The History of Frost Lumber Industries

Adapted from material prepared by A. J. Malt

Frost-Trigg Lumber Company may be said to have been the seed from which the Forest Products Division of Olin Industries grew. It is interesting to note that on February 18, 1897, to take the place of two other small companies in which the organizers had been interested—the L. Trigg Lumber Co. of St. Louis, Missouri, and the E. W. Frost Lumber Company of Texarkana, Arkansas. Its incorporators and initial officers were E. W. Frost, President; R. L. Trigg, Vice President; and P. S. Paoli, Secretary-Treasurer.

The purpose of the new corporation was to provide a sales outlet for a number of sawmills in which men and their associates were interested. An office was opened in St. Louis and C. D. Johnson, placed in charge as sales manager.

Among the men who organized Frost-Trigg Lumber Company, those whose enterprise and energies were perhaps most influential in the future development of the organization were E. W. Frost, E. A. Frost, and C. D. Johnson, although others who contributed much came into the organization later.

During 1901 and 1902 a number of choice tracts of pine timber of considerable acreage came to the attention of the Frost group. In order to acquire these and other available holdings, the Union Saw Mill Company was incorporated in Arkansas on August 11, 1902. A complete saw mill was built and a townsite laid out at Trigg City, Arkansas, on the mill site.

The following year the Louisiana & Pine Bluff Railway Company was incorporated in Arkansas for the purpose of building a railroad to connect Trigg with the Mississippi Pacific at Dollar Junction, Arkansas, and to reach the company's lands beyond. This corporation continues to be a wholly-owned subsidiary. The Trigg City and timber holdings have been continuously augmented since the inception of the company, and today Frost-Trigg Company owns approximately 250,000 acres under sustained yield management.

Prior to 1905 Meaux, E. W. and E. A. Frost had acquired a sufficient interest in sawmills and lands in the Delcoto Parish, Louisiana, to warrant building a sawmill for its conversion. Accordingly organized and built their plant at what is now South Mansfield. At the time of its organization the Delcoto Land & Lumber Company acquired the plantation stock of the Mansfield Railway & Transportation Company. The mill at South Mansfield is still in operation and the Mansfield Railway & Transportation Company continues as a wholly-owned subsidiary in the Frost setup.

The Black Lake Lumber Company at Camppt, Louisiana, was organized as a Louisiana corporation on March 12, 1906, by E. A. Frost and his associates. A large tract of pine timber in Naicheochea Parish had been acquired under a timber cutting contract, and a mill for its manufacturing was erected at Camppt. Louisiana. This operation came to an end in 1903, when all the timber had been cut.

Another mill was added to the organization in 1907, when the Star & Crescent Lumber Company was organized for acquiring the plant and some fifty thousand acres of timberland of the Montross Lumber Company at Montross, Louisiana. Operations were carried on at this point until the plant was destroyed by fire on August 8, 1912, at which time all but a little over a hundred stand of virgin timber had been cut.

The Frost-Johnson Lumber Company, the direct parent company of the present Forest Products Division, was organized in 1907 to develop southeast Louisiana timberlands, which were, however, sold shortly afterwards.

Meanwhile, Frost-Trigg Lumber Company served as the corporate vehicle for carrying forward another development. In order to bring about more convenient and efficient control, a merger of the existing properties was carried into effect in 1909. The companies included in the merger, with their subsidiaries, were as follows:

- Frost-Trigg Lumber Co.
- Star & Crescent Lumber Co., Union Saw Mill Co.

At the same time the following officers were elected:

- E. A. Frost, President
- C. D. Johnson, Vice President
- P. T. Whitfield, Vice President
- G. S. Prestridge, Vice President
- H. H. Wheelers, Secretary and Treasurer

The name of the Frost-Johnson Lumber Co. was changed to Frost Lumber Industries Incorporated, on June 3, 1925.

Prior to the merger the company had no production in the State of Texas, where a considerable market for lumber was developing. Accordingly, the need was supplied by the purchase in 1910 of the timberlands and complete sawmill plant of the Young Lumber Company at Naicheochea, Texas, together with its subsidiary, the Nacogdoches & Southeastern Railroad Company. The plant and railroad are still in operation.

In 1918 the company entered the retail field with the organization of the Wiles-Chipman Lumber Company, which took over the too-long-established business interests which, because it contemplated operating as a retailing concern rather than manufacturing, it was unsuccessful. Accordingly, the Arkansas & Louisiana Missouri Railway Company was chartered in Louisiana on July 31, 1920. Local citizens and businessmen were invited to take stock in the new corporation, but Frost retained the controlling interest.

With the double purpose of increasing the size of its production, increasing the size of the market for its products, and at the same time providing a profitable use for the lower grades of oak developed in the producing of hardwood lumber, the management decided in 1922 to engage in the manufacture of oak flooring. Incorporation of the perfection Oak Flooring Company under Louisiana law followed on March 4, 1922. The name of the corporation was changed on January 19, 1942, to Frost Hardwood Flooring Co.

With the Peavy & Moore interests of Peavy, who had previously acquired approximately 15,000 acres of timber lands in Jasper and adjacent counties in Texas, Frost joined in the organization of the Jasper County Lumber Company. It operated a complete sawmill plant at the town of Jasper, operated the company's railroad, and produced both pine and hardwood, which was marketed by Frost. After twenty-three years of operation it was decided to sell the property.

Approximately 47,000 acres of land and timber together with the plant of the Waterman Lumber Company at Waskom, Texas, were purchased in 1928 and were made a unit of Frost Lumber Industries, Inc., of Texas. This operation, as well as that at Nacogdoches, Texas, was under the able management and supervision of the late H. W. Whitfield from the time of acquisition until his death in 1944. Owing to the utilization of timber saw-log size at a more rapid rate than is being provided by re-growth, operations at Waskom have had to be suspended.

Frost-Trigg Furniture Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1930 in Louisiana, manufactures a furniture factory at Shreveport. It manufactures porch and outdoor furniture from lumber and blocks of wood. The company itself markets its products.

The addition of a line of forest products treated with Wolman Wood Preservatives was made possible after the company entered into a contract with the American Lumber & Treating Company of Chicago in 1948, under which a company erected a treating plant on land leased to it by Frost. Frost thus has been able to supply its treated lumber, ties, poles, posts, and pilings.

In January, 1952, Frost Lumber was merged with Olin Corporation, Inc., and became Forest Products Division of the latter company. Late in 1952, Olin completely absorbed Frost Hardwood Floors and Frost Furniture Company.

Conversely, Shreveport Long Leaf Lumber Company is now completely disassociated from Olin.