

# ARTIFACTS



Cover: Photo from Domtar. Inside: Theater Corner by Phil Brown, pages 2-6; 2013 Season by Lori Brost, p. 7; Tail Race Chronicles by Lori Brost, 8; Excavating Nekoosa by Uncle Dave 9; Tail race photos, 10-21; Robert Gleason, 22-24; Society Pages, 25; Domtar, 26; Nekoosa mill, 27; 1940 Census, 28-29; Old Abe, 30; Yankee Buzzard by Col. Billy Parker, 31; Mill diving photo, 32.



# Theater Corner

## By Phil Brown, SWCHC President

In the August 2012 and November 2012 *Artifacts*, I investigated three corners of what is now the intersection of East Grand Avenue and Second Street South. Now to finish this series by covering the southeast corner of that intersection.

### In the papers

May 16, 1918

If you want a real first class job done on your tires in the way of repairing, take your next job to the Wood County Tire Repair Co., next to the New Meat Market, east side. They have the only first class steam outfit in the county and I guarantee to do a good job at a reasonable price.

*John A. Worlund, Prop.*

**Tires Is Our Business**

We do Vulcanizing by Steam  
Which is admitted to be the best method in existence.  
Tires Retreaded and All Kinds of Repairs Made  
We also buy old tires and pay the highest market price for the old rubber.

**Wood Co. Tire Repair Co.**  
Next to the New Meat Market

1915

This Space Reserved  
For The  
**New Meat Market**  
Opposite Wood County National Bank

---

**JOHN H. BRANDT**  
Proprietor

### ONE OF THE BIGGEST THINGS

**BRANDT'S NEW MEAT MARKET CREATES A GREAT SENSATION IN THIS CITY**

The biggest thing that has hit Grand Rapids in a dog's age is Brandt's new meat market on the corner of Vine and Second streets. From early morning until 10 o'clock Saturday night, the day of the opening, the place was thronged with buyers, not only from this city but from surrounding towns, and probably more meat was sold that day in this shop than was ever sold in the city in one day.

At the prices charged for meat the people of this city must have saved in the neighborhood of \$300 on their meat purchases Saturday, and there was a tidy margin of profit left for Mr. Brandt.

1915

Everybody patronized the shop that day—rich, poor and the people of moderate means. The prices were a revelation to the people and the talk of past prices paid in this city would not have sounded good to the old butchers in business here could they have heard it. "Trust busting" was a feeble way of putting it. They called the butchers everything but gentlemen.

The people will get over their wrath in time but it is safe to say the day of exorbitant meat prices in this city is over. All butchers will have to get down to a fair margin of prices, and the sooner they do the better it will be for them. How they are going to adjust themselves to the new order is for them to figure out, but they must do something quickly or retire from business.

April 22, 1920

### COHEN SECURES BRANDT CORNER LOCAL BANKER BUYS PROPERTY ON EAST SIDE FROM GINSBERG

J.A. Cohen of this city closed a deal Wednesday bringing him into possession of the property on the east side situated on the corner of Second and Vine Streets South. The property was owned by J. Ginsberg, of Chicago, and includes the building in which the Brandt meat market is located, the Wood County Tire Co. and the B.G. Eggert Land Office.

When asked if there would be any changes made over there in the buildings or if any new buildings were contemplated on that property, Mr. Cohen stated that he had not decided as yet.

The property was owned for several years by Mr. Ginsberg and later by other Chicago parties, but came back into Mr. Ginsberg's possession.

**Commnity  
Service**

—oOo—

METHODIST AND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES  
UNITING

—oOo—

UNITED CHORUS      HELPFUL SONG SERVICE  
First Service

**SUNDAY EVENING**

—at—

**Congregational Church**  
Preacher—Rev. Robt. J. Locke

—

**Oddfellows Night**

The Oddfellows have been invited and will attend in a  
body

—o—

P. S. All other Oddfellows in the city are also invited

1918



**First Congregational Church (built 1911)**

See *Home Mission: A History of the First Congregational, United Church of Christ, Wisconsin Rapids* by Artifacts editor Uncle Dave, who, as a member of the nearby First Methodist church, attended summer vacation Bible school in the Congregational building shown above.



In this picture, c. 1915, two buildings occupied the southeast corner of East Grand Avenue and Second Street South. The New Meat Market occupied the corner in what was known as the Bogoger building. Next door was the Wood County Tire Co. and, across an alley, a rooming house that held Eggert's real estate office. At far right is the First Congregational Church.

**Below: Taken from East Grand Avenue and Third Street South some time after 1922. At Grand (formerly Vine) and Second Street South, is the side of the Bogoger building and front of the Ideal theater, later the Rapids and now Rogers Cinema.**

**Hess Plumbing occupied the east (left) building 1908-1935, when Nick Winckle started an ice cream business there. Walter Herschleb bought out Winckle in 1940 and moved into the building adjacent to the Ideal. Perry's Sport Shop occupied the former Hess building. In 1947, Bob Luzenski bought the business from Herschleb, renamed it Friendly Fountain and ran "the Friendly" until 1961 when he sold it to Joe Jenkins. In 1967, Perry's Sport Shop bought the Friendly Fountain building and combined it with Perry's.**



