

John L. Stauber

Nominated by John C. Stauber, grandson

The John L. Stauber story begins with his father, John K. Stauber, who came to Marshfield in the early 1880s. He married and went to work for the Upham Manufacturing Company as a cabinetmaker for the grand wages of 30 cents an hour, ten hours per day, six days per week.

John K. and his wife Frances had seven children, the youngest of whom was John L. Stauber, born September 2, 1897. All of the other children, except a sister, Frances Barrett, left Marshfield to work and live. John L. attended St. John's grade school and Marshfield McKinley High School. Because of financial need at home, he worked part-time at what was then the Roddis Lumber and Veneer Company. Late in his senior year of high school, while riding the North Western train from his home to work, he had what seemed a tragic accident which changed the course of his life. He fell partially under the train and his left foot was amputated at the instep. This injury caused him to not graduate high school due to the lack of a history credit. It also made it possible for him to get his first job in banking, as a messenger boy at what was then the German American Bank.



John L.'s career saw him successively become a bookkeeper, teller, loan officer, and, in February 1933, the executive vice president of the American National Bank, successor to the German American Bank. In March 1933 when President Roosevelt declared a national bank holiday to close all of the banks in the country not already closed by failure due to the Depression, American National was among those closed.

John L. was married in 1920 to Marie Bening, a farm girl from the town of Day, whom he met while clerking farm auctions in the area. They had three children, John H. born in 1921, Robert born in 1923, and Betty Fran (Elizabeth Frances) born in 1926.

Having a family to support and being in the depths of the Depression, John L. obtained an appointment as Conservator of the American National Bank and simultaneously began the daunting task of forming a new bank, not a popular concept at the time. However, by March of 1934, he, along with men like Louis Hartl, E. M. Lee, John P. Adler, August Mews, Hubert Weber, Emil Umhoefer, and others, was able to open the Citizens National Bank of Marshfield, forerunner of the Citizens National Bank, now Associated Bank. Meanwhile, through his efforts as conservator, all of the deposits of the American National Bank were paid in full and the stockholders suffered no stock assessment.

John L. became president and chairman of the board of directors of Citizens and was still active as chairman when he died in 1982. During his career (from 1914 to 1982), he became well known for his many banking innovations. He helped start Wisconsin farmers on their alfalfa program (he was known throughout the state as "Alfalfa John") by lending farmers funds at low interest to grow alfalfa as a hay crop. He was also active in Trees for Tomorrow and encouraged Wisconsin banks to buy tree planters to be used to reforest farmland denuded by indiscriminate tree cutting. He was elected president of the Wisconsin Bankers Association in 1953. He developed the chattel mortgage concept for lending money to farmers for cattle and machinery and business owners for equipment of all kinds. He then served on a presidential commission to bring the chattel mortgage to farmers throughout the country. He served as

chairman of the North Wood County War Bond Committee during WWII. He was chairman of a number of St. Joseph's Hospital fund drives and served on the hospital board for many years.

John L. also participated and served in many civic and community organizations. He was president of the Chamber of Commerce and of its predecessor, the Marshfield Commercial Club. He was president of the Marshfield Industrial Foundation, now part of MACCI, secretary-treasurer of Sacred Heart parish, a member and state and local officer of the Knights of Columbus, president of and a Paul Harris fellow in the Rotary Club, and a member of many other organizations.

John L. Stauber passed away at the age of 84 in 1982, survived by his wife, children, and a legacy of business and civic accomplishments.