

JOHN O. MOEN

John O. Moen was 19 years old when he came to Portage County from Norway. Relatives and other Norwegians had settled in the area surrounding Amherst, and Moen felt comfortable starting his American life there. He soon became associated with Jerome Nelson, founder of the village of Nelsonville and an operator of a flour and grist mill.

In 1887, Nelson sent Moen, who was now married and the father of three children, to investigate the possibilities for a sawmill in the newly formed Oneida County. They purchased almost all the lots surrounding the present Moen Lake and, together with John S. Loberg, formed the Nelson Lumber & Boom Company. The company purchased hundreds of acres of land in the surrounding area, mostly along creeks that flowed into Moen Lake. In 1900, three years after the death of Jerome Nelson, timber was becoming scarce and all the holdings of the Lumber & Boom Company were sold to John Barnes.

Although Moen was manager of the sawmill in Rhinelander, his family remained in Nelsonville. It was not an unusual practice at this time. However, his involvement with the Wisconsin Veneer Company in 1905 made it clear that he had established himself as a businessman of Rhinelander, so his wife, the former Mattia Iverson, and son Oscar finally made the permanent move to this city, leaving their two married daughters behind in Portage County.

During his lifetime, John Moen was a partner in many business ventures and director of several companies, but the two with which he was associated the longest were the Veneer Company and First National Bank, of which he was president from 1914 until his death in 1931.

Oscar Moen lived in Rhinelander the rest of his life. He was plant superintendent of the Wisconsin Veneer Company until 1926 and operator of the Village Inn from 1935 to 1943. His son, John O. Moen II, left Rhinelander for California, where he was involved in auto sales. He returned here briefly after the death of Oscar in 1966, but spent his last years in Appleton. He died in 1974. Oscar and Cora Moen were the last generation of Moens to reside in Rhinelander.

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