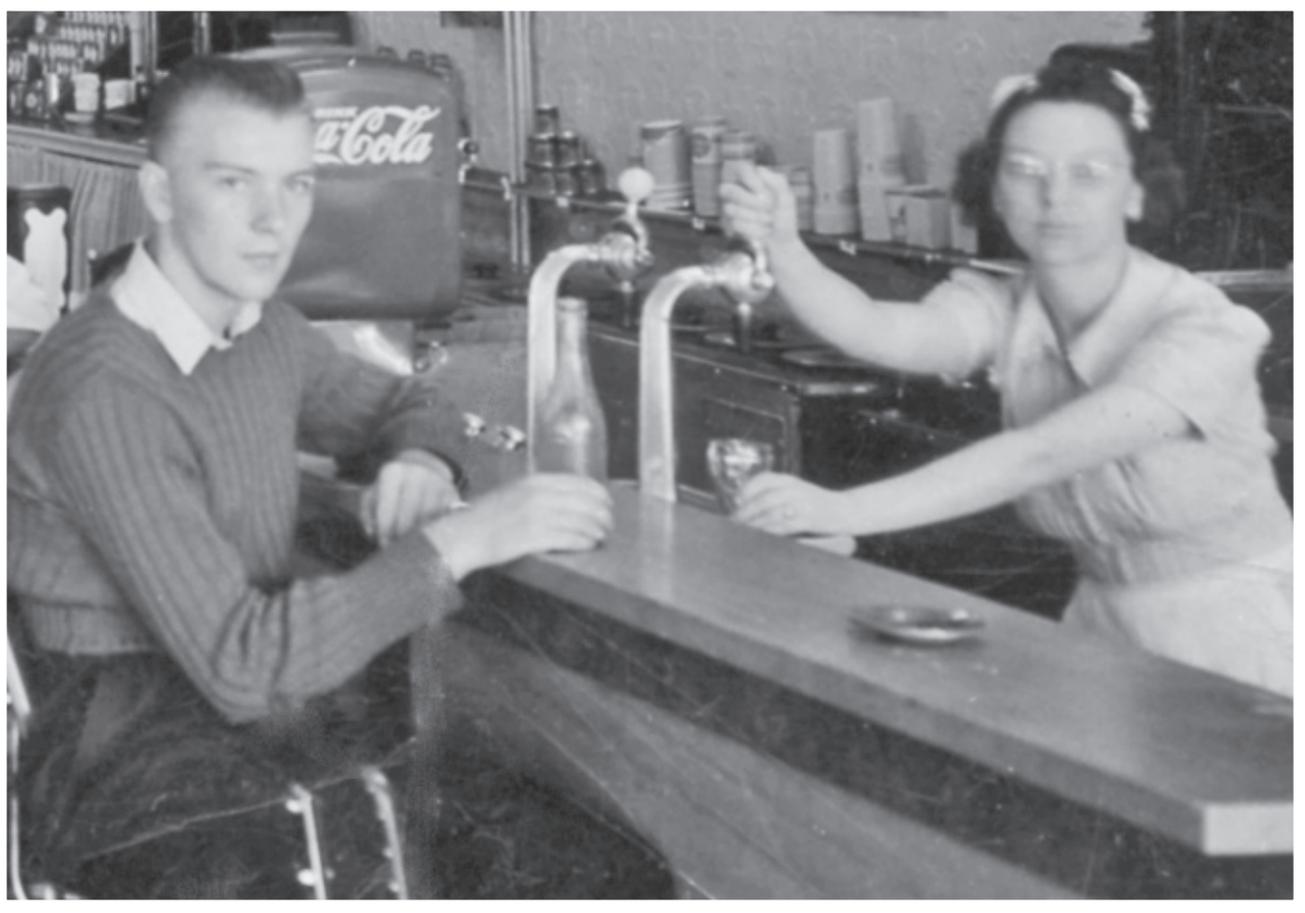
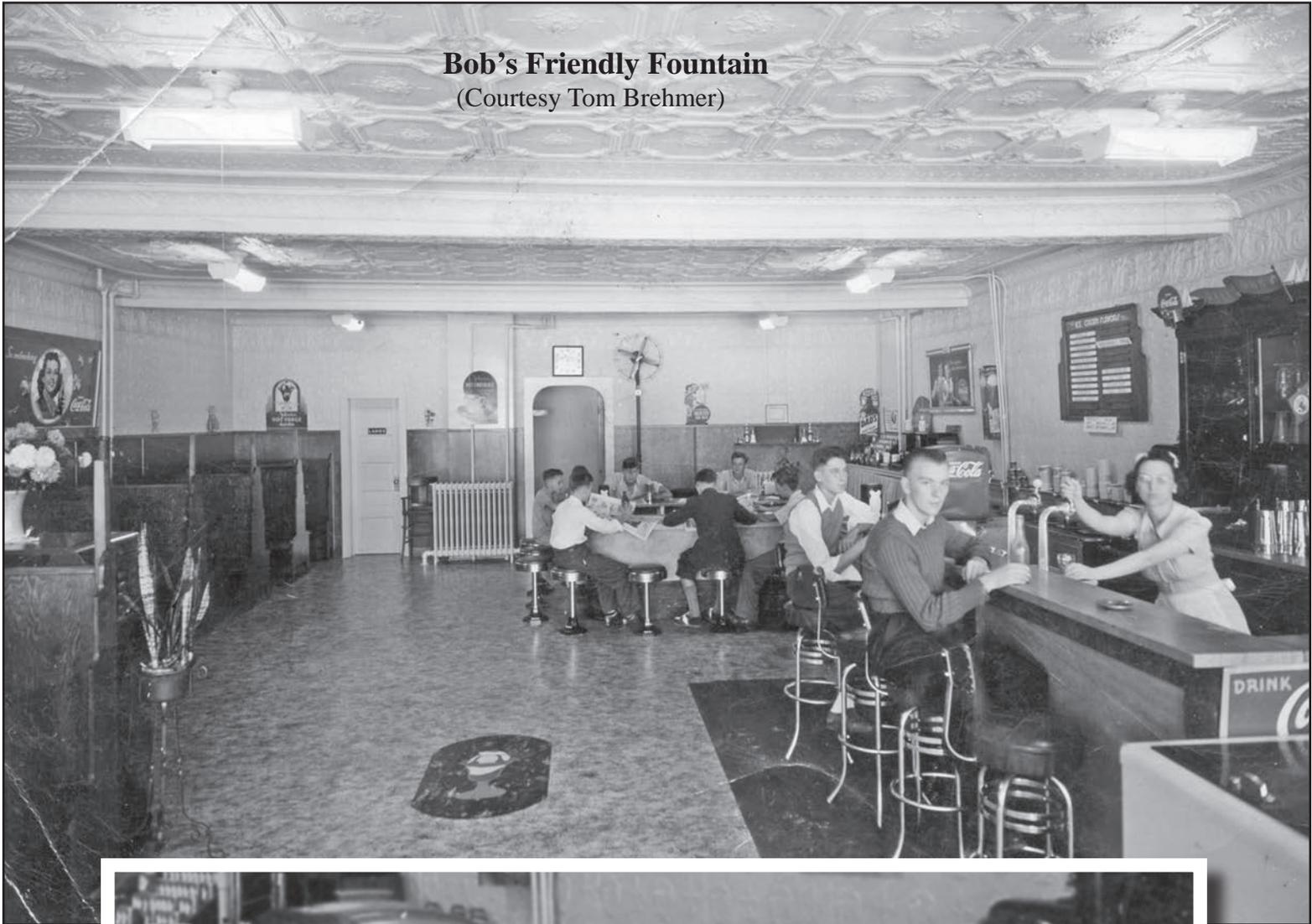


In this photo, taken approximately 1930, the two frame buildings formerly on the corner have been removed and the Wadhams Gas Station built. According to the Wisconsin Historical Society website, Wadhams Gas Stations were small, well-designed, pagoda-style buildings. Gasoline came from underground storage tanks by means of easy-to-handle mechanical pumps.



Don Krohn photo c. 1950 shows the aftermath of the Cranboree parade east of Grand Ave. Starting on Second Street and going east towards Third Street were Ronnie's Mobilgas Service Station; Rapids theater; Friendly Fountain; Perry's Sport Shop; and Reiland and Schmidt Law office, designed by Donn Hougen and built in 1952.

**Bob's Friendly Fountain**  
(Courtesy Tom Brehmer)



Spring!



## Seasons in the Sun 2013

**By Lori Brost, Museum Administrator**

May 26, 2013, marks the start of my fifth season with the Museum. It seems as though time has truly flown since last September when we closed out one season and started preparing for another, but we have accomplished quite a bit in that time. With the assistance and expertise of Col. Billy Parker and Dave Laspa, we have updated the Civil War room to focus on the Battle of Gettysburg. The Museum has also made some changes in the General Store, Schoolroom and Krohnographs exhibits. Mary Beth Rokus, Cathy Meils, Lois Cantin and Jody Steinke have put together a Wisconsin Rapids Community Theater retrospective for the second floor landing.

After Sunday, May 26, the Museum will be open Tuesday through Thursday and Sundays from 1-4 p.m. The annual Ice Cream Social will be held on Saturday, June 22, and we will be closed Independence Day, Thursday, July 4.

To schedule a tour (children in fourth grade and older, please), contact me by email at [lori@swch-museum.com](mailto:lori@swch-museum.com), by phone 715-423-1580 or in person at the Museum, 540 Third Street South, Wisconsin Rapids.



David Farmbrough

Lori Brost

SWCHC Museum Administrator

# Tail Race Chronicles

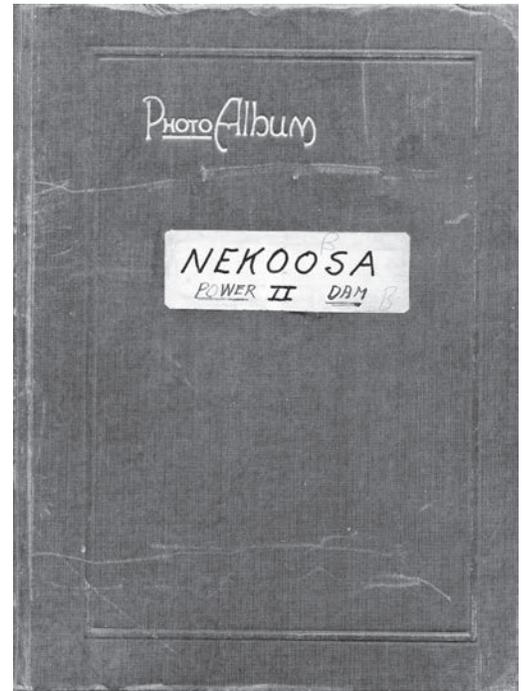
Why “tail races?” I’ve been asking the question for years. Apparently I’ve been talking to the wrong people, because there is actually a definition available for those who take the trouble to find it. A race is a watercourse used for industrial purposes. The race leading to a water wheel (or turbine) is called the head race, and the race leading away is called the tail race

Now I know what a tail race is and how valuable its process is for our local paper mills because, a little over a month ago, a “project” landed on my desk: two binders

of photos from Domtar, one outlining the building of a pipeline from Nepco Lake to the Port Edwards mill and the other focused on the Nekoosa dam, hydro-electric plant and, most vividly, the tail race excavation.

