

Who's Who In Wisconsin Rapids

The Who's Who column will be run each Saturday in the Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune. It will include a brief sketch of the life of citizens who have helped make history for Wisconsin Rapids.

Joseph A. Cohen



Today J. A. Cohen, former Mayor of Wisconsin Rapids and one of the city's best known business men, is the subject.

Joseph Abraham Cohen, son of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Cohen, was born February 12, 1869, at Aleckintz, Province of Berlin.

He attended school in Brody, Austria, until twelve years of age and after leaving school commenced clerking in stores in that country.

In the spring of 1889 he left his native land for the United States, arriving in New York City and continuing his journey to Milwaukee, where he clerked for a short time in the Steinhilber Co. general store.

Moved to Neenah

He remained in Milwaukee until early in the spring of 1891, when he went to Neenah and engaged in business in a general store with his brothers Max and Nate. They continued the business in that city for one year and on May 20, 1891, removed the goods to Wisconsin Rapids and opened up the Cohen Bros. General

Merchandise store in the building now occupied by the Beardsley Grocery store.

Added Branch Stores

The store was under the management of J. A. Cohen. Within three years' time the three brothers added six branch stores which were located at Waupaca, Stanley, Wausau, Merrill, Rice Lake and Stevens Point, which have all been closed except the J. A. Cohen & Bros. store at Merrill.

Built Large Building

In the year 1903 a new modern brick building was erected on Mr. Cohen's lot on First Street North and when completed the stock of goods removed to the new quarters, where Mr. Cohen remained in charge until July 1, 1919, when the stock was transferred to the Merrill store, and the building leased to J. R. Ragan, where he conducts a furniture business.

Elected Mayor in 1912

At the spring election of 1912 Mr. Cohen was elected mayor of the city, by a big majority over three opposing candidates and is the only candidate of this city who ever ran with opposition and carried every ward. He was reelected at the following election without opposition. During his administration the work of street paving was begun and waterworks and sewerage systems were installed owing to water shortage the pumping station on Oak Street was also installed.

City Bought Electric Plant

Under his direction, the electric light plant was taken over by the city. He also created a sinking fund to build the City Hall on the West Side and left ten thousand dollars in the fund when he went out of office.

During his term of office the swimming pool, one of the greatest benefits to the city, was built and he also aided at all times and in many ways for the city's benefit.

Organized Citizens Bank

During the summer of 1912, Mr.

Cohen became interested in the banking business, and organized the Citizens' National Bank, with a capital of \$110,000, which was oversubscribed in one week's time, with one hundred and sixty stock holders, and on March 29, 1913, the bank opened its doors for business, in the building on Grand Avenue, now occupied by the Cozy cafe.

With the increasing business the buildings was insufficient to take care of the work properly, and in 1916, Mr. Cohen began the erection of the new Citizens' Bank building on Grand Avenue, which is one of the best buildings in the city.

In July 1917, business was commenced in the new quarters. Mr. Cohen has been the bank's president ever since its organization.

Active During War

During the late world war he was chairman of the Red Cross Society, chairman of the northern division of

Drive and liberally subscribed to every call for need at all times, working in every way to aid and help the cause.

He has always responded financially when asked to donate for charity or give toward anything for the ben-

efit of the city, being very liberal with his donations.

Is Republican

He is a republican in national affairs, but in county and city politics, chooses the man he considers will best

fill the duties of the office to which he is elected.

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Mr. Cohen is active in lodge circles, being a member of the Masonic order, the I. O. O. F., the Rebekahs, the B. P. O. Elks and Moose. He has been treasurer of the local lodge of Odd Fellows for the past twenty-five years.

Mr. Cohen is a quiet, genial gentleman, is fond of outdoor life and a great deal of his time during the summer months is spent at his pleasant cottage on the banks of Lake Barron.

Joe Cohen, as he is most generally known, is a man who has won his spurs in a land where he came as a stranger, with more of a handicap than most men of business. Through practicing careful economy, good business judgment and combining foresight and initiative he has been able to accumulate a substantial fortune and engage in affairs preeminent in this city.

The king of England owns a saloon.
Long live the king!