

WEBSTER E. BROWN

Although Anderson W. Brown was called the “father of Rhinelander”, his brother Webster E. was the city’s “favorite uncle”. Eighteen-year-old Web Brown was a student at the University of Wisconsin while his older brother was scouting the pine woods of Northern Wisconsin. The prospect of building a new community was exciting for the young man, and after graduation, he and Anderson formed a partnership, appropriately named Brown Bros. They were later joined by their two younger brothers, Edward and Walter.

After marrying his college sweetheart, Juliet Meyer, Web ventured north from Stevens Point with his brother and other members of their family. In 1883, both brothers built permanent homes in Rhinelander and, unlike other businessmen at the time, moved their families there immediately. Webster’s home was at the northeast corner of Stevens and Frederick streets, just a block east of his brother, Anderson. Both homes soon became too small for their growing families and their place in the community.

In 1887, Webster moved his first house a block south and built the much larger home which is still standing today. His first house was one of those recently razed for the library parking lot. Anderson remained in his original home (on the site of today’s Zion school) until 1894, when he built the large Queen Anne house with which most Rhinelander residents are familiar and which was much photographed. His first house was moved north in the same block and remained standing until the 1960s.

When Rhinelander was incorporated in 1894, Webster, at the age of 45, was the community’s unanimous selection for mayor. After serving two terms, he returned to his many business interests. It wasn’t long, however, before he was called upon to represent, not only Rhinelander, but the state of Wisconsin, when he was elected as a Republican to Congress in 1901. He served three terms.

Both Webster and Juliet Brown remained involved with the Rhinelander community throughout their lives. At his death in December of 1929, Webster was President of the Rhinelander Paper Company, having succeeded his brother, Anderson, in 1923. Both were founding members of the 1st Congregational Church, and Juliet was a teacher in the Sunday School which she helped organize. She also served on the Board of Regents for the University of Wisconsin. Webster and Juliet were married for 52 years

Descendants of Webster and Juliet Meyer Brown will be gathering in the Rhinelander area next week for a family reunion and celebration of the 100th year of their family cottage.

Special to the Daily News by Joy Vancos, 29 June 2003; additions 5 Feb 2009

“W. E. Brown is building a cottage at North Pelican. The structure is of logs and will be of good size. The family, with guests from out of the city, will have an outing at the lake as soon as the building is completed.” *The Rhinelander Herald*, 15 Aug 1903

For many years, the Moen Lake chain, was often referred to as “North Pelican”