

Building supplier plans major expansion

Most people know that Jim Carpenter Lumber Company is one of the largest building supply businesses in the area. What surprises many is the fact that the retail establishment is also one of the county's largest employers.

Forty-five people work for Jim Carpenter, a firm which started as a sawmill in 1955 and last year grossed \$7 million in sales of building materials in five states.

Charlotte Hoffman, who was recently made Assistant Store Manager, began working there 19 years ago. She considers herself lucky to be employed in the county. "I drove to Culpeper for two years to work at the Highway Department, but I didn't like being away from home," Hoffman said.

She has seen the business grow dramatically.

James P. Carpenter was more or less forced into the building supply business according to Hoffman. "His first love was the sawmill. But he kept getting so many requests for building supplies that he had to start stocking them," she noted.

Carpenter sold the company in 1974 to the Lester Group which is headquartered in Martinsville.

The original retail store had three rooms. Now the facility has a 4,000-square-foot building and is planning a major expansion.

Manager Sonny Miller says the addition will add 12,500 square feet—increasing the retail floor space by 50 percent and adding warehouse storage on the lot.

Lumber and other building materials which are now stacked in the yard will be under roof when the expansion is completed by early summer. "We should be able to cut the waiting time of our customers picking up building materials by half," Miller explained. "We will also be able to keep the materials in better condition."

The expansion will also enable Jim Carpenter Company to begin manufacturing window units in addition to the door units it currently produces.

Jim Carpenter Company has gradually been increasing its inventory. Last fall, the firm began stocking industrial and commercial hardware and industrial cleaning supplies. Jim Carpenter also offers a complete line of steel buildings—the only building supply business in the country that offers a steel building package according to Sonny Miller.

Employees are optimistic about 1985. Hoffman says business bottomed out in 1981-82 but is good now and should be even better during the upcoming building season.

"Some contractors have scheduled from 20 to 40 houses to build in 1985," Hoffman said.



The management at Jim Carpenter Lumber Company includes Assistant Store Manager Charlotte Hoffman, Larry Harris, Assistant Manager of Contracted Services (left) and Sonny Miller, manager (right).