The Great Northern Paper Company, Chapter 14: Boston

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CHAPTER XIV

BOSTON

Lester Smith once drew an organization chart -- a huge wheel representing the Boston Office, labelled "W.A.W. & W.O.M.", driving a satellite array of little pulleys, each marked with the initials of a different department head, through belts in the shape of thunderbolts. This was as good a representation as any of the place of the Boston office in the old Company during most of the period which we have under discussion.

We have mentioned the Boston office many times. We will write about it and about some of the people associated with it, because in so doing we may be able to make what we have already said, and what we will say, more real; make more clear how things were directed and controlled from this base remote from the operations, and possibly add to the understanding of why things were as they were in other parts of the organization. As the writer was so long associated with the Boston office, we trust that a considerable amount of personal reminiscence will be forgiven.

To begin with, while the Boston office, the brain and nerve center of the old Company, came into existence in 1899, and for more than half a century was located in different places in downtown Boston, the name of the Company was not in the Boston telephone directory, nor on the door of the office, until 1947. Believe it or not, the Great Northern Paper Company technically did not have any office in Boston until that time. This needs to be explained, of course.
The overt reason was the cloak of secrecy with which the Company surrounded itself. While the doors of the mills, and the great areas of its woodlands were open to all visitors, we have already seen that almost no information about finances or anything else was put out to the public, or even to stockholders. This situation gradually loosened up, but in the period around 1928, which we have reached, clams sounded like a rock-and-roll band compared with Great Northern people discussing Great Northern affairs, and keeping a low profile was supposed to reduce the number of those who might come asking questions and interfering with more important things. This had a certain validity, but the real reason was to avoid payment of Massachusetts taxes as a corporation doing business in that State.

This matter of having the Boston office made legitimate was brought up many times after the writer went there in 1927. No one seemed to know what might really be involved, but Sheldon Wardwell, who, as we have said, was a cautious man, did not want to make any waves, and nobody caught up with the situation until 1946. William A. Whitcomb's tragic death in June of that year filled the newspapers, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts discovered that there was a Great Northern Paper Company in its midst. Within ten days after the event, a letter was received from the Department of Corporations and Taxation, calling attention to the tax laws governing foreign corporations, and suggesting that it would be a good idea to explain what was going on. In reply to this, Sheldon Wardwell, after stating that the Company was incorporated in Maine; that its mills and timberlands were all in that State; that its business offices were in Millinocket, and that its Treasurer and Sales Department had offices in New York, wrote:
"The late president of the corporation, William A. Whitcomb, lived in Dedham. One of its three Vice-Presidents, William O. McKay, lives in Beverly, Mass. They were, of course, obliged to be in New York and at the offices of the company in Maine at frequent regular periods and as a matter of convenience for themselves maintained their own private office at 201 Devonshire Street, Boston.

The name of the company was purposely left off the door of the office and the company was not listed in the telephone or any other directory in Boston. This was done so that persons wishing to do business with the corporation would go to its proper offices in Maine or New York and would not attempt to do business with Mr. Whitcomb at his office here.

Directors and stockholders meetings were held in Maine or New York, never in Massachusetts. The company neither manufactured nor stored any of its products in Massachusetts. Therefore, the company neither did business nor had any place of business in Massachusetts."

This was true as far as it went, which was not very far, in view of the actualities. In July, a representative of the State Income Tax Division called, ostensibly to examine William O. McKay's tax return, which he did rather perfunctorily, but he also asked a lot of questions pertinent to the Department of Corporations' inquiry. William O. McKay, who did not like to be in any ambiguous situation, did not wait for the State to ask any more questions, but immediately had Price Waterhouse quietly figure out what the tax would amount to.
It turned out to be no big thing; somewhere between $500 and $9,500 a year, depending upon how the law was applied, and early in 1947 he registered the Company as doing business in Massachusetts, had its name painted on the transom over the door of the office, and listed in the telephone and other directories. The mountain turned out to be a molehill. It must have cost as much to prepare the mass of information each year as it did to pay the tax -- about $200 in 1947 and $1,770 for 1954, the last year of the Boston office.

This puts us ahead of our story, so let us go back, with apologies to A. Conan Doyle, and go into some geography and other details, as these will be of importance later on. Nothing is known about the several earlier locations. What we will describe is the office in the eight-story Boston Safe Deposit & Trust Company building, the 201 Devonshire Street address where the activities which we will go into were carried on for the more than thirty years between 1922 and 1954.

The bank fronted on Franklin Street, from Devonshire Street to Arch Street, its offices taking up most of the street floor. Behind these, a lobby, an entrance to the bank on one side, the elevators, and a stairway from the basement to the roof on the other, ran straight through the building, from Arch Street to Devonshire Street. The three elevators were of the old hydraulic type, with manual controls, requiring an operator. The enclosed stairway was on the Devonshire Street side of the elevator shaft. Above the street floor, the building was in the shape of a square U, with the open end toward Arch Street.
The space occupied by the Boston office took in nearly all of the wing on the Franklin Street side, on the eighth floor. Leaving the elevators, one found himself in a white-marble-floored corridor some eight feet wide, and following this to the left and then to the right, around the building, came to a partition in which were heavy oak two-leaf swinging doors, with pebble-glass panels, and a transom of the same across the top. In 1928, each door panel was lettered at the top with the room number, 824, and at the bottom of the left-hand panel were the names,

Wm. A. Whitcomb
Wm. O. McKay
A.P. Lane
F.T. Dolbeare
L.R. Smith

Behind these doors was the true head office of the Great Northern Paper Company. Sheldon Wardwell had played it down as the private office of the President and one of the Vice-Presidents, and indicated that little business was done there, but this is the place from which the old Company was directed.

The writer of a book published in 1967 has referred to the Boston office as "palatial". If he was ever in it, he must have kept his eyes shut. The room modules were about 22 feet square on the outside of the corridor, and a little smaller on the air-shaft side. Beyond the main doors, the corridor continued straight ahead to a partition across the end of it, which made a very small office, occupied by Lester Smith, Assistant to the President. On the immediate left of the entrance was a half-office, used by Dick Caspar, the Assistant
Manager of Manufacture. Next was a full-size office for William O. McKay, the Vice-President and Manager of Manufacture, and then the corner office, slightly larger than any other, occupied by the President, William A. Whitcomb. All these offices had connecting doors. On the right of the entrance, about thirty feet of the corridor partition had been removed, leaving only one column, opening the corridor into the "outside" office, the windows on the air-shaft. Next to this was the office of Fred T. Dolbeare, the Purchasing Agent, and beyond that the corner room on the air-shaft side, occupied by the Traffic Manager, A.P. Lane. These rooms opened only into the corridor. There was no conference room. These offices were of course used later by different people, and the names on the door changed accordingly. A year earlier, when the writer arrived, Garret Schenck had been in the big corner office, but this was the way it was in the fall of 1928. In all, there were seven rooms, less than 3,000 square feet.

The floors were all covered with dark green battleship linoleum. All the woodwork was dark, dull-finish oak. The plastered walls were painted a medium buff color, right through. There were green roller shades at the windows. No drapes, no pictures; nothing whatever on the bare walls except a hanging map of Northern Maine in the President's office. There was a somewhat worn oriental rug in the middle of the floor in William O. McKay's office, a better one in the President's, and a very small one in Lester Smith's. As the writer recalls, these were not Company property. All the other floors were the bare linoleum.

A button on the wall behind the President's desk operated a
buzzer in the outside office. A telephone switchboard of the old-fashioned cordless type was located against the wall immediately to the right of the main doors, as one entered. This thing gave only a faint buzz when a call came in, and a little brass indicator dropped down to show the line on which the call was being received. There was no switchboard operator until some time in the early 1930's, so that someone had to be in the outside office all the time, with one ear cocked for this puny signal. The remainder of this wall was taken up by storage cabinets and coat closet, of the same dark oak as the woodwork. Four of the private offices had closets tucked into corners, one-half of each for coats, the other half containing a cold-water wash-basin. Over each was a storage cupboard, out of reach except by standing on a chair. The washrooms were down the corridor, near the elevators. Lighting was atrocious. The ceilings were some eleven feet high, and light came from frosted glass globes, flush mounted, each holding one small bulb giving about as much illumination as four healthy fireflies.

All the furniture, except that in the President's office, was alike -- dark mahogany or mahogany-finished wooden desks, with round or straight-backed wooden-seat swivel chairs and side-chairs of the same style. The President's furniture was of better quality, but plain, like the rest. He did have a table, matching his desk, a low, round-backed swivel chair and a couch about six feet long, these last upholstered in black leather. Stenographers' desks were of the old turn-over-top variety, with the typewriter in the middle. There were a lot of steel filing cabinets, a blue-print cabinet, two roll-front bookcases, one of which could be locked, and two safes, all the same olive-drab color, and all arranged around the
walls of the various offices and in the corridor. As far as we can recall, the only office equipment, other than typewriters, consisted of one adding machine, a postage scale and a pencil sharpener.

In 1928, in addition to the five men whose names were on the door, the President, Vice-President & Manager of Manufacture, Traffic Manager, Purchasing Agent and Assistant to the President, in that order; there were six in the office staff: Dick Caspar, the Assistant Manager of Manufacture, newly arrived; Jerome Ross, the President's secretary, who had almost nothing to do with the activities in the outside office; Frank Keenan, an old-timer even then, who did some of almost everything; Ashton Gourley, hired in the spring of 1927 as a stenographer, who helped with the typing of purchase orders, the filing and whatever else came to hand; the writer, who was nominally the Purchasing Agent's secretary and helper, but was also called upon for general duty, and one girl, Elizabeth McLeod, no relation, who had been taken on early in the year, and acted as secretary to William O. McKay, besides helping out generally -- eleven all told; ten men and one woman.

As Lester Smith said, Garret Schenck had not needed much help, but William A. Whitcomb did, and so did William O. McKay, as Manager of Manufacture and later as President, and with the increased activities of the new administration and the changes in the times, the burden on these members of the staff became unbearable, and remained almost unbearable, even though additional help, all stenographer and secretary-type girls, began to be hired almost at once. It is not possible, from memory or from the records, to cover all the personnel changes of the next twenty-five years or so, is unnecessary anyway, and we will touch only on the most important. The organization never
was very large. At this point, it is perhaps enough to say that in 1951, just before it was decided to transfer the head office to Bangor, and with Boston still carrying out its normal functions, there were fifteen people altogether; eight men and seven women, in the Boston office, the most that had ever been there. Of the men, four dated from 1927, or earlier, in the Boston organization, and one from 1936. There had been some post-war additions, and to the best of our recollection, the entire staff of the Boston office, from the President to the telephone operator, although not composed at all times of the same people, remained at between eleven and thirteen bodies through the twenty turbulent years from 1928 to 1948.

Some time in the early 1930's, a triangular shaped room on the right of the corridor just outside the entrance was rented for the storage of records, and about this time the Company, by its own choice, became a tenant at will, with no lease. It was not until after World War II that the true office area was enlarged by the rental of additional space on the Franklin Street side, and at that time the partition containing the entrance was moved down the corridor to include the door to this.

A new administration always makes some physical improvements. This one was no exception, and the writer can remember most of them, without any confidence in the order in which they occurred. They are interesting for their unimportance. The very first was the writer's own personal project -- cutting down the bushings holding the ornamental bottom finials on the light fixtures so that larger bulbs could be put in -- the higher the wattage the bigger the bulb in those days. The President and Vice-President almost at once pro-
vided themselves with badly-needed new desk chairs. Work night after night was commonplace, and lighting remained a problem. Some inexpensive bowl fixtures, made of plastic, lowered two feet or so from the ceiling, were installed, making some further improvement. William A. Whitcomb would not have them in his office, but then he almost always left the office early. Venetian blinds were installed, replacing the old roller shades and making things look a little more modern. Next, a square of plain chocolate brown carpet was bought to go under each desk, and a runner of the same for the corridor through the outside office where there was a plain wooden settee for the use of visitors.

There were in the office a hand-operated Mullen tester and an old-style quadrant ream scale, used for testing daily samples sent from the mills and occasional samples of competitors' paper sent in by the Sales Department. After the writer had demonstrated, using aluminum foil, that he could get almost any pop test, and that with a little draft from an open window he could get almost any basis weight, a motor-driven Mullen tester (rebuilt) and a modern basis weight scale were provided. A small drafting table and supply cabinet were bought for the writer's use, and an electric cooler for bottled water was installed in the outside office. All these things were done within the year, or a little more. End of improvements for some time.

