

**POSTMASTER AT MOREHEAD CITY, N.C.
HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE COMMITTEE ON POST
OFFICES AND POST ROADS UNITED
STATES SENATE, SIXTY-SIXTH
CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION, PART 1-4**

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE
COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICES AND POST ROADS
UNITED STATES ^{SENATE} SENATE

SIXTY-SIXTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON THE

NOMINATION OF ROBERT T. WADE FOR POSTMASTER
AT MOREHEAD CITY, N. C.

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POSTMASTER AT MOREHEAD CITY.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1919.

UNITED STATES SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON POST OFFICES AND POST ROADS,
Washington, D. C.

The subcommittee met at 10.15 o'clock a. m. in the committee room, Capitol, Senator Thomas Sterling presiding.

Present: Senators Sterling (chairman) and France.

Present also: Senator F. M. Simmons and Hon. Samuel Mitchell Brinson, Member of Congress.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee has been called for the purpose of considering the nomination of Robert T. Wade for postmaster at Morehead City, N. C. We will hear you, Mr. Willis. Proceed in your own way to make a statement to the committee.

STATEMENT OF MR. CLEVELAND LANGLEY WILLIS, MOREHEAD CITY, N. C.

The CHAIRMAN. State your age and occupation, please.

Mr. WILLIS. My occupation now or at the time I took this examination?

The CHAIRMAN. No; your general occupation.

Mr. WILLIS. At present I am not occupied, but at the time I took this examination I was railroad clerk for the Norfolk Southern Railroad at Morehead City.

The CHAIRMAN. What is your age?

Mr. WILLIS. Thirty-five. The Post Office Department posted a notice in the post office, as they generally do, notifying the people that a vacancy had occurred in our post office and that a civil-service examination to fill the vacancy would be held on November 13, 1918.

The CHAIRMAN. That is, for the position of postmaster at Morehead City, N. C.?

Mr. WILLIS. Yes, sir. The vacancy was caused by the death of the late postmaster, W. L. Arendell.

I wrote the Civil Service Commission in Washington for an application blank and the rules governing examinations. I did not get any reply. They only sent me the application blank and a set of rules. I read over the application very carefully and got three reputable citizens of Morehead City—two merchants and the cashier of the Marine Bank—to certify as to my character and good standing in the town. I filled out my application blank, giving my business from April, 1901, as purser of the Beaufort & Ocracoke Steamboat Co., operating between Beaufort and Ocracoke, carrying the mail on a mail route. From then until the time I filled out the blank, which

was sometime about the 1st of November, I was at work with Mr. A. H. Webb, jr., agent of the Norfolk Southern at Morehead City.

I read over this application blank very carefully, but they seem to want to impress upon you that no reference to politics or religion should be made. Consequently, in my statement on the application blank I did not refer to my position on that boat. I was purser and mail clerk, but it carried no political appointment with it. It mattered not who was purser; he was supposed to act as mail clerk, as the route would not justify their putting on a mail clerk. It was not under the same system as the railroad.

Senator SIMMONS. You are speaking about the steamboat of which you were purser?

Mr. WILLIS. It was not a steamboat; it was a gasoline boat, running from Ocracoke to Beaufort at that time. Since then it has been changed from Morehead to Ocracoke.

Senator SIMMONS. How many passengers did it carry?

Mr. WILLIS. We could easily take care of 30 to 35 on the *Kitty Watts*, the boat running at that time, which has since been burned, and the *Violet*, the other boat, ran in the opposite direction. One boat would go on one day and the other one the next day.

Senator SIMMONS. How many passengers did you generally have?

Mr. WILLIS. We would average anywhere from 10 to 50 on the trip.

Senator SIMMONS. It would not carry 50?

Mr. WILLIS. No, sir. But we would pick up at different points. We left at Beaufort, and our first stop would be at the Straits, then Marshallberg, Davis, Atlantic, Cedar Island, Portsmouth, and Ocracoke. In the trip that day our passenger list would run from 10 to 50. We would not average over three a day, I suppose, of through passengers. There were fish boats running to Ocracoke out to the pound nets, and their rates were cheaper than ours, and if a man wanted to go through and did not mind riding a fish boat, he generally went on that.

Senator SIMMONS. What is the distance?

