

BY W. REGINALD WHEELER

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PINE KNOTS AND BARK PEELERS

# PINE KNOTS AND BARK PEELERS,

THE STORY OF  
FIVE GENERATIONS OF  
AMERICAN LUMBERMEN .

BY

W. REGINALD WHEELER

*Illustrated*

Foreword by SENATOR EDWARD MARTIN



LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA

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William Emery Witherell  
Pvt., Co. I

## CHAPTER TEN

### N. P. Wheeler's Home and Influence

#### MEMORIES OF ENDEAVOR

by Clyde Dale Gorman

ONE OF THE EARLIEST EXPERIENCES that I can remember is that of a trip on "Number One," the puffing little engine with the large smokestack and the side cylinders that pulled the logcars into the upper reaches of Otter Valley, and then, much more slowly, led them loaded in the late afternoon down the valley to the mill at Endeavor. I suppose I was four or five years old when my mother allowed me to go, in charge of a neighbor's daughter, Flora Putnam, who was fond of children, on the trip.

We sat on the fireman's seat at the left while the man, who seemed to have the strength of a giant (Homer Smith) threw many shovelfuls of coal into the engine's rapacious boiler. The flames seemed to lick his face whenever the door was opened. The grade was steep but the little train plowed along in the early light until in about an hour we reached the logger's camp. Here the logs, mostly hemlocks, were hauled in from the woods, by horses, cutting great gouges in the rough roads traversing the forest. Coming to the very edge of the tracks were the high skids upon which the logs had been rolled with the aid of can'thooks. From the engine my small feet were led along these slippery skids and the fear of falling from them fixed the scene in my memory. When a dinner bell was rung the men trooped into the mess hall and we all sat around rough tables where immense quantities of food disappeared in record time. These were pow-

erful men, rough, often bearded, living an outdoor life and satisfied with it. Summer, fall, winter and spring came and went but they kept doggedly at their tasks until the larger trees were removed and the camp ready to move on to another location.

The last time I attempted to visit this valley the stream, never large, had shrunk to a rivulet and the brush and small trees were almost impenetrable. Only in a few places could I find the rotting remains of the old timbers upon which the railroad had been laid. The valley had reverted to its original wild state as Nature has taken over again.

Among the multitude of things one remembers of life in the village, one nearest the heart is that of the little Sunday School which met some sixty years or more ago in what was called the "White School." It was then a typical one-room school on weekdays with cracks and holes in the walls into which we pushed paperwads, a potbellied stove near the center and desks with patented folding tops that creaked crazily when they were being opened or closed. But on Sundays the place seemed transformed. Here we were met not to learn the 3 R's, but to make a start in the Christian religion. Here one saw the beaming face of Mr. Wheeler, the lumber manufacturer, who had organized the school, and the tranquil and lovely face of Mrs. Wheeler, as she guided some of the classes in the study of the lessons. Emery Witherell, a sturdy veteran of the Civil War, was the loquacious superintendent of the school. I remember well his oft-repeated words, "It does my old heart good to see so many present this morning." "Em" taught our boys' class and as he had fought at Gettysburg—and hidden behind a tombstone to avoid bullets when the Confederate drive was in full swing—we boys were always needling him to tell of his experiences there. The lesson of the day was too often neglected for Em's tales of derring-do. We sang lustily and many of the hymns of that day are still remembered while those of later years are not.

The White School was inadequate to meet the needs of the

liam F. Wheeler and Company in Hickory property. Now I find we have taken from the Newtown property, Wheeler and Dusenbury and Company dividends amounting to \$688,500.00 and from the Endeavor property, Wheeler and Dusenbury dividends of \$960,000.00, a total of \$1,648,500.00, beside paying for other valuable property and we have some left. In its result, this operation will compare favorably with any strictly lumbering operations on the Allegheny River that I know of. I doubt if I could do any better were it possible to go back and try it again. From the time I went on to the Tionesta, a boy of 23, 39 years ago, I gave my best energies to the work, and the welfare of the business was never out of my waking moments on a week day until I left in January this year for this trip abroad.

N. P. Wheeler spoke with regret to his wife on his failing to spend more time with his sons on such forest pastimes, but always business was put first in his life.

The twins enjoyed hugely, however, helping him run lines in surveying, and laying out roads and locating "corners" in the woods; and some of their happiest memories are of such sylvan expeditions. They loved to hail him in the woods and to hear his fine manly answer, "Hallo." On the Pacific Coast they accompanied him when he looked over the Trask Timber tract purchased in 1906. The father rode a white horse; the boys tramped. They met a local woodsman; they continued together in looking over the timber; the father and the two boys tired the woodsman out and at the end of the day he was trailing the trio from the effete East. They encountered several yellow jacket nests; the yellow jackets found crevices in their leggings in "the greaves" of their armor, as their father put it; and the stinging insects attacked the white horse so that he tried to rub them off on the bushes and the tree trunks. One summer the family camped in the pine timber at Heart's Content. This time their father and mother accompanied them; the party included the

parents, the twins, their brother Nelson, Nelson's fiancée, Eleanor Cannon; their cousin Jack, Margaret Culbertson, who later became Jack's wife; a friend of the family from Springfield, Massachusetts, Bertha McConkey, superintendent of a school system there; the cook, Emery Witherell, known as "Colonel Wither," who had served in the Civil War. The boys fished in the nearby trout streams; shot porcupines in the tall timber; and enjoyed the bountiful meals they had not known when camping without feminine companionship or assistance. In the evening they sang songs around the camp fire; "Cold Blows the Blast," and other familiar tunes. One song which referred in rather impolite and frank phrases to their father, that was irreverent in words but not in spirit:

"Everybody works but father,  
 "And he sits' round all day!  
 "Sits up there in the parlor,  
 "Smoking his pipe of clay.  
 "Mother takes in washing,  
 "So does Sister Anne,  
 "Everybody works at our house,  
 "But my old man,—the darned old loafer!"

N. P. Wheeler chuckled over the song and joined in the fun and fellowship of the group camped in the tall pines, and amid the timber the acquisition of which his foresight, energy and sacrifice had made possible.

Some of N. P. Wheeler's principles and habits of business were expressed in the following characteristic statement:

"Do not announce your plans or decisions ahead of time. I am not ashamed of what I am doing, but it is not wise to tell everyone what you plan to do. Do not lose your temper. A man who loses his temper is always at a disadvantage. Always provide an extra margin of time in your appointments and accepted obligations."