Much later, the plastic light fixtures were replaced with more efficient units, and as the little bits of carpet wore out, each office not having a rug was furnished with one of about the same color as the old ones, but covering most of the floor. As additional
people were added to the staff, the desks provided for them were almost all bought second-hand, refinished. The writer recalls the purchase of only three really new ones. However, new and better desk chairs were bought as the old ones wore out. Some time in the 1940's, six or eight sepia enlargements of photographs of the mills, power plants and woods scenes, framed to match the woodwork, were hung in various offices. The walls were washed every couple of years, but the writer can recall their being repainted but once -- the same color -- and that was after the offices had been occupied for some twenty years. Telegrams were a frequent means of communication, and somewhere along the line what was then called a TX (tele-type) system was tried out. This might have been a big help, but it was too slow, primarily because it had to be used by everyone; everyone did not have time to learn the keyboard, which was different from that of a standard typewriter, and it was removed. The dial system came along, and the old upright telephones were replaced with modern style instruments in due course. With more people on the staff, the three outside lines were continually over-loaded, and some time in the 1940's efforts were made to work out a more sophisticated system. However, all the several recommendations of the telephone company were considered too costly, and they finally came up from somewhere with another old switchboard of the same type that had been in use for so many years, but with two more outside lines. In the course of time, a small desk calculator and a mimeograph machine were acquired. Oh, yes; air conditioning. Some time after World War II, two window units, of the old cabinet type that stood on the floor inside the room, were installed in the outside office, but the hazard
to the lives of the girls in the office -- those near the units claiming that they would freeze to death, those away from them swearing that they would die from the heat -- resulted in their being shut off most of the time, and they were not much of an improvement. We may have missed something, but outside of a new map for the wall of the President's office, and the swap of a safe for one belonging to the Pope Appliance Corporation, these are all the physical changes, except as we will note later, that we can recall, and we are talking about a time-span of a quarter of a century. Palatial the Boston office was not.

In the story of the Boston office, as in some other parts of this work, the writer will have to draw on his memory of his own experiences, and his understanding and recollection of personalities and events. He was involved in one way or another in almost everything that went on, and if he refers to his own part too often, or if his viewpoint differs from that of others, may it be understood that this is in the interest of trying to do what is at best a difficult job, or that he is telling it like he saw it.

The Boston office always retained a considerable degree of decorum, although never as much as while Garret Schenck was alive, when nobody for instance, was allowed to work in shirt-sleeves, no matter how hot it might be. You always wore a suit, and in those days suits always had vests. When the writer went to Boston, he had but one suit, a light gray thing that before the summer was over just had to go to the cleaners. He appeared in the office wearing the only other clothes he had; gray flannel slacks with twenty-two inch bottoms that were the almost universal informal dress of young men.
in the 1920's, and the coat from an old brown suit, he was promptly
told that this was not done, and in that way discovered the "clean-
while-you-wait" places, where you could get your suit cleaned and
pressed instead of eating lunch. William A. Whitcomb did away with
this rule when he became President, and under him the atmosphere
became less formal.

However, while the men in the working office staff, including
the Assistant Manager, were on a first name basis among themselves,
and were called by their first names by the executives, the latter
were always "Sir" or "Mr." to everyone. William A. Whitcomb called
William O. McKay "Mac", but William O. McKay, in spite of their long
intimacy, never called the President anything but "Mr. Whitcomb".
When women began to be added to the staff, they were invariably
addressed as "Miss or Mrs. So-and-So", and the girls called all
the men "Mr.". On the other hand, the two minor department heads
in Boston, and the people at the mills and other offices were almost
always called simply by their last names, at least in executive level
conversation, although they were of course always "Mr. Dolbeare" or
"Mr. Bowler", or whatever, to the lower echelons. To the 1927 work-
ing staff, Frank Keenan, Ash Gourley, Jerome Ross and the writer,
William A. Whitcomb and William O. McKay were affectionately "Big
Bill" and "Little Bill" respectively, behind their backs, of course.

It now becomes necessary to write about these two men, so
different, yet so closely associated, and strongly related in the
writer's mind, because he worked for both of them at once for so long
a time. Since there was so little publicity on either of them, what
he has to say is almost entirely based on his own association with

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them, and this is another place where he feels really inadequate to the task. However, he will do the best he can to make these men real to the reader.

William A. Whitcomb (1873-1946) was a big, bony man; well-muscled, straight-backed and broad-shouldered. Well over six feet tall, he did not look as big as he was, for some reason. He was ruggedly good-looking, with a broad, scarred forehead, short nose, level, dark eyes, a square jaw and tight lips. His normally rather stern features enhanced his deserved reputation as a hard man, but belied the very human person behind them.

He was a native of Clinton, Indiana, the son of John Whitcomb, a merchant and landowner, and Lydia Parks. He attended Greencastle Preparatory School, and graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering from De Pauw University in 1894. Having in mind to go into the street railway business, he went on to two years of post-graduate work at Yale's Sheffield Scientific School. A fine athlete, he was a football star at DePauw, where we believe he came by the scars, headgear not being what it is in these days. He played for Yale, too, but only a few games before he was disqualified by a new rule allowing only three years of college football. His uncle, Fred Parks, induced him to come to the Glens Falls Paper Company in 1896. This company went into the International trust in 1898. His rapid rise in that outfit, and the circumstances under which he came to Great Northern in 1910 have already been noted.

As General Manager, under Garret Schenck, he seems to have been given a pretty free hand in running the manufacturing operations, and
was involved in many of the other affairs of the Company. However, while early in the game he made some effort to exercise some control over the activities of the Spruce Wood Department -- and as we will see later it looks as though he was influential in making some changes -- Garret Schenck did not allow him much scope in this direction, as is indicated by his action when he became President. Nevertheless these two men must have been highly compatible, as the writer has never heard or seen anything that would point to any serious disagreement between them except on the subject of Fred Gilbert, and this was kept in a little compartment by itself, not interfering in any way with their other relationships. It was probably Garret Schenck who arranged for him to borrow from Northern Finance, almost as soon as he arrived in Boston in 1910, a substantial amount of money -- the figure we have is $88,000 -- to buy Great Northern stock, and he had this all paid off by February 1, 1918.

He devoted a great deal of thought to organization and to matters involving the Company's work force. The diaries which he kept from the time he came with the Company until 1923 mention every labor negotiation, the selection of mill superintendents and other personnel, numbers of discussions about salaries, and notes on things concerning people -- a visit to the Company's "tenements" at Madison; a new house for one of the Superintendents; a compliment to Jerry Michaud, who drove the Company car at Millinocket for a long time, and a couple of cracks at Frank Bowler for driving him over rough roads -- things like that and not much else except frequent references to minor family affairs. As an engineer, he was interested in mechanical equipment, and as we will see, had successful inven-
tions to his credit. Diary entries having to do with mill operations are confined almost entirely to short comment on new developments -- the Pope devices, the experiments on No. 9 machine at Millinocket and on No. 1 at Madison, and the like. As Vice-President, he was involved in the processes of high-level decision-making, but there is little mention in his notes of such activity.

William A. Whitcomb's personality was full of contradictions. He could be perfectly charming or positively terrifying. Normally good-natured and relaxed, he could become outrageously angry, sometimes throwing almost childish tantrums over trivial matters. He made headlines, but shied away from publicity. A master at expressing himself, and outspoken in his opinions, he never, at least during the time the writer knew him, made a public speech. Slow to adopt new developments in the industry, he was himself an inventor. He was tight with the Company's money, but spent his own freely. He was conservative in politics, and in directing the Company's affairs, but mildly eccentric in his own habits. Humane in his philosophy, he often made utterly unreasonable demands upon his people, and drove his organization mercilessly. On the other hand, when a good job was done, he seldom failed to express appreciation. His creed was even-handed fairness to employees, customers and stockholders, but not being a magician, he was not always able to be completely fair. Devoted to the welfare of the Company, he could put its affairs completely out of his mind for considerable periods of time, to immerse himself in some personal interest, putting in the best part of several years, for instance, in working out the genealogy of his family. He had strong liking for certain people, but developed actual aversion to those who persisted in policies of which he did not approve.
cept where substantial amounts of money were involved — either income or outgo. In this area, he made the decisions, and what constituted a substantial amount of money was relative. However, in spite of the above quote, he never did cease to search out the best advice he could get although he did not always take it. He consulted frequently with certain members of the Board, particularly Sheldon Wardwell and the Ledyards, and later Williamson Pell, on matters of high-level importance. He had great confidence in his ability to draw sound conclusions, provided he was given the facts. He generally tried his thoughts out on people in the organization whose judgment he respected, before taking action on them, but you could not count on this. He usually took quite a lot of time to consider a problem, and often had his decision in mind before discussing it with anyone. He had no use for yes-men, and you could argue with him, up to a point, as long as you knew what you were talking about, and it didn't take him very long to find out whether you did or not. Even if he had formed a firm opinion, his final decision could be influenced. Under those circumstances, however, he might employ delaying tactics, which drove those responsible for implementing the decision up the walls, while he assured himself that his first decision had not been the right one. Again quoting his daughter: "He cared so very much that things should go right"; but the writer recalls only one really important instance when he ever backed off, once committed, at least as far as the Manufacturing Department is concerned. Once he had made up his mind, he delegated work easily; his instructions were unmistakably clear, and were always issued through proper channels. His door was always open to those who had problems they wanted to discuss with him, and they seldom came
away without direction. He had a saying that it was not hard to get to the top; one had only to be willing to accept responsibility, and responsibility rarely seemed to bear heavily on him.

In the newsprint industry, he was one of the most prominent, but at the same time one of the least-known figures, esteemed by the Company's customers for his integrity, and treated with respect by competitors for the toughness with which he wielded power in the interest of Great Northern. He never telegraphed his punches, and the old Company belonged to no trade association or other organization through which any of his intentions might leak, except that it made a small contribution to the Newsprint Service Bureau, without being a member, to become eligible to receive its reports. "Solid, reticent"; "loved, hated - and feared" are comments the writer remembers being made about him in published articles having to do with the Company's position. Within the organization, he was considered a hard task-master, but genuinely admired for his qualities as a leader, and for his hard-headed policies in the interest of Great Northern.

He devoted much time to his home and family - his wife, Grace, daughter Merle and two sons, John and William Arthur Jr. He kept in shape by working on his wooded estate. His relaxation was wood-carving -- not the usual stuff, but big pieces, always oak, often original designs, and he collected very old English furniture, oak, of course. To the best of our knowledge, he did not have a great many personal friends outside the Company and the business. He had a well-developed sense of humor, criticism bothered him not at all, and in the writer's opinion, he was almost literally without fear of
We have said that he was mildly eccentric. For instance, he would never use a mechanical pencil, and full-length ordinary pencils had to be cut in half before being sharpened for his use. He always blotted his signature, and the blotting paper had to be white, coated on one side, and cut into little pieces of a few square inches, to exact dimensions. He used dozens of ring binders of various sizes, all made to order and covered in real leather. His letter-heads and envelopes had to be of an odd size, and he had other unusual ideas about paper and forms. He was a pipe-smoker, one pipe after another, but never before lunch. His pipes were made for him in England; tiny things with no bit, holding half a thimble-full of tobacco, the mouthpiece a short length of goose-quill, discarded after each pipe-full. He would use half a dozen of these pipes in an afternoon, along with at least two boxes of matches. He attracted a lot of attention amid the commuter traffic on Boston sidewalks, towering over the crowd in hand-made shoes with crepe soles nearly an inch thick; his brown felt hat, which new or old, always seemed to be crumpled, on his head any which way, and a calf-skin briefcase, slung over his shoulder on a long strap, dangling around his knees. In winter, he was even more conspicuous in a long Harris tweed overcoat nearly to his heels, a heavy woolen muffler around his neck in the British fashion, and the briefcase slung over all. This is enough to indicate what we meant. There was an aristocratic streak in William A. Whitcomb. He knew what he wanted, in his personal tastes and in his business life, and cared little about what others thought, except as it helped him to arrive at decisions.
To the writer, if he had any significant fault in management, it was his tendency to hold up decisions on programs which involved spending much money. His outstanding trait was his integrity; the absolute, uncompromising, forthright honesty which governed his conduct. Here he had only one side. Deceit was the cardinal sin to him, and the worst thing he could find to say about any man was "he is not sincere".

