

# WILSON MERCANTILE COMPANY NEAR TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY



This modern three-story structure, which replaced the old buildings used when the company first started in 1910, represents the growth by which the Wilson company has become one of the foremost jobbing houses in this part of the state.

## Logging Camps Big Customers In Early Days

The Wilson Mercantile company was organized in January, 1910, with S. F. Wilson as president; F. W. Genrich, vice president; J. W. Laut, treasurer and manager, and Oscar Week, secretary. The capital stock was \$75,000.

At that time the business was conducted in some old buildings near the St. Paul tracks, and this arrangement held until July, when the new building was completed. At present the Wausau warehouse is a three-story structure with a basement.

When the company started it had three salesmen to cover its entire territory. The delivering was done by horses and dray wagons, while shipments to outside territory were all by rail and all salesmen traveled by train.

In these early days the lumber industry was still flourishing, and large orders went directly to northern Wisconsin camps. The lumberjacks of this day, however, are enjoying much better food than the old-timers, according to the Wilson people.

From the very start the company featured the Valley Queen and Valley Boy brands that are still their main lines. The Valley Queen label is known throughout the territory now and is much sought by shoppers.

As wholesale grocers, the Wilson Mercantile company serves its territory in a number of ways. The wholesale grocer may save the public much money on its food bills by protecting the community against rising markets. It is customary with jobbers to protect their trade for quite a period after advances have actually taken place. Also, in cases of calamity such as floods, and so

forth, in parts of the country, the jobbers usually are well stocked and if service is held up from outside territory they are still able to take care of the immediate needs of the community.

A jobber accumulates merchandise from all over the world, and in seasons of short pack, he is able to pick up merchandise from sections of the country where there is a better supply than in the immediate vicinity.

### Rhineland Branch

In 1917 the Wilson company opened a branch at Rhineland under the management of W. L. Covey. This warehouse is located on the Northwestern and Soo tracks. At the time of the opening of this branch the lumber industry was also flourishing around Rhineland. The resorts were only beginning to open up. Today the lumber industry is about gone, while the resort business is beginning to expand all through this and the other sections of Northern Wisconsin. Tourists are bringing a large amount of grocery business to this part of the state.

This is only one of the ways in which the situation in the Wilson territory has changed from the time at which the company was opened. The company now covers fifteen counties, serving a population of 164,700. In the firm's territory there are 33,324 farms, which of course yield much grocery business. It operates nine trucks and has eleven salesmen on the road, all of whom drive their own automobiles.

Merchandise is practically all delivered to the doors of the retailers in the company's own trucks. In the early days the Chicago wholesale houses were favored because the people of northern Wisconsin were so few in number that the jobbers could not buy in quantities. Today the Wilson concern buys most of its groceries in carload lots, and the business has become localized.

In January, 1934, Mr. J. W. Laut, who managed the company since its organization, resigned

after 24 years of service, and Oscar Week replaced him as general manager. Mr. B. F. Wilson, president of the company since its organization, died June 22, 1934. The present officers of the concern are Perry M. Wilson, president; F. W. Genrich, vice president; H. J. Schneider, treasurer, and Oscar Week, secretary and general manager. The present capital stock of the company is \$300,000, and the present manager of the Rhineland branch is Walter J. Neitzke.

In the Merrill territory H. J. Schneider now serves as salesman, having succeeded his father, Sam Schneider. He is well known to every grocer in all the towns north of Wausau, and, like his father, has always enjoyed the confidence of the trade.

The Wilson company is enjoying good patronage and growing despite the current hard times, and, like other wholesalers, is coming back nicely after the recession. The future really looks bright, it declares.

## Log Building Was First One In Tomahawk

The first building erected on the present site of Tomahawk was put up by Angus Buie in October, 1887. It was a log structure. The first frame building was a residence at 115 West Rice avenue, built by C. C. Lincoln in July, 1887, and is still standing.

The first store building in Tomahawk was erected by John Oelhafen, Sr. it is still standing at 117 West Wisconsin avenue and was occupied by William Oelhafen, son of the builder, previous to his removal to Tripoli, and is now vacant.

The first hotel in Tomahawk was the Somo House; the next, the Windsor, was built by Pat and Mike Day in September, 1887. The first doctor was J. D. Cotter, who also was time-keeper at the dam; he came in 1886. One of the first lawyers was A. H. Woodworth.

## Barker Lumber Branch Eight Years Old Here

"Tall trees from small acorns grow," is an axiom applicable to the small beginning and steady growth of the "Barker Lumber & Fuel Company," as a whole, and of which the Merrill plant is an important and integral part.

The "Barker Company," at first consisted of D. T. Barker, the father of the company, and of the present succeeding owner of the company, which was originally established at Delavan, in 1872.

The company, which necessarily operated but one small yard at the beginning, has now reached the dimensions whereby it is rated as having a "paid-up capital stock of \$400,000," and a phenomenal growth, for at the present time the Barker people are operating fourteen yards in Wisconsin, with headquarters at Green Bay. Mr. G. H. Barker, the active manager, is the son of A. R. Barker, the second in line of ownership.

The Merrill branch was instituted about eight years ago, and has become an important factor in the successful development of the Barker interests.

The yard at that time was decidedly unkempt, and indicated its years of age and neglect, which was offensive in view of A. R. Barker's announced slogan: "Keep a lumber yard as clean as a department store," which means a lot, as it is practiced at the Merrill yard, under the local management of E. N. Stenerson, in appearance, and elimination of fire hazard.

During the now-waning summer, the Barker Company expended approximately \$1,500 for labor alone, in rehabilitating the premises and the erection of a large combined shed and warehouse for the storing of lumber and kindred building materials, which has a 220 foot L-shaped frontage, properly arranged with interior

driveway and "a place for everything, and everything in its place." The distribution of this amount of money among the laborers of Merrill was an act worthy of commendation.

The Barker company's yard and office holdings consist of a 100-foot frontage on East Third street, and extend northward to Fourth street, and every foot is as clean as mortal man can keep it.

A very complete stock of lumber, building material, builder's hardware, coal, coke, paints, oils, etc., is carried at all times, and dispensed to the public in a manner, and for a consideration, that has won for the company an increasing and commendable patronage.

Mr. Barker, the owner, is one of that desirable class of men with extensive interests, yet modest and approachable, who seeks warm-hearted friendship, without thought of public reward, as is evidenced by his high standing in the Masonic Fraternity, being familiar with its ritualistic work in the most advanced degree, and yet has several times modestly refused to make public appearance in demonstration thereof.

Mr. Stenerson, the local manager, has amply proven himself to be not only a good business manager, but a good citizen, as well, having taken an earnest and active interest in the welfare and advancement of the city of Merrill, and its people, and it is hoped that he and his estimable family may long remain among the Merrills, with an increasing measure of success, and a widening circle of lasting friendship.

### MARATHON SCHOOL HEAD WAS LOGGER WITH O. B. SMITH

George G. Green, a resident of Wausau, who became a clergyman and for many years was superintendent of schools of Marathon county, was a fellow workman with Mr. O. B. Smith in the Pete Kelley logging camp down at Trappe, in the winter of 1844-45.