

25 YEARS AGO AND BEFORE

AS THIS ANNIVERSARY RECOGNITION OF OUR FORESTRY OPERATIONS IN ONEIDA COUNTY COMES ONLY A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE START OF OUR FORESTRY PROGRAM ON NOVEMBER 1, 1930, WHEN I REPORTED FOR WORK AS FIRST FORESTER, I THINK THAT I SHOULD INTERJECT SOME BACKGROUND FOR THE BENEFIT OF MOST OF YOU. ORDINARILY I DO NOT USE THE PRONOUN I VERY MUCH BUT IT SEEMS NECESSARY AT THIS TIME. THIS REMINDS ME OF A STORY I HEARD RECENTLY WHICH SEEMS APPROPRIATE AND, SINCE IT WAS TOLD TO A MIXED GROUP, I AM SURE IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT HERE. (STORY) IT SEEMED FUNNIER WHEN I FIRST HEARD IT. IF WHAT I SAY HERE DOES NOT GO OVER SO WELL, I WILL HAVE ONLY MYSELF TO BLAME AS THIS IS MY IDEA. THERE IS A LOT OF GOOD MATERIAL FOR A GOOD TALK. I HAVE BEEN ALLOTTED THREE MINUTES AND ORDINARILY THIS IS MORE THAN I NEED OR USE BUT THERE IS ENOUGH INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR FORESTRY PROGRAM AND OUR 25 YEARS IN ONEIDA COUNTY TO TALK FOR HOURS. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SORT OUT ITEMS THAT SEEM IMPORTANT TO THIS OCCASION. WE WHO WERE INVOLVED IN FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION IN THE 1930'S REALIZE WHAT WAS INVOLVED IN STARTING AND TRYING TO BUILD A PROGRAM WHICH DID NOT SEEM ECONOMICALLY SOUND AT THE TIME. BUSINESS WAS AT A LOW EBB AND LAND, TIMBER, AND FOREST PRODUCTS SO LOW IN VALUE THAT THERE WAS REALLY NO INCENTIVE. THINKING BACK TO THOSE DAYS AFTER THE LAST 20 YEARS OF PROSPERITY I WONDER HOW WE MADE AS MUCH PROGRESS AS WE DID. MONEY WAS REALLY SCARCE AND IT IS DIFFICULT TODAY TO BELIEVE THAT CONDITIONS COULD HAVE BEEN SO BAD. I WOULD NOT WISH THIS EXPERIENCE ON OTHERS BUT SOMETIMES I WONDER IF A SHORT PERIOD ONCE IN A WHILE MIGHT NOT DO SOME GOOD. THIS WOULD REALLY BE CONTROLLED ECONOMY. ONE EXPERIENCE I HAD AFTER HAVING BEEN HERE ABOUT 15 MONTHS WAS A SALARY REDUCTION OF 20% WHICH LEFT ME WITH LESS SALARY THAN MY PREVIOUS JOB. THE REDEEMING FACTOR WAS THAT I STILL HAD A JOB AND WAS ON THE PAYROLL.

WHEN WE CAME TO ONEIDA COUNTY ABOUT POSSIBLE PURCHASE OF COUNTY-OWNED LAND IN THE MONICO AREA, WE HAD BEEN THROUGH OVER 10 YEARS OF STRUGGLING TO

GET OUR FORESTRY PROGRAM UNDER WAY AND PURCHASE SOME LANDS IN FOREST COUNTY FOR OUR REFORESTATION PROGRAM. THE AREA IN FOREST COUNTY WAS SELECTED AFTER LOOKING OVER A NUMBER OF AREAS IN NORTHERN WISCONSIN BECAUSE WE ALREADY OWNED SOME LAND IN THE AREA AND IT APPEARED TO BE A GOOD SITE FOR PLANTING OF SPRUCE. AT THAT TIME TREE PLANTING WAS CONSIDERED A NECESSARY FUNCTION IN ANY FORESTRY PROGRAM. WE WERE USING LARGE AMOUNTS OF SPRUCE AND THE USE OF POPPLE AND MIXED HARDWOOD HAD NOT BEEN CONSIDERED POSSIBLE. SPRUCE WAS CONSIDERED A MUST FOR PAPERMAKING BUT WE DID USE BALSAM AND HEMLOCK. ORIGINALLY WE PLANNED TO BUY 75,000 ACRES IN THE FOREST COUNTY AREA BUT ABOUT THE SAME TIME THAT WE STARTED OUR BUYING PROGRAM THE FOREST SERVICE STARTED AN ACQUISITION PROGRAM FOR THE NICOLET NATIONAL FOREST. INSTEAD OF ENCOURAGING OUR EFFORTS, THEIR ACQUISITION MEN ACTUALLY DISCOURAGED AND OUT-BID US FOR LAND WHEREVER POSSIBLE. ONE MAN EVEN OFFERED TO BUY WHAT LAND WE ACQUIRED IN THAT AREA AND SAID THAT WE COULD NOT JUSTIFY A FORESTRY PROGRAM. WE WENT AHEAD ANYWAY AND ENDED UP WITH 30,000 ACRES INSTEAD OF OUR ORIGINAL GOAL OF 75,000. THE AREA IS ALMOST COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY GOVERNMENT LAND NOW.

