

Biographical Portrait EDWARD HINES

(1863–1931)

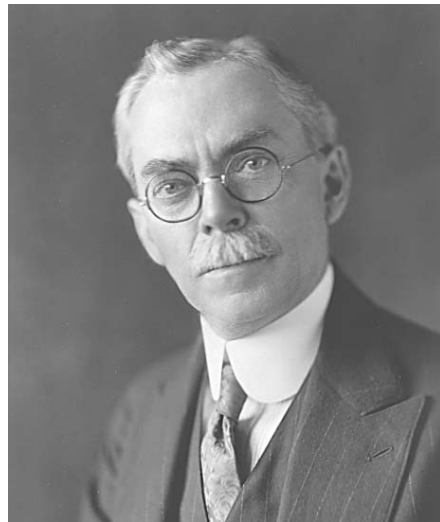
BY JAMES G. LEWIS

Edward Hines, an innovative lumberman and founder of the forest products enterprise that bears his name, was born in Buffalo, New York, on July 31, 1863. Two years later, the Hines family moved to the Chicago area where Edward Hines Lumber Co. is still headquartered.

The only son in an Irish immigrant family of seven children, Edward at fourteen worked as an office boy for the lumber wholesale firm of S. K. Martin & Co. Seven years later, he became secretary-treasurer of that firm. In 1892, the energetic, dapper young man started his own business, Edward Hines Lumber Co., and astonished the gray-bearded lumbering fraternity of Chicago by outselling all his competitors in the city during the first year in business.

The following year, as the nation went into an economic depression, the company prospered. Hines bought out his former employers three years later. The company's growth caught the eye of Frederick Weyerhaeuser, who bought out two associates and served as a director until his death in 1914. Hines and Weyerhaeuser quickly formed a close, lifelong friendship.

Aggressive salesmanship, innovative merchandising, and a propensity for operating on an every expanding scale accounted for Hines' success. Hines first purchased lumber in boatloads and trainloads and then contracted for the entire output of sawmills, insisting that the type of lumber produced be geared to market demand. He encircled Chicago with a well-run branch-yard system offering on-the-spot purchases and prompt delivery. He acquired standing timber and sawmills, and at one time he owned or controlled seventeen mills in Wisconsin alone. Constant travel in the logging districts made Hines better informed than most of



Edward Hines

COURTESY OF THE EDWARD HINES LUMBER CO.

his competitors and established important business contacts. Hines purchased extensive holdings of southern pine and exported lumber to South America and Europe. He also leased timber-cutting permits on crown lands in Canada.

Hines had a gift for consolidating scattered timber holdings to secure timber for his operations. Often holding less stumpage than others, he would bring together several businesses to form companies with large land holdings. One of his most challenging efforts involved the Weyerhaeuser family and two other lumbermen in Minnesota. Acting on a proposal from Hines, a number of Weyerhaeuser-associated companies agreed in 1905 to consolidate their holdings in northern Minnesota and Canada as the Virginia and Rainy Lake Company. Hines contributed \$4 million cash and seventy-two square miles of timber permits in Canada, and built a second mill at Virginia, Minnesota. Billed as "the world's largest sawmill" (capacity 1 million board feet daily), it employed 1,500 men.

Some 2,800 men and 900 horses logged the timber. Logs were hauled over 2,000 miles of sleigh roads and 3,000 miles of railroad tracks. Although the scale of this operation was stupendous, there were formidable obstacles to turning a profit. Internal dissensions developed between Hines and Wirt Cook, one of the two Minnesota lumbermen. Cook accused Hines of improper business practices; Hines, feared physical violence from Cook and carried a gun in his pocket. The company's directors, however, supported Hines. Nonetheless, with operating costs too high and the venture barely turning a profit, the company shut down in the late 1920s. Hines also had lumber operations in Mississippi during the 1920s that closed down around the same time as the Virginia and Rainy Lake operations.

The dominant figure in the Virginia and Rainy Lake firm was its president, the flamboyant, decisive Edward Hines. On a tour of Italy in 1928, Hines was received by the king, the pope, and Mussolini in a space of two days. Two weeks later, Hines acquired a 67,400-acre tract of public timber near Burns, Oregon. The Bear Valley Timber Sale on the Malheur National Forest was possibly the largest volume of timber ever sold in the Pacific Northwest. There, Hines's company pioneered selection logging and sustained-yield forestry in cooperation with the Malheur National Forest. The mill used the latest technology and housed two large turbines, with a 6,000-kilowatt capacity that provided a surplus of 3,000 kilowatts. The surplus was later sold to the West Coast Power Company. Timber harvest from this sale continued until 1968.

The firm erected a company town on the outskirts of Burns, which was incorporated as the City of Hines in 1930.



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At its peak in the 1920s, Edward Hines Lumber Co.'s operations processed millions of board feet a day. The company claimed to have the world's largest sawmill in Minnesota. This photo of its Log Rollway at West Superior, Wisconsin, was taken around 1920. The inscription states that it is "the largest aggregation of logs in the world."

Edward and his wife Loretta designed and planned the city around an oval, dedicated to park and recreation. Mrs. Hines stipulated that every house be constructed with slight differences so that the city would differ from most mill towns. When the development company in charge of building the town fell on hard times during the Great Depression, the Edward Hines Lumber Co. chartered the "City Corporation" to finish building the town. Although the mill has remained the economic heart of the town, the Edward Hines Lumber Co. sold off its interest in it in the 1990s. The company's operations are now centered in the upper Midwest.

At the company's peak of influence in the 1920s, Edward Hines Lumber Co. had lumber operations stretching from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico and from Chicago to the Pacific Northwest, and included ownership of Continental Coal Company in West Virginia. Edward Hines' legacy, however, was in lumber marketing, which he helped revolutionize. His sales promotion created a market for hemlock and birch; for example, he popularized birch kitchen cabinets. Hines was also known for his efforts to standardize lumber grades and for his leadership in lumber trade associations. He



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The Edward Hines Lumber Co.'s main yard in Chicago, circa 1920. The shed on the right, called the "Lincoln St. Shed," stored pine boards. The building on the left was the "Planing Mill."

was an organizer of the National Lumber Manufacturers Association (now the American Forest and Paper Association). He married Loretta O'Dowd in 1895 and had three sons (Edward, Ralph, and Charles) and a daughter, Loretta. Edward Hines, Sr. died on December 1, 1931.

The Hines Lumber Company is now a third-generation family-owned company run by the founder's grandson, Edward Hines. It is one of the Chicago area's largest building materials suppliers. The fourth generation is very much involved in the family business. Great-grandson Edward McMillan Hines is vice president of sales, great-granddaughter Elizabeth Hines Bigelow is marketing manager, and great-granddaughter Heather Hines Clessuras serves with her siblings as a director of the company. Today, the company operates twelve full-service retail lumberyards, a full service Millwork Division (that has its own custom shop, steel door shop, lock shop, and interior door line), Cabinet

Division, Window Center, and Commercial Division. □

This article is an adaptation of the biographical entry on Edward Hines in the Encyclopedia of American Forest and Conservation History (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983), 289–90.

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