

*Robinson's Racket,
the forerunner
to the Company
Store.*

THE COMPANY STORE

as told by
HARPER SIMPSON

My granddaddy, William Blackstock Simpson, moved to Lando in 1862 and lived in the old Cornwallis house – it used to sit across there from the water tank and they tell that Cornwallis spent the night there. When I went to work in Lando in 1926, Mr. Sam Ramsey had cows down under the bottom and hay in the top – using it for a barn. I don't know what year they tore that old house down though. Anyway, my daddy was born in that old Cornwallis house.

There wasn't nothing but a grist mill when my granddaddy moved there, and he ran the grist mill. There wasn't any cotton mill there or any stores there except one. A fellow named Jim Robinson had a store there, Robinson's Store. Later the Barbers came there and ran a mill. Then Harry's granddaddy came there and started a little yarn mill. They've been adding to it ever since.

They used to have two stores in Lando. The upper store where they sold clothing, medicine, shoes, and stuff. Mr. Joe Hollis and Mr. John Pittman worked there. Then after they closed it, Luke Long ran the picture show there. Then there

was the lower store where they sold groceries. Mr. Gilbert worked there and Mr. Bud Kee. They built the present store in 1920 and moved in it in '21. I went there in '26 and Mr. Gilbert and Mrs. Myrt Long and Mr. Miller and different ones was working there. It's still there, but they've made a sight of changes. Where the Post Office is now over on the left, there was a balcony up there – went back to 'bout where the counter is back there now and went across and had a stairway that came down. They sold shoes going from the front back on the right hand side, and you could buy them anywhere from \$2.50 to \$11.00. Had most any type shoe you'd want, but we sold more men's shoes than ladies. And they had drugs and stuff all on the left hand side and cloth.

They had groceries downstairs. Back then meat, fatback, was five to seven cents a pound. Back in the back, we had a grist mill. We made grits, ground meal. I've ground hundreds and hundreds of bushels of meal. They had any and everything you wanted.



ROBINSON'S



They had a elevator over there kinda' where the office is now and we had caskets to sell. We'd pull up the elevator and when we sold one we'd bring it in through there. We never did do any embalming, but we had Mr. Barron come in from Chester and we paid him so much to do the embalming.

We had a ice plant down under the store and made ice. Sam Featherstone was the drayman. We'd haul ice out over the hill everyday. It was about \$1.25 a hundred delivered. Then we quit making ice and started buying it from Chester.



"Loonies"

The mill printed aluminum money back then. We called them "loonies", but they were tokens. They made five, ten, twenty-five, fifty and one dollar pieces. The purpose of them when they started was instead of writing you out a bill at the store, they would just write you out a order and put that

against a week's work. In case you ran out of something and needed something there at the store and you didn't have a credit account, you could go to the office and they'd issue you these loonies and you could come in the store there and spend them and get your full dollar's worth. That was the purpose of them, but children would come to the door with a dollar or two in loonies that somebody had given them to trade in for good money. Why they'd worry you to death. I remember one time this fellow wanted some loonies cashed in the store and they wouldn't cash them for him. You see, he'd bought up a bunch of loonies, making twenty and twenty-five cents on the dollar. He got mad because they wouldn't cash all the loonies he had and so he started saving up and buying all the fifty cent loonies he could get his hands on, and he wouldn't trade them back in. So they had to make some more fifty cent tokens so they could have enough to make the right change there in the store. People just got to the place that a certain few was making money off of them. If they'd used them for the correct purpose, they'd been good. It was intended for a good purpose, but it's just like everything else, somebody comes along and finds out some way to beat it.

I worked there in that store for years. I've seen alot of changes.