

William Duncan Connor, Sr.
Nominated by Sara W. Connor

W.D. Connor, Sr. (1864-1944) was a pioneer lumberman and lieutenant governor (1906-1908). He built most of the infrastructure of Auburndale, Stratford, and Laona. His leadership steered landmark Workmen's Compensation legislation for the timber industry. His motto of "Behind the Mills, the Connor Timber Stands" legacy still stands today, implementing Wisconsin Forest Crop Act and multiple-use sustained-yield forest management.

W.D. Connor, Sr. was born in Stratford, Ontario, Canada. In 1872, he moved with his parents to Wisconsin, settling on a farm near Auburndale. He began his career in the R. Connor Company, his father's lumber company. W.D. moved to Marshfield in 1894, and eventually acquired extensive land and timber holdings in Wisconsin, and on Vancouver Island, Canada.



The Wisconsin Forest Crop Act passed in 1927. As President of the Connor Lumber and Land Company, W.D. was at the forefront of its passage and implementation of multiple-use sustained logging practices. Connor was an advocate of new logging techniques and maximizing growth over harvest.

As a visionary lumberman, Mr. Connor created Stratford and Laona with infrastructure to support the men, women, and families that worked for the R. Connor Company/Connor Lumber and Land Company. W.D. Connor built the Marathon County Railroad and the Laona & Northern Railroad throughout Central and Northern Wisconsin. He built the banks, stores, schools, and hospitals. He brought doctors to treat the people who lived in the communities and teachers for the schools. In Laona, W.D. built the hotel, as well as providing cultural performing arts. Providing sufficient infrastructure for the residents, he built the houses, churches, and public works companies. It took planning, financial risk, and vision.

Cruising and buying timber throughout northern Wisconsin, W.D. Connor's timber holdings were in excess of 225,000 acres. Losing half the land in the Great Depression did not stop his philanthropy. He gave land and a full logging camp, plus all of the necessary equipment to run it, to the Milwaukee Council Boy Scouts of America – Camp LeFeber - Northwoods in the heart of the Connor land in Laona.

W.D. Connor contributed greatly to the establishment of the Marshfield Library. He served on the Board of Trustees and President of Carroll College in Waukesha. His axiom was "Knowledge is Power."

W.D. Connor was very active in Wisconsin politics. He was Chairman of the Wisconsin Central Committee from 1904-1906. Lieutenant Governor from 1906-1908. W.D. Connor served on the Marshfield City Council. For twenty years, he served on the Wood County Board and as its President.

W.D. Connor, Sr. was at the forefront of Wisconsin political policy and the development of legislation. Serving as Wisconsin Lieutenant Governor, W.D. Connor, Sr. cast the deciding vote making Wisconsin the First State to have Workman's Compensation. Realizing that the Lumber Industry is the most dangerous and has the highest accident rate of any business, Mr. Connor, like so many of the Lumbermen in the Wisconsin legislature, was concerned for the men, their families, and their future. W.D. Connor, Sr. served as Lt. Gov. when the Natural Resources Department was formed.

During World War II, W.D. Connor served as head of the Wisconsin Council of Defense. He was chairman of the Marshfield Liberty Loan Drives and Victory Gardens Committee.

He was President of both the Marshfield American National Bank and the Stevens Point First National Bank.

During his tenure as President of Connor Lumber and Land Company, they were active in the Northern Hemlock and Hardwood Manufacturers Association and Michigan-Wisconsin Timber Producers Association, Maple Hardwood Manufacturers Association, National Hardwood Lumber Manufacturers Association. W.D. Connor, Sr. was a pioneer Lumberman in Wisconsin. Having moved from Stratford, Canada, to Auburndale, W.D. Connor worked tirelessly in Wisconsin's lumber and forest products industry.

W.D. Connor, Sr. passed away on November 20, 1944 having lived a full life of business and service to his community.