Fantastic pictures without a doubt, crisp and clear and looking like they could have been taken last month or year, but dated from 1918 through 1952.

It became my job to make sure these photos are available 95 years from now! So with the utmost patience, I took the books apart, put the photographs in order and in protective sleeves and arranged them in a new binder. After all that, the photographs were scanned, and the original prints returned to Domtar. Despite the Museum not having the originals (that may go another 50 years without being seen) – with the electronic version, we can reproduce and upload these images.





## Excavating Nekoosa

By Uncle Dave

The paper mill at Nekoosa was the product of hometown initiative and out-of-town investment. Entrepreneurial energy was provided by Thomas E. Nash of Centralia (later Grand Rapids, Wis. and now Wisconsin Rapids). The former railroad telegrapher would also be a founder of Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co.

Nash was joined in the Nekoosa project by Lewis M. Alexander, president of John Edwards Manufacturing Co., Port Edwards, Wis., a resident of four years who had married into the eponymous Edwards clan; A.W. Patten and his son-in-law, John McNaughton, owners of two paper mills at Appleton, Wis., and two at Kaukauna, Wis., both along the Fox River; and Nash's old friend and business partner, William F. Vilas, Madison, Wis., a U.S. Senator 1891-97. Letters between Nash and Vilas have provided material for several *River City Memoirs* books and newspaper stories.

Joining the original "syndicate of capitalists" were Frank Garrison of Centralia Pulp and Water Power and his partner, G. F. Steele, also general manager of the paper mill at Combined Locks, between Appleton and Kaukauna.

Excavation at Nekoosa began in May 1893, as Nash wrote to Vilas: "Have contracted for stone, brick, lime, cement, timber for the dam, water-wheels, pulp grinders, and one paper machine and shall probably close for the other and water filters in a day or two." The more celebrated of the two machines had been on display at the Columbian Exposition, Chicago.

Also under construction were a boiler house, smoke stack, beater room and finishing room. Building stone came from the Worden quarries in the town of Rudolph. Over a million bricks were shipped in from Watertown, Wis. Local and regional sources provided timber and lumber.

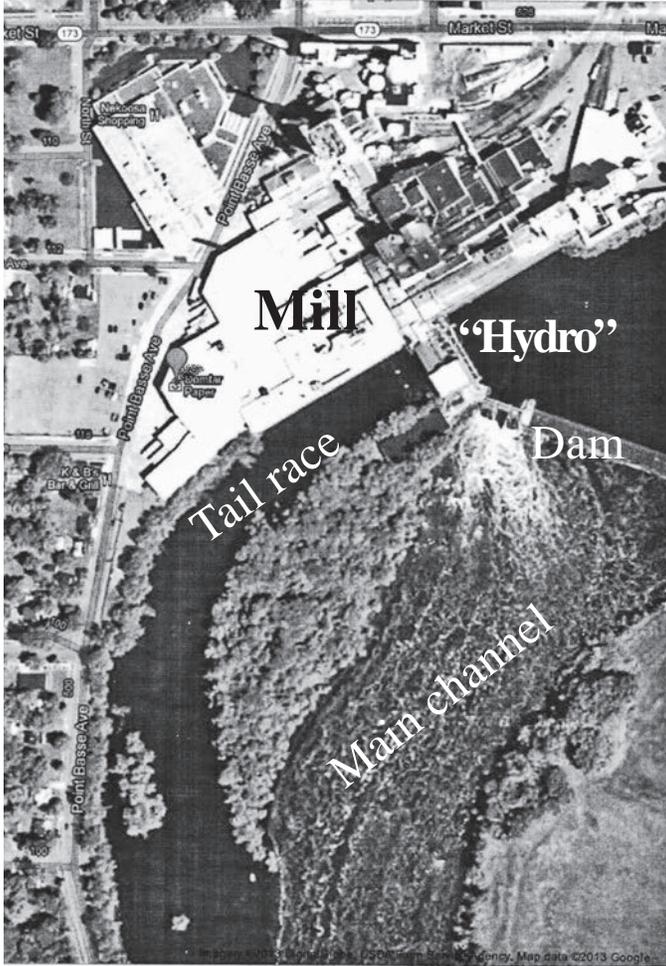
Construction began immediately on the village that would complement the mill. As it developed, the *Wood County Reporter* said, in 1893, "May Nekoosa prove to be a southern suburb that we can all be proud of."

See *River City Memoirs III* for the rest of this story. J. Marshall Buehler's *The Nekoosa Story* and *Looking Back: A History of Port Edwards* provide the most personable account of NEPCO and its role in the Age of Paper.



# Aerial View

Google Maps

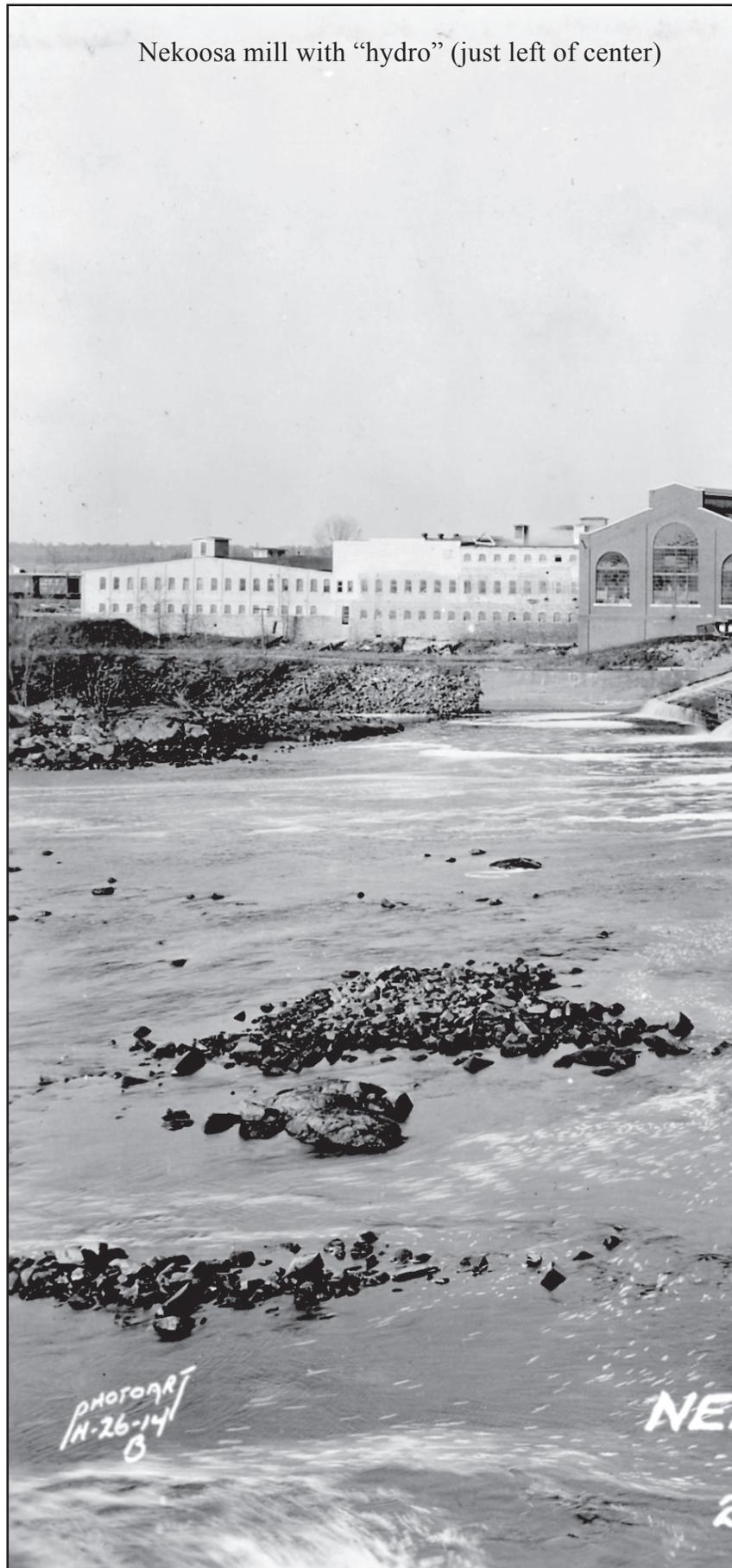
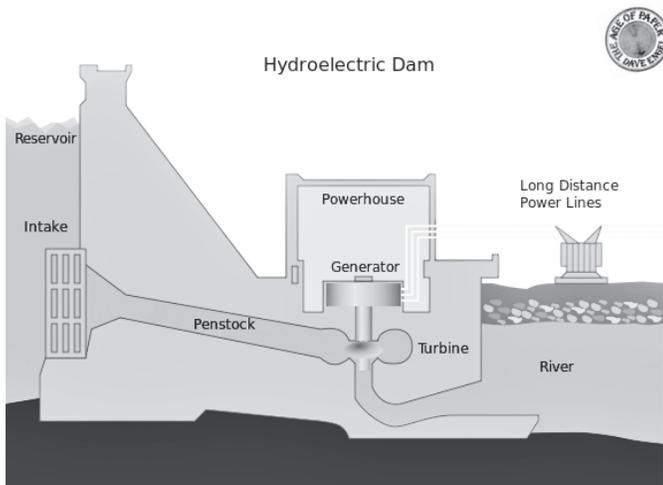


