

proved to be the most favorably located. This will prove enough²⁴ holdings to insure continuous operations for at least 20 years. Mr. Robbins planned on devoting his attention to logging, rail-roading, and to his flooring industry but he was lost without a mill, so in 1917 he built a new mill which he operated until August of 1919 when he sold it to the Thunder Lake Lumber Company. This deal carried with it all timber holdings of the Robbins Lumber Company and the Robbins railroad. Mr. Robbins still retained the flooring factory but during the summer of 1919 it was reorganized, half interest being sold to Mr. Abendroth, an experienced flooring mill operator, who had spent a number of years at the business in Michigan. The present company is capitalized at \$75,000, \$65,000 being paid in. The factory makes maple and birch flooring which is shipped all over the United States. The raw material is purchased at all available markets. The waste, which amounts to a great deal in making flooring is utilized as above stated and shipped by the carload lots.²⁵

In 1891 A. Conro and James Conro decided to erect a modern mill. A most peculiar location was selected for the mill site. What was once a point with a narrow isthmus pinning it to the mainland, and bounded by water on both sides, was made into the mill yard. It took 4 years to make the foundation as in some places the water was 12 feet deep and this was filled in.²⁶ This mill had one of the largest planing mills in the vicinity and was capable of turning out from 12-15 cars of dressed lumber

24. Rhinelander News, December 10, 1915
 25. Ibid., November 29, 1919
 26. Vindicator, July 15, 1891

daily. In 1898 the mill was sold to the George Rice Lumber Company of Oshkosh. Mr. Conro continued to operate the planing mill until 1904 when he retired from business.²⁷

In 1888 the Stevens Lumber Company was organized by Senator Wm. Stevens, Charles Stevens, and their father. Senator Wm. Stevens was made President of the Company and has held the office ever since. The Company has operated a sawmill continuously since that time. In 1912 the Company entered into an agreement with Mason - Donaldson Company to saw exclusively for them. In 1917 the Stevens Lumber Company was totally destroyed by fire, causing a loss estimated at \$50,000. The fire was contained to the mill proper, thus saving the lumber yards and other adjoining buildings. In order to keep the industry in Rhineland the city council agreed to donate \$15,000 to the Company if it would rebuild. The offer was accepted and the new mill was constructed which still runs today.²⁸

During the years between 1888 and 1875⁽¹⁸⁹⁵⁾ there were many smaller mills in operation but as the lumber supply decreased these mills were closed down. Among these were: the mill established by E. R. Bristol in September, 1891 for the purpose of cutting lumber for the Soo Lumber Company.²⁹ The Butterick Mill, sold in 1892 to the Eagle Lumber Company, which owned a large tract of timber up the river enabling the mill to be operated for several years longer.³⁰ The Clayton Mill in 1895 was one of the most ~~steady~~^{steady} going mills in the city, running both day

27. Rhineland News, March 27, 1914
28. Ibid., June 1, 1917
29. Vindicator, September 2, 1891
30. Ibid., April 9, 1892

and night.³¹ This same year the mill was destroyed by fire but was rebuilt and operated for 5 years, when in 1900 it burned again.³²

In 1890 the Rhinelander Kindling Wood Company was organized and a plant built for the purpose of making use of the waste material from the saw-mills. When first organized the plan was considered an important factor for the welfare of Rhinelander as it would run the year round and thus insure steady employment. This industry did not prove as successful as had been expected and only operated a little over one year.³³ In 1898 negotiations were completed with the firm of Hess, Shaw and Company for the erection of a Box factory in place of the old kindling wood mill. The old mill was torn down and a new plant erected. Everything in the nature of a wooden box was to be turned out, the stock used being a low grade of cull lumber, and remnants and waste from the mills.³⁴ As before the project did not prove successful and in 1900 the plant was sold to A. H. Frost, W. R. Hendy, and R. C. Dayton, besides a strip of land joining the property. This party remodeled and equipped the plant with machinery for the manufacture of veneer. This industry proved successful and in 1903 the demand had so increased that it was found necessary to enlarge the plant.³⁵ This step was not more than finished when the entire plant was destroyed by fire. The advantages of such a plant in Rhinelander had

- 31. Vindicator, April 24, 1895
- 32. Ibid., January 24, 1900
- 33. Ibid., November 19, 1890
- 34. Ibid., June 14, 1898
- 35. Ibid., August 8, 1900

been realized and through the enterprise and means of the citizens the plant was rebuilt.³⁶ In 1901 the Veneer Company was bought by Mr. Moen and Dr. Daniels under whose management the plant prospered. In 1914 the company again changed hands, coming under the management of F. A. Marshall, Mr. Moen retaining an interest and also Presidency of the company. This industry has proven to be one of the most important manufacturing enterprises of Rhinelander.³⁷ It is a large factor in the welfare of the city, employing a large force of men steadily. The product of the plant equals about 4 million feet of logs per year or 15 million feet of one-eighth inch veneer. Veneer is made from red oak, birch, elm, and basswood. Most of its output has been sold to the Morgan Company of Oshkosh but some of it is sold elsewhere throughout the country.³⁸ In 1916 new additions were made to the plant, including a large warehouse, shipping house, and an office building, which increased the output and doubled the efficiency.

