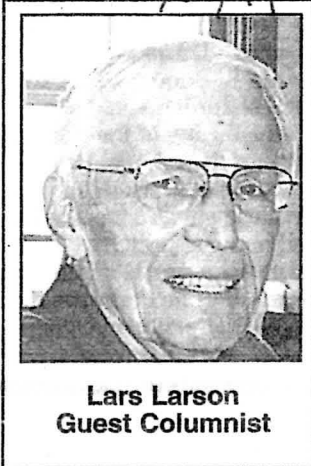


# Mill owners and managers, part two

CS 5/12/11

Three other men were important mill owners and managers during the lumbering boom in Washburn, including Milton Allen Sprague, born on October 29, 1843, in Arcadia, New York. He was the son of Lowell and Hephzibah Flint Sprague. He attended school until he was about 16 years old, then worked his way to Lansing, Minnesota to join his brother, who was engaged in farming and sheep raising. He then moved to Idaho and Nevada, pursuing various occupations including railroad work. His long career in the lumber business began at age 25 in Boise, Idaho, where he operated a small sawmill and lumber yard, eventually owning mills and yards in Osage, Iowa and St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota. About 1883 he moved to Barron County, where he constructed and operated a large sawmill. About 1900 he moved to Washburn, where he had charge of the South Shore Lumber Company sawmill, later purchasing the mill in association with H.C. Akeley of Minneapolis. He turned over the management of his lumbering interests to his son, Monroe, devoting himself to the affairs of the Northern State Bank, which he, H.C. Akeley, and other investors founded in 1895, Milton serving as president. A bank building was constructed of native brownstone on the northwest corner of the original intersection of Bayfield Street and Washington Avenue. In June 1905 the Akeley and Sprague mill was destroyed by fire,



Lars Larson  
Guest Columnist

and a new mill was constructed on the site, in 1909, by Monroe Sprague. In 1902 Milton purchased a farm about two miles north of Washburn on Highway 13, constructing a large house there in 1913. He also built a beautiful house on the northwest corner of First Avenue West and Third Street (103) as a wedding gift for his daughter, Mary Alice, when she married in 1915. Milton married Hattie Horr Graves on December 1, 1875. She was a school teacher, one of the first in Washburn, a talented artist, and a leader in community and church affairs. He died on January 13, 1917; his wife died in July 1937.

Monroe Horr Sprague was born on November 7, 1876, in Osage, Iowa, the son of Milton and Hattie Horr Graves Sprague. In 1879 the family moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he attended school. He graduated from the University of Minnesota with a law degree and was admitted to the Minnesota bar in 1900. On June 29, 1905 he married

Daza M. Glover in Minneapolis. The couple moved to Washburn after their wedding, where he managed the lumbering interests of his father, Milton A. Sprague. He was active in business and community affairs, succeeding his father, Milton A. Sprague, as president of the Northern State Bank. In 1928 the family moved to White Lake, where his wife died on March 30 1949. He moved to New Brunswick, New Jersey and then to Dayton, New Jersey, where he died on February 3, 1963.

Justus S. Stearns was born on April 10 1845, on a farm in Chautauga County, New York, the son of Herman S. Stearns. His only formal education was at the district rural school, which he attended between his farm chores. When he was 16 years old the family moved to Erie, Pennsylvania, where the father entered the retail lumber business, young Justus serving as his assistant. In 1862 the family moved to Conneaut, Ohio, where he continued to be associated with his father in the lumber business. In 1876 Justus moved to Ludington, Michigan, where he clerked in a lumber company supply store and then was promoted to cashier in the company's

main office. He purchased a large tract of pine timber in adjacent Lake County, constructing a small sawmill nearby. In 1892 he and a partner purchased four townships covered with pine timber on the Lac du Flambeau, Chippewa Indian Reservation. About 1901 he purchased six townships of heavily timbered land in the Bad River Indian Reservation, operating sawmills on Chequamegon Bay. During these and subsequent years he expanded his investments and operations in lumbering in the south, and in banking and many other lines of business, including hotels, in Ludington. He was active in Republican politics, being elected secretary of state in Michigan in 1898, but a narrowly missed nomination for governor ended his political career, except as a delegate to Republican Party conventions. In 1930 he was given the honorary rank of colonel by the governor of Kentucky in recognition of the contributions of his investments and enterprises to the economic development of that state. In 1869 he married Paulina Lyon, who died in 1904. Justus died on February 14 1933, in Ludington.