



## *Ernest Chester Miller*

1871-1945

Ernest Chester Miller was born October 16, 1871, at Greenville, Michigan, son of Oscar Chester and Matilda (Berridge) Miller. He attended high school in Greenville and graduated from the Business College in Grand Rapids in 1891. He married Sarah Manola (Anderson) in 1896 and after working eight years on his father's farm in Michigan, moved to Aberdeen, Washington, in 1904 for greater opportunities in the West.

He, together with his father-in-law, Henry Neff Anderson of pioneering lumber fame in Grays Harbor, bought a large lime rock deposit near the town of Sedro Woolley, Washington. A year later they decided to develop the property and build a cement plant known as the Washington Portland Cement Company to process the rock into cement. He first laid out a town site across the Baker River from Sedro Woolley to provide housing for the workmen and families. This small community became

known as Concrete and during the early years of development "Ernie," (as everyone called him), was a one-man show in the community. When the town was incorporated, he became Mayor, Police Chief, Fire Marshall and Court Judge as well as boss of the cement plant operations. While the people were generally happy and satisfied with the hard life in this remote, undeveloped area, there were occasional disturbances, such as fights and knifings among the local citizens. Ernie carried brass knuckles on his person in case of trouble but rarely used them. He managed the operation until they sold out in 1911 to the Superior Portland Cement Company near Sedro Woolley who had exhausted their own quarry and needed a new supply of lime rock. He then returned to Aberdeen and became manager of the Grays Harbor Railway & Light Company, an electric utility. A year later, in 1912, he associated with the F.C. Wilcox Shingle Company and later acquired

the Union Cooperage Company, a 'box shook' operation. The next year the name of the company changed to the Grays Harbor Shingle Company and in the following years, it became the largest shingle manufacturing operation in the Northwest.

During this time he was instrumental in organizing the Red Cedar Shingle Association and while President initiated a change of the shingle pack measurement from the thousand to the square, which was officially adopted and has been the industry measure for bundling shingles ever since.

In 1917, he added a lumber mill to the plant and the firm's name was changed to E.C. Miller Cedar Lumber and Shingle Company. He was President and General Manager until his death on May 21, 1945. During this period, the firm had grown into one of the principal cedar lumber and shingle mill operations in the state of Washington.

Mr. Miller was active in civic and club affairs in addition to his activities in the lumber industry. He was past President of the Chamber of Commerce, a life member of the Masonic Lodge, a member of the Aberdeen Elks Lodge since 1909, a charter member and past President of the Grays Harbor Country Club, a past President of the Washington State Senior Golf Association, the founder and past President of the Grays Harbor Rose Association and a member of the First Congregational Church. He served as chairman of the committee for the establishment of city parks.

Mr. Miller belonged to a pioneer Grays Harbor family, though members of it came there years before he did, and he would not describe himself a pioneer, despite his 33 years of residence in Grays Harbor. Still he had the

same self-reliance, the same vigor of convictions, and the same energy that distinguished the pioneers. They were a notable group; these men that saw opportunity and helped build the forest industry in the Harbor community.

At the time of his death, he was survived by his wife, Sarah Manola Miller; a daughter, Mrs. Catherine Miller Ingram, Aberdeen; a son, Harold A. Miller, Portland, Oregon; two brothers, Charles M. and Ralph Miller, both of Greenville; and a sister, Mrs. Julia Smith of Greenville.