## Tail Race

Current from above the dam passes through the “hydro” where it spins waterwheels (turbines) connected to generators above. Most of the electricity produced at a paper mill powers its own operations.

The water departs the hydro by way of the tail race, at a lower altitude than the headrace above.

Wikimedia Commons





NEKOOSA EDWARDS PAPER CO.  
NEKOOSA MILLS  
200 TONS KRAFT PULP & PAPER.  
N115 11-5-28.



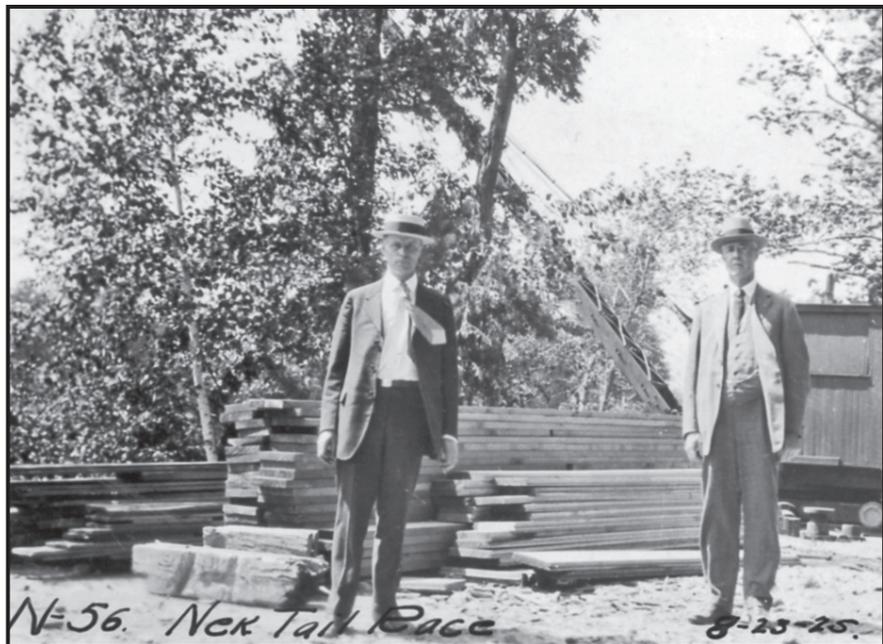
*N-523. Watchdog water go down 1 ft. river.  
7-26-25*

