Those in managerial areas and salaried employees received their money in an envelope also. There was no money withheld for Social Security, taxes, nor anything else. There were practically no advances to the employees. This was not tolerated. Those on salaries did okay, though the salaries were moderate for the times. Mr. Wilder, the shop superintendent received $40 per week (**$746.39**); Mr. Girrardeau, shipping clerk, $18 per week (**$335.88**); Mrs. Rutland, secretary, $18 per week; Mr. Patton, clerk, $12.50 per week (**$233.25**); Mr. Lyles, $37.50 per week (**$699.74**); Mr. Shelley, $35 per week (**$653.09**); truck drivers, $15 per week (**$279.90**); firemen $15 per week; laborers, $12 per week (**$223.92**). These were depression figures. During these times a stamp was 2¢ (**37¢**); milk was 10¢ per quart (**$1.87**); bread 10¢ per loaf; streetcar fare 5¢ (**93¢**); 24 pound sack of flour 99¢ (**$18.47**); and gasoline 15¢ per gallon (**$2.80**).

Mr. C. T. (Charlie) Hodges, the salesman for millwork, traveled all over central and south Georgia selling "jobs" for our company. He came on Friday to bring the plans and specs and blueprints to Mr. B. L. Johnstone at the uptown office, and then came to the factory to check on the orders being manufactured. Mr. B. L. Johnstone and his secretary, Mrs. Margaret Chandler, prepared the bids on the buildings from plans submitted by Mr. Hodges. Mr. Charlie Hodges was a

fine man, well dressed, rather tall and heavy; and he did a great job getting jobs for Willingham Sash and Door Company.

Mr. Charlie Culbreath was the salesman for the paint division of the company at the Third Street store. He was a fine man and a great salesman.

Mr. B. L. Johnston was a Willingham descendant, his mother having been a Willingham. He was an old bachelor, and was truly a great guy.

Mr. C. Y. Alexander was a manager of the paint store. He, too, was a great man; tall, heavy, but not too heavy, well set, and a Chesterfield of a man. He was easy-going, relaxed, and never worried, but he got the job done with his secretary; his shipping clerk, Rufus; and a laborer. Mr. Alex as he was called and C.Y. by some, and Cy by some; was from Union Springs, Alabama. He was so proud of Union Springs and his heritage and family. He married Miss Elizabeth Willingham in the mid second decade of this century, and soon after this union he volunteered to work for Willingham Sash and Door Company in the paint division. Mr. Alex had a great life for he did much for his church, community, family, and people in general.

Mr. Robert Hatcher (Bob) was the head of the bookkeeping and billing office on Third Street. In this area was Mr. Devereaux and Mr. Holt Willingham, the typist. Mr. Bob was a great guy dedicated to the Willinghams, his family, church and community. Mr. Bob helped Mr. Holt Willingham graciously and compassionately with his work and drove Mr. Holt to see his parents twice a month on Sunday.

A week at the factory and paint store was interesting, fascinating and wonderful to see such good people turning out such good work and materials, always looking to do better.

After about 12 months I decided to leave Willingham Sash and Door Company for a profession. I had planned to go to Georgia Tech and be an architect, but with Pappa Patton's death in December, 1928, I went to work after graduation. I finished Lanier in June, 1929. I thought I would now, in 1930 follow my uncle's path, Dr. Wesley Thomas, and go to Medical School. I discussed this with my family and Mr. O. P. Jr. and I resigned on September 5, 1930. I did finish medical school and came to treat many of my fellow workers at Willingham Sash and Door Company.

This year was a highlight in my life. I learned much about people, business, hard work, giving and taking and just plain striving for the best!