

When White Men First Discovered Western Red Cedar

It was exactly 150 years ago this month that Captain George Vancouver, in command of a hardy crew aboard a 400-ton sailing ship appropriately named "The Discovery," set sail from England for the little-known and mysterious North Pacific Coast.

The many exploratory achievements of Vancouver in this area during the years 1791-1793 are universally recognized today. He discovered and named, either for members of his crew or friends back in England, such familiar Northwest landmarks as Puget Sound, Mount Rainier, Mount Baker, Whidby Island, Hood Canal, Vashon Island, Fort Townsend, the Gulf of Georgia, and many others.

One important yet relatively unknown discovery which can be attributed to the Vancouver expedition, however, was made by Vancouver's ship surgeon and botanist, Archibald Menzies. Born and educated in England, Menzies studied botany at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, later entering the English navy as an assistant surgeon. Hearing of the proposed expedition to the opposite side of the earth, he expressed to Captain Vancouver his desire to accompany it as ship surgeon so that he could continue his botanical studies. He was accepted, being later destined to make botanical discoveries equally important to the geographical ones of his associates.

Vancouver's tiny ship sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, thence across the Indian Ocean, through the East Indies, and across the broad Pacific, first sighting the North American continent, which was then known as "New Albion," nearly four months after leaving England. In sailing north along the Pacific Coast, Vancouver, through some quirk of fate, failed to discover the mouth of the Columbia river, the presence of which was then unknown. However, his many later discoveries in the Puget Sound and British Columbia areas more than recompensed for this oversight.

The expedition proceeded slowly up the Strait of Juan de Fuca, reputedly named after a legendary Greek navigator who is said to have been the first white man in the region, about 1592. Vancouver ordered a halt off the heavily forested coast near the present location of Port Townsend, from where he sent out several small boats on exploratory trips about the region. One of these boats, manned by crew members named Puget and Whidbey, worked as far south down the inland waterway as the present site of the city of Tacoma.

During this period of reconnaissance, Botanist Menzies was busily engaged in exploring the luxurious vegetation which he found ashore. Among the many evergreen trees examined, he was particularly impressed with a giant species which he recognized as somewhat similar to the Cedars of Lebanon found growing in Asia Minor and to which reference is made in the Bible. Today it is known as Thuja Plcata or Western Red Cedar.

Menzies not only noted their distinctive odor, immense size, and graceful beauty, but he also observed the wide use to which the native Indians of the region—some friendly, others hostile—put this species of wood. They used it for their excellent sea-going canoes, for their everyday camp needs, for their burial coffins; he even saw that they took "cedar wool" from the bark and wove it into primitive blankets. Upon inquiry, he was told by the Indians, through the use of signs, that the reason for their extensive use of this particular tree was its extreme durability and resistance to the weather.

At the time, Menzies certainly did not foresee the widespread usage which Western Red Cedar would receive as a roof and sidewall covering millions of his fellow-men who would come to settle in "New Albion" years later. Wood shingles were used in England, however, as far back as the middle of the 14th century. The use of this material was transplanted to America with the Pilgrims.

Naturally when the first pioneers followed the Lewis and Clark expedition into the Pacific Northwest, they constructed their homes from everlasting cedar. With the coming of the transcontinental railroads to the Northwest in 1885, the manufacture of shingles from Western Red Cedar trees sprang into a great industry almost overnight. Today, over 94 per cent of all wood shingles are made from this hardy species which

grows in commercial quantities in the states of Oregon and Washington and the province of British Columbia.

So it is that the red cedar shingle industry has played an important role in the development of the Pacific Northwest. And an obscure botanist and surgeon in Vancouver's sailing company, Archibald Menzies, might well be named the "father" of the industry.

Placing The Blame

Noble H. Chowning

All this stress and strain, and the putting of the blame on unions for the comparatively few strikes in the defense program is supposed to put unionism on the spot.

It would be impossible for me or any other individual to investigate the causes of these strikes and determine for ourselves whether they are justified.