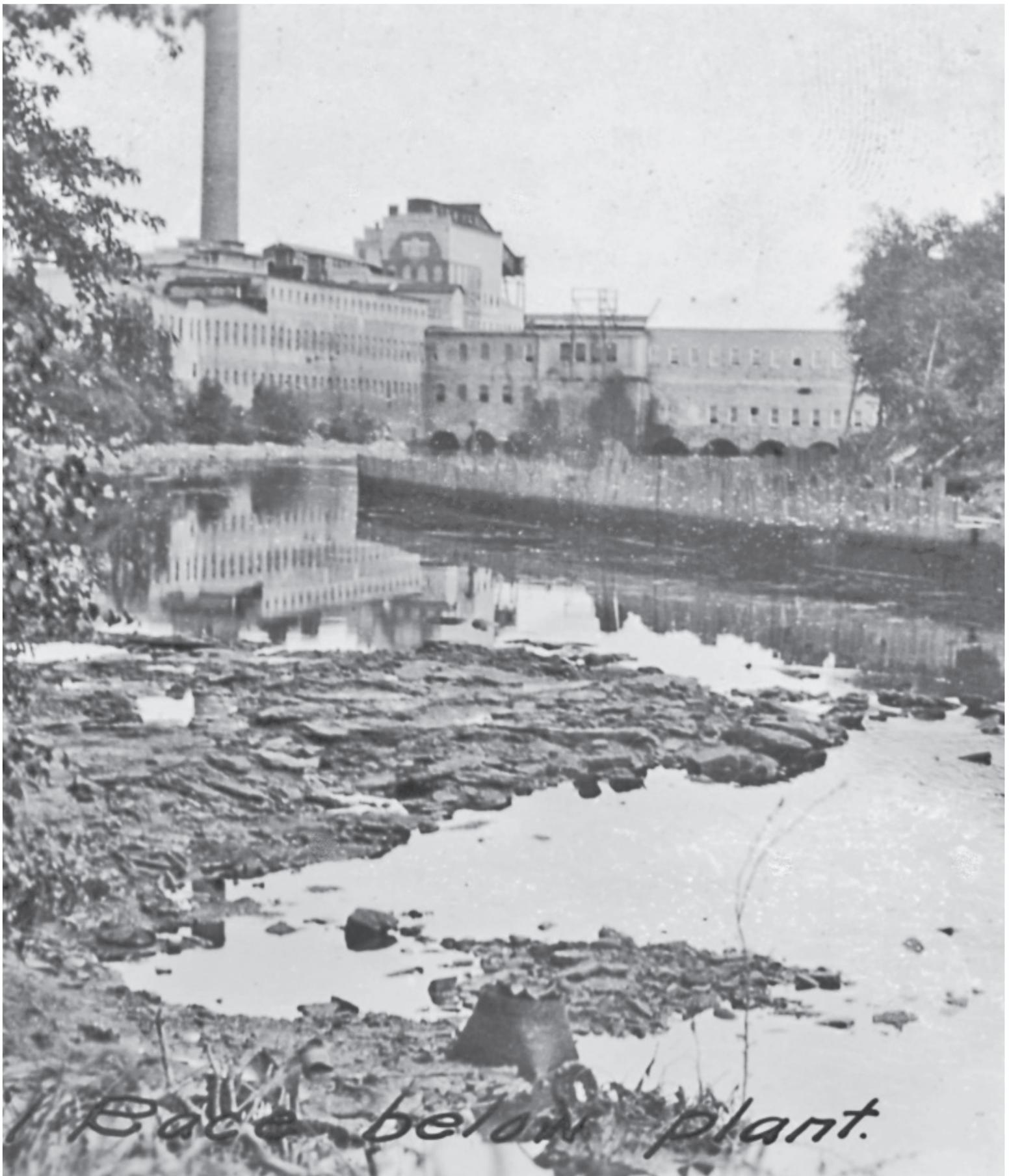


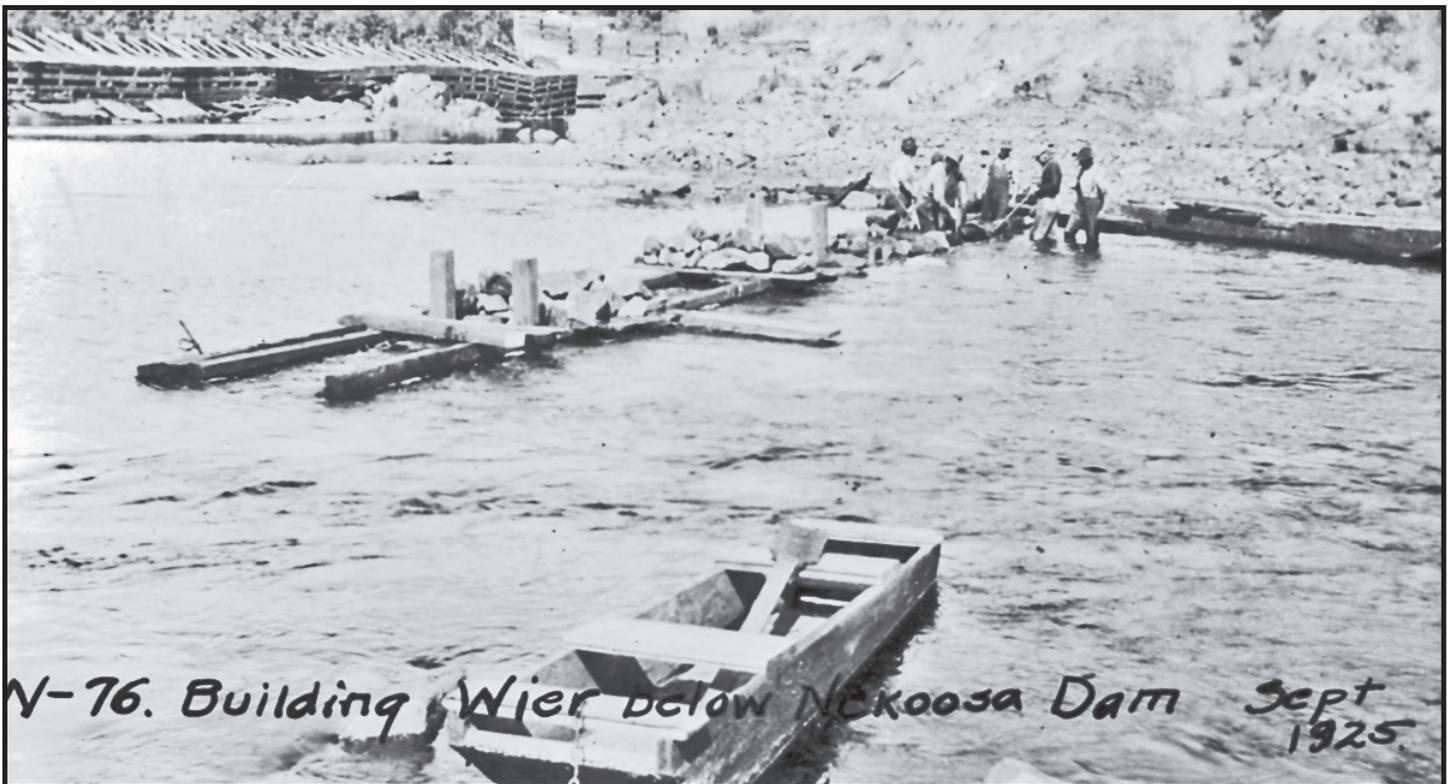
*N-533 Tail Race bed while water down.*



The Big Guys: Not identified on photos but within guessing distance are Nekoosa-Edwards executives and owners Lewis M. Alexander, at left, and above with mustache, and his son, John E. Alexander, above at center, pointing. Marshall Buehler tentatively identified man at right as William McGrogan, power superintendent at the Nekoosa mill. Head engineer Edward P. Gleason may also be pictured somewhere on these pages.







Marshall Buehler: The tail race was excavated to create a greater head or higher fall of water at the Nekoosa hydro plant. In generating electric power, the greater the fall of water, the more power that can be generated. When you can't raise the head water above the generator, the next thing is to excavate the tail race and make it deeper."