In 1891 a second step was taken which caused Rhinelander to cease being simply a milling town. The nature of this step was the erection of a Screen Door Factory. The main building was 60 x 250 feet and two stories with a basement. Besides this there was the engine house, boiler house, and several dwelling houses for the employees.⁴⁰ In 1893 the plant had met

36. Vindicator, August 12 & September 23, 1903
37. Rhinelander News, November 29, 1919
38. Ibid., June 12, 1914
39. Ibid., June 23, 1916
40. Vindicator, June 10, 1891

with such success that it was necessary to erect another build-⁴¹
ing in order to double the capacity and meet the demands.

The following year a new warehouse was built, making it possible
for the plant to operate throughout the entire year, affording
a place to store the output of doors and windows.⁴² In 1893

the company was induced by the advancement association to erect
a factory for the manufacture of stove boards. The Association
advanced \$1,000 towards the purchase of the site just across the
road from the factory. This offer was accepted and work was be-
gun at once. This enterprising plant continued operation until⁴³

December, 1901 when the entire plant was destroyed by fire.

For some time the company considered rebuilding and every effort
was put forth by the citizens to encourage this, but the Company
finally decided to move further west, and thus Rhinelander lost
one of its most important industries.

The Rhinelander Iron Company was started in the spring
of 1889 by Nicholas, John and Peter Didier, brothers coming to
Rhinelander from Muskegon, Michigan. The location selected for
the plant was a forest in 1889 and the timber was cleared away
in order to enable the erection of the plant.⁴⁴ The machine shop
was built and equipped with machinery during the summer and the
foundry was completed in the fall, the first iron being melted in
August 1889. Saw mill machinery and the wrecking, moving and
erecting of saw mills was the company's specialty, together with
the installation of steam boilers, and the erection of refuse

- 41. Vindicator, April 1, 1893
- 42. Ibid., November 14, 1894
- 43. Ibid., June 7, 1898
- 44. Ibid., June 3, 1891

burners and smoke stacks. The company did such satisfactory work that the demand increased and soon the company was requested to do work in the southern and western states as well as in Canada. The main feature of the Rhinelander Iron Company's work lay in the fact that it never had to be done over. The number of men employed varied from 16 to 60 due to the pressure of business at different seasons of the year. The plant is completely equipped with electric motors and air compressors, and with modern appliances for twentieth century manufacture and repairs.⁴⁵

Jas. S. Kirk, in 1892, decided to move his box factory from Muskegon, Michigan, to Rhinelander. The factory was built quickly and was ready for work the same year.⁴⁶ Mr. Kirk operated this factory for 8 years and then he decided to return to his former home. For some time the factory stood idle but in the fall of 1902 it was bought by a newly organized company known as the Rhinelander Refrigerator Company, which was backed by local capital and men whose names insured success. The company immediately began the erection of a new plant by changing the old factory and enlarging it by the erection of 3 new buildings. The company planned on manufacturing refrigerators of several grades but chiefly of household use. The plant, when first established, had a capacity of 16,000 to 18,000 refrigerators a year when running at fullest capacity. This new business proved to be a success and the demand for the products increased beyond the supply. By 1909 the company was able to pay its first dividend, the entire

45. Rhinelander News, November 29, 1919
46. Vindicator, July 30, 1892

debt being paid off. ⁴⁷ In 1910 it was found necessary to enlarge the factory in order to meet the demand. Two new buildings were erected which increased the floor space to 120,000 sq. feet and increased the output to 200 refrigerators a day. ⁴⁸ This is an industry for Rhinelander to be proud of as it is giving the city a publicity throughout the United States. The company seasons all its timber, builds the cabinets and manufactures its own metal linings. The wood used consists chiefly of ash and elm shipped in from the nearby forests. ⁴⁹

The possibilities of Rhinelander for a pulp mill were realized in 1903. Parties from away had looked into the matter and were busy trying to organize a home company for the purpose of starting a paper mill. The local men of means had signified their willingness to subscribe generous sums to assure its establishment. ⁵⁰ By April of 1903 a company had been formed with a capital stock of \$300,000, all of the stock being taken by Rhinelander people except for Mr. C. S. Pierce of Milwaukee, who became a stockholder. The articles of incorporation were filed at Madison, April 27. It was decided to build the mill at the rapids in the Wisconsin river and the size and capacity were to be limited only by the limit of the water power. A. S. Brown was elected President of the company. The building was constructed entirely of brick and steel and was absolutely fireproof. ⁵¹ In 1905 its