William Osborne McKay (1889-1956) was born in Beverly, Massachusetts, where he lived all his life. He was a grand-nephew of the famous clipper ship builder, Donald McKay, and his ancestors came from the far northern highlands of Scotland, as had the writer's. He had been employed early in 1908 as a stenographer in the Boston office, after a very short term of service with the Canadian Pacific Railway in that same city. At that time, as far as we can determine, Lester Smith was the only other man in the working office force. He was immediately thrown into the front line, one of his jobs in his first year being to ride herd on groups of strike-breakers -- and that may not be the right word, as we will see later -- being sent to Millinocket. His close association with William A. Whitcomb began in 1911, when he became the latter's secretary. By 1913, he was being used more in the capacity of an executive assistant, his title being changed at that time to "Secretary and General". Some few years later, he was sent to Millinocket for a crash course in the manufacturing processes, becoming, in fact, the first Bureau of Economy Apprentice. In 1926, he was made Assistant to the General Manager, which position he held when the writer first knew him. He succeeded William A. Whitcomb as Vice-President and Manager of Manufacture in 1928, and as President in 1946. Some of what we will
say applies to him as Vice-President, some as President, and some just to the man.

He was a tall man, though not quite so tall as William A. Whitcomb, lightly built, with fine bones and delicate hands. One of his shoulders was slightly lower than the other, the result of an early lung ailment, but few knew this, as he had his suit jackets padded slightly unevenly to conceal it. Lean, dark-skinned and hawk-faced, with expressive gray eyes, he radiated the nervous energy that consumed him. A kindly, friendly man, sincerely interested in people as people, but demanding, he created in those who worked directly with him so fanatic a loyalty to him personally that it affected their whole lives. His long background with the Company and his understanding of people made him close to everyone in the organization.

Brought up under William A. Whitcomb, he had an entirely different personality but the same innate integrity and moral character, and he absorbed the broad aspects of the former's policies in the market-place, in dealing with the organization, and in relation to the industry, as well as many of his methods of procedure, and pursued these after he became President. However, times had changed, and in that capacity he had many friends, and made no enemies that we know of. But this part of his life was in the future, and we are getting ahead of our story.

Self-educated, William O. McKay was exceptionally intelligent. He had great skill as a manager, using every trick in the book to get the best out of his organization, studying his people relative to the problem, and employing those elements of management which he felt
most appropriate to the situation, all the way from a flat "that's an order" to the most subtle forms of persuasion, but in dealing with specifics, he was as direct as a bulldozer, and he never played politics. He was always thinking ahead. He was a master of timing, which he considered to be of the greatest importance in management; he had a system of follow-up which allowed little that went on in his department to escape attention, and he had a fantastic memory. Sheldon Wardwell wrote of him to Lewis Cass Ledyard on September 3, 1935:

"You may remember that a year or so ago I expressed my opinion of Mr. McKay. This opinion is not changed. I believe he is one of the best men in the paper industry and believe that those who know him both within and without the Company would agree with this statement."

Except for the few months of training which we have mentioned, William O. McKay had no mill experience, but there was no part of the operations of which he did not have a basic knowledge. He was not mechanically-minded, but he could rapidly absorb an explanation of the principles involved in any mechanical or process problem, and discuss it with understanding.

What William A. Whitcomb's administration might have been like without William O. McKay, at least as far as the manufacturing end of the business is concerned, will never be known, but it would have been different. The former was all for progress, but his inclination was to leave the money in the bank until the perfect solution to the problem in hand was found. The latter was always ready to spend whatever money there was, using the best that was available. William O. McKay was a mover and shaker. Always loaded with more ideas than
could be translated into action, not only his own, but those which he solicited from others, he continually fed these to the President, with whom he had a lot of influence, and a great deal of what was accomplished was due to his persistent prodding. They were in almost daily contact, not only about the affairs of the Manufacturing Department, but about problems and situations in every area of the Company's operations, although any opinion which William O. McKay might have about this outside his own department, if accepted, was almost invariably transmitted as coming from the President, as befitted good organization. As we have said, there were lines that were not crossed in the old Company. William O. McKay often felt that the President leaned too heavily on him, or at least that he took up too much of the time that he should be devoting to his own department. For years, even lunch time was not his own, as the President insisted that they go out together, always to the Parker House, and this bugged him no end.

Things did not by any means always go smoothly between these two strong-willed men. William O. McKay's computer-like mind was sometimes offended by William A. Whitcomb's deliberate approach to some problem, or his obduracy about some point upon which they did not see eye to eye. He was a very sensitive man. Unlike William A. Whitcomb, he did care what others thought of him, and he was often hurt by the President's blunt criticism of some situation in which he was involved. They had many differences, and some quite bitter disagreements, which resulted in a deep freeze between them at times. This was never allowed to go on for too long, one or the other eventually making peace overtures, because they had too much respect for each other to allow any difference to remain unresolved. William O.
McKay's quick thinking also could occasionally cause unfortunate misunderstanding even with some of those others close to him who could not follow the same thought process. He could get very angry about this and other things, and an angry William O. McKay was something to put fear into the bravest. It often took him a long time to cool down, and you would sometimes get the misdeemeanor you had committed thrown at you years later -- as we said, he had a long memory-- but he did this as a form of education, not because he retained any ill-feeling, and he expected complete loyalty from his people, regardless.

Naturally restless and eager, anxious to get results, he trained himself to be patient. He often said, after something had failed to work out right: "You can't get a ten-strike every time"; or "That's just a rub of the green"; a phrase he used meaning "That's the way the cookie crumbles". He was a little superstitious. For instance, he never entered the office in the morning without knocking with his ring on a fire extinguisher hanging outside the door, and touching the brass kick-plate at the bottom of the door with the toe of his shoe. He "knocked on wood" whenever he felt that he might have made an over-optimistic statement. In the office, he was a chain-smoker, usually taking only a few puffs from each cigarette and then stubbing it out in a small ceramic ashtray made by one of his daughters. This was a beautiful incinerator, and caught fire several times a week, but he would not part with it.

He carried a bulky wallet full of clippings of short sayings and verses of poetry which seemed to him to express the philosophies by which he lived, and sometimes used one of these in explaining his point of view. He admired the thoughts expressed in Kipling's "If",

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and he often quoted a phrase which he attributed to Donald McKay: "Let others talk; I'll work". He did not always follow his own precepts. The writer has by him a little card on which is written a quotation from Stanley Walker, given him by William O. McKay on some occasion:

"One may do first-rate work without taking life too seriously or making unnecessary obeisances to stuffed shirts".

He never made obeisances, unnecessary or otherwise, to stuffed shirts or anyone else, but he did take life seriously, and it sometimes seemed that he considered work an end in itself, having in his Baptist background, the old hymn "Work, for the night is coming, when man works no more."

He was even more shy of publicity than William A. Whitcomb, so much so that he would not have a portrait made, in spite of the urging of his family and his associates in the Company, and when, after his death, a picture of him was needed to go with those of the other Presidents, it had to be blown up from a snapshot of a group in which he appeared. He lived quietly, and had few interests outside of his home and family -- his wife Ivy, and three daughters, Merle, Jean and Sally, about whom he talked a great deal. If he had any such interest, it was playing the stock market, which he did like a game, and quite successfully, although he had started with very little capital. In the 1930's, he built a beautiful new home, which he named "Splinter Hill", in Beverly. The writer laid out this house for him, and made the original schematics, which were of course worked over by an architect, but without major change.
Except for these things, his life was literally wrapped in the Great Northern Paper Company. He lived with it day and night. High-strung, burning with desire to get things done, very conscious of the responsibilities of power -- and he once told the writer that it was not really money, but the right to exercise power, that caused people to seek high-level jobs -- but without the calm assurance of a William A. Whitcomb or a Garret Schenck, he lived under the constant pressure of fear that he might do something or not do something, or that he would allow something to be done, that would hurt the Company. For this reason, he seldom made an important decision without the most thorough investigation, driving his organization as hard as he did himself, which was very hard indeed.

He was a great teacher, having the ability to translate his idealism into pragmatic advice. He had certain maxims of his own. Two, which we have never forgotten, were: "Make sure you are right, and when you are right, don't let anything stop you."


; and "Never box yourself in. Always leave yourself a little back door". These explain a lot about William O. McKay. He had more moral courage than any man the writer has ever known. Often actually ill from nervous tension, he kept going by sheer willpower; never ceasing to formulate, study and propose new plans; never hesitating to go into a fight for what he was sure was right; and if he was defeated on the first round he slipped out the "back door" and pursued his objective by approaching it in some other way.

The writer injects a personal note here. It may not add much to the Great Northern story, but then again it may help to give meaning to some of the things we will speak of later. He worked
very closely with these two men, for one or the other, or for both at the same time, over a long period, in widely divergent areas. They sent him on some difficult missions -- even to go up against heavy-calibre opposition in their interests, and he knows that he had their mutual confidence.

William A. Whitcomb once said to him, out of a clear sky, after the successful conclusion of some project which had involved all three: "John, what do you suppose there is about Scotland that it produces the finest people in the world?" This was something, coming from a man who had not a drop of Scottish blood. The writer did not know it until years later, but he took home, time after time, to show to his family, work which the writer had done for him. William O. McKay showed his appreciation in many ways. His sister, in a letter written in November, 1970, at the age of 87, said: "Although I did not know you in person, your name stood for perfection in our family", and the writer cherishes a tiny, hand-written note, given him when he left Boston to begin setting up the head office in Bangor under a new President:

" 2/27/52

God bless you and yours.

McK "

For his part, the writer respected and admired both these men for their strength of character, honesty and basic humanity. He was a little closer to William O. McKay, if for no other reason than that he needed friendship, and reached out for it more than did William A. Whitcomb. His hope is that his inadequate portrayal of these men will help those who did not know them to at least some
small understanding of what they were like, and why things were as they were under their administrations.

The first instruction the writer received in Boston, after being introduced, shown his desk and given the keys to the office and washroom doors was: "DON'T TALK TO ANYBODY ABOUT THE COMPANY". The Mafia law of omerta was no more binding than this rule of silence about Company affairs as far as the Boston office crew was concerned. True, one would probably not have been found shot in the back, with a dead bird in his mouth, if he talked, but as far as we know, nobody ever tried to find out. Internally, contrariwise, the effectiveness of the Boston office depended entirely upon communication.

To begin with, let us say that the way things were expected to be done, and nearly all the routine of internal reporting, were covered by what were known as the General Orders, issued between 1910 and 1927 by William A. Whitcomb as General Manager, and a few put out by William O. McKay up to 1929, as Manager of Manufacture. These were sent to the appropriate department heads, the Auditor having a complete file, and were revised from time to time. There were, as nearly as we can determine, 110 of the old General Orders. To show the kinds of things they covered, the first ten are as good as any:

General Order No. 1 - Ordering Materials
No. 2 - Receiving and Delivering Materials
No. 3 - Approval of Bills for Payment
No. 4 - Registration and Preparation of Payrolls Including Employing and Paying Off Employees
No. 5 - Payroll Digest
No. 6 - Townsites at Millinocket and East Millinocket, and supervision of the Property.

No. 7 - Tare allowance for News Rolls.

No. 8 - Handling Cores and Plugs, and Inventory of Same.

No. 9 - Sale of Materials at the Mills and Transfer of Materials between the mills and at the mills.

No. 10 - Bureau of Economy.

By the time William A. Whitcomb became President, many of these, or parts of them, had become out of date, and he started a new series, designated as Executive Orders, intended to replace them, but this project never really got off the ground, and only a dozen or so were issued. Over the years, the procedures covered by the General Orders became outmoded in some cases, but compliance with the intent was automatic without formal change, and as late as the 1960's many of the procedures were still being followed. In the various revisions, some of the cumbersome original titles were shortened. No. 4, for instance, became simply "Timekeeping System". The title of No. 12 -- "Repair Job", which persisted all through the time of the old Company, was a weird misnomer, as the procedures, and the "Repair Job Record" which it provided for, were never used for anything but capitalized jobs.