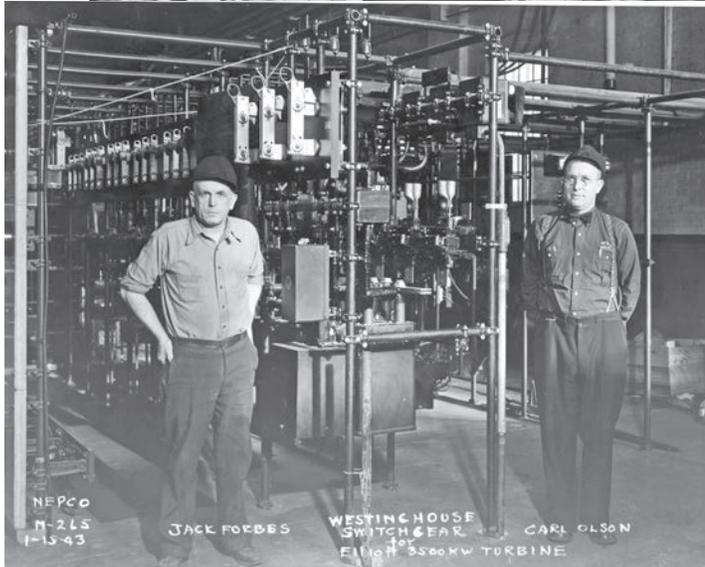




1930







NEPCO  
M-215  
1-15-43  
JACK FORBES  
WESTINGHOUSE  
SWITCH GEAR  
for  
Elliott 3500KW TURBINE  
CARL OLSON

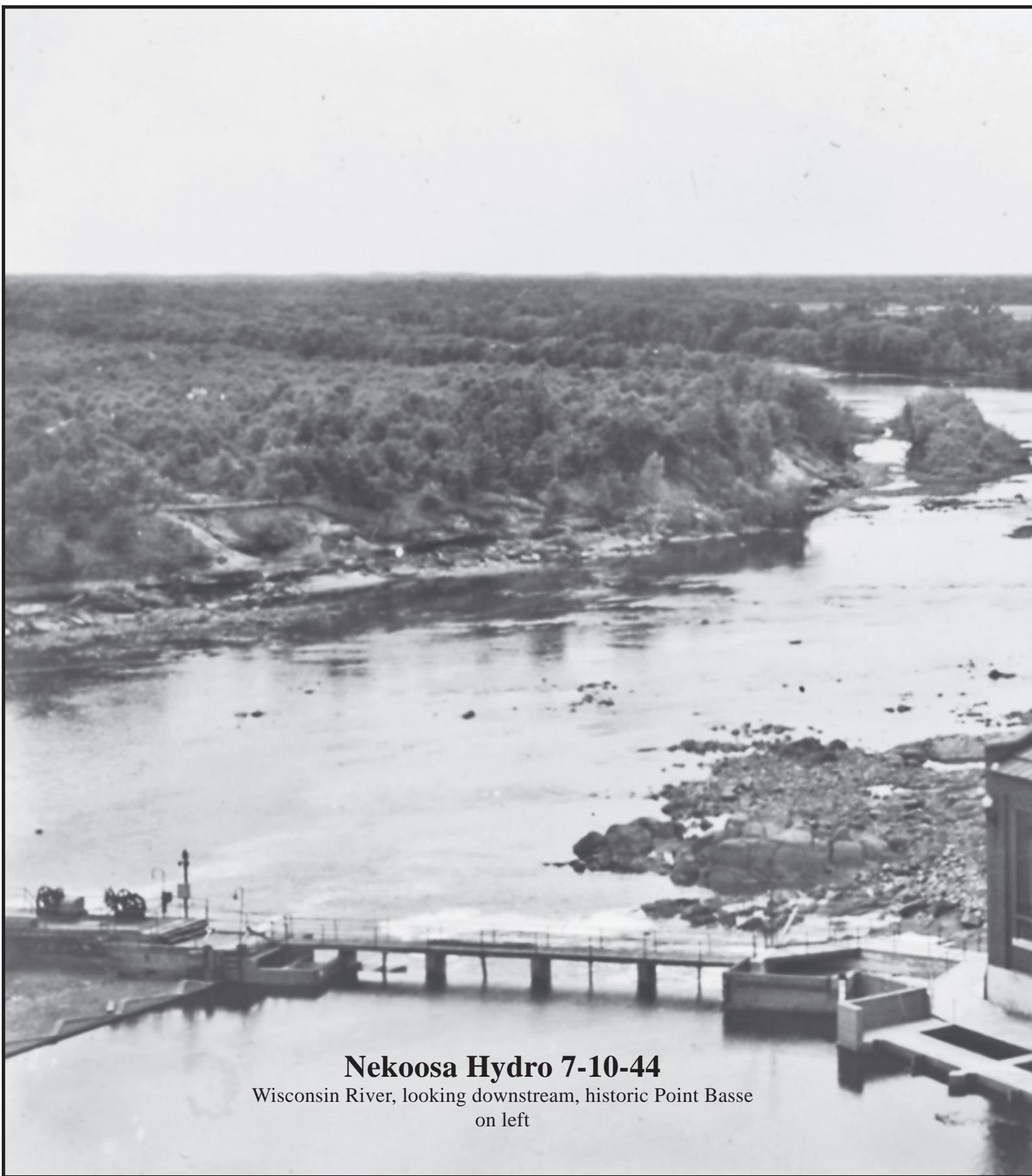


Upper left:  
Jack Forbes, Carl Olson  
Switch Gear for 3500 MW Turbine  
1943

Above right:  
Jack Forbes, Jim Mlsna, Carl Olson  
Nekoosa #5 3500 MW Turbine  
1944

Left:  
Louis Koehn Sr.  
3500 MW turbine switchboard

# Powerhouse



**Nekoosa Hydro 7-10-44**  
Wisconsin River, looking downstream, historic Point Basse  
on left



## Benefactor

Even though he graduated from Northwestern, said the University of Wisconsin Foundation website, Robert P. “Bob” Gleason “has always held the University of Wisconsin-Madison, particularly its athletic teams, close to his heart” and had chosen to include in his will a bequest to support U.W.

As an “accomplished” athlete in Port Edwards, Wis., Gleason had hoped to play football for the Badgers in part because his father, Edward P. Gleason, had earned a degree in mechanical engineering at Madison. But the senior Gleason had made other plans for his son.

“My father helped build the two paper mills on the Wisconsin River, in Port Edwards and Nekoo-sa,” Gleason told the Foundation. “I was going to go to Wisconsin, and then my father had a lot of contacts in Chicago through the paper companies. He got me a deal at Northwestern, where they had just started a new technological institute.”

Robert attended Northwestern 1940–1944 and played end on Wildcat football teams quarterbacked by the legendary Otto Graham. Like his father, he graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering.

In the Navy air corps toward the end of World War II, Gleason anticipated heading back to Port Edwards for a career in the paper industry when Northwestern grad Justin Dart offered him and other ex-military football players “the chance to come out to Los Angeles and go through training at Rexall [drug store chain]. About 12 of us

wound up in Los Angeles. That’s how I came to California.”

When Gleason met his future wife Ellen, granddaughter of William Cargill, founder of what would become Cargill Inc., he left Rexall and moved to Hawaii. “A friend of hers was chairman of the McKesson & Robbins drug company. They had five stores in Hawaii, and I oversaw those five stores.”



Robert Gleason  
*UW Foundation website*

Robert and Ellen settled on Ellen’s ranch in Solvang, Cal., a Danish-styled tourist town about 30 miles north of Santa Barbara. “She and her previous husband had planted these walnut trees on the ranch,” he said. “So I took over and raised walnuts for about 25 years.”

A few years after Ellen’s death, Robert sold the ranch and bought a new house in Solvang and got into the restaurant busi-

ness with a friend, Vincent Evans.

Evans and his wife died in a crash of the partners’ private jet in 1980, “the first time in those years that he and I didn’t fly together, and that changed my life.”

Now retired, Gleason spends most of his time in Solvang, but returns to Port Edwards each year. “I still have the old family house back there, right on the Wisconsin River,” he says. “I was born and raised there, so I still go back every summer from about the middle of July until Labor Day.”

During one of these visits the following interview was conducted.



## Friends in High Places

August 2008 interview with Robert Peck Gleason (Born 8-24-23)

Dave Engel with Ellsworth Oilschlager and Lori Brost

*Excerpts, edited*

My dad was Edward Peck Gleason and my mother was Fern Evelyn Gleason.

My father and Isaac Witter were very close friends. They built the St. John's Episcopal Church together. After the church was built, they had a couple big fund raisers on the back lawn here [at the SWCHC Museum building].

Isaac's son, Jere, and I were good friends even though he was older. Later on, he had his own apartment in that house up here [Third Street]. And of course, the Nashes lived next door. In those days, everybody knew everybody and it was a pretty small group.

Billy Huffman lived over on the corner. His father ran the *Tribune*. Every summer he'd come out and spend a week with us at the lake [Nepco] and then I'd spend a week with him in town here. I loved it because they had the old swimming pool at the time. We'd go up there swimming. Being from Port Edwards, I thought that was great.

Stanton Mead's mother, Ruth Mead, had an electric car. When we were at the lake in the summer, every now and then she'd call my mother to come into town. "Bring Bobby along and I'll give him a ride." We'd meet her and it was like a popcorn wagon, a big black boxy thing with a lever. Two or three times in the summer I'd come up and take a ride with her and she'd let me steer a little bit.

Alexanders: of course I was much closer with them then. John lived right next to us in the brick house at 311 Wisconsin River Drive. Alexanders and us, when we were born, we had a nurse that we shared between us. We were like one family; we were just together all the time. John and my dad were very close, they were like brothers.

John died very young. They sent him down to Madison [University hospital: cancer]. He called my father to come down so he was the last one to be with him when he died.

Alexander, he had a black cook from Chicago and her son was a famous tap dancer. He used to come up once in a while. I would go down there two or three times a week and have milk and cookies and everything.

My brother and I both went to Northwestern.

I was a Delta Tau Delta down there and the reason I got in was because John Alexander was a Delta Tau Delta. He made sure I became a Delt down there at Northwestern. Then my brother came after I did and he introduced the two Alexander girls, Marcia and Paula, to fraternity brothers and they both married fraternity brothers.

My father was born in Ashland. His father died, so when my father went to the University of Wisconsin, his mother moved down there and bought a house and took him all through college in Madison.

John brought my dad up from Madison and introduced him to his father. My father came up two summers in college. When they finished at Wisconsin, he went to work for Allis Chalmers in West Allis and did some experimental work for International Harvester.

Dorothy Alexander was like my second mother. We had a lot of parties in their home. She was a dancer. She used to perform for us.

When we were little kids, we'd go for a while and mingle with them and she'd put on a little dance show. She taught me how to put this foot way up on top of this knee and then this foot over this knee and then walk on your knees.

They had a big ballroom down there and in the later years they had a full bar and everything which we visited many times. They'd have one or two every summer where they'd dress up. I should show you a few of those pictures. Oh God, there was Alexanders, Vanattas, Mom and Dad, Herbie Roach from the Rapids, McCourt, and Utegaards.



E.P. Gleason

About every other summer, we were at the lake and they'd have a scavenger hunt. They'd divide up man and woman and give everybody a list of things to go out and get. One of the things on my dad's list was a lock of Harriet Jasperson's red hair. Everybody said, you'll never get that from her, but my dad, Christ, he came back with half of her head of hair.

Then, as I told you, every Saturday they had the big dinner dance at the Country Club.

In those days, the two paper companies [Nepco and Consolidated] were the best of friends. I would see Stanton Mead at big parties at the golf course.

They were members at the Upriver Gun Club, a trap shooting club, at that little cabin up there on the Biron road. My father died up there. He always went and shot first because he was the historian and kept the scores. After he finished shooting 25 out of 25, he went back to the car, cleaned his gun and put it in the trunk and sat behind the driver's wheel, reading a *Life* magazine and keeled over and died.