- 47. Vindicator, January 7, 1903
- 48. Rhinelander News, August 26, 1910
- 49. Ibid., November 29, 1919
- 50. Vindicator, February 4, 1903
- 51. Ibid., April 5, 1903

output had increased so it was necessary to build a new addition which made it possible to increase the output 10 tons daily. 52

The Rhinelander Paper Company is an industry of intrinsic value, paying one-fifth of all taxes assessed in the city and giving steady employment to nearly 500 employees. It turns out 68 tons of paper per day and this paper is of the highest class stock. The product is sold directly from the office thus no sales force is employed on the road and the only effort made to sell it is by advertising in the trade journals. The material used is supplied from the hemlock forests about Rhinelander, while spruce is brought from the mill's own holdings in northern Minnesota. 53

While Rhinelander was still a very young town the need of modern improvements was felt and the people set about to have all the necessities. July, 1881, the public water system was begun. A pumping station, costing between \$2,000 and \$3,000 was erected and water mains were run through the principal streets and hydrants placed at convenient points. 54 In 1891 the owners of the water works plant effected a sale with a number of local capitalists. The owners had an exclusive franchise from the city for 20 years and the property paid well as an investment. The plant was bonded for \$50,000, the bonds running 20 years at 8% interest. The people of Rhinelander soon began to realize that the plant should be owned by the city and in 1905 this came to pass. The city took over the bonds on the water works plant, \$83,000 worth of bonds being turned over for \$75,000. The city met the obliga-

- 52. Vindicator, April 5, 1905
- 53. Rhinelander News, November 29, 1919
- 54. Eagle River Vindicator, July 21, 1887

tion by issuing straight city bonds. This transaction meant that the city would own the plant and save the yearly interest expenditure of \$1,400.⁵⁵ In 1911 a clear title to the plant was gained by a stipulation made by the special committee appointed by the council and the representatives of the bond holders. For the sum of \$90,000 the city became the sole owner of the plant.⁵⁶ From time to time the water pipes were extended into the new additions of the town for convenience and for protection against fire, especially in the factory districts.

Along with the water improvements came the sewerage question. The necessity for these modern conveniences became more apparent and in May, 1892, the town board secured a competent civil engineer to make a preliminary survey of the streets and to estimate the cost of a complete sewerage system.⁵⁷ In the fall of the same year a special election was held to vote upon the sewerage system. The result was favorable for the plan and it was decided to lay sewers on the main streets in the city at first and to add to the system from year to year until a complete system would be obtained.⁵⁸

The first electric light plant of Rhinelander was owned by Casper Faust and Gideon Clark. The machinery was installed by Mr. Ed. Forbes in 1889. In 1891 the plant was furnishing power for 950 incandescent lights and 30 arc lights. This was more than the engine could stand so the same year a new engine was installed to meet the demand.⁵⁹ In 1893 the Electric Light Plant was

- 55. Vindicator, September 20, 1905
- 56. Rhinelander News, January 6, 1911
- 57. Vindicator, May 7, 1892
- 58. Ibid., August 13, 1892
- 59. Ibid., June e, 1891

taken over by the Northwestern Electric Lighting Company of Minnesota. The new company built an entirely new power house and the machinery was improved so that the very best lights available were assured to the people.⁶⁰ The plant was enlarged again in 1896 by an addition and also the installation of a national incandescent dynamo, as well as a new arc light dynamo for store lighting.⁶¹ In 1898 Mr. Forbes and several other citizens bought the Electric Light Company. The plant was run by steam until 1905 when the Rhinelander Power Company was organized. The Company was capitalized at \$85,000, \$40,000 being subscribed by the officers of the Company. The plan was to make use of the excellent water power available a few miles below the city known as the Hat Rapids.⁶² This plan proved very successful. It not only increased the power available but gave the city the use of day power which had been denied under the old steam plant. The current from the dam is carried to the sub-station in Rhinelander by three high extension lines where it is stepped down to the required voltage.⁶³

In 1902 the city began its advancement in street improvements. The business streets were paved first and gradually the other ones were improved. The city paid one-third of the expense, the money being raised by bonds of the city bearing interest due annually.⁶⁴ This much needed improvement has been going on continually since that time. In 1907 the Oneida Gas

60. Vindicator, April 15, 1893

61. Ibid., October 7, 1896

62. Ibid., February 24, 1919; Rhinelander News, November 29, 1919

63. Ibid., December 6, 1905

64. Ibid., January 4, 1905