Correspondence was highly important to the Boston office, and indeed all through the Company. Each mill had a letter-head of a different color -- white at Millinocket, brown at the Lower Mill, and blue at Madison, for quick identification. The Auditing and Engineering Departments used white, but the latter always used a blue typewriter ribbon. All had a small corner head of the same
design, like

GREAT NORTHERN PAPER COMPANY
Millinocket Mill
Millinocket, Maine

printed ordinary black letter-press. All other letter-heads were white. The Spruce Wood Department had two, with centered heads, one being the only two-color job in the Company, having "Division of Forest Engineering" added in red. Those used in Boston were different in that the corner heads were engraved, and each official had his own, with his title and the name of the Company in very small type, thus:

FRED T. DOLBEARE
Purchasing Agent
201 DEVONSHIRE STREET
Great Northern Paper Co.
BOSTON, MASS.

About the time William A. Whitcomb became President, the Boston heads were centered instead of being placed in the corner, and after 1947, when the Boston office came out of hiding, a letter-head with a fair-sized "GREAT NORTHERN PAPER COMPANY" and the address across the top, with the name and title of the official below this on the left side, all in black raised printing, came into use. The Sales Department always had used a bold GREAT NORTHERN PAPER COMPANY heading. Letter-heads were in three sizes, full, three-quarter and half, and the orders were to use the last whenever possible. This was not to save paper, but William A. Whitcomb detested long letters, and everyone perforce learned the art of being concise. Almost all written internal communication was by letter. There were some forms which we will describe later, used for all kinds of notes and reports, but no true so-called "inter-office memos".
All this is just for the record. The important thing about internal correspondence was that nearly everything was put in writing, and letters were addressed to the officer or department head, never to a subordinate except on very rare occasions. Every letter to a mill, for instance, no matter what the subject, was written to the Superintendent, and while the answer might be prepared by a subordinate, it was always signed by the Superintendent. There is always an exception, and one was that the Assistant Manager of Manufacture had his own letterhead, signed his own letters, and had letters addressed to him. Within a few years after 1929, the administrative assistant types, like Frank Keenan and the writer, were also carrying on correspondence with department heads, over the Manager's rubber-stamped signature and their initials, but these letters always went across the Manager's desk. All letters to people outside the Company were signed by an officer or a department head.

Telephone communication from Boston was often delegated to assistants in the upper levels, and might be with the immediate assistants of other department heads, but all telephone or face-to-face conversations, even those of the President, in which instructions were given or decisions announced, were confirmed by letter and acknowledged. Even telegrams were confirmed by letter. In addition, a copy of every piece of written communication, internal or going from any department to the outside, was sent to Boston -- excepting of course letters to people in the Boston office itself -- for the attention of either the President or the Manager of Manufacture. Through these procedures, there was little that went on anywhere
that did not involve correspondence; copies of practically all correspondence came to the Boston office; the Boston office consequently had a pretty good idea of what was going on everywhere, and every department head knew it.

Since there were no copying machines except the impractical mimeograph and the unsatisfactory hectograph, there was no wholesale broadcasting of letters, the number of copies being confined to the capability of a typewriter and carbon paper, not usually more than four or five. If the department head wanted members of his staff to have copies of some communication, he had additional ones typed. There were, however, instances of fantastic numbers of copies of some document being produced in Boston by typing and retyping. It will be obvious that this system generated an enormous mass of filing, but that was the name of the game. It was cut down to some degree by means which we will note later.

As we have said, some of the forms used by the old Company had come from the International Paper Company with William A. Whitcomb, and were revised to meet Great Northern requirements. Not all of them could be so revised, so there were Forms 2 and 2A, both 8-1/2" x 11". Form 2 had nothing on it but a border of light broken lines, each representing a typewriter space, and was used for forms specially ruled, and for the design of new ones. Form 2A came in white, blue and buff, and had a solid ruled border. This was a multi-purpose form, used in a great many ways -- for reports, memos, special forms, even for drawings. It may still be in use. Then, just after the writer went to Boston, the President invented the famous Form 229, a half-sized version of Form 2A, with a Great Northern Paper Company
heading, a section about an inch wide ruled off at the top, and a narrower one at the bottom for date and signature. This came in white, blue, yellow and pink. In the course of time, there was added Form 229A, a stretched-out version that when folded became 229 size, with room left for a binding margin. This 229 form was used for all kinds of condensed reports and memoranda. Forms for regular reporting came in various colors, for easy identification, and there was very little that happened that was not covered by some report to the Boston office, making direction and control from that distance viable. We will mention only those which were of perhaps the most importance, and will add additional discussion on the uses to which some of them were put at a later point.

A copy of every order sent to the mills every day by the Sales Department came to the Boston office. Incidentally, the copies that went to the mills were not priced, so that they never knew what they were working against. The Daily Production Report from each mill, two days old when received, showed the production of each machine, with the various factors affecting output; speed, trim, broke, and time down; compared with an "ideal" figure, and an explanation of lost time; a list of the orders made; the production of groundwood by lines, with the amount of power used; the production of the sulphite mill; a summary of total production and shipments and other information. There was also a "Daily Summary", a half-size sheet sent to the President, the Vice-Presidents, the three mill Superintendents and the Auditor. This covered all three plants, and its purpose, according to General Order No. 38, was "assembling and giving to the management upon a single report, in-
formation with regard to production at the mills; condition of Reservoirs; and the weather." This was little used in Boston except by the President, as the Manufacturing Department had more detailed reports. Car Reports, covering the shipments for the previous day, to be followed up by the Traffic Department, and the requisitions for materials and equipment to be purchased, were also received daily. Requisitions were signed by the Manager of Manufacture before being passed along to the Purchasing Department. From the Treasurer came a daily Cash Report - the "Cash Card", showing bank balances and the status of securities held, which were never anything but Government bonds. An inventory of major supply items; coal, sulphur, limerock and machine clothing, a report on overtime labor and a pulpwood inventory report showing the amounts of rough and peeled wood undelivered, divided as to water, rail and truck delivery, and giving the year cut in each case, were received weekly. However, the really hot reports were the Water Power Report, sometimes referred to as the "Hydraulic Report", covering the operation of the power system, discharge of water at the various stations, natural flow or run-off on the two rivers, and the situation in the storage reservoirs, along with meteorological data, made weekly, monthly, quarterly and for the year, with a separate itemized report on the so-called "Small Pond" storages, operated by the Spruce Wood Department during the driving season and cooperatively with the Engineering Department the rest of the year; the Weekly News Letters from each mill, the Sales Department, the Engineering Department, the Bureau, the Auditing Department and the Spruce Wood Department, each giving a summary of the previous week's activities; the weekly report on the status of capitalized construction and repair jobs, showing
the amount expended against the estimates, and most important, the Manufacturing Reports, or "Cost Sheets", for each mill, prepared by the Auditing Department; separate reports on the production, with a breakdown of costs, on paper, groundwood, sulphite and wrappers, with the figures related to established normals. With these came the Earnings Statement, on two bases, production and sales; and a little supplement on mill payrolls and the number of men employed at each mill per ton of paper. This report was issued weekly, monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly. There were many others, of course, daily, weekly, quarterly and yearly from every department, and at odd times Test Reports from the Bureau; by this time real reports on the results of tests and experiments; copies of reports to the Industrial Accident Commission, and special reports on many subjects. There were also the break reports from pressrooms in bulky envelopes containing "ends" showing defects causing press breaks, sent by the Sales Department; and in the time of the National Recovery Administration and during the wartime controls, reams of Government forms to be processed.

All this stuff, and more, had to be filed, and the maintenance of files was a major chore in the Boston office. It had a complete file of the Salary Records for salaried employees. It kept up-to-date files of photographic documentation on all important properties and activities, including a picture of every building owned by the Spruce Wood Department. It had a file of prints of drawings of the townsites, general mill plans and nearly every area of importance in the mills. These drawings included the small "C" size that folded once each way were 8-1/2" x 11", so that they would go into a standard envelope; covering general plans of each mill and of every room in each mill,
along with much else. These were extremely useful to the Boston
office, but of little value to the Engineering Department, and it
required constant pressure to keep them reasonably up to date. There
was a file of Spruce Wood Department maps. Daily samples of paper
from each of the machines; several trade magazines; an investment
service; the Newsprint Service Bureau reports; the old Boston News
Bureau, a now long defunct financial publication put out in Boston
by one of the New York financial publishing houses, and the U.S.
Government weather map which used to be published daily in Boston,
and a mass of other material, all figured in the office routine
and filing.

It would be impossible to detail what everybody did, and how they
did it, in the Boston office, because things changed over the years,
as they did everywhere else, and anyway, nobody would believe it.
However, we will try to give some general impressions, and a little
detail here and there. To begin with, everyone was within shouting
distance of everyone else, and no office door was ever closed more
than half a dozen times a year. Garret Schenck had spent most of
each summer at Falmouth, on the Cape, but carried on business from
there, by mail, telephone and courier. William A. Whitcomb usually
took vacations, and so did A.P. Lane and Fred Dolbeare, but William
0. McKay could always find some reason why he should not leave the
office at all, and took only a little time off now and then. Other
than vacations, William A. Whitcomb, while he was General Manager,
made a few trips during which he visited various Canadian mills,
but the writer does not recall his making any such visits after he
became President, except to an individual mill or two. William 0.
McKay made a comprehensive tour of Canadian plants in 1927, which as we will see, influenced the writer's career with the Company, and later on he made a number of visits of shorter duration to other mills, but not many. Up until the middle 1930's, while natural sandstone was being used for pulpstones, Fred Dolbeare made one trip a year to Ohio to inspect the material quarried for the next year's supply, but otherwise was seldom away from the office. A.P. Lane, however, was out probably half the year, on special missions, and keeping personal touch with the important people on nearly every railroad east of the Mississippi. William A. Whitcomb and William O. McKay made one two-day trip each month to attend the meeting of the Board of Directors in New York, and both men sometimes separately, but often together, made frequent visits to the mills, the frequency depending upon what was going on, in addition to attending the Annual Meeting of Stockholders, which was held in Millinocket. Most of these trips were of not more than three days' duration. They nor any other Great Northern people belonged to any industry or trade association or society; attended no trade conventions or conferences, and except for A.P. Lane's service as Fuel Administrator during World War I, and the N.R.A. period, when they had no choice, served on no committees, commissions or boards, except those of Great Northern subsidiaries. Therefore, they were at their desks probably 80 percent of the time, with two effects -- first that they generated work continually, and second that they were almost always accessible, and there was seldom any difficulty in getting decisions or answers to questions. Even if they were to be absent, they invariably left work behind to be ready for their return, and they left instructions about anything of
importance that could be foreseen and that would have to be handled by a subordinate while they were absent.

Digressing a little again, we mentioned in another place staff meetings of a kind. Both William A. Whitcomb and William O. McKay, when they visited Millinocket, almost always held an evening meeting with local officials in the old Great Northern Hotel, where a suite of rooms -- two bedrooms and a parlor with a huge fireplace -- located just off the lobby, were reserved for Company use. These were informal sessions, generally covering a range of subjects, and they were completely dry. They were the nearest thing to what might be called a staff or managers' meeting, although the Superintendents, the Engineer or the Auditor were occasionally called to Boston, usually separately, for a meeting on some important matter. This did not happen often. Just as a matter of interest, one of the bedrooms, which William A. Whitcomb always used, had in it two oak bedsteads with low headboards which he had carved himself. For a great many years, these two bedrooms, A and B, were the only ones in the hotel provided with keys, and these were left on the inside of the doors. There are few of that period who do not remember the time when William A. Whitcomb got locked into his room, and not being able to make himself heard, because the parlor was between the bedrooms and the lobby, had to escape through a window onto the porch that ran around the building. Also incidentally, he had his own private set of English china, never used by anyone but him and his party. The writer has one place setting of this, salvaged from the hotel when it was demolished.
We have many times mentioned Lester Ruthven Smith (1875-1960). Generally thought of as a Cape Codder, he was actually a native of Lynn, Massachusetts, and had worked in one or more insurance agencies before coming to Great Northern as Garret Schenck's secretary in 1902, at which time he was the whole office force. Lester Smith was a man of medium build, with a pleasant face, bushy eyebrows, a lot of common sense, and a keen sense of humor, with a long ash always dangling from the cigarette without which he would have looked sort of naked. As the years went on, he had become a kind of investigator and messenger for Garret Schenck, and in 1926 was made Assistant to the President. In the meantime, at some fairly early date, he had taken over the administration of the Company's insurance program. As long as we are telling it like it was, this might be as good a place as any to cover this subject, as insurance was handled by the Boston office as long as it was in existence. We will do this very superficially, as while the writer was himself in overall charge of the insurance program later, he does not pretend to know the fine points of this complicated aspect of the Company's operations.