[*History of Up River Gun Club* by Dave Engel notes that long-time member E.P. Gleason had directed engineering projects for the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co., including the construction of Nepco Lake in 1925. Up River member Morris Wolcott told Uncle Dave in 2006 that, in 1968, Gleason, "came up to me and said, 'I'm gonna give you the keys to the trap house and you take care of the trap.'" Wolcott took the keys. Gleason went into the car, sat behind the wheel and died.]

*Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*  
April 23, 1945

Naval A/C Robert P. Gleason, son of Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Gleason, 321 Wisconsin River avenue, Port Edwards, has completed the course of physical conditioning and ground school work at the U.S. navy preflight school, Athens, Ga., and has been ordered to a naval air station to begin progressive flight training preparatory to joining a combat unit. A graduate of John Edwards High school in 1940, he participated in football, basketball and golf. Later, he attended Northwestern university, where he also was an athlete and from which school he graduated in 1944. He now reports to the naval air station, Memphis, Tenn.

### 1923 *History of Wood County*

Edward P. Gleason, chief engineer of the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co., was born in Ashland, Wis., March 8, 1889, son of Edward F. and Mary D. (Peck) Gleason.

The father was born in Waukesha, Wis., of Irish ancestry, was reared in the same place, and in 1885 settled in Ashland, Wis., where he followed the profession of attorney-at-law until his death.

His wife, who is also deceased, was from Connecticut and traced her descent from colonial ancestors. They had two children, Edward P. and Robert, the latter of whom is deceased [died in 1899].

Edward P. Gleason attended the common and high schools in Ashland, being graduated from the latter in 1906. Four years later he received the degree of B.S.M.E. from the Wisconsin State University, after which he entered the Student Apprentice Course of the Allis Chalmers Co. of Milwaukee, where he remained for a year and a half.

After that he worked one year in the Experimental Engineering Department of the International Harvester Co. In October, 1912, he came to Port Edwards to take the position of assistant engineer for the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co., in which position he served until 1917, when he was made chief engineer of the company's three plants.

Fraternally he is a Blue Lodge Chapter and Mason and a member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. He is a member of the Technical Association of the Pulp & Paper Industry and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

As a good citizen he is always ready to lend a helping hand in any local movement for the betterment of the community.

Mr. Gleason was married in Wisconsin Rapids, in August, 1921, to Fern Millenbah, who was born in Merrill, Wis., Aug. 28, 1898, daughter of Henry and Mayme (Larson) Millenbah. Her parents were early settlers in Wisconsin and are now living in Wisconsin Rapids.



## Early Sorrow & Society Pages

*Sept. 6, 1906* Miss Pauline Alexander is the guest of Miss Grace Goggins in Grand Rapids.

*1910* Mary Peck, 67, widow of Samuel, resides on Madison St., Madison, Wis., with son and UW student Edward Gleason, 21.

*Reported July 5, 1911*

Oconomoc, Wis., the drowning of Pauline Edwards Alexander.

Pauline, 19, and her brother John, 16, are driving their motorboat from a rented cottage to pick up their father, Lewis M., 60, when leaking gas bursts into flames. Pauline is knocked into the water and John is badly burned. Their mother and a servant are picked up by a nearby boat.

L.M. Alexander is called, "one of the prominent capitalists of Milwaukee. He is president of the Merchants and Manufacturers bank and of the Milwaukee National bank and largely interested in the paper industry in Wisconsin."

Pauline had been a student at May Bennett's preparatory school at Millbrook, New York (in 2013 a spectacular ruins). Buried in Milwaukee, "Deceased was well known in this city [Grand Rapids], having spent a part of nearly every summer at Port Edwards, at which point Mr. Alexander is extensively interested."

*March 18, 1914*

John Alexander, who is attending Lawrence college at Appleton, is home to spend a week's vacation with his parents at Port Edwards.

Miss Grace Goggins, who is attending Normal school at Milwaukee, spent Sunday at home with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. B.R. Goggins.

*July 21, 1914*

Will Entertain For Bride-to-Be—Miss Grace Goggins, who will be a bride early in August, will be the guest of honor at a party given by Miss Marie Looze, at which a number of girl members of the graduating class of the Lincoln High school of 1912 will be guests. On Saturday Miss Lucie Church will entertain a number of girl friends in her honor.

*July 28, 1914*

Mrs. Henry Demitz will entertain young ladies at her Third street home in honor of Miss Grace Goggins. Miss Goggins will be guest of honor at a party at the Pavilion given by Miss Mary Jones.

*August 4, 1914*

Twenty-five young ladies were entertained by Mrs. Albert Natwick at her Third street home in honor of Miss Grace Goggins who tomorrow becomes the bride of Edw. Gleason.

*August 5, 1914*

Marriage of Grace Goggins, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. B.R. Goggins, to Edward Gleason of Port Edwards at the Methodist church...groom attended by John Alexander.

Bride and groom leave for Stevens Point in an auto to begin a wedding tour...upon returning will make their home in Port Edwards where Mr. Gleason holds a responsible position with the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. The bride was born and raised in Rapids where she is deservedly popular as is her husband who has been located here for the past couple of years.

*Sept. 22, 1915*

The sudden death of Mrs. Edward Gleason at the home of her parents has cast a gloom over the whole community. Grace Goggins was born in Grand Rapids, March 23, 1894. She was a graduate of the Lincoln High school and had attended Milwaukee Downer College and Stevens Point Normal. Mrs. Gleason was of a bright, sunny disposition which had greatly endeared her to a large number outside the family circle.

*1915*

Fern Millenbah marries Edwin Kuhlmann.

*1917*

Edwin Kuhlmann dies.

*1920 census*

Edward Gleason, 30, "widowed," lives on Second Street, Port Edwards, as does his grandmother, Mary Peck, 77

*1922*

Fern Millenbah, widow, marries Edward Gleason, widower.

## What is Domtar?

In the glory days of the Age of Paper, the *Artifacts* locale celebrated the world headquarters of two locally-owned paper makers: Consolidated Papers, Inc., in Wisconsin Rapids, and Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co., in Port Edwards.



Cover design of an 1860s song, exhibited by the Dard Hunter papermaking museum, formerly in Appleton, Wis.

The *Age of Paper* is also a 1986 book by *Artifacts* editor (Uncle) Dave Engel, detailing the water powers along the Wisconsin River in Wisconsin Rapids.

As local offices close and the veil of proprietorship is lifted, relics and memorabilia occasionally become available to museums and archives such as our own. Witness the photos shown in these pages.

The Nekoosa mill is now owned by an entity named “Domtar,” which sounds pretty dominating. It was started by Henry Potter Burt, who founded Burt, Boulton Holdings Ltd. in England. That was 1848, the year Wisconsin became a state.

Burt, Boulton Holdings marketed a process protecting lumber, such as railroad ties, from decay. In 1903, a new company emerged from BBH called Dominion Tar and Chemical Co. Ltd. Upon the outbreak in 1914 of World War I, Dominion Tar established its head office in Montreal, Quebec, where it has remained.

In mid 20th century, Dominion Tar grew to be one of Canada’s largest companies, trading in chemicals, consumer products, construction materials, kraft and fine papers, newsprint, container board, and packaging. It began making paper in 1961.

In 1965, Dominion Tar became Domtar Ltd., then Domtar Inc. It “divested other interests” in favor of papermaking in the 1990s and expanded into the U.S., acquiring Ris

Paper Co. Inc., a merchant in commercial printing and business paper, now Domtar Distribution Group.

Meanwhile, the Nekoosa Paper Co. merged with the John Edwards Manufacturing Co. to form Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company in 1908. Nekoosa-Edwards merged with Great Northern Paper Co. in 1970. Great Northern Nekoosa Corp. was acquired by Georgia-Pacific, headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., through a 1990 “hostile takeover.”

In 2001, Domtar acquired four Georgia-Pacific paper mills: Woodland, Maine (sold in 2010), Ashdown, Ark. (operating), Nekoosa (operating) and Port Edwards, becoming at that time Canada’s largest paper company in terms of sales and the third largest manufacturer of uncoated free-sheet paper in North America.

The Port Edwards mill, at what was once one of our own first class world headquarters, was closed in 2008.



## Walking into another world

A couple of investigative crews from the world-wide media have been drawn here by the *fin de siecle* of the Age of Paper. In our own August pages was published our portion of a study of declining communities from the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism.

