

Charles W. Stimson

1879-1952

Charles Willard Stimson was born at Big Rapids, Michigan, on February 22, 1879, the only child of Willard Horace and Kate (Jefts) Stimson and grandson of Thomas Douglas Stimson.

He attended grammar school in Detroit, Michigan, and when his family moved to Los Angeles, California, he attended Throop Polytechnic Institute (later California Institute of Technology) from which he was graduated in 1897. After graduation from Throop, he became associated with two of his uncles, Fred S. and Charles D. Stimson, in the Stimson Mill Company in Seattle, Washington.

At the turn of the century he joined his father in forming the Ballard Lumber Company in Seattle to process timber they had purchased near Bay View, Washington. In organizing their logging operation, they brought the 42-ton geared locomotive around the Horn that Mr. Stimson's grandfather purchased from the Lima Company in 1880 and had used in his logging operation in Michigan. "Peggy" as the shay was dubbed, was destined for a long life under exciting circumstances. During the 75 years she worked in the woods of Michigan, Washington and Oregon, she hauled in excess of a billion and one-half feet of logs, survived four major fires, including the Tillamook Burn and destruction of the Old Forestry Building in Portland, Oregon, and is now on exhibit at the Western Forestry Center in Portland.

When the logging of the Bay View timber tract was completed in 1912, Charles Stimson organized the Stimson Timber Company to log timber that he and his father owned on Hood Canal in Washington. In 1923 he bought the Brace-Hergert sawmill on Lake Union in Seattle. Upon the completion of the cutting of the Hood Canal timber, the company ceased operation in September, 1932. In May, 1931 Charles Stimson incorporated the Stimson Lumber Company, Forest Grove, Oregon, with himself as President, to process timber in Oregon which he and his father had bought during the years 1888 to 1890 from the government by homesteading the claims. Much of the sawmill and logging equipment (including Peggy) was brought from the Seattle operation down to the new operation in Oregon.

By August, 1933, the Stimson Lumber Company sawmill was ready to cut its first log in Oregon and eight miles of logging railroad had been built to the first "setting." The evening before logging was to start, a red glow appeared on the horizon in the Gales Creek area some 15 miles away. This was the start of the tragic Tillamook Burn that raged continuously for more than a month, burning over more than 15 billion feet of prime old-growth Douglas fir timber on 400,000 acres. Approximately half of Stimson's timber was covered by the fire. When the rains came, the fire fell to the ground creeping around the smoldering timber but logging was promptly started and the first train of logs dumped into the mill pond caused huge clouds of steam to rise from the charred logs still hot from the fire.

Charles W. Stimson began a search for a way to utilize the huge amount of fire damaged timber that appeared to be useless for lumber. In 1938 he started laboratory work on a plastic wood filler to upgrade the lumber with the result that in 1942 Plasto-Fil and Filtite, wood fillers, were marketed and later utilized by many wood working companies.

In January 1948, Forest Fiber Products Company, a subsidiary of Stimson Lumber Company was formed with Mr. Stimson as a Director and in the same year produced the first panel of Forest hardboard made from the fiber of wood unusable for lumber.

During the First World War, Mr. Stimson was a dollar-a-year man serving the Emergency Fleet Corporation. He was one of the two men who controlled the sale of lumber in the Washington-Oregon area through the use of government embargo. Dissatisfaction with this system later brought into being the Fir Production Board, of which Stimson was a member from June, 1917, until the end of the war. The board expedited procurement of lumber for use in building ships for the Emergency Fleet Corporation, and spruce for airplane wings and, through a citizen organization, the Pacific Lumber Inspection Bureau, tallied, inspected and shipped lumber to points where it was needed. C.W. Stimson was Director and President of the Bureau during 1928-1929.

Charles W. Stimson was a Director of the C.D. Stimson Company, the American Mail Line, the Superior Portland Cement Company, the Marine Bank Corporation and Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company in British Columbia, Canada. During 1934-38 he was Chairman of the Executive Committee and President of the Metropolitan Company, Seattle, which in the latter year was merged into the Metropolitan Building Company. He served the merged company as a Director, Chairman of the Executive Committee and President from 1939 to 1945.

He was a member of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, the Rainier Club, the Seattle Golf Club, the Arlington Club of Portland, Oregon, and honorary life Commodore of the Seattle Yacht Club. He wintered in Palm Springs, California, for many years where he was President of Smoke Tree Ranch, a private resort.

He was married in Seattle, October 28, 1903, to Clara, daughter of Frederick Augustus Wing, an insurance executive. Their only child, Jane, married Harold Anderson Miller.

Mr. C.W. Stimson died in Seattle, Washington, October 2, 1952, at the age of 73.