Early Great Northern fire and related insurance was placed with Arkwright, one of a group of Mutuals. At that time, mutual policyholders were assessable on a percentage basis for losses. That was changed later, but was the situation at the time of the great Salem fire in 1914, and this cost Great Northern a lot of money. As a result, some time not too long after that date, the insurance was shifted to stock companies through the Factory Insurance Association. At that time, the broker of record for the Company was O'Brion, Russell & Co., who were general agents as well as brokers, and very
effective in not only the more common place insurance coverages, but in fields like liability, boiler and machinery, and so on.

When Garret Schenck Jr. was in a private school in Boston in 1904 and 1905, one of his schoolmates was a young man named Joseph W. Knapp. They went on to Williams College, and roomed together for a year, after which Joe Knapp transferred to Yale. Upon graduation, he went into an investment house for a short time, then to the New England Telephone Company, and in 1914 left them to go into the insurance business on his own account. It would be natural for him to approach Great Northern, through his association with Garret Schenck, Jr., and in 1916 he got his first business, coverage on the wood piles in the mill yards, having, as he told the writer, been able to place it at a substantial reduction in rate. A little later, he was successful in landing Workman's Compensation, and as time went on, some other business. In 1924, Joe Knapp, for fairly obvious reasons, took into partnership Hilbert Schenck, second son of Garret Schenck, who had been out of college for a few years, and shortly thereafter the entire Great Northern account was turned over to the firm of Knapp, Schenck & Company. Although O'Brion & Russell were displaced as brokers, they continued to serve the account as General Agents, and managed to maintain some of the business, although some of this was taken from them and given to others in the course of time. There was nothing particularly wrong about this. As a matter of fact, it was much of a piece with some of the Company's other procurement policies, but the election of Hilbert Schenck to the Board of Directors of Great Northern, after the death of his father, gave the insurance trade the impression that the Company's insurance was locked up, and that nobody could break in, no matter how strong a case he
might have, and few made any serious efforts to do so. This is just to indicate that the handling of insurance was not so onerous a job as it might have been under other conditions. To complete as much of the insurance story as needs to be told here, this situation prevailed until an Insurance Manager was appointed upon Lester Smith's retirement in 1951, at which time competition began to be encouraged. Joe Knapp retired in 1957; Hilbert Schenck took in new partners, including his son Garret, and Knapp, Schenck & Co. continued to retain a major part of the business, but by 1963 many things had changed, the old ties had been broken, the new Directors of Great Northern decided that a larger firm should be handling its account, and it reverted to O'Brion & Russell, which by that time or perhaps a little later had become Paige, O'Brion & Russell.

Lester Smith, while continuing to handle insurance, was made Traffic Manager in 1934, and the position of Assistant to the President disappeared. As we have said, the Traffic Department was losing much of its former significance, its main functions having become the supply of cars and the tracing of shipments, along with continuing efforts to obtain better freight rates on the Company's business, and the preparation of material for hearings on the unending I.C.C. rate cases which could affect the Company's competitive position. All of these were time-consuming duties, but the rate cases were being handled by Sheldon Wardwell, and the Traffic Department staff was down to four men, including the Manager, by attrition. Lester Smith was not happy about this, but could not do anything about it. In 1936, Jerome Ross (1895-1944) who did not get along well with William A. Whitcomb, who had inherited him from Garret
Schenck, was promoted sideways and given the title of Assistant Traffic Manager, which he held until his untimely death after a leave of absence because of poor health. However, he was inexperienced in traffic work, and was never more than a clerk-secretary, which Lester Smith did not need, because he had always done his own typing, and continued to do so until his retirement in 1951.

Although the writer worked with Lester Smith for a long time, he cannot point to any really outstanding achievement. As Secretary to the President, he was undoubtedly highly efficient. In his few years as Assistant to the President under Garret Schenck, he became, as we have said, a kind of investigator, and knew a lot about a great many things, but seemed to interest himself in rather superficial matters. Under William A. Whitcomb, he served usefully as a foil for the latter's thoughts, and his down-to-earth comment sometimes put the President in his place. Like the time he was told that he was not qualified to express an opinion on some matter because he had never been to college, upon which he drew himself up stiffly and replied: "Mr. Whitcomb, I may never have been to college, but I have a college education!". This broke up the argument. Having an early background in insurance, and given the situation we have described, he handled this duty competently. It seemed to the writer that he performed as Traffic Manager with a kind of resentment that he had not been relieved of other duties, nor given any additional help, which was true, but was not by any means a unique situation in the old Company. Unlike A.P. Lane, he travelled very little, indicating to some degree his attitude toward this job. His yearly travel expense was only about $500, against A.P. Lane's $5,000. Nevertheless, he was a faithful employee, did his best as he saw it, and was sincere in a statement made to the writer after his retirement:
"Without boasting, I can say that I was a good investment for the G.N.P. Co.". We would say he was right.

From 1907 until 1912, Fred Thayer Dolbeare had been both Purchasing Agent and officially Traffic Manager. About that time he was, as we have noted, relieved of the Traffic work, and reverted to being a one-man Purchasing Department. In 1918, he was given a stenographer, and the Purchasing Department became a two-man operation. It was still essentially a two-man operation in 1927, the writer being the second man, with some help from Ashton Gourley. As the procurement of materials and supplies was an important function of the Boston office, we will describe as briefly as we may how it worked at that time, and will later explain some of the changes that took place.

Let us say to begin with that the Purchasing Agent did not have anything to do with certain large items of supply, nor with the more important purchases of mill equipment, except to write the orders. Coal and sulphur contracts were handled by the President. Limerock came from the subsidiary Knox Lime Company, and decision on new or replacement mill equipment of consequence, especially for capital jobs, was made by the Manufacturing and Engineering Department people. The Purchasing Agent signed the orders, but not contracts, these being considered to require the signature of an officer.

The same blue half-sheet size requisition form, really too small, was used by all three plants, the typed serial number bearing the prefix "1-", "2-" or "3-" to identify the mill. Requisitions originating with the Engineering Department were given an appropriate
mill number, except that on orders for materials and equipment for large construction projects a special series was used. The order forms used by the Purchasing Department were also half-size sheets, pre-numbered, and with the identifying prefix. Copies were required for the supplier, the Purchasing Department, the mill and the Auditing Department, and the forms were printed with a request that copies of invoices be sent to all these places. In 1928 carbon paper for all these copies had to be inserted by hand, but a few years later snap-out type pre-carboned forms were adopted.

Requisitions were priced in pencil, the order was written from the requisition, and the requisition number was typed on the order form. Requisitions were then filed in binders, by mill and by number. Orders were filed the same way. Invoices received were checked against the orders, and filed. Completed orders were transferred to a dead file. The open order books served as a tickler, and the Purchasing Department did all the follow-up on late delivery and the like. It had nothing to do with the mill storerooms. Once the order was delivered in good condition, it became the responsibility of the mill. With anywhere from thirty to sixty orders a day; sometimes several from one requisition, although the mills did their best to prepare requisitions so that this would not be necessary; and with only one man to do everything except pricing, and he even did some of this, he had little time to pick daisies.

Most of the pricing was done by the Purchasing Agent. At this time, it was about all he did, and he made it as easy for himself as possible. A great many things were always bought from the
same suppliers, so that rotating electrical equipment and main switchgear; small switches, conduit and other electrical equipment; steel, cast iron, brass and malleable iron pipe, with fittings and valves; steel shapes; steel plate; rubber hose and belting; bolts, nuts, small tools and similar mill supplies; screen plates, and a lot of other commonly used material and equipment always came from the same sources, with little or no competition.

Pricing was done in one of several ways -- by referring to the last order; by telephone; by letter asking for quotation (there was no request for bid form); or by simply making out the order, with the request that the price be supplied. Pulpstones and machine clothing were bought heavily from one manufacturer, but others were given an order now and then to keep them in the picture and to see what their product would do. The percentage of business given to different suppliers, particularly of machine clothing, varied from time to time as performance was evaluated by the mills, and eventually a policy of dividing machine clothing among several of the manufacturers, on a quota basis, was adopted. Most of the very large items of new or replacement mill equipment had usually been priced by the Manufacturing or Engineering Departments, sometimes competitively, sometimes not, depending upon the circumstances. Some of the standard mill machinery items were left to the Purchasing Agent to handle, but in these cases, his tendency, like that of the Engineering Department, was to stick with a make with which he was familiar, or more properly, with a make represented by a salesman with whom he was familiar.
In spite of his long experience, Fred Dolbeare had limited knowledge, which was one reason why he was allowed to handle only what was essentially the "nuts and bolts" aspects of procurement. He could not read a drawing, or discuss intelligently anything much more technically complicated than a keg of nails. He seldom had a new idea, and did not take kindly to one offered by anyone else. He was expert at biting criticism, but had little to teach, even if he had wanted to, which he did not. With only one full-time man in his organization, he was not under the necessity of evaluating comparative performance, and he could have found something to criticize even in perfection.

While the writer had come to Boston knowing that he was going into the Purchasing Department, he soon decided that he was not going to be dead-ended behind anybody like this. Having decided that there was no future in leading a dance orchestra in his little corner of Canada, he had trained in secretarial work with the deliberate aim of doing exactly what he had done -- get to be secretary to an executive of a large corporation, to be where the action was, and move on from there. That this corporation happened to be the Great Northern Paper Company was accidental, but in a matter of days he had become a fervid Great Northern afficionado. In the spring of 1927 having obtained a basic knowledge of the mill processes through normal exposure, and by trailing the Night Superintendent around the mill, asking questions, several nights a week for two years, he was ready for Phase Two. With the blessing of his boss, Charles H. Burr, the mill Superintendent, and with the encouragement of Fred Mears, then Assistant Superintendent, he had applied for transfer to the Bureau as an Apprentice, and almost simultaneously learning of a
vacancy in Boston, put in for that also. He was accepted by the Bureau first, with the understanding that if he was called to Boston he would go there, but could come back to the Bureau if he did not make the grade in the Head Office. Actually, he worked one day in June on the Bureau staff, but before the end of that day Charles Burr sent word along that he had been instructed to have McLeod report in Boston forthwith. During the winter of 1927-28 he took an evening course in Purchasing at Northeastern University, but nothing he learned there seemed to be relevant to the work he was doing, which was just more typing for a man for whom he could develop no respect. Therefore, in the spring of 1928 he told William O. McKay that in spite of his best efforts he could not please Fred Dolbeare; that he would not work under him any longer, and asked to be returned to the Bureau, where he could make a contribution and get some satisfaction out of his job.

We have mentioned William O. McKay's visit to a number of Canadian mills in the summer of 1927. During this trip, he had sketched on bits of paper the layout of each mill as he remembered it, and as we said, his memory was remarkable. When making up his report, he had made the comment that he wished there was someone in the office who could make drawings of these sketches. The writer who had a little training in mechanical drawing too, said that he could, and did, and this changed the course of things. From that time on, he did quite a little work of this kind for both William O. McKay and William A. Whitcomb, usually to translate their ideas on one thing or another to the Engineering Department. He had also begun to participate in the discussions of some of these matters.
William O. McKay, who had seen what was coming, because he had been through the same kind of experience with the same individual years before, refused the writer's request to be sent back to the Bureau, saying that he had already become more valuable in Boston than he would be at the mills, that plans were in the works to take him out of the Purchasing Department, and that while he was to continue to assist there for the time being, he was free to use his judgment as to when to disagree with the Purchasing Agent, and did not have to take any unwarranted criticism.

The first encounter as a result of this sent Fred Dolbeare flying into the Vice-President's office, which did not get him anywhere, and while he did not accept the situation gracefully, a better relationship actually developed. Anyway, by the middle of the year, while the writer technically remained in the Purchasing Department, and helped out when he could, most of his time was being taken up by the President and Vice-President, and the purchasing work fell heavily on Ash Gourley. By the next year, he was back in the Manufacturing Department.