Then, in December 2012, John Schmid and Mike De Sisti for the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting joined that effort. Their “Paper Cuts: Wisconsin Then and China Now,” a series in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, had been profiled on NPR’s *All Things Considered*.

“Across the state, milling lumber into good paper, the kind called ‘knowledge’ grade for books, has employed thousands for more than a century, and created a distinct culture. Then about six years ago, the mills started closing as a result of the twin threat of the iPad and China. Still, some hearty souls are surviving through grit and attitude.”

According to Schmid, mills were set along “lushly forested rivers” in a pastoral setting of great scenery and wildlife a Madisonian could love—rife with cranes, gulls, egrets, deer and eagles. “Such outdoorsy charm creates a counter-intuitive backdrop for a globalization project about economic change that moves with digital speed.”

Our own Nekoosa mill is called, “the most striking and atavistic” of all, “along a stretch of the Wisconsin River where nearly every town has a mill that makes paper of some sort – and some that until recently once had such a mill.”

Schmid portrays Nekoosa as a mill “of particular pride and distinction.”

Owned by Canadian paper maker Domtar Corp., said Schmid, it has made the paper for best sellers, including J.K. Rowling, Stephen

King, Malcolm Gladwell and Henry Kissinger.

“One executive told me with obvious pride that Nekoosa alone on some weeks would account for nearly half the best sellers on display in the national bookstore chains – back when those sorts of chains existed, anyway.

“Most notably, it made the paper for the cinder block-like biography of Steve Jobs, the visionary who did more than anybody to popularize the touch screens that have put a shroud of uncertainty over those mills and put many out of business.”

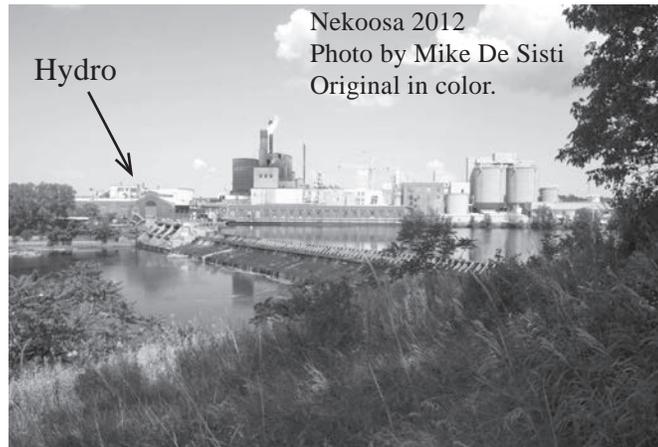
Schmid and De Sisti toured the “handsome brick structure” of the Nekoosa mill on a warm summer day.

“The guide took me inside, where it was even warmer – that’s because paper machines have large middle sections called dryers that bake the last moisture out of the pulp. The interior was humid, cramped and noisy.”

The guide took the tourists “past some huge pulping vats and through a metal door and we stepped back into the sunlight, this time from a side of the building I had not seen driving in.

“It was like walking into another world. Standing out on the mill’s riverside gangways, the main sound was the rushing river. I could see one of the three hydro-electric dams that still provide about a third of the mill’s electricity. The river was wide. Across the way was nothing but trees, reflected in the river, part of the seemingly endless hardwood forests in northern Wisconsin.

“It is the same unchanged view that Nekoosa paper makers have seen for over a century. The view is as breathtaking as any painting by Thomas Cole or the others in the 19th century Hudson River School of landscape painting.”









Wisconsin Veterans Museum

Wisconsin 8th Infantry Eagle Regiment with Old Abe, Vicksburg, July 1863

## Scandal Circulated

“OLD ABE” VICTIM OF A HORRIBLE STORY  
A MYSTERY CLEARED UP

From the March 20, 1915, *Daily Leader*  
Grand Rapids, Wis.

A scandalous story has arisen recently relative to “Old Abe,” and it should be told, for everybody in Wisconsin has known about the war eagle and will not rest if it is possible to shield its memory from those who, through revenge or a mistaken kindness, have cast reproach upon it.

A few days ago, a taxidermist of Jackson county presented to the state a stuffed bald eagle from the same family of eagles that “Old Abe” hailed from. It is now on exhibition back of the speaker’s desk, in the assembly room, and is greatly admired both by members and visitors.

Now comes the scandal. The taxidermist, who is perfectly familiar with bird creation, when told that the present eagle was not as large as “Old Abe” said, “I know that. You

should remember that the male bird is never as large as the female bird.”

The information of the taxidermist makes plain some of the mysteries of the Eighth Wisconsin’s experience.

Officers of the regiment, as well as members that felt free to call at the colonel’s tent during the mess hour, frequently spoke of the abnormal size of the eggs on the colonel’s table.

It also explains why “Old Abe” was furious one day when “he” saw a soldier carrying one of “his” eggs to the colonel’s tent. “He” flew at the man and would have driven him from camp but for the ready help given the poor fellow by his comrades.

It is now believed that if proper treatment had been accorded “Old Abe” during those four years “he” could have flooded the south with Wisconsin bald eagles.

By Col. Billy Parker

## “That Yankee Buzzard” *Old Abe the War Eagle*



Wisconsin’s most famous Civil War veteran was not even human. She was a bald eagle mascot of the 8th Wisconsin infantry regiment.

Old Abe was captured by Lac Du Flambeau Indians in the spring of 1861 near what is today Park Falls, Wis., and was traded to Daniel McCann for a bushel of corn.

Old Abe’s military career began that fall when McCann sold the eagle to a newly recruited company, the Eau Claire Badgers, for \$2.50. After the purchase, they changed their nickname to the Eau Claire Eagles and gave the female eaglet the name Old Abe. Upon mustering in to federal service at Camp Randall in Madison the Eau Claire Badgers became company C, 8th Wisconsin infantry regiment and were designated as the color company whose mission it was to protect the flag.

March 4–April 8, 1862, Old Abe was involved with her first major campaign, the siege of Island Number 10 on the Mississippi River. The 8th Wisconsin was not heavily engaged in the campaign that ended in a major Union victory.

Old Abe’s first serious combat came at Corinth Mississippi, Oct. 3-4, 1862. Accounts have her flying high over the battle but that was because the cord for her perch was shot off and her eagle bearer was wounded. So

was Old Abe, shot through one wing but not drawing blood and only losing a few feathers.

In 1863 during the siege of Vicksburg, Miss., the Confederates in the trench watched

her fly high over their lines every day and even placed a bounty on her, calling her “that Yankee buzzard.”

She was wounded yet again there as one shot grazed her neck and chest but did not cause any serious damage. This caused the regiment to have her wings clipped.

With the siege ending on another Union victory, Old Abe had one more major campaign, March 10-22, 1863, in which the regiment spent most of its time fighting small rear guard actions on its retreat back to New Orleans after the disastrous battle of Mansfield, La.

On Sept. 26, 1864, Old Abe began her retirement. When the enlistment of the original 8th Wisconsin ran out, she was presented to the state of Wisconsin as a gift. She spent her retirement years visiting fairs, expositions and veterans reunions to help raise money for wounded veterans.

In February 1881, a small fire broke out in the basement of the state capital. Old Abe was rescued but the effects of the smoke caused her to pass away on March 26. Her body was then stuffed and placed back in the capitol only to burn in another fire in 1904.

Today a replica of Old Abe is on display over the Wisconsin State assembly. Her likeness still goes into battle on the patch of the 101st airborne division. She also graces several

monuments throughout the state and battlefields where she fought. She also has been included on many company logos including J.I. Case.



*Wisconsin Capitol burning 1904*

South Wood County Historical Corp.  
540 Third Street South  
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 31



*Artifacts*, a local history magazine and newsletter for the South Wood County Historical Corp. welcomes contributions of writings and photographs relevant to the greater Wisconsin Rapids area. For a year's subscription and membership send \$20 to the address above. Questions? Contact Lori Brost, Museum Administrator and assistant editor, 715-423-1580. [lori@swch-museum.com](mailto:lori@swch-museum.com)

