

# Seneca Sawmill Company

Eugene, Oregon

TPM Member since 2013



Born in Utopia, Texas, Aaron Jones was one of five children. He came to Oregon when he moved to his uncle's dairy farm in 1931. Aaron graduated from Toledo High School and did well academically, being one of only two students from his class to go on to college at the University of Oregon.

Aaron's college studies were disrupted by World War II. He joined the Army, rose to the rank of Captain and by the end of the war, was a Battalion Commander. When Aaron returned to Eugene, Oregon, after the war, he married and was blessed with three daughters, Becky, Kathy and Jody, who would one day share his vision and take the reins of the Company.



*Seneca Sawmill Company Founder, Aaron Jones, striking a pose near the the log pond.*



*January 2009, Seneca broke ground for construction of a cogeneration facility. (L-R) Jim Munyon, Jason Bosch, Dale Riddle, Aaron Jones, Todd Payne, Rick Re, Bill Powell, Ted Bennett. Below the Seneca Sustainable Energy Plant today.*



technological innovations that have resulted in over 25 patents, four new sawmills, three new planers, a log merchandiser, a renewable energy electrical plant, and at least a dozen technical and mechanical revisions to stay at the forefront of efficiency in sawmill manufacturing.

Now, over 60 years later through continual reinvestment in Lane County, the Seneca family of companies, has grown to 450 employees in three locations. The Seneca legacy and commitment to excellence continues with Aaron's daughters, Becky, Kathy and Jody, as company owners.

Not long after, the government declared new forest management plans that would open forest lands to commercial harvest for the first time in order to provide jobs for the returning veterans. Aaron heard opportunity knock and he and a brother-in-law went into the lumber business. By 1953, Aaron established his own lumber company. In its first year of operation, Seneca Sawmill Company employed 25 people and manufactured 18 million board feet of dimensional lumber.

Aaron was on his way to becoming a leader among leaders in the forest products industry. The success of Seneca Sawmill is based on Aaron's insistence on excellence which led to



*When market demand turned in 2002, the mill retooled the large log breakdown to produce nine and ten foot studs.*

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The Seneca Mills in Eugene include a dimension mill and a stud mill complex. The Dimensional Sawmill produces a mixed range from 2x4s up to 2x14s. They can produce lengths up to 28 feet. The mill uses larger diameter logs from 12 to 40 inches in size. The Seneca Stud Mill processes 2x4s and 2x6s from smaller logs ranging in diameter from 3 inches up to 14 inches. The production includes 8-10 feet in length. Working together the Eugene Mills produce approximately 430 million board feet per year.



*Seneca Jones Timber Company manages over 165,000 acres of forest. Management activities include reforestation, harvesting, road building, and stream & wildlife protection.*

it seems like smaller lumber is the majority of its product, the mill is also equipped to produce railroad ties. As a result of incorporating new technology and upgrading equipment at the mill, it has increased annual production to 220 MBF.

In the 1980s the government began to pull-back access of public lands to provide timber. Although the industry had been harvesting timber from public lands for over 40 years, it became apparent that public timber would no longer support the mills. Thus, Aaron began to invest in timber lands. The initial acquisition was just 35,000 acres. As the acreage grew, Seneca Jones Timber Company was created to manage the expanding land base. The



*Today, Seneca Sawmill is owned by Aaron's daughters, Becky, Kathy and Jody.*

In the process of turning logs into lumber, the Seneca Mills utilize 100% of the raw materials

with no waste. Seneca Sustainable Energy, LLC, uses biomass from the logging and byproducts to generate sufficient electricity to power to 13,000 family homes in the Eugene area.

In 2011, Seneca purchased a sawmill in Noti, Oregon. The Seneca Noti Mill produces green dimensional lumber 2x4s, 2x6s, and 2x10s in lengths up to 24 feet. They also mill some 1-inch runs. Although

the company now owns and manages over 165,000 acres of Oregon forests.

The forests include second growth timber which is managed on a sustainable basis. The forest policy consists of more than just the planting, growing, and harvesting of trees. The Seneca Jones Timber Company manages the whole ecosystem of the forest, providing habitat for fish and wildlife, clean air and water, soils and recreational opportunities. Continued timberland acquisitions, sustainable forest management, and the use of highly skilled forestry professionals creates a winning combination that guarantees Seneca can meet future market needs for many generations to come.



*In 2006 Seneca installed the Small Log Breakdown that produces high quality lumber from logs as small as three inches.*



*Today, Seneca managers guide the care of their forests using the Oregon Forest Practices Act.*

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