We will not pretend to tell about everything that happened in the next twenty-five years, but will make some effort at describing the kinds of activities that went on. There were many gradual and some abrupt changes over these years, mostly in who did what, but the functions of the Boston office, the methods of direction and control and the often curious procedures changed little.

Outside of the things strictly peculiar to the responsibilities of the President, which included keeping track of what was being
done in the Sales and Spruce Wood Departments, nearly every other activity was centered around the direction, control and servicing of the manufacturing operations. While the duties entailed were multifarious, the goal of the Manager of Manufacture and his immediate organization was efficiency, pure and simple, and efficiency meant making paper better and cheaper, with equipment purchased and installed at the lowest possible cost. The effort in this direction divided itself into three general areas, and we delineate these broadly; analysis of and action on information on production, cost and quality; initiation or evaluation of proposals for the replacement of equipment and the modernization of facilities and methods; and planning, instigating and following up new programs, including new construction, to improve operation, increase productive capacity or provide more power.

The various reports received in the Boston office were literally picked apart. Not an hour of lost time, not an inch of unused trim, not a pound of excess broke, not a foot of below-normal machine speed, not a spoiled wire or felt, not a dirty or otherwise unsatisfactory sample, not a broken pulpstone, not an extra bit of power per ton of groundwood, not an abnormal pound of sulphur per ton of sulphite, not an excess cubic foot of water used, not a dangerously high or low item of inventory, not a freight car on demurrage, not an unprofitable order, and not a day or a dollar out of line on a construction job went unnoticed, nor if not satisfactorily explained, unquestioned. On the other hand, good performance in any area was not ignored. About the only thing that did not get this kind of attention from somebody in Boston was for some reason the accident record. A severe accident of course always drew a blast, but there was no regular pressure from Boston on accident prevention until the later days of the old Company.
The morning mail for the Manufacturing Department was combed out by the Assistant Manager, or one or the other of the Manager's staff, and with copies of unimportant correspondence culled out, was on his desk, with red-pencilled notations, for his attention when he came in. The big day was Thursday, when the Manufacturing Reports, the complete cost and profit results of the previous week's operations were received. These were not true figures for this period. Certain costs were prorated, others arbitrarily apportioned by formula, and the selling price was not necessarily that of the paper actually made, nor the cost that of the paper actually shipped. There were other anomalies also, but the reports each week were comparative, and over a period of time gave the real picture. There were no "cost centers", except that separate reports were made for groundwood, sulphite, paper and wrapper, and each of these was broken down into the essential elements of its cost. Reaction in the way of commendation or criticism on the figures was sometimes spontaneous, but perhaps more often was the result of study of them relative to the existing conditions, past performance and trends. The percentage of sulphite pulp used in paper was under constant pressure. As it requires roughly twice as much wood to make a ton of sulphite as it does to make a ton of groundwood, this was a highly important factor in the cost of paper, and was the subject of continuous study from every angle, all the way from the quality of wood through both pulping processes, the preparation of stock, and into the formation of the sheet on the paper machine. Low water years were real disasters in this area, since the sulphite mill had to be pushed to the limit of its capacity, just to provide stock for the machines, the production of this pulp requiring the use of little
power. Perfection of a sort was reached when the East Millinocket mill actually ran for several months one summer without any sulphite at all. In general, Great Northern machines regularly ran with less sulphite than those of the competition, but the paper they made was almost as regularly near the bottom of the "rolls per break" reports received from the pressrooms, although low sulphite was not the only reason for this. Untidy bundles of press break ends received from the Sales Department, and examined in Boston before being sent to the mills showed slivers, bark specks, calender cuts, bits of rope fibre, "fish-eyes" of hardened pulp, oil spots, slime holes, wet streaks, over-dried paper and about everything else that could cause trouble.

There was no budget system, but a cash requirement forecast, which included mill operations, the projected pulpwood cut, and new construction, was made each year. There was a Payroll Digest, establishing the number of men allowed in each of the mill departments, on two bases, one for summer and one for winter operation, revised each year and monitored through labor cost and examination of an occasional random payroll, and there was a Repair Job Summary, to which construction jobs were added as approved or subtracted when completed, and which indicated the status of each capital job -- not repair jobs, in spite of the title -- in comparison with the estimate.

The ordinary run of repair and maintenance work was left to the judgment of the mill Superintendents, but each year started out with a list of capital jobs for consideration, some of which verged upon being repairs -- things like replacement calender or press rolls.

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The procedure was then normal, the list being divided into what had to be done, what ought to be done, and what it would be nice to do if you had the money. This break-down took into account the carry-over of work from the previous year, and was of course subject to revision. While the mill Superintendents, as the most interested parties, had a voice, final decision on priorities was pretty much made in Boston, which gave instructions to the Engineer to make studies or have Job Records prepared, depending upon the status of the proposition. On anything of importance, drawings and estimates were sent to Boston for approval or suggestions before the Job Record was issued, and these got a thorough overhauling, even at times to the extent of obtaining new quotations or suggesting alternative designs. Incidentally, Job Records were numbered in series, the numbers starting at 100 for Millinocket, 200 for the Lower Mill, and 300 for Madison, and there was a special 400 series for large projects outside the mill properties.

Big jobs were of course subject to much preliminary discussion, but the final details of even these were scrutinized by Boston before approval. A Job Record was not usually issued until the Manager of Manufacture was satisfied -- at least he did not approve it until he was satisfied. Starting early in 1931, it also had to be formally approved by the President, and if he had not been involved in the preliminaries; perhaps even if he had; this was where the crunch came, and truly, it was on occasion a minor triumph to come out of his office with a signature obtained by cold logic or a good selling job, as the case might require. It then became the duty of the Boston people to needle the Engineering Department into completing the design and specifications, to get in requisitions, to
chase up the suppliers for shipment, to trace shipments for delivery, to push for progress on the work, and when the job was done, to get in the final cost figures. Both the Superintendents and the Engineer considered this harrassment, and in a way it was, but it was necessary, because they were overloaded and constantly being side-tracked, and because when the brass in Boston had decided that something should be done, they wanted it done right now.

Very large expenditures of course had to have the approval of the Directors, and at one point a large expenditure was anything over $25,000. However, the President did not allow anything to be put before them on which he was not pretty sure of approval, although some studies which involved programs consisting of several parts were not put forward in total, and very big jobs were quite often broken down into steps, appropriations being made for one step at a time. Lastly, after a job was under way, Boston people kept track of it, using flattery, cajolery and threats of dire consequences in the effort to keep progress up and costs down. The net result of all this was that the work done each year based on mill recommendations was mostly of the "had to be done" type, while the progressive programs -- the so-called "forward work"-- emanated from Boston.

The Spruce Wood Department was handled a little differently. Before 1928, it had largely conducted its own affairs. Fred Gilbert would no doubt have discussed timberland acquisitions with Garret Schenck, but as best we can determine, there was little preliminary planning of operations between them, discussions of what was being done were informal, often during the old President's fishing trips to Maine, and whatever reports may have been sent to Boston were
not very comprehensive. After William A. Whitcomb took over, however, this department had to submit for approval each year a program for its operations -- how much wood was to be cut and where; how much from Company land and how much from permits, how much was to be purchased, how much was to be river driven and how much delivered overland; what was to be cut from Company camps and what by contractors, and so on. This program was evaluated and revised on the basis of many things; estimated costs, of course, and the state of the inventory of wood being prime considerations. After it had been approved, copies of every permit and every contract made under it were sent to the President in Boston.

A weekly report, showing the status of all wood in process was initiated promptly, and a little later a monthly cost report on each individual operation was required, and while from the very nature of things the activities of the Spruce Wood Department could not be controlled as closely from Boston as were those of the mills, it was not from lack of effort.

This department of course had capital expenditures too. In earlier years, it had had a Job Record system similar to that of the mills, but internal. This had been allowed to deteriorate, but shortly after 1928 it was reinstated, and capital jobs were subject to approval of the President. Land purchases also had to be approved by him, but we will not go into this subject here.

The Sales Department, not being an operating department, did not make many reports, and important decisions in connection with its activities were mostly made in face to face discussions, often at the time of the regular Directors' Meetings, when the President
and the Manager of Manufacture, who could not be disassociated from sales policies, were in New York.

All the reports were of course filed. Some, of transient interest, were weeded out every few years. Some were retained indefinitely. There were Daily Production Reports in the Boston office, dating back to 1900, for instance. Reports which were frequently used were put into binders, and in addition certain information was drawn off and tabulated, so as to be instantly available. There was also a file of what were called the "Statistical Reports"; simple tabulations of important figures like production, the wood charge-out, percent sulphite used, newsprint price, earnings, dividends paid, and the like, which were sent back to the Auditor at regular intervals for entry of "official" figures, which took into account adjustments of one kind and another which might not be indicated in the routine reports. Newspapers and trade magazines were clipped for items of interest, and those which it seemed important to preserve were pasted up and filed in binders.

A lot of time was spent on study of water control. The Kennebec River was left largely to the Kennebec Water Power Company, but reports of storage and flow were received from them, and as Madison was the control point for discharge, change in this was cleared with the Company through the Boston office. West Branch storage was technically operated by the Engineering Department, not by rule curve, but from forecasts from time to time based on various factors. However, the Boston office maintained its own storage
charts, made its own interpretation of meteorological data, and its own calculations of the amount of water that could be used under different conditions, because the requirements of the mills sometimes did not square with the technically-based conclusions as to the discharge that could be maintained. This quite often required taking calculated risks, and the Boston people developed considerable expertise at second-guessing the Engineer, at times over-ruling him, either from necessity or from honest difference of opinion as to what was going to happen on the watershed.

The Company had no files on salaried people, the only information on them, in most cases, being contained in the Salary Records, and was confined to bare essentials. There was an Application for Employment form, but this was a very simple affair, intended for use in taking applications from candidates for the Bureau Apprentice course, which provided for very little history. There were three complete files of copies of Salary Records; one in the Boston office; one in the Auditing Department, and one in the Treasurer's office. Department heads had those for their own people only. All new records, and all changes in records, had to be approved by the Department head and by either the Manager of Manufacture or the President, and the physical revision of an existing record had to be made in Boston. This was cumbersome procedure. The change to be made, usually agreed upon informally beforehand, was covered by a letter from the department head, enclosing his copy of the record or records. It was then necessary to call in all the other copies, make the entry, get it signed by the President or the Manager of Manufacture as required, and send all copies to the depart-
ment head for his signature. He then held out his own copy, and distributed the others to the proper places, with letters of transmittal, copies of which came to Boston, so that proper redistribution could be checked. General salary changes were a massive headache, as only one or two people in Boston were allowed to even see the records. They also created a real hazard, because at one time or another during the process, all of the Salary Records were out of the files and scattered all over the country in the mail. An attempt was made at one time to have each department head make his own changes on general increases, after approval of a list, but in spite of specific instructions as to what was to be put on the record in the way of explanation, this resulted in a royal foul-up, and was never tried again. It was not until the 1950's that a system was set up which provided for change orders and a single master file of Salary Records, which stayed in one place.

Anonymity notwithstanding, there were a lot of visitors to the Boston office. Many were salesmen -- "peddlers" they were called. These usually went to the mills or the Engineering Department, but if they had anything that interested the people there, they were almost always referred to Boston. Some of them were regulars, of course, representing firms with whom the Company usually did business, but there were all kinds, from advertising salesmen to people with something to promote, like a plantation in South America to grow kenaf fibre, which theoretically at least could be used to make newsprint. This source of fibre, incidentally, is being talked about again as this is written in 1974. These people were usually taken care of by the Assistant Manager or one of the
Manufacturing Department staff. Sometimes it worked the other way around, people being sent to the mills or the Engineering Department if they had found the Boston office first and seemed to have anything of interest. But there were not only salesmen. Traffic people from the railroads, financial people, people looking for the Sales Department, timberland owners looking to sell land, people looking for work, people looking for information -- all the usual types of visitors to a business office -- some welcome, some nuisances. All of them took up time, and many of them did not get to spend much of it with the brass, being politely shunted to one of the staff, who had to take the time, whether they had it to spare or not.

