



# Truman Doud Collins

1831-1914

T.D. Collins, christened Truman Doud but known to friends as Teddy or T.D., was born in the village of Cortlandville, New York, March 7, 1831. Teddy was one of five children of Jabez Collins and Adaline Doud Collins. He was nine years old when his parents moved from Cortlandville to a small farm nearby. He attended the Cortland Academy and as a youngster was in poor health.

"But the turning point of my life came when I reached the age of twelve and the world opened up to me anew, and I determined to make myself, my character, my health, and my business career... and there'd be no more doctors for me." This may account for a story that has endured for generations about the ambitious, young Teddy Collins.

"Teddy was earning money by traveling to neighboring farms buying butter, eggs, and farm produce and shipping them to a buyer in New York City. When the buyer, Mr. Hurlburt, came to Cortlandville to discuss another business proposition with Teddy, he was astonished to find the man whose business flair and initiative he'd been counting on was only a boy of fifteen or sixteen."

In 1851, at the age of twenty, Teddy left the family farm, and with the help of a local judge, Mr. Stevens, took a job working for the engineering corps constructing the Binghamton and Syracuse Railroad. He started by driving stakes for the survey, but Teddy had a natural talent for mathematics and engineering and was soon running a transit. Within three years he became an engineer of a division in Broome County, New York.

For most men in 1854 that would have been a good start to a lifetime of railroading, but Teddy Collins was not "most men." He left a railroad career for the dense forests of northwestern Pennsylvania.

In 1854, Teddy, along with his older brother, Joseph (Joseph Van Halen Collins / J.V. Collins), and three friends, arrived in Hickory, Pennsylvania, located on the Allegheny River. They began working as laborers in the woods at sixty cents a day for twelve-hour days. By July 28, 1855, Teddy had saved enough money, probably from his previous railroad work and the meager amount he made in the woods, to join with his three friends and brother, J.V., in buying John Alexander's steam mill and timber at Turkey Run, near Whig Hill, Pennsylvania. Somehow they scabbled together \$3,000 as a down payment, with a mortgage of \$17,000 to be paid in three years. After three years, they paid the mortgage in full, and in six additional years, 1864, Teddy and his brother had bought out their friends

and held full title to the original 1,480 acres and mill at Turkey Run.

From that point on, Teddy had found his life's work. He was a tree man. And proud of it. Before he died in 1914, he built what became known as the "Teddy Collins Empire," eventually making him the largest private landowner in Pennsylvania.

Along with a handful of trusted partners, Teddy succeeded in owning and operating 13 mills in Pennsylvania, including two mills in Nebraska, Pennsylvania, the Beaver Valley Mill, Pine Hollow Mill, Golinza Mill, Bucks Mill, Old & New Salmon Creek Mills, Mayburg Mill, Nebraska Box Mill, Tionesta Manufacturing Company, and the Mayburg Chemical Plant. His annual production at one point was well over 50,000,000 board feet.

When moving timber took horses, he had 66 teams of horses. When moving timber took barges, he built barges. An 1864 report shows Collins consuming 800,000 feet of lumber for barges alone. When moving timber took to the rails, he built railroads. In fact, he built over 100 miles of logging railroad and 41 miles of main line, and he operated 25 locomotives — all in support of his mills and his timber communities. His railroading began with the Fox Creek & Little Coon Tram, then the Tionesta Valley & Hickory Valley Railroad, onto the Tionesta & Salmon Creek Railroad, and his last, the Sheffield & Tionesta Railroad.

When it wasn't trees he was cutting or railroads he was building, Teddy turned his attention to the houses and towns he and his partners built for their employees. They added schools and village stores, sidewalks and parks. He supplied water, gas, and oil to the homes, but his most prized accomplishment was always building a church, a Methodist Church. A community without a church, in Teddy's mind, was no community at all. And he didn't just build them, he and his wife, Mary, also taught Sunday School in them.

When opportunities came his way, he threw his hat in the ring — sometimes with success, sometimes not. He chased gold in California and never found it. He dabbled in oil with the Walnut Bend Oil Refinery but never caught the fever. In 1875 he built the elegant Collins House Hotel in Oil City, Pennsylvania, with his brother, J.V. Collins. And seven years later, sold his interest when the hotel began offering alcohol. When a bank was needed he helped build the Citizens' National Bank at Tionesta and became its president.

While all of this might have resulted in a man of starched pomposity and ostentatious peacokery,

when it came to Teddy Collins, it did just the opposite. If you met him, you would have seen a small man with chin whiskers, wearing a blue work shirt, slouch hat, and frayed jeans that had brushed by too many trees and were punched unevenly into his old leather boots. He seemed to have one other dress option, and that was a frock coat with tails along with the same old leather boots and old slouch hat. When cars came into fashion in the early 1900s, he stuck with his horse, McGinty, and his two-wheeled cart. He was known to be a bit crusty, certainly frugal, cordially impatient with inefficiency, an extraordinary philanthropist, and a rigid Methodist. Teddy considered all of his possessions to be given to him in trust by God, and because of that, he should be a good steward and a generous giver. That philanthropy extended beyond Pennsylvania to Methodist missions overseas, including the Collins Institute in Calcutta, India, and the Bareilly Theological Seminary in Bareilly, India.

Sharing his life was Mary Stanton Collins, a red-headed school teacher with a quiet, introverted, intelligent disposition and a life-long commitment to the Methodist Church. They were married in 1864 and if Teddy was frugal, Mary was more than his match, foregoing the acquisition of material comforts to live plainly and modestly. Her father, Daniel Stanton, had been a lay doctor and Mary picked up enough of his skills to help people in the community when a professional doctor couldn't be found. They had one child, a son, Everell Stanton Collins, who worked side-by-side with his father and eventually encouraged him to expand the Collins timber operations to Washington, California, and Oregon.

It is no mistake that the inheritance Teddy and Mary left to their son and future generations of Collinses was more enduring than the lands and trees, mills and railroads that spread over the country. It was a set of values that has kept the company family-owned for now into its fifth generation — and hopefully, with more to come. Those values that reverberate through the generations include: Do the right thing; Believe in self-discipline; Commit to work and live simply; Respect those who labor with and for you; Resolve to be scrupulously honest in all your affairs; Regard thrift as a prized value; And remember — that if God has given you more, then more is expected of you.

Teddy Collins died April 15, 1914, at the age of 83 in his beloved town of Nebraska, Pennsylvania, located in the Tionesta Valley. He had lived there with his family since 1882. Mary Stanton Collins preceded him in death, dying six years earlier on October 29, 1908.