

George Giustina

1886-1946

The births of George and Erminio Giustina in San Vito de Cadore, Italy, marked the beginnings of two pioneers among the lumber and plywood manufacturers of Oregon. They were the sons of Natale and Madalena de Sandre Giustina. George was born on May 23, 1886 and Erminio on November 1, 1887.

In this little village of 1200 people in Belluno Province, just north of Venice, George and Erminio acquired their early education, an education that involved the study of mathematics under the tutelage of a Catholic priest at a parish school.

In 1900, at the age of 14, George Giustina emigrated to the United States. After several years in New Jersey and New York, he and an older brother, Bart, moved to San Francisco, and established a partnership as building contractors. George studied architecture and drafting while working as a builder. In 1910, George and Bart moved to Portland, Oregon, to continue their construction business as the Giustina Brothers.

At the age of 14, Erminio became an apprentice with a master craftsman in Wood Construction although he specialized in interior finishes and furniture. Then in 1905, Erminio emigrated to the United States and worked as a carpenter in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut until 1911, when he joined his brothers, George and Bart, in the home building business in Portland, Oregon.

George and Erminio married the Onorato sisters of Kelso, Washington. George married Mazie on May 24, 1914. Children born of that union were: Madalena (Mrs. Thomas Fox); Dorothea (Mrs. Frank Kincaid); and Alice (Mrs. Pershing Dahlstrom). Erminio married Irene on March 6, 1916. To this marriage were born three sons: Natale Bernard, Ehrman

Erminio Giustina

1887-1961

Vincent and Gregory Horace, and also a daughter, Dolores (Mrs. Thomas Fruiht).

The Giustina brothers continued in the construction trade until 1917. Their previous experience and love for wood led to the purchase of their first sawmill at Molalla, Oregon. This venture was short-lived as April, 1918, saw the unfortunate loss of this sawmill when it burned to the ground. The Giustina brothers then purchased a sawmill at Vesper, Oregon, on the Nehalem River, in Clatsop County, Oregon. It was operated until 1923 when the Giustina brothers moved to Lane County to operate a newly-acquired sawmill and timberlands near Dexter, Oregon. These timberlands were the start of the present-day "Giustina Tree Farms." Another sawmill was also located at Walker, Oregon, and run by the Giustina brothers. The lumber from the Dexter mill was flumed seven miles to Pengra, where it was surfaced and shipped by the Lewis Lumber Co. The partnership at this time consisted of George, Erminio and John Giustina. In 1929, the youngest brother, Anselmo, joined the partnership.

The old Fisher McDonald mill at West Second and Garfield streets in Eugene, Oregon, was purchased in 1934 by the Giustina Brothers to provide a planing facility. The lumber was then trucked to Eugene. Then in 1940, the Eugene plant was developed to house sawing, drying and planing operations at one location, and the Dexter mill was dismantled. Additional timberlands were purchased on Gate Creek at this time, and became one of the early certified West Coast Tree Farms.

This final sawmill, in lumbering pioneers George and Erminio Giustina's careers, was operated with George as General Manager, Erminio as Operations Manager, and John and Anselmo until George's death in 1946.

Erminio retired from the partnership in 1948, but remained active in pursuing business and personal interests until the time of his passing in January, 1961. John sold his part of the company in 1946, and Anselmo retired from active company work in 1972. The company continues to operate under the same pattern of progressive leadership established by the first partnership with N.B. Giustina as President and General Manager and Ehrman V. Giustina as Vice President and Operations Manager – both are sons of Erminio Giustina.

George and Erminio were very active in community affairs and involved themselves in many personal hobbies and interests. George was active in the Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Rotary Club, and he had a deep interest in all civic affairs and community sports programs, even sponsoring a semi-professional baseball team.

Erminio's activities included work towards improving public schools; the support of athletic programs; nurturing flowers, shrubs and trees; and construction of and refinishing fine, old furniture. He was also a member of the Lions Club and the Eugene Country Club.

Both men were active members of industry associations – Willamette Valley Lumbermen's Association, West Coast Lumbermen's Association, Willamette Valley Logging Conference, and Pacific Logging Congress.

George and Erminio Giustina will long be remembered for their stature among those who became known as the pioneers of the lumbering industry. As has happened with others in this industry, George and Ermilio's success story is filled with progressiveness, endurance, hardship and very hard work.