

Meadow River Lumber Company

During the first decade of the 1900s, brothers Thomas and John Raine incorporated the Meadow River Lumber Company and purchased 32,000 acres of timber in western [Greenbrier County](#). There they built a large sawmill, the town of [Rainelle](#), and a 20-mile railroad. Thomas Raine was president of the company until 1912, when John became president until 1938. Later, Howard Gray was president until 1961, and his son was president until the company was sold to Georgia-Pacific in 1970.



The original 1910 sawmill burned in August 1924 and was rebuilt by March 1925 with three nine-foot band saws. At its peak, the Rainelle mill cut an average of 110,000 board feet per day and was the world's largest hardwood sawmill. From the early 1930s until the 1960s, the mill sawed an average of 20 million board feet per year. In 1928, a record 31.6 million board feet was sawed.

Meadow River Lumber Company operated a system of portable lumber camps built on railroad cars that could be moved to new timber supplies. The company eventually owned 75,000 acres and also bought timber from nearby coal and land companies. Teams of horses skidded the logs to the railroad until 1930, when the company switched to overhead cable skidders mounted on railroad cars. These skidders could move logs within a three quarter-mile circle to a central point for transport to the sawmill.

Boards were air dried in 40-foot stacks and then in one of 14 dry kilns before being sold or processed into products. The company operated a furniture plant until World War II and a planing mill which manufactured such items as stair treads, baseboards, and molding. A flooring plant averaged one million feet per month, and a shoe heel plant produced four million to six million wooden heels per year.

Rainelle was a model company town with public water, electricity, and nice houses with yards and garden plots. Georgia-Pacific tore down the outdated mill in 1975 and rebuilt at a new location. The original mill site is now a shopping center.

Written by [William N. Grafton](#)