We should mention here one curious fact. William A. Whitcomb did not care to have his acquaintances announced, and unless he was already engaged, any of his visitors who were not strangers were usually simply told to go right down to his office. Whether this had any bearing on what happened in that room in June, 1946, is anybody's guess, but it is interesting to keep in mind.

We have mentioned people looking for work. Some of them were after employment of any kind, especially in the years when work was scarce. However, many were men just out of college, or were technical or professional people, who had either run down the Boston office in some way -- although of course in the later years this was no problem -- or had been referred to Boston from some one of the Maine locations or from the New York office. For this reason, another thing the Boston office had to do was keep pretty well informed on the manpower needs in the salaried areas all through the Company, and these applicants were handled accordingly. If, after interview, the individual seemed to be a likely prospect for some known
or possible opening, a telephone call was usually made right then to the appropriate department head, and the man's qualifications were outlined. Depending upon the reaction, he either filled in one of the simple application forms and was let go with the usual "we'll keep you in mind", or was sent along to the mill, or wherever, for another interview and possible employment. On the other hand, if a mill Superintendent or some other department head turned up someone in whom he was interested, he was almost always sent to Boston so that the people there could talk with him. Therefore, in one way or another, the Boston office passed on practically every person hired for a salaried job, and even in a few instances on people who were hired for hourly-paid work. As we have said, after the early years of the old Company, almost all new salaried employees started at or near the bottom of the ladder. A few people, mostly clerical, came from regular employment agencies, but the old Company never used "head-hunters". As a last note on this subject, promotions from the work force to salaried jobs, and promotions or transfers within the salaried organization were also subject to approval of the Boston office, and it should be kept in mind that, as explained earlier, what was considered to be the salaried organization was broader in scope than it became later, the breakdown in the old "organization" which we have described beginning with the unionization of the office employees in 1946.

Contract negotiations with the unions representing the Company's employees -- "Labor Conferences" they were always called -- were held in Boston; not in the offices, but in some suitable rented space located as close as possible to it. From the days of the
earliest joint agreement, the Company negotiations and the various union representatives all sat down together at the same time -- "Coalition bargaining", if you like -- and when William A. Whitcomb became President, there were, we believe, eight unions and seventeen locals representing the mill employees.

Except for a five-year agreement starting in 1926, contracts during the time of the old Company were mostly for one year, and this of course called for annual preparation; consideration of business conditions and outlook, changes in the Cost of Living Index, study of the rates paid in other mills, and so on, most of this work falling on the little staff, who also participated in the negotiations themselves. The nature of this participation underwent a gradual change over the years, from straight record-keeping to active argument and involvement in decision-making, as people like the writer, Dick Caspar and Creighton Stanwood, in that order, came into the Boston organization, and Frank Keenan, who had been at it for a long time, became proficient in handling legal technicalities. Except during the time of George Parks, who was General Manager but not a Vice-President, actual negotiations all through the period of the old Company were handled by the officer in charge of Manufacturing, by whatever title he might be known, and he always went into the discussions armed with a vote of power given to the President by the Board of Directors. Year after year the writer heard Presidents, whoever they might be, say to Vice-Presidents, whoever they might be, when the ball was about to open: "Good luck. Do what you think best, and I'll stand back of you." This was not carte-blanche to give the Company away, but the writer knows of no time
when what the Vice-President and his people thought best, after they had been convinced by the delegates, was not accepted by the President, who of course always kept informed of developments, and by the Directors.

The old Company's negotiating team was never very large; not more than six or seven men; the Vice-President and his immediate staff, and the three mill Superintendents, who took part only in the discussions of specific situations involving their respective mills. There was never a typewriter, a calculator, or even a telephone in the places where discussions were conducted.

The old Great Northern's contract was a simple thing. It consisted of an Agreement, to which were attached Mill Rules, a printed Paper Machine Width and Speed chart, and four typed schedules of hourly rates, all on unbound 8-1/2" x 11" sheets. The 1926 five-year agreement contained exactly nineteen lines. The Mill Rules attached to this agreement were those formulated in 1919. They were printed, well spaced out on a single sheet. The problem faced by the Boston office staff was that when negotiations had been successfully concluded, everyone usually signed the Agreement on the spot, without, except perhaps in the very late years, any reservations about ratification by the membership, but the International Officers and each local wanted a copy of the whole contract to take home with them. This meant producing some thirty copies in a few hours.

Preparations for negotiations, in addition to the usual studies of the Company's position, the cost of living trend and the contracts of other companies, and so on, included the printing of blank
Agreements -- the agreement itself took up about the top third of the page, the remainder being ruled for signatures and printed with the names of the unions and the titles of the International representatives -- making sure that there were plenty of the existing Mill Rules and Paper Machine Speed and Width chart on hand, and the typing of forty copies or so of each of the four wage schedules, with the occupations listed, but no rates. There were also always lists of the so-called "Grievances and Adjustments" -- special requests from the locals -- and these were condensed and typed separately for each local, the request or question on the left side of the sheet, leaving a space for entry of the disposition of it on the right. The printer who did the Company's work was alerted to have a crew ready to call in on over-time if necessary, with supplies of the proper papers on hand, and everything was as ready as it could be.

In negotiations, the contract language was usually taken up first, then the wage rates, and last the adjustments. Contract clauses, as agreed upon, were fed to the printer, and the type for them was set, so that it was often possible to have the Agreement itself in printed form within a short time, while negotiations continued on other matters. If some clause was hanging fire, a blank space was left in which a typed slip covering whatever wording was agreed upon could be pasted later. When it got down to wage rates and adjustments, whatever part of the office force not attending the conference was told to stand by as long as it was in session. When these points had been settled, and loose ends were being tied up, either Frank Keenan or the writer, or both, depending upon the
circumstances, dashed back to the office and put the new rates on work sheets, and whoever was available went to work typing them on the previously prepared forms. The whole business was then checked and collated, and while it might take half the night, it was seldom that with good coordination everything was not pulled together and ready when the conference re-convened for signing. However, if there was any delay, the International representatives and delegates had no hesitation about signing the agreement before the rest of it was ready, and the writer has even seen them happily signing blank agreements, while the contract clauses were being typed, to be pasted to the signature sheet later, such was the relationship at that time. It was also sometimes possible to get the answers typed on the "Grievance and Adjustment" forms, so that these could be taken along with the contracts. It is not possible to really describe how all this was accomplished in the time it was, and carrying out this pressure-cooker operation after participating in several days of negotiations was really something. On top of this, without respite, the Standard Rate Sheets, authorizing the paymasters to pay new rates had to be made up, and notes for the Company's files put in shape while they were still fresh in mind. It then remained only to follow up to make sure that everything that had been agreed upon was understood, and that the appropriate action was taken. All kinds of things happened to upset this routine, of course, but in a general way, this is what happened, conference after conference. Printed booklets were introduced in 1945, but this did not change the above procedure, the booklets being printed later for general distribution.

Then there was advertising. For a company that owed its very
existence to advertising, the old Great Northern did not show much gratitude. If it did any newspaper advertising at all, prior to 1929, except for taking occasional complimentary space in some such publication as the Maine State Labor News, the writer has found no record of it, but in that year it instituted a regular program, if the effort may be dignified by that name. The reason for starting this program at that time was to give a small price rebate to Maine dailies -- the Lewiston Sun-Journal, the Portland Press-Herald, the Bangor Daily News and the Bath Times, as the writer remembers, and it was set up on the basis of a dollar's worth of space for each ton of newsprint purchased. Once started, it was difficult to get rid of, and it too was a Boston activity. It was handled by Lester Smith until he was made Traffic Manager, at which time it was turned over to the writer.

It was not intended to sell paper, just to use space, and about the only way to do this was to create the anomaly of talking about the Company while under orders not to talk about the Company. Therefore, the content was mostly of the "institutional" type, confined to facts which were pretty well known anyway, using pictures of the mills and mill equipment and photographs of woods activities, with information about timberlands, water powers and production, and stressing the Maine angle -- the use of Maine resources, the employment of Maine labor, and so on. Forest fire prevention was another subject, covered by drop-ins or full space, with occasionally a public service type thing on safety or something of that kind. There was an agreement with the Lewiston Sun-Journal to make the layouts and send mats to the other publications, but providing photography,
writing text, checking layout, and, because all the papers involved did not take the same tonnage or charge the same rates, scheduling and record-keeping were required, this little program took up a disproportionate amount of time, no small part of which was devoted to fighting off every other customer in New England who felt he should have the same treatment. The only one to break the line, however, was the Boston Herald-Traveler, which came on very strong, and finally wangled a half-page in a special supplement once a year. At about the same time, we believe starting in 1931, the Sales Department instituted a program of full-page one-color advertisements in "Editor & Publisher". These were designed to sell paper, offered it for sale, and while of much the same character as the Maine advertisements, laid stress on the fact that Great Northern newsprint was made in the United States, providing employment for United States citizens. There were no matchboxes or cigarette lighters or other such gimmicks and the whole thing was a far cry from the Company's later sophisticated promotion programs, but it represented a lot of work which had to be done as a sort of side-show to more important business.

Also there were the President's Reports. What Garret Schenck may have done to get ready for the meetings of the Board of Directors is unknown, but William A. Whitcomb, and William O. McKay after him, made the most elaborate preparations, centered around individual reports on important subjects to be taken up. These reports ran all the way from a routine financial statement from the Auditor through what were in effect news letters from the Manufacturing and Spruce Wood Departments, often laying the groundwork for requests for
appropriations for modernization programs, or containing the actual request for funds; a report from the Sales Department; studies of large new projects like paper machine replacements, and reports on labor negotiations, to donations of land for cemeteries. Other than those from the Auditor and the Sales Department, they were made up or worked over in Boston. They were models of clarity and precision, written, revised and written again, over and over, until exactly the right information and the right words to put the message across in the most effective way came out. Figures used were checked and verified fourteen ways, as if no one could be trusted to add two and two, and everything needing corroboration was backed up by other data, charts, drawings and documentation, also all checked and rechecked, some marked with color-coded tabs so that they could be produced instantly, and all packed in regimented order in a bulging briefcase. Except for the odd summer period when there were no meetings, these preparations took up the time of the staff for a solid week every month, and what was left undone during this week had to be caught up during the two days the President and Vice-President were away. Incidentally, these reports were typed on the odd-sized Form 229A which we have mentioned, and were numbered and titled, there being anywhere from six to twelve each month. Unfortunately, they are listed in the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors, starting in October, 1928, just that way, by number and title, with no other comment except an occasional vote arising from one of them, and they have been destroyed. Therefore, much of the kind of information available from the Directors' minutes before that time is not available for the years from then on, and this may be apparent
in later parts of our story.

Early in 1931, the Great Northern Paper Company issued its first report to stockholders; a Balance Sheet for the year 1930. This evolved, in the course of time, into the Annual Report. For fifteen years, it remained a simple thing, a single folded sheet. We will tell more about it in its various forms in other places, but let us say here that the design and production of it were another effort of the Boston office, and even in its primitive stages it was an unqualified, unmitigated headache, involving only a little less thought and labor than it took to build the Panama Canal.

We have made many references to the staff of the Boston office. By this we have meant everyone who may have been there at any particular time except the top people -- the President, the Vice-President and Manager of Manufacture, the Assistant Manager, the Traffic Manager and the Purchasing Agent -- but what might be called the administrative staff, from 1928, when William A. Whitcomb, who as we have said needed a lot of help, took office, until after World War II, basically consisted of only two men -- Frank Keenan and the writer, and they are the only people who worked in Garret Schenck's office during his lifetime who are still alive as this is written in 1974.

Between 1928 and the demise of the Boston office, there were three Assistant Managers; Dick Caspar (1928); the first after Garret Schenck, Jr., who probably had much the same duties, but with a different title; Creighton Stanwood (1936) and the writer (1947). Since the first two named came to Boston directly into this position,
and later were officers of the Company, and since what follows is sufficiently confusing, we will not tell about them in this chapter, but in later parts of our story. The writer, however, followed a different course, and part of his history has been told in the story of the Boston office. After 1929, Ash Gourley's work was confined mostly to the Purchasing Department, and while called upon for other duties in emergencies, like everybody else, he remained in that specialized field throughout his career, which we will also take up later. Like the Assistant to the President, while there was one, he had his own bailiwick, and did not take an important part in administrative work for the President and Vice-President. Until 1946, the others who were added from time to time were typists and secretaries, and except as noted as we go along, performed routine duties. After William O. McKay became President in that year, other administrative people came into the organization, and we will tell about them shortly.

