

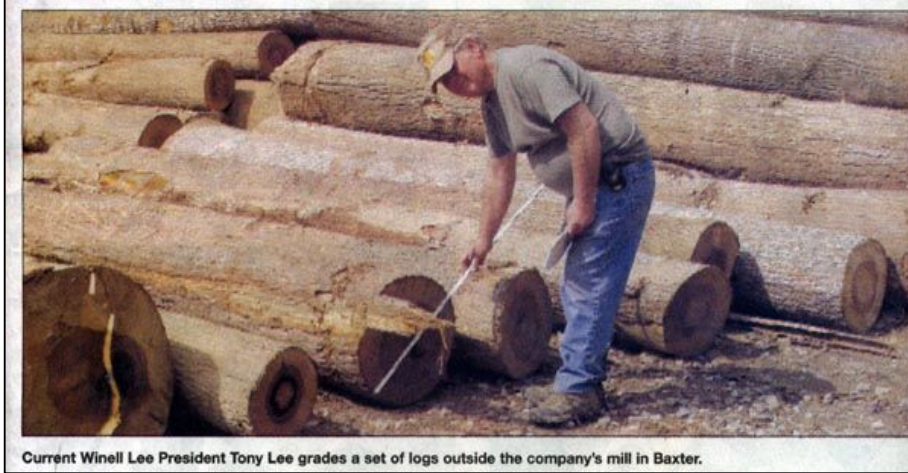
CARVING A NICHE

Local four-generation business celebrates anniversary

It's a company that's been through hard economic times, a devastating fire and admittedly lots of change.

But over the past 60-plus years, Winell Lee Moulding & Hardwood has certainly etched itself into a unique category.

Today, the company offers all kinds of products, from flooring, columns, paneling and more. Winell Lee



Current Winell Lee President Tony Lee grades a set of logs outside the company's mill in Baxter.

has had a hand in projects from the basic home modeling's to historical restoration work and has products that ship all over the country.

Starting from its mill outside Baxter, the company is able to take the log (with dozens of steps in between) to

a finished product - something that is very rare. Its store and showroom in Cookeville displays the finished products.

"We do the unusual. We do a lot of things no one else does," said Jeanie Lee, Winell Lee sales and marketing manager. "A lot of companies can do lumber, but to be able to take it from the log to the finished product, of making moldings, flooring, a lot of custom work, you do not find that.

"We are told by the Forestry Association that we are possibly one of very few that do what we do from beginning to end," she said.

(Picture: Winell Lee Showroom, Cookeville, TN, May 2008).

What also makes Winell rare is the fact the company has maintained itself as a family business, with at least four generations influencing its past, present and future.



Jeanie's husband Tony is the third generation family member to have a hand in the company that first started out as a simple lumber yard around 1945 by logger Isaac Lee.

Winell Lee, Isaac's son, also logged, and eventually opened up the Winell Lumber Co. in Baxter.

Tony started working with the company part time at age 12 and now has been involved with the business for 44 full-time years. Tony and Jeanie's sons, Shae and Jason, have both been working with Winell Lee for nearly 20 years - and the list goes on.

"We've got the family experience, but we've also got other employees that have been here 20 or 30 years," Jeanie Lee says. "I think there is just something about the loyalty of a family business, that once it goes so far, you want to see it keep going."



As each generation comes along, changes are inevitable. When Winell started the lumber store, one of his products included tubs, something that was later discontinued.

"We went back to our first love, which is a lot of wood," Jeanie Lee said. "And we've expanded with each generation and have now added a lot of custom stuff, custom arches, anything that's considered custom."

"And the main thing is our product, our wood, is grown and manufactured in Tennessee, and I really didn't know how important that was until people commented about that," she said.

Perhaps the most important change the company made was moving to Cookeville almost 15 years ago, not long after a fire in the early '90s destroyed its previous mill and building in Baxter.

Winell Lee opened on Interstate Drive in 1994 before moving into its current showroom and store on Jackson Street about nine years ago, a move that has surely benefited its growth.

"We've seen that it really meant something for people to see the finished product, what you can do with it, by having a large showroom," Lee said. "So that's what we did."

And Winell Lee recently celebrated more than 60 years in business, something that means a lot in face of tough times, both behind them and ahead.

"We've had tough economic times before. We've had those slumps in the family business, and we've been through fires," Jeanie Lee said. "To have that and still be able to maintain through the years through bad times, I think it takes a good product. It takes consistency, that people know we're going to be here, and I think it takes experience, knowing what we're doing."

And as for Winell Lee continuing to be a family-run business, only time will tell.

"It's hard to say. We've got generations coming on," she said. "But we've always come out on top, pulling together as a family. And I think that's been to our benefit."