Mr. WILLIS. The distance charted out is about 60 miles, I think. My duties were to distribute the mail. I took the mail at Beaufort, and on our way to the Strait, which is about an hour's run, or an hour and 15 minutes, I separated the mail and distributed it into the different boxes and bags. There was not much pick-up mail.

Senator SIMMONS. Were you employed by the Government?

Mr. WILLIS. No, sir; I was employed by the Ocracoke—I do not know whether it is a steamboat company or not.

Senator SIMMONS. You were employed by the boat?

Mr. WILLIS. Yes, sir; I was employed by the boat.

Senator SIMMONS. It is a small gasoline boat?

Mr. WILLIS. Yes, sir.

Senator SIMMONS. What was its capacity in tonnage?

Mr. WILLIS. I could not tell you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. How many passengers could you conveniently carry?

Mr. WILLIS. We could carry 25 to 30, easily. The seating capacity was about that many.

Senator SIMMONS. It was just a day boat?

Mr. WILLIS. Yes, sir; no sleeping quarters at all.

Senator SIMMONS. With long benches on either side?

Mr. WILLIS. Yes, sir.

Senator SIMMONS. Sort of like a street car?

Mr. WILLIS. Something on that order; yes, sir; practically the same thing.

Senator SIMMONS. What was the fare?

Mr. WILLIS. I will not say positively. I think it was in the neighborhood of a dollar and twenty-five cents for the through trip.

Senator SIMMONS. The round trip?

Mr. WILLIS. No, sir; just one way. Between stations it was 25 to 50 cents.

The CHAIRMAN. You made a trip down one day and back the next?

Mr. WILLIS. Yes, sir. There was a lay off at either Ocracoke or Beaufort. We exchanged every Saturday at Atlantic. We would meet and exchange mail. That would allow me to spend one Sunday, or our crew to spend one Sunday, in Beaufort and one Sunday in Ocracoke, and gave us one Sunday out of two at home.

Senator SIMMONS. What is the size of Ocracoke?

Mr. WILLIS. About six or seven hundred people. I do not believe it goes to a thousand.

Senator SIMMONS. The other stops were small stations?

Mr. WILLIS. They were small stations; yes, sir.

Senator SIMMONS. What was the largest?

Mr. WILLIS. I think Atlantic possibly was the largest.

Senator SIMMONS. How many people are there there?

Mr. WILLIS. May be about the size of Ocracoke.

The CHAIRMAN. Over what waterways did you go?

Mr. WILLIS. We left Beaufort through the outlet of Bogue Sound, crossing Beaufort Inlet, coming through the straits connecting the inlet with Core Sound; through Core Sound in Pamlico Sound. Portsmouth and Ocracoke are on the southern border of that sound.

Senator SIMMONS. All inland waters?

Mr. WILLIS. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Proceed with your statement, Mr. Willis.

Mr. WILLIS. In making out this application on the strength of the statement as to politics and religion, I did not make a statement as to my service in the post office under my father's administration.

The CHAIRMAN. The post office at Morehead City?

Mr. WILLIS. Yes, sir. He held it for two terms, and for about four years I was sworn in as assistant. There was no salary attached. My sister was assistant postmaster, and my father had to pay her out of his salary. They swore me in so that if either one of them should want to be absent for any length of time, or were taken sick, or anything like that, I would be in position to relieve either one of them.

I did not make any reference to that in my application for fear that I might border on those subjects that were repulsive to the Civil Service Commission.

Senator SIMMONS. You were sworn in, but you received no salary?

Mr. WILLIS. Absolutely none; no, sir—not one penny.

The CHAIRMAN. What service did you perform?

Mr. WILLIS. I distributed mail, sold stamps, rated up parcel post, and on one occasion when my father was sick for about 30 days I made out the report for the post office.

The CHAIRMAN. To what extent was your service continuous?

Mr. WILLIS. Absolutely nothing continuous. I was there only as they needed me. I would go down in the morning about 11 o'clock, when the 10.30 train came in, and would help them distribute mail.

The CHAIRMAN. How frequently did you do work at the post office?

Mr. WILLIS. Sometimes it would run for three or four weeks or a month at a time that I would do that and relieve my sister in the afternoon, then, at other times, when I would be busy at something else, I could not get to the office, and it might be a week or 10 days that I did not do anything there. I do not know exactly.

The CHAIRMAN. Take it the year through, what proportion of time did you work in the post office?

Mr. WILLIS. I would imagine that—you mean the number of hours?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. WILLIS. It would not exceed two hours in any one day that I was there.