Frank Keenan and the writer, both under various titles, were sort of second assistants to both the President and the Vice-President, with a range of duties which it will be impossible to cover. Although they each had their special fields, whatever had to be done, you name it, one or the other did it. Lester Smith, passing an open door while showing a visitor around the office one day, pointed to a young man busy at a typewriter, saying: "He looks like a stenographer, doesn't he? Well, he's not; he's a lawyer!" This was Francis Robert Keenan (1903 - ). We have said that he was an old-timer when the writer went to Boston. He had been employed in 1918, at the age of fifteen, as a clerk in the Charlestown traffic
office. In 1927, he was twenty-four years old, a burly, handsome Boston Irishman, typically fair-skinned and dark-haired. He was then attending night classes at Suffolk Law School, from which he graduated a few years later, and passed the Massachusetts bar. Good-natured, highly intelligent, deliberate, helpful, endowed with sound judgment and with a common-sense approach to every problem, he was a real producer. Always involved in the traffic field he did a great amount of work in connection with the freight rate cases which we have mentioned; his sound advice was valued in personal financial affairs; he handled minor legal matters, was invaluable in labor negotiations and the corollary work involved; equally invaluable during the periods of the N.R.A. and wartime regulations; was the trouble-shooter for the Company in the pressrooms of its Boston customers -- the Boston Post, the Boston Herald-Traveler, the Christian Science Monitor; what was called the "League of Nations" -- the Polish Daily News, the Jewish Advocate and the Pilot, the organ of the Boston Catholic diocese -- and of those of some of the other customers in suburban areas. Along with all this he was a typist and secretary. His various titles do not really describe his functions until the later years. In 1947, he was given the title of Assistant Traffic Manager under Lester Smith. This did not mean much, as he was doing traffic work anyway, and was not relieved of any other duties. The following year he was made Executive Assistant, which most nearly describes the work he had done for so long, and in 1951 was appointed Traffic Manager, under conditions which we will go into later, serving in this capacity until 1966; then two years as full-time Traffic Consultant, retiring in 1968 after fifty years of service,
and because of hiring and retirement ages was the last man who will ever have given this much of his life to the Company.

Continuing a few feet along the corridor and coming to another open door, Lester Smith said to his friend: "There's another stenographer, right? Wrong; he's an engineer!" This was the writer, whose duties had become as heterogenous as Frank Keenan's, or more so. Upon going back to the Manufacturing Department in 1928, he had begun four years of night school, one year at the Lincoln School of Northeastern University; one year at the old Franklin Union, and two years at Lowell Institute, M.I.T., graduating in Mechanical Engineering in 1932. His duties led in so many directions as to cause William O. McKay to ask at one time: "Is there anything you can't do?". Mention of some of these things will give some further insight into the activities of the Boston office -- a new detailed wall map for William A. Whitcomb's office, and the design of a removable mount for it; literally hundreds of other maps and sketches; a complete analysis and condensation of every Spruce Wood Department contract for operating and stumpage; an investigation of pulpwood inventory and shortages, which involved walking half the length of the West Branch; involvement in the study of grinder room and machine room modernization; the investigation of half a dozen or more inventions; the purchasing of mill equipment during the depression years; involvement in the hectic activities of the N.R.A. period; the study of pulpwood production and logging methods in four southern states; assisting in the defense against a law-suit; collecting overdue notes, and we do not mean just the one we have mentioned; the
design of a portable pulpwood slasher, which was so successful that it had to be abandoned; involvement in one way or another in every experimental, modernization and new construction program; visits to and reports on nearly every paper mill in the eastern United States and Canada; inspection of the facilities of all the major paper machine builders; trouble-shooting in the mills, the town-sites and among the personnel; the administration of sub-contracted machine work during World War II; the investigation of a site for a possible new mill in Saskatchewan, where, by the way, a mill has since been built by another company -- are just things picked at random out of twenty-five years in the Boston office as examples of the kinds of activities the writer alone was involved in, before he became Assistant Manager of Manufacture, along with continuing to be spare secretary to both William A. Whitcomb and William O. McKay, taking part in the clerical work of the office, and doing plain ordinary typing. Like Frank Keenan and Ash Gourley, he never got far from a typewriter for a quarter of a century, give or take a few years.

We have mentioned the addition of girls to the staff, starting in 1928. The first one stayed only about a year, and for the next four years, as we recall, there were none. In 1933, a very efficient young lady was taken on; a second girl was hired in 1937, a third in 1940. The others came during the latter part of the decade of the 1940's. Some of these left and were replaced. All of them but one remained stenographers or secretaries. The exception was Sarah E. (Sally) Whittam, (1909 -  ) an extremely able young woman, hired
in 1933 as a stenographer, who became secretary to William A. Whitcomb in 1936, when Jerome Ross was moved to the Traffic Department. After William A. Whitcomb's death in 1946, she acted as Office Manager and sort of general assistant for a few years, began to be involved in handling the insurance, and took over this work, with the title of Executive Assistant, upon Lester Smith's retirement in 1951. She was named Insurance Manager in 1954. When the writer set up the Personnel Department the following year, the insurance function was assigned to it, and she continued to carry on the same duties, with the same title, until the writer's retirement in 1959, at which time she was made Manager of Insurance and head of a separate Insurance Department, holding this post until she was retired in 1966, at her own request, after several periods of illness.

The Boston office is one of the very few places where, except for the girls who came and went, almost everyone who was employed at any time can be accounted for. As far as the writer knows, only one man, other than those who have been mentioned, served in the Boston office before 1927. This was Paul Dearborn, stenographer in the Purchasing Department, who died in that year, creating the vacancy filled by the writer. However, later in the game, four who have not been noted passed through this office on their way to more important positions. They were all short-termers in Boston. One was Charles D. Tiedemann (1924 - ), a native of Hartford, Conn., a Brown University football star and World War II Navy veteran, who had been employed in 1947 as an Apprentice; came to Boston from the Madison supervisory organization in 1949 as an assistant to the writer; was
called back into the service during the Korean War, returned
to the Manufacturing Department in 1953; moved into a Sales
Service job out of New York in 1957, and worked up to Manager
of Newsprint Sales in 1964, leaving the Company some few years
later.

Another was Alan F. Hamel (1925 - ), born in Halifax,
Massachusetts; tall, thin and blond, a World War II Army veteran,
hired as a stenographer in the Traffic Department in 1948, who be-
came Assistant to the Traffic Manager in 1951, serving in this
position until his resignation in 1969. The third was Lothrop
(Chub) Bartlett, who came to Boston in 1951, and whose story has
been told in connection with the Madison mill.

The fourth was Edwin N. Grindle (1921 - ), a native of
Ellsworth Falls, Maine, a real downeast Yankee, employed in the
Bangor office as a stenographer in 1949, who came to Boston in
1951 as Assistant to the Purchasing Agent; returned to Bangor a
year later to become secretary to the Executive Vice-President
and later to the Vice-President, Operations, moving with him to
New York in 1965, shortly after the Head Office was established
in that place; then to the Personnel Department in Millinocket
in 1966; was appointed Salary and Benefits Administrator in 1968;
moved back to New York in that capacity in the same year, retiring
in 1974, for health reasons.

Chub Bartlett was of the old Company, but not of the old
Boston office. The others were really neither old Company nor
old Boston office. They were part of the happenings which as
we said earlier began after World War II, and eventually resulted in Great Northern as it became later. None of the positions mentioned after 1951 was in existence in that year.

The Boston office outlived the old Company by a year or two, but not as we have told about it. The announcement that it was to be eliminated came late in 1951, without warning, and we will tell about this later. The Manufacturing Department was almost immediately broken up, Chub Bartlett going to Madison, and the writer, the only survivor, to the new Head Office in Bangor, in February, 1952. The other Departments, Purchasing, Traffic and Insurance, each sort of operating independently, remained in Boston temporarily, but were shifted to Bangor by 1954. By that time they had been skeletonized, none of the remaining girls choosing to move to the new location; and were reconstituted. The Boston office space, with the exception of the large corner room first occupied by Garret Schenck in 1922, and the little room at the end of the corridor, next to it, was turned back to the bank. William O. McKay, who had been displaced as President in January, 1952 and made full-time chairman of the Executive Committee, a more or less honorary position, retained these two offices, and his secretary, Doris Kimball, remained with him until his death in September 1956. Shortly after this, the writer made his last visit to 201 Devonshire Street, to help her close out what remained of the old operation, a rather sad experience.

A one-man office which the Sales Department had opened in Boston, we believe in 1950, when Elliott Aldrich was at or near
retirement, was not directly affected. This, as we recall, was located in the Statler Building, and had nothing to do with the place we have been talking about.

We have done the best we can, but we still do not feel that we have been able to adequately explain the fabulous Boston office, where everything that went on in the Company was related to everything else; where principle was more important than profit, people were more important than pennies, and pennies were more important than pretty pushbuttons on plastic panels. This was the place where over the years the countless decisions were made that gave strength to the "giant hiding in the Maine woods", whose broad shoulders raised up the Greater Great Northern of the 1950's and the still greater corporation which grew from it. Much of what we have told about will seem to many to be S.O.P., no different from any current operation with a similar function, but it was different: in the nature and quality of the information flowing in; the intensity with which this was analyzed by a very small and very versatile staff which was both investigative and administrative; the effective system of communication between the management and the head of each department; the constant atmosphere of urgency, and the decisiveness which came not only from the personalities of those making the decisions but from information upon which they could rely, and from their knowledge of who was who everywhere in the organization, and what he was doing to advance the interests of the Company. Not very good, but the best we can do from an admittedly conditioned point of view.

Most of the things which we have told about and will tell
about later involved in one way or another this incredible place. Incredible not so much for what we have been able to write about it, but for what we have not. Like William A. Whitcomb's mania for having the essential substance of long documents abstracted and reduced to memoranda that could be typed on a 3" x 5" card. Like getting into the office at 7 A.M. and leaving at 7 P.M. in time to get to night school without supper. Like sweating out your decision to tell the mill to use 2700 feet of water when the Engineer said that this would bankrupt the storage. Like the solid satisfaction that came from getting approval to go ahead with some project on which long hours of study had been spent, and the even greater satisfaction of seeing it completed. Like William A. Whitcomb's pre-Christmas depression, which every year resulted in a couple of weeks of what Lester Smith called "the Goddamn Christmas spirit". Like actually drawing four complete grinder room layouts on one sheet of 8-1/2" x 11" paper. Like vacations, if any, in bits and pieces. Like working until long after midnight time and again to produce information which you knew would be demanded at nine o'clock in the morning. Like frantic telephone calls at all hours of the night trying to collect on the notes of the dying Boston Post. Like trying to comfort the widow of a man killed in a mill accident. Like the Catch-22 situation where the writer was required to be in the office all the time William A. Whitcomb was out to lunch, and Frank Keenan was required to be in the office all the time William O. McKay was out to lunch, when they both went out together for weeks on end. Like year after year being sent to the mills on a schedule that got you back to Boston at 10:30PM.
on Christmas Eve. Like trying to convince the Mechanical Superintendent of a newspaper pressroom that those white spots defacing his cuts and solids were the fault of his press and not of your paper. Like William A. Whitcomb's delighted laughter when Frank Keenan, watching him measure the length of his rug by placing one foot in front of the other, heel to toe, called off "eighteen, thirty-six, fifty-four". Like Sunday after Sunday and holiday after holiday at the typewriter or on the drawing board while your wife did a slow burn at home. Like gnawing your fingernails while waiting for the Sales Department to call in with an order that would keep a paper machine running a few more hours. Like searching for ten days for the whole mailing of an Annual Report, to find it, still in the mail bags, lost in an obscure corner of the South Station Postal Annex. Like standing in line in Washington to explain to some bureaucrat why you had to have some piece of machinery to keep the mill running. Like falling asleep on the President's couch at 5:00 A.M. upon finishing a piece of work that he had to have for the coming day. Like being called back into the office two days out of hospital after a near-fatal bone infection because so much work had piled up while you were gone. Like William O. McKay's thoughtful little gifts to new children in the Boston office family. Like incredible.