

Reprinted From
"The Pacific Woodman"

President's Page

IN THE BEGINNING

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The first three words in the book of Genesis are "In the beginning." We must go *back* of the formal beginning of the Woodmen of the World of Denver, Colorado, if we are to properly portray the series of stirring events leading up to its organization almost fifty years ago.

"Coming events cast their shadows before." The dark clouds of Civil War cast their shadows across the American continent several years in advance of the opening of actual hostilities in the Spring of Sixty-One. No history of that conflict is complete which does not sketch the causes leading up to it.

Back in the days when our story starts, the world dubbed as a dreamer the man who proposed a plan to abolish destitution and distress by combining into one institution the essential elements of fraternity and life insurance. The tiny acorn is the forerunner of the giant oak. The Fraternal Beneficiary System of Home Protection was still in the acorn stage in this country when on a warm Sabbath forenoon in July, 1882, a thoughtful man, aged thirty-eight, occupied a pew in the Congregational Church at Lyons, Iowa. The sermon he listened to that Sunday had as its theme "God's first temples—the trees." Strangely inspired by the preacher's discourse, the young man carried in