It has become a great American custom to have faith in those who are in a position to know. It has been my experience as a laboring man, among real laboring men, that there is no group of people more long suffering than these same laboring men. They are slow to anger and will invariably choose the easier way out and avoid trouble at every turn if they can. If you will only stop and think you will realize that the possession of the attributes are the primary reasons why he is a laboring man and not of sterner stuff.

It has been my conviction that at least 75 per cent of the strikes actually put into effect are justified many times over. The reason I think so is because, knowing the laboring man as I do, I am very sure the reasons for striking must be ample or he could not have been made to sacrifice his livelihood, which means more to him than to any other class of people.

Our commentators generally agree that strikes are holding up only one per cent of our defense program. As I have stated three-quarters of that one per cent are justified, no doubt. That leaves only one-quarter of one per cent for, shall we say, illegitimate strikes.

I think you will find that percentage of error in any business, any organization, or anything, I

wish labor was perfect. Why labor should be required to be perfect I do not know. I know that perfection is impossible in anything. When the whole world becomes as near perfection as one-quarter of one per cent, Utopia will have arrived for all practical purposes.

I like to delve a little deeper into these jurisdictional disputes. It has been known by all labor leaders, and

others who make it their business to know, that much of this friction between C. I. O. and A. F. L. has tickled the ribs of many industrial officials.

It has become smart business for industrialists to play one union against another. They can oft-times accomplish their ends without appearing to be involved in any way. Many strikes are caused by companies creating a situation in which

a strike becomes necessary. Furthermore, the officials know when creating that situation that strike action will follow. As a rule the union does not publicize the act. The publicity comes when the men walk off the job. Attention is focused on the union and the employer goes scot-free. Who is to blame in such cases? There is more to this union and employer relations than you read

in the newspapers.

Unless you make it a study, to be able to read between the lines is impossible. Have faith in your fellow man. When a union goes on strike, know that men like you and I have, in by far the biggest majority of cases, weighed the pros and cons and exercised their judgment even as you and I.

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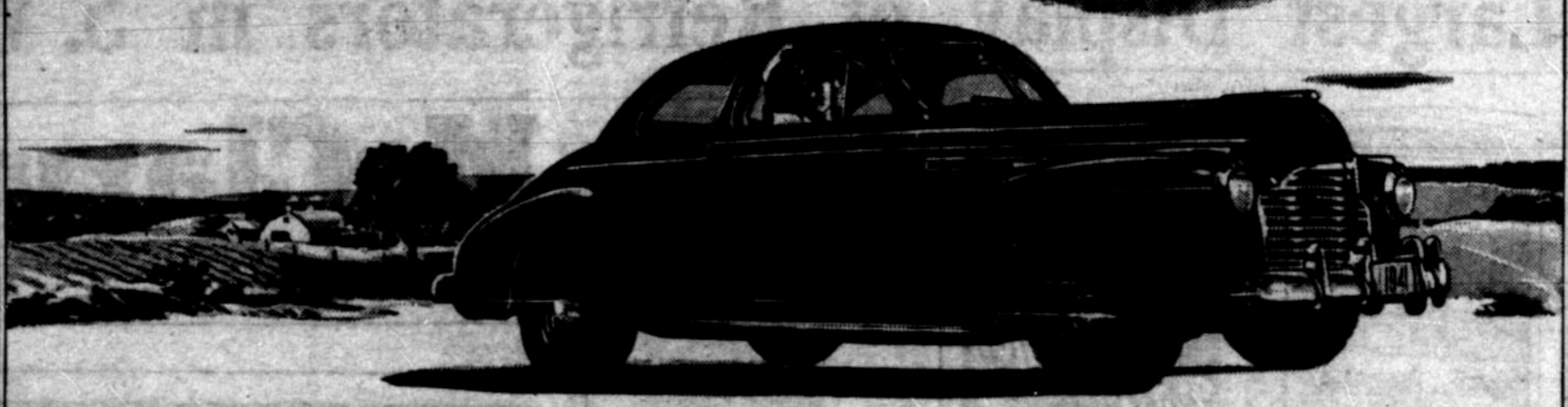
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