



E. S. Collins

1866-1940

Everell Stanton Collins, often called E.S., was born in Cortland, New York, March 30, 1866. Cortland, or Cortlandville as it was previously known, was also where his father, T.D. "Teddy" Collins, was born. Everell was the only child of Teddy and Mary Stanton Collins. They had returned to Cortland from Pennsylvania ostensibly so Teddy could retire from his life as a lumberman and Mary could raise her son around the Collins family. Naïve? Probably. Because a team of good pulling mules wasn't going to be near enough to keep Teddy Collins from returning to the woods of Pennsylvania, no matter what he promised his new wife. Trees were in his blood and, as it turned out, in his son's, too.

Within a year, by 1867, they had returned to the woods of Beaver Valley, Pennsylvania, and for the next fourteen years this was the place Everell called home. On the idyllic side, he grew up hunting ducks, grouse, squirrels, woodchucks, rattlesnakes, and bears, although he never did get a clean shot off at a bear. He fished for trout with a spear or hook and cut beehives from trees, carrying the precious treasure home. He swam with friends, rafted with men, and helped in barn and house raisings. He went to school and church, trusted in God, and worked and worked and worked.

He was, after all, Teddy Collins's son and there were lessons to be learned, and the harder the lesson, the better. No child of Teddy Collins' was going to be spoiled. Maybe that's why by the time Everell was nine, he was already packing shingles, thousands and thousands of shingles, for thirty-four cents an hour. At thirteen, he'd already spent winters in sub-zero temperatures hauling timbers out of frozen creeks. By fifteen he was working in the mill, jacking logs and edging. For Everell Collins there would be no soft life of easy money, maids, and private education. There'd be no traveling abroad with nannies, tutors, and toys. He wouldn't dine with silver or be waited on by servants. He would grow up to be a shy, serious, disciplined, intelligent man, taciturn to some, and his life was so far from soft that it probably ended up killing him.

Perhaps, though, he got something more important than a life of ease. He acquired a life of meaning and purpose: Love God; be a good steward toward the lands you own and the communities you share your life with; act with honesty, integrity, and always a sense of responsibility; and, like your father, adhere to the adage, "If you're given more, then more is expected of you."

To accomplish that he often ran into one obstacle. Teddy. When Everell wanted to go to college, Teddy objected. Vehemently. "Waste of money. Waste of time. I never went and you're not either." Everell's reply? "I earned the money. The time is mine. And I'll go." "Then don't come home again," barked Teddy. Everell went to Allegheny College. He lasted a year and came home with consumption. The door opened, with prodding from Mary.

It took a full year to recover, but by 1887, Everell announced, "I'm heading West." Gold fever. Its tempting tentacles were creeping even into the timberlands of Pennsylvania. Several of Teddy's partners were heading to California and Mexico. Everell would go. Not so much for the gold they never found, but for the chance to be his own man. Within a year, he bought

40 barren acres in Mexico and began building his own place. Alone. But his old nemesis, consumption, sucked him dry. Again. He returned home to Pennsylvania, bowed but not broken. He had tested his own spirit, his own mettle, and met the man he would become.

Then a place named Ostrander came a-calling. Actually, it was a letter from an old Pennsylvania friend of Teddy's, Aaron Root Sr., who did the calling. Root and his family had gone west to Ostrander, Washington. Doug fir country. They'd purchased land and began cutting timber, but Aaron Root took sick. They needed help. Teddy sent Everell. The year was 1890. The ticket to the future of Everell Stanton Collins was finally punched.

With his accustomed way of doing things, which included hard work and more hard work, an eye for opportunity, and the intelligence to turn a \$2,000 loan from his father into the beginnings of his own future, Everell hit the ground running. Within nine years he'd built the first sawmill at Ostrander, followed by a hotel, a Methodist Church and parsonage, a two-room elementary school, and a community hall. He launched the Ostrander Railway & Timber Company, the Silver Lake Railway and Lumber Company, and the Cowlitz Development Company and along the way, served two years in the Washington State Legislature representing Cowlitz County. The time Everell had spent working in Teddy's mills and timberlands, surveying for Teddy's logging railroads, and inventing mechanical parts as he went along were paying off.

