



## *George T. Gerlinger*

1876-1948

GERLINGER, George Theodore, lumberman, was born in Chicago, Illinois, January 15, 1876, son of Louis and Sophia (Hollacher) Gerlinger. His father came to this country from France in 1870 and settled in Chicago. George T. Gerlinger received his education in the public schools of Chicago and from private tutors. In 1897, with his father and his brothers, he began logging operations with horses near Yacolt, Washington. In 1900 they moved to Oregon, and in 1902, he established the Deep Creek Lumber Co., Clackamas, Oregon. In 1905, again with his father and brothers, he established logging and milling operations in and near Dallas, Oregon, and founded the Willamette Valley Lumber Co. where he served as president until the close of his life.

He was married in Berkeley, California, October 21, 1903, to Irene, daughter of James Ryder Hazard, a cattle rancher in Arizona, and had four children: Georgiana, who married Harley Craford Stevens, deceased; Irene, who married William Swindells; Jean, who married Robert Carter Kirkwood, deceased; and John Hazard who died in infancy.

For more than half a century, until his death October 9, 1948, George T. Gerlinger, lumberman, was easily Oregon's leading forest conservationist. Quiet, unassuming, he was a powerful and effective advocate for his chosen public service in conservation.

He is the "father" of Oregon's famed state forestry program. Through his efforts and tireless crusading, the 1911 legislature set up the first state board of forestry. Two years later Governor Oswald West named Conservationist Gerlinger to the newly created forestry board. The same year Gerlinger went to Chicago as Oregon's representative to help form the First National Conservation Congress.

He served continuously from 1913 until his death – 35 eventful years in state forestry development and expansion – as a member of the Oregon State Board of Forestry. In his freshman year, he led a successful fight for a compulsory Fire Patrol Law, and followed that up with a succession of campaigns through the years to strengthen state

forestry and conservation statutes. Climax of his long career was the passage in 1941 of the Oregon Forest Conservation Act, first of its kind in the nation.

Gerlinger was a leader in developing a sound forestry program for the handling of the O. & C. lands. He was honored in 1938 with an appointment by Secretary of Interior Ickes to the first O. & C. advisory board and helped shape initial policies.

National recognition came to him in 1944 when he was elected president of the National Lumber

Manufacturers Association. As a war time president he spearheaded a highly successful program to spread forest conservation work, tree farming and sustained yield forest management into every timbered state.

Gerlinger was one of the pioneers of the tree farm movement, and early brought a number of his timber properties into the conservation program.

Gerlinger was rated one of the nation's leading lumber freight rate experts and is credited with creating a national freight rate structure that permitted western lumber producers to compete with southern and eastern lumber manufacturers.

The conservationist was also one of the country's leading authorities on shortline railroads. As a young man in 1896 he helped build the Vancouver, Yacolt and Yakima Railroad, a short local line serving Clark County. In 1906, he built the Salem, Falls City and Western Railroad and operated it as a common carrier for many years. He was receiver and for years managed the Oregon, Pacific and Eastern Railroad, which ran out of Cottage Grove east for about 20 miles.

Lumberman Gerlinger was one of the state's largest lumber manufacturers. His plants were models of efficiency and exemplified the best utilization and conservation practices. His large mills at Dallas have operated continuously for more than half a century. The plants at Dallas and Foster have been the nucleus of Willamette Industries, Inc., a nationwide integrated company manufacturing plywood, lumber, and paper products.