The CHAIRMAN. Would you say that your service in the post office was on the average of two hours a day during your father's term?

Mr. WILLIS. No, sir; I would not say that. For about three years that I acted in that capacity; he was postmaster for two terms. After that they got a small appropriation, I think, of about \$30 for an assistant, and my father put on a man to clerk with that \$30 to perform the duties that I had been performing. He was on duty practically all day, and it gave each one of them a little more time off.

Senator FRANCE. That has a bearing on the question before the committee? This service of yours in the post office previously has a bearing upon this particular question?

Mr. WILLIS. Has it?

Senator FRANCE. Yes.

Senator SIMMONS. Senator, I think it does. It is with reference to his experience.

Senator FRANCE. Well, then, proceed.

Mr. WILLIS. After I got this application from the Post Office Department I filled it out—

Senator SIMMONS. What business were you engaged in at the time you were rendering this voluntary service for your father?

Mr. WILLIS. I was in the coal and wood business in Morehead City?

Senator SIMMONS. During the whole time?

Mr. WILLIS. No, sir; not the whole time. I was part of the time. Part of the time I was idle, just picking up jobs. I did some electrical work—just any jobs around the fish house, if there was anything to do. I just picked up jobs. I was not in any particular business at the time. I was in this coal and wood business for one year or a little over.

Senator SIMMONS. Did you not have a restaurant of some sort?

Mr. WILLIS. Not under father's administration as postmaster; no, sir.

Senator SIMMONS. Not while rendering the services mentioned?

Mr. WILLIS. No, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Proceed.

Mr. WILLIS. I went around to the post office. I did not know whether the forms had changed since I had had that little experience

in August or not, and I asked the postmistress to let me have a blank postal money order. I naturally supposed that that was one of the things they would examine us on, because it was the most difficult part of the office work. She kindly consented to let me have one, and I looked it over and saw they were practically the same, if not the same, as they were when I had this experience. I thanked her very kindly and returned it to her.

On the night of the 12th—no one knew I was going to take this examination; I kept it quiet—

Senator SIMMONS. When was that?

Mr. WILLIS. I did not especially care—

Senator SIMMONS. No; but you said the night of the 12th.

Mr. WILLIS. I meant the 10th.

Senator SIMMONS. The 10th of what?

Mr. WILLIS. November.

Senator SIMMONS. What year?

Mr. WILLIS. 1918. My examination was held on the 13th, I think it was. It was the night of the 12th that I asked my employer if it would be all right for me to be off the next day. He wanted to know why, and I took out my card entitling me to entrance to the examination to be held in New Bern, with my photograph attached thereto, and showed it to him. That explained it to him, and he granted me permission to be off the following day.

I went to New Bern and stood the examination with Mr. R. T. Wade. I finished my examination at 1 o'clock, or about 1. We went on at 10. We had four hours for the examination, and I finished at 1 and left the other applicants at work. They came off about 2 o'clock. I went on home and did not hear any more about it, and could not find out anything from the commission.

The CHAIRMAN. The Civil Service Commission?

Mr. WILLIS. Yes, sir—as to our rating, until on March 8, I received a letter from the Civil Service Commission, postmarked March 6, Washington, D. C., and in that was my rating, which is before me now.

The CHAIRMAN. Have you the letter?

Mr. WILLIS. There was no letter at all, absolutely nothing, except this rating. It is called "Report of ratings—postmaster examination. (Compensation from \$1,000 to \$2,400 per annum, inclusive.)"

The CHAIRMAN. You may have it marked and have it made a part of the record as an exhibit.

Senator SIMMONS. Why not put the whole rating in? Oh, this is only your rating?

Mr. WILLIS. Yes, sir; that is all, sir.

(The rating referred to, marked Exhibit A, is as follows:)

R. NO. 75. REPORT OF RATINGS—POSTMASTER EXAMINATION NOV., 1918. (COMPENSATION FROM \$1,000 TO \$2,400 PER ANNUM, INCLUSIVE.)

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION,
Washington, D. C.

SIR: This is not an examination under the civil service act and rules, but is held under an Executive order of March 31, 1917, which reads as follows:

"Hereafter when a vacancy occurs in the position of postmaster of any office of the first, second, or third class as the result of death, resignation, removal, or on the recommendation of the First Assistant Postmaster General, approved by the Postmaster General, to the effect that the efficiency or the needs of the