



The Hudson River Sinker Mahogany Story

In Summer of 2019, a fellow luthier in the Cleveland area, David Strong, let me know that someone in Streetsboro, Ohio (a southern suburb of Cleveland) was advertising on Craigs List for “Mahogany Boards salvaged from the Hudson River”. He had already checked out what the seller had for sale, and he said it was great wood, but he only was able to buy a few pieces. More was coming later.

I contacted the seller, and he said his nephew worked for a dredging company in New York, and they were dredging the Hudson River on the Jersey side of Staten Island. They were pulling out mahogany logs that had sunk. His nephew was shipping it to his uncle in Streetsboro who ran a small business cutting and drying native Ohio hardwood. He had just gotten some big boards dried in his kiln and would be happy to sell them, if something “nice” would be made from the wood. I told him if it was good mahogany, I was going to make guitars and that sealed the deal. I drove down with a woodworking friend, and we purchased all the mahogany he had dried at that point, which was 8 boards, each 10 feet long, 10 inches wide and 1-1/4” thick.

David researched the area where the dredging took place and our best guess, is that the logs were part of a mill pond for a defunct sawmill, called “Ichabod T. Williams & Sons” which had closed in the 1960’s and the plant demolished in 1972. Their history From the Library of Congress Archives is as follows:

“The Ichabod T. Williams & Sons Sawmill and Veneer Plant was at one time the nation's leading firm for the manufacture and distribution of fine domesticated and foreign hard woods. The Williams family participation in the lumber business goes back as far as 1838, when Thomas Williams, a cabinetmaker, formed a partnership with Isaac E. Smith and established a lumber yard in New York City. The firm of Smith & Williams continued until 1870 under Thomas' son Ichabod. He then formed his own company under the name of Ichabod T. Williams in that year. Two sons became partners in 1880 and 1882 (with two more to follow in the early 1890's) and the name became Ichabod T. Williams & Sons.”

Further research indicated that this sawmill specialized in supplying mahogany to the United States most of which went into furniture, but they also sold to all the guitar companies, including Martin for many years. One of the many receipts in the Martin archives shows that they supplied the mahogany for the “Golden Era” of Martin production during the 1930’s.

FORM 18-778-6M-12-32 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF YOUR ORDER

SOLD TO

C. F. MARTIN & CO., INC.,
Nazareth, Pa.

No. 16865
Date June 8, 1933.
Salesman Mail (Roe)
Terms
F. O. B. Carteret NJ
Your Order No. 5020

Ship to
Date to Ship AT ONCE
Route CRR of NJ

FEET	DESCRIPTION OF STOCK	PRICE PER M FEET
	<u>MEXICAN MAHOGANY VENEER</u>	
1,500 Ft.	1/8" - 7-1/2" & up wide	65.
1,000 "	1/12" - 5" & up wide	55.
	quarter sawn, firm texture, dark color.	

RECEIVED JUN 9 1933
ANSWERED

PHONE CHICKERING 4-5380

ICHABOD T. WILLIAMS & SONS
MAHOGANY
DOMESTIC HARDWOODS AND VENEERS
Main Office: 220 ELEVENTH AVE., cor. 25th St.
NEW YORK, N. Y.
Chicago Office: 73 East NINTH ST.
CHICAGO, ILL.
Saw Mills and Yards: Carteret, N. J.

We herewith acknowledge receipt of the above order, which will receive our careful attention. If incorrect in any particular, kindly advise immediately. Shipment will be made on shipping date noted above—accidents and unavoidable delays excepted.

All orders are accepted, subject to delays or cancellation by us in whole, or part, on account of strikes, accidents, delays of carriers or other causes beyond our control.

Accepted including conditions on reverse side hereof.

ICHABOD T. WILLIAMS & SONS
APPROVED BY: *J. W. Williams*

"Courtesy of C. F. Martin Archives."

Jewitt Guitars is making acoustic guitars using this mahogany, which is dense and has wonderful grain, figure, and color, none of which can be duplicated by stains. We always leave this wood unstained and with a clear finish to show off its character. The sound from this wood can only be described as shimmering, with rich mid-ranges and excellent note articulation.