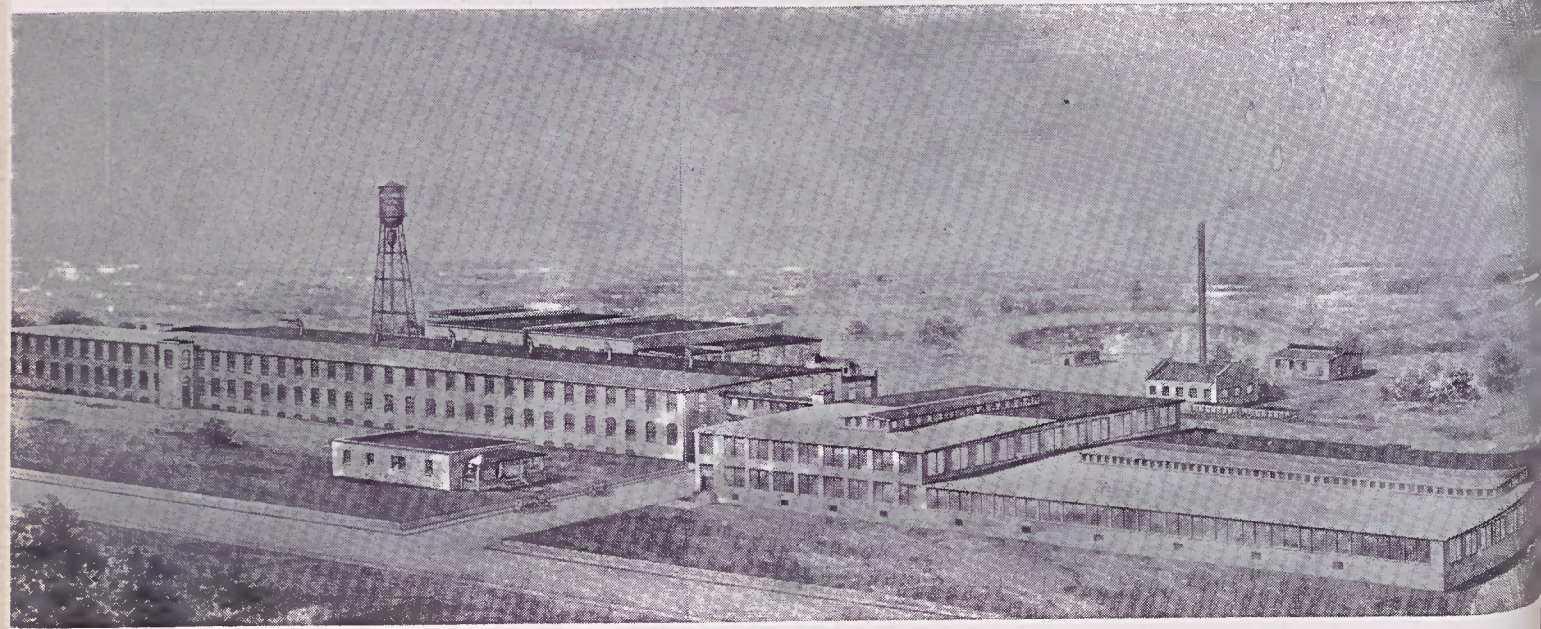


Veteran Alexander Employee Recalls Early Days At Mill



This old rendering showing the Alexander Sheeting Mill as it appeared many years ago was found by veteran carpenter A. L. "Tobe" McFarland while he was remodeling offices at

Alexander. He kept the picture for several years and when he retired he gave it back to the mill. It now hangs in the office of C. L. Kametches, the mill superintendent.

When A. L. "Tobe" McFarland retired from the Alexander Sheeting Mill at Forest City December 1, 1968, he held some records which are not likely to ever be equaled at the Alexander plant. He had been with the mill for 49 years; he started to work when the mill was being built in 1919; and he worked at Alexander during three ownerships of the mill.

Mr. McFarland worked in the Carpentry Department for the entire time. He recalls that he received the grand sum of 35c an hour when he was first employed. He worked 10 hours a day and five hours on Saturday for a total of 55 hours a week.

"We were paid in cash back in the early days," Mr. McFarland said. "A policeman would go into town with someone from the mill to bring the money back from the bank and they would put your money in an envelope."

At the beginning, Mr. McFarland helped with construction. Houses were being built for the mill's employees since there was no housing available in the vicinity of where the mill was being built. He recalled, "There wasn't anything here then, and they brought people down from town every morning in an old truck.

"The truck probably held 30 people, and people moved into the houses before we could even get them finished. There was no transportation to and from work, so people had to live where they could walk to the mill."

Mrs. McFarland was with her husband at the interview and she also recalled some memories of life at Alexander Mills during the early days. She said, "It was a good life and a lot of fun in the mill community here.

"The company would sometime let the young people use the truck to go for rides or to go to some special place."

The McFarlands were married in 1927 and have two children. Their son is a professor at Appalachian State University at Boone and their daughter lives in Laurinburg. There are five grandchildren.

Claude Landis, supervisor of plant

service was Mr. McFarland's boss at the time he retired. This was a switch because when Mr. Landis first came to work as a helper Mr. McFarland was his boss.

Learning a mill job was quite different back in the earlier days, according to Mr. McFarland. He said a person had to learn the job on his own time and once he had learned to do the job he would be employed if and when an opening came.

Mr. McFarland said the men who did maintenance work on mill houses were very well fed at Christmastime. "When you went by the houses," he said, "you



A. L. "Tobe" McFarland (left), who worked 49 years at the Alexander Sheeting Mill at Forest City, is shown with Claude Landis, the last supervisor Mr. McFarland worked for.

had to go in and have a piece of fruit cake and some coffee at each one. You couldn't refuse."

Now that he is retired, Mr. McFarland has more time to spend on his hobby of cabinet making. He made some of the desks and cabinets which are used at the Alexander Sheeting Mill and he has also made many of the frames used for framing Karastan's Happiness rugs.

Mr. Landis paid tribute to Mr. McFarland, describing him as a top-notch employee and expressing regret over losing "one man who could really get any job done."

THE MILL WHISTLE