

# John Raine



John Raine entered into the lumber business in 1893 with his brother W. T. Raine and in 1906, they acquired 32,000 acres of timber and coal lands in Greenbrier, Fayette and Nicholas Counties, West Virginia, and the Meadow River Lumber Company was formed.

Mr. Raine and his brother founded a town at the foothills of big Sewell Mountain in Greenbrier County and named it Rainelle and in 1908 began construction of their railroad. In 1909, the brothers began construction on their mill and sawing began in September 1910. Its triple band saws cut 35,000,000 board feet of lumber annually. The lumber yard had more than three miles of dock stacked 20 to 30 feet high. After thorough seasoning, the lumber went to the planing mill, which had an annual capacity of 25,000,000 board feet. The brothers were pioneers in adding value to West Virginia timber. The hardwood flooring plant had a capacity of 12,000,000 board feet and produced 4,000,000 women's wooden shoe heels annually. Logs were transported to the mill twice daily by shay engines over their own railroad. Products, such as wooden shoe heels, tongue-and-groove flooring and interior trim, not only added value, but pioneered work in utilizing the entire tree.

They built 25 miles of railway before they started the mill and added about 10 miles per year in the headwaters of Meadow River for many years. From 1910 to 1970, Rainelle was the home of the largest hardwood sawmill in the world. The employees numbered approximately 500. Mr. Raine became general manager of the Meadow River Lumber Company and it quickly built up an international business of exporting finished lumber to the United Kingdom and Europe. They were big suppliers of finished lumber for phonograph cases. Raineola talking machines were also manufactured in Rainelle for many years.

In addition to being president of the Meadow River Lumber Company and managing it for many years, Mr. Raine had many other forestry business connections and community activities. He was president of the Bank of Rainelle and John Raine Real Estate Holding Company; vice-president of the Southern Forestry Congress; member of the West Virginia Wesleyan College Board of Trustees; and, Appalachian Forest Research Council Trustee, appointed by Secretary of Agriculture Howard M. Gore.

In 1934, Mr. Raine was a guest of Oberlander Trust Company in Germany and shared his knowledge of forestry practices and methods of reforestation with those interested in the United States in the 1930s. On one of his return trips abroad, he brought back an instrument from Germany that measured the growth of trees. This instrument was not used in the United States at that time. Mr. Raine also did a lot of visiting with schools, 4-H and service clubs, talking about forest resources in West Virginia.