WE STARTED LOGGING OPERATIONS IN THE SUMMIT LAKE AREA TO LOG SOME OVER-MATURE TIMBER. WITH THE SUMMIT LAKE LANDING AS A BASE IT WAS FELT THAT THIS WOULD BE A GOOD AREA TO EXPAND OUR FORESTRY PROGRAM. TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT, WE WERE NOT ABLE TO BUY ANY COUNTY-OWNED LAND TO ADD TO WHAT WE HAD WHICH NOW AMOUNTS TO APPROXIMATELY 7,000 ACRES. THEY HAVE NEVER SOLD ANY OF THEIR LAND BUT WE HAVE CONTINUED TO OPERATE OUR SUMMIT LAKE LANDING ON A SMALLER SCALE. MUCH OF OUR PULPWOOD IN THIS AREA COMES FROM COUNTY LANDS.

BECAUSE OF MY ACQUAINTANCE WITH CECIL BRANHAM AT MONICO AND BOB LESLIE AND GAGEN LUMBER COMPANY AT GAGEN, IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT EASTERN ONEIDA COUNTY MIGHT BE A GOOD FORESTRY AREA. INCIDENTALLY, YOU WHO MAY KNOW KEN JOHNSON, WHO IS ACCOUNTING SUPERVISOR FOR US HERE AT RHINELANDER, MAY APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT HE IS A NATIVE OF RHINELANDER. I FOUND HIM WORKING IN THE OFFICE

OF GAGEN LUMBER COMPANY WHEN THEY WERE ABOUT READY TO DISCONTINUE THEIR OPERATIONS AND LOOKING FOR A JOB FOR HIM. I ASKED STAN HURD TO DO SOME CHECKING AND AS THE RESULT OF HIS REPORT, WE APPROACHED THE FORESTRY AND LAND COMMITTEE. THEY SHOWED DEFINITE INTEREST AND AFTER A FEW MEETINGS AND SOME NEGOTIATIONS THE COMMITTEE DECIDED TO OFFER COUNTY-OWNED LANDS IN THE MONICO AREA FOR BIDS. THE MINIMUM PRICES SET WERE HIGHER THAN WE HAD BEEN PAYING OR THOUGHT ADVISABLE BUT WE WERE THE SUCCESSFUL BIDDER.

OUR PRESENT OWNERSHIP IN EASTERN ONEIDA COUNTY IS APPROXIMATELY 60,000 ACRES MADE UP OF THE ORIGINAL PURCHASE OF COUNTY LANDS AND NUMEROUS PURCHASES OF PRIVATE LAND. IT IS A WELL BLOCKED AND VERY ACCESSIBLE AREA SERVED BY TWO MAIN STATE HIGHWAYS AND TWO RAILROADS. MONICO IS IDEALLY LOCATED AS A CENTER FOR OUR OPERATIONS AND I AM SURE WILL CONTINUE. IT HAS BEEN A CENTER FOR LOGGING OPERATIONS SINCE THE LOCATION OF THE RAILROAD THROUGH THE AREA. AT ONE TIME, AROUND 1900, A PULP MILL WAS BUILT THERE BUT DID NOT PROVE SUCCESSFUL AND AFTER AN EXPLOSION AND FIRE WAS NEVER REBUILT.

SELECTION OF RHINELANDER AS HEADQUARTERS FOR OUR FORESTRY AND ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS WAS MADE AFTER THE WAR AND AFTER A TRIAL IN RENTED SPACE DOWNTOWN, WE PURCHASED THE PRESENT SITE AND BUILT AN OFFICE. WE HAVE SINCE ADDED A CENTRAL GARAGE ON THIS PROPERTY WHERE MOST OF OUR MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT IS REPAIRED. MONICO WAS SELECTED FOR THE SITE OF OUR NURSERY, WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY LOCATED NEAR WISCONSIN RAPIDS, AND FOR A SHORT WHILE IN FOREST COUNTY. MONICO IS ALSO HEADQUARTERS FOR ALL OF OUR FORESTRY AND LOGGING OPERATIONS IN ONEIDA COUNTY. WE HAVE CARRIED ON AN EXTENSIVE ROAD BUILDING PROGRAM AND HAVE A GOOD NETWORK OF ROADS THROUGHOUT THE AREA. GOOD FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED AND CONSIDERABLE RESEARCH CARRIED ON IN THE GAGEN EXPERIMENTAL UNIT, HARDWOOD AREA, AND CHRISTMAS TREE UNIT. PERSONALLY, I THINK THAT IT IS ONE OF THE BEST SITUATED AND MANAGED FOREST PROPERTIES IN WISCONSIN. IT SHOULD HAVE A GREAT FUTURE.

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A TIME SINCE MY ORIGINAL MEETINGS WITH THE ONEIDA COUNTY FORESTRY AND LAND COMMITTEE AND THE COUNTY BOARD OVER 25 YEARS AGO WHEN THERE HAS BEEN ANY REASON TO REGRET OUR DECISION TO LOCATE IN ONEIDA COUNTY AND RHINELANDER. I BELIEVE THAT BOTH PARTIES RECOGNIZED THAT FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT WAS A LONG-TERM PROGRAM WHICH REQUIRED MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION. LOOKING BACK OVER THIS PARTICULAR PERIOD, WHICH REALLY DOES NOT SEEM SO LONG, IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT SO MUCH COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED. I AM GLAD TO HAVE HAD A PART IN IT AND HOPE THAT THE NEXT 25 YEARS WILL BE AS PROMISING FOR THOSE INVOLVED.