

## Wisconsin River

After the lands bordering the river were opened up for development, two men, named Campbell and Conant built a saw mill at what was sometimes referred to as "Conant Rapids".<sup>45</sup> Actually, almost the entire river from Stevens Point (Clark Street Bridge) to the mouth of the Plover River was rapids. The river fell about 42 feet through this area and was compared to the *Grand Rapids* in the present city of Wisconsin Rapids.<sup>46</sup> Today the Wisconsin River Division Dam is situated near the site of the old Conant Dam. Many large rocks are visible in the channel upstream of the dam, along West River Drive. The land in this area was donated to the county for a park.

In 1889, George Whiting, William Whiting and R.C. Russel were authorized to build a dam across the Wisconsin River. The dam was constructed in 1890 of timber cribs filled with rock. The original dam had no gates, so except for what water passed through the water wheels, high flows would overtop the entire dam. Much of the timber crib portion of this dam remained intact underwater upstream of the present spillway section until 1992 when it was razed to build a cofferdam to make repairs to the present concrete gate section.

In 1892 the Wisconsin River Paper and Pulp Company was incorporated and acquired the rights to the Whiting dam. Some accounts will refer to this as "Lower Stevens Point" dam. Others may call it the "upper dam" referring to the smaller Whiting Mill dam located just downstream.<sup>47</sup> The Wisconsin Geological Survey states there were 16 turbines installed with a capacity of 4,660 horse power.

In 1926 a new concrete dam with 20 taintor gates was constructed and the old crib dam was submerged. A concrete spillway was built on the west end of the dam and on the east near the grinder room. At this time the head was raised to about 23½ feet. The west spillway remained until 1949, when it was covered with soil and became part of the present dike. The concrete spillway constructed between the grinder room and the gate section remains and was rebuilt in the 1980's with drain tile installed to control seepage.

About twenty years later, on August 1, 1945, the dam and power facilities were purchased by the CWP&PCo. By that time only 13 of the original turbines remained. Two of these were used for hydro generation only and the remainder for grinding wood.

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<sup>45</sup> *A Standard History of Portage County*, Lewis Publishing Company, Page 217, 1919

<sup>46</sup> *The Water Powers Of Wisconsin*, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, Madison, WI, 1908

<sup>47</sup> This dam and mill is today owned by the Neenah Division of Kimberly Clark.

In 1947, 3 of the old grinders were abandoned and the flumes filled. Electric motors were used to continue to grind wood. In 1960 the fourth grinder turbine was abandoned and the flume filled. Then, in 1963 the two hydro generators were converted to grind wood and a new "tube type" or horizontal hydro turbine was installed. This was the now infamous "Moose". This machine was of the adjustable pitch propeller or Kaplan design and was intended to be a standard, easily installed hydro that Allis-Chalmers, now located in York, PA<sup>48</sup> was promoting. Being a horizontal, standard design, the "Moose" saved installation costs over the heavy vertical units that required deeper footings. Since the dam and mill rest on solid granite, this saved considerable design and construction costs at that time. The "Moose", or #1 hydro, is rated at 2,800 horse power. Workers at WRIV who have felt it shake when running wild figure there are more than horses at work down there. The *Moose* was not designed to the standards of the old vertical hydro generators and because of that and other factors is not as reliable.

On January 1, 1966 Consolidated Papers Inc. transferred ownership of the hydro and dam to the Consolidated Water Power Company. In 1994 a new all electric grinder room is expected to come on line. Early in 1995 the old grinder room will be converted to strictly hydro generation as is Biron and Wisconsin Rapids. This building and equipment will also be conveyed to the Power Company.

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<sup>48</sup> Allis Chalmers Hydro Division was purchased in the 1980's by Voith.