

George Edward Miller

1888-1966

Even before the creaky Model T Made transportation easier, George E. Miller packed his grip for horse-and-buggy travels into the rugged Oregon country to contact mills, buy lumber and make friends with sawmill operators surprised and happy to see him.

Back in 1917, there were no lumber wholesalers south of Portland when Mr. Miller gave up the sheet metal business to join his brother, John. He took to the business like a root to the soil, for he was the first of the hearty breed of lumber buyers in the Willamette Valley to spend full time traveling and making contacts. Luckily, his brand new Model T Ford shortened the journey between Portland and Eugene to a mere day's drive. Mr. Miller could recount many tall tales of the days when he "bounced along the chuch holes in the Model T, working the pedals like an old organ."

Nebraska born, Mr. Miller moved to Oregon as a small child. In 1910, he married Katherine Sauer and they had two sons, Robert George and James Edward, and a daughter, Francis (DeFrieze). He built his life on a ninth-grade education and a deep love of people.

It was the dark depression of 1932 when Mr. Miller braved the economic tides to borrow money and establish his own company. His success, while others around him failed, was attributed to his honesty, character and spiritual strength. His innate ability to conduct fair human relationships in business dealings aided the growth and stability of the Geo. E. Miller Company, along with his knowledge of lumber, his experience in the field, and his contacts throughout the industry.

His ability to bounce back from adversity and to sympathize with the problems of millmen made Mr. Miller a popular lumber buyer and later earned for him a highly-regarded reputation as company president. He was well-known as a quiet, warm and kindly man who trusted people and in turn won their trust.

In 1937, he started Santiam Lumber Company which later was sold to Willamette Industries. He established the Cascadia Lumber Company at Sweet Home in 1940. A new, larger and more modern sawmill was built in 1950 at Toledo, Oregon. During those years, Cascadia Lumber Co. acquired considerable land and timber holdings. The mill specialized in large timbers which were sold to a ready market all over the United States, Canada and abroad. Cascadia was rated 50th in the nation in lumber production in its prime. Such business skills show that Mr. Miller was a man of vision who plunged ahead when others were drawing back.

Throughout his lifetime, Mr. Miller remained active in Christian leadership, supporting numerous missionaries and providing lumber for new churches. He loved to garden and raised over a half acre of flowers that he cut, arranged and sent to church services and youth rallies.

His green thumb poured forth thousands of blossoms, especially his favored camellias, roses and begonias, surrounding his home and filling his greenhouse. He always expressed great satisfaction “for the enjoyment of helping things grow and for the pleasure of giving them to others.”

Mr. Miller’s guiding philosophy was framed on the wall of his office for all to read: “I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it. I shall not pass this way again.” It was for this, more than for his considerable business success, that he wanted most to be remembered.