Ostrander became known throughout the country for their signature long logs — Doug firs, some reaching 270 feet tall. Everell was now the "square timber" expert and Ostrander's trademark logs were used for keels and masts, Mississippi barges, and the Panama and Welland Canals.

To Everell, the West was timber's future. To Teddy, there was no better timberland than Pennsylvania. But Everell persisted, scouting and surveying potential timberlands in Washington, Oregon, and California. In hindsight, it's fair to say that many of those timberlands would be instrumental in building his reputation and his wealth.

But like his father, there was more to life than timber. Everell was simply not happy without a life partner. While he was a bit on the starchy and stuffy side, he was also inclined to admire, appreciate, and love the other. Enter Mary Emma Laffey, daughter of Bernard and Susannah Laffey. She was the joy in life he had so sorely missed. They were married on February 7, 1899, in Catlin (now Kelso), Washington. A confident, bright, intelligent woman, Mary Laffey surrounded Everell and their three children with the kind of unconditional love he had never known. Their first child, Alton Laffey Collins, was born October 31, 1899, followed by Grace Ester Collins, January 3, 1901 and Truman Wesley Collins, August 29, 1902.

Lumberman, entrepreneur, legislator, husband, father — but who was the man, Everell Stanton Collins? He was a polite man, a proper man, an honest man. Add in frugal, thrifty, and religious. He never laughed much. Never ate in fancy restaurants, never hobnobbed with the rich and famous. Never bought fancy clothes, never drank or gambled or promised

more than he could deliver. He was slim, trim, fit, and walked a mile and a half to work, then took nine flights of stairs up to his small office in the Terminal Sales Building. Snowstorms were no exception to that routine.

He was also a fruit and nut man who carefully considered what he ate. On a drive to one of his logging operations, it would not be unusual for him to carry along a bag full of raw cabbage, a head of lettuce, fistfuls of fruit, and pockets stuffed with nuts. If a cherry tree was on the way, he'd stop and pick to his heart's content. But for all his frugality, he drove a Cadillac. Fast. And he insisted on wearing an old hat. Bill Moffat, his long-time comptroller, once dared to tell his boss that his hat was a disgrace and ought to be thrown out. Everell replied, "Nonsense, no man ever wears a hat out." Moffat later said, "Of all the men who ever lived, Everell Collins came closest to wearing out a hat."

E.S. Collins died on December 18, 1940, in Portland, Oregon. His obituary told the things that obituaries often do, accomplishments, contributions, and gifts. The business ventures list included: St. Helens Pulp and Paper Company, Ochoco Lumber Company, Mt. Adams Pine Company, J.T. McDonald Logging Company, Lakeview Logging Company, Elk Lumber Company, Grande Ronde Pine Company, and Curtis, Collins & Holbrook. He served as a director of the Northwestern and U.S. National Banks. His philanthropy was everywhere, from the Collins Memorial Library at the University of Puget Sound, to the E.S. Collins Science Building at Willamette University, to the YMCA's Camp Collins and so much more. There are even places we never knew he had a critical hand in creating, such as opening up winter skiing on Mt. Hood and donating the land that is now Short Sands Beach on the Oregon Coast. But perhaps his most generous gift was giving, in perpetuity, 60 percent of the net proceeds from the Collins Pennsylvania Forest and the Collins Almanor Forest to the National Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Church.

When asked to send a photograph to add to his listing in "Who's Who in the Northwest," he replied:

"I am desiring no particular publicity, and know of no reason why the public should be wearied and pained by looking at my photograph, therefore, am not sending it."

Maybe Everell would have also thought that there was just too much falderal following his death. But this time E.S. Collins didn't have a say in the matter. Others did.

"He earned ably and spent wisely. There were elements of greatness in E.S. Collins, lumberman, banker, philanthropist — a rich man who went about quietly doing good. E.S. Collins, a living success story at its best, made money readily, spent it wisely, remembering always the social obligations that go with wealth. He will be remembered with gratitude and pride."

The Oregon Journal
Editorial, January 1, 1941

Ten years after his death in 1950, The Oregonian chose E.S. Collins as one of the "100 Men of the Century." Clearly, his old hat never held him back.