

Herbert A. Templeton

1883-1969

The Herbert A. Templeton Foundation is well known for its support to Oregon communities. But not as much is known about the man who established the foundation.

Herbert A. Templeton was a career lumberman whose leadership helped shape the western forest products industry. He was involved in all aspects of the business: he owned and managed retail lumberyards, operated a wholesale lumber business, and manufactured lumber products.

Born and raised in Iowa, Herbert Templeton helped pay his way through Grinnell College by working in his father's lumberyard and in a Minnesota sawmill. He loved sports and was captain of his college track team. After graduation, Templeton worked as a traveling lumber salesman for six months. Then he bought a train ticket to Portland, Oregon, but stopped off in Billings, Montana, and decided to stay.

He opened a lumberyard in Laurel, not far from Billings, in 1906. Templeton later merged his business with the Rogers Lumber Company and became managing officer of the Rogers-Templeton Lumber Company. When Rogers-Templeton and three other competitors formed Monarch Lumber Company in 1920, Templeton became president and managing officer.

The lure of the Pacific Northwest reasserted itself, and Templeton sold his interest in the company and relocated his family to Portland in 1924. He formed the Herbert A. Templeton Lumber Company, a national wholesale business involved in selling lumber and lumber products purchased from Oregon mills. His reputation as an honest, reliable businessman brought him success, and he soon acquired two small sawmills to ensure a source of supply. His son Hall became a partner in 1936, and his son-in-law, James Bryson, joined the firm in 1945.

They organized the Valsetz Lumber Company in 1946 in order to purchase the Cobbs and Mitchell Lumber Company in Valsetz, Oregon, including timberlands, a large sawmill, and a railroad. The Herbert A. Templeton Lumber Company marketed the lumber produced by Valsetz Lumber Company, which continued to expand over the years.

Valsetz Lumber Company and the Herbert A. Templeton Lumber Company merged with Boise Cascade Corporation in 1959. At the time of the merger, Valsetz Lumber Company owned timber and timberlands in northeast and western Oregon and in eastern Washington. The company operated six sawmills in Oregon and Washington, a plywood plant, and a pine furniture factory and millwork plant.

Following the merger, Herbert Templeton retired from business and devoted his time and energy to the Herbert A. Templeton Foundation, which he had formed in 1955 to help improve the quality of life in Oregon communities. Because of his long interest in higher education, Mr. Templeton played a major, active role in building Lewis & Clark College into a leading liberal arts school. He served on the school's board of directors for 16 years, was board chairman for 8 years, and also provided major financial support.

Active in community affairs, he served on the board of the Portland-area YMCA for 15 years and on various boards of the Westminster Presbyterian Church and Portland Council of Churches. He was also a member of the boards of the West Coast Lumbermen's Association and the South Fork Lumber Company and was president of the Western Retail Lumbermen's Association.

Herbert Templeton has been described as a gentleman who lived by the golden rule and treated everyone honestly and fairly. He enjoyed people and was a gifted storyteller.

He and his wife Ruth had four children, Bob, Bess, Hall and Jane. Herbert Templeton died in 1969 at the age of 86. His children continue the work of his foundation.