Sunday, Jun 08, 2008: Herald Citizen, Cookeville, TN

***LEE, WINELL** - (Founder and Owner of Winell Lee Lumber Co., Inc., 40 yrs.)
B 7 Oct 1927, Putnam Co., TN - D 28 June 2002, Cookeville, TN
Buried: Smellage Cemetery, Boma, Putnam Co., TN

(SS Death Index: Name: WINELL LEE - Birth: 7 October 1927-Death: 28 June 2002- Age: 74 - Last Residence: Baxter, Putnam, TN 38544 - Last Benefit: (not specified) - SSN: 410-36-6667 Issued By: Tennessee). (Death date was verified with a family member or someone acting on behalf of the family). Place & Time of Service: Baxter Chapel of Hooper - Huddleston & Horner Funeral Home, Monday, 1 July 2002 at 2:00 p.m. Bro. Jim Holifield, Bro Fred Hawkins & Bro. Clyde Cunningham officiating, arrangements by: Baxter Chapel of Hooper - Huddleston & Horner Funeral Home.

Wife: Mary Louise Statom, md 3 September 1946

Parents: Isaac Lee & Isabelle Montgomery

(Isaac Lee, b. 22 April 1894, TN - d. 17 July 1976 & Isabelle (Montgomery) Lee, b. 29 January 1899, TN - d. 5 September 1983, both buried in the Crestlawn Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN).

Children: Connie Gentry & Tony Lee

Siblings: Chloe Burgess, Herman & Odell Lee

(1900 census 17 Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN: Dwl: 160 - Lewis Lee, 52 yrs. old, b. December 1847, TN md 32 yrs. widow. Children: Tennessee, 19 yrs. old, b. September 1880; Ozias, 17 yrs. old, b. November 1882; Arminda, 15 yrs. old, b. September 1884; Lewis, 13 yrs. old, b. October 1886; Dow, 11 yrs. old, b. January 1889; Ezra, 9 yrs. old, b. November 1890; Margaret, 8 yrs. old, b. April 1892 & Isaac Lee, 6 yrs. old, b. April 1894, TN. All born in TN).

(1910 census 17th Civil Dist, Putnam Co., TN: Dwl: 1 - John L. Lee is head of household, 62 yrs. old, TN, widow. Living in the household: Ezra Lee, 19 yrs. old, TN md to Ova, daughter-in-law, 18 yrs. old, TN, 0 children born, 0 children living. Also living in the household, Isaac E. Lee, 16 yrs. old, TN).

(1920 census 17th Civil Dist, Putnam Co., TN: Dwl: 120 - Isaac E. Lee is head of household, 25 yrs. old, TN md to Isabell, 20 yrs. old, TN. Child: Herman E. Lee, 1 yr. old, TN).

(1930 census 17th Civil Dist, Putnam Co., TN: Dwl: 104 - Isaac E. Lee is head of household, 36 yrs. old, TN, (21 yrs. old 1st marriage) md to Isabell, 31 yrs. old, TN (15 yrs. old 1st marriage). Children: Herman E., 11 yrs. old; all the names are almost completely illegible in the census, next is shown a daughter, 9 yrs. old; a son, 7 yrs., old; Lula Bell Lee, 5 yrs. old & Winell Lee, 2 yrs. old. All born in TN).

'When Great Trees Fall, After A Period Peace Blooms.Slowly And Always Irregularly'

Yes Two Great Trees Have Fallen, But We Have Heard The Sound. We Have Heard The Sound In The Wonderful Things Our Mom And Dad Have Done'

(Picture on Tombstone)

LEE, MARY LOUISE STATOM

B 25 Dec 1929, Huntsville, AL - D 31 Oct 2005, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN

Buried: Smellage Cemetery, Boma, Putnam Co., TN

Place & Time of Service: Boma First Church of God, Wednesday, November 2, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. Bro. Tim Sharp officiating, arrangement by: Baxter Chapel of Hooper-Huddleston & Horner Funeral Home.

Order of Service: Pastor Tim Sharp: Opening, "Setting A Tone For a Service of Celebration"; Clyde Cunningham: Prayer; Congregational: "Amazing Grace"; Nelda Pack: Testimonial, "Boma Elementary School"; Mike Pack: Testimonial, "Boma 1st Church of God Teacher"; Ann Cunningham: "When They Ring Those Golden Bells"; Lonnie Dunn: "The Holy Hills of Heaven Call Me"; Mary Lee: Audio; Mary Lee & Boma's Quartet: Song; Pastor Tim Sharp: "Message of 'Celebration'".

Husband: Winell Lee, md 3 September 1946

Parents: Houston Statom & Melissa Stewart

Children: Connie Gentry & Tony Lee

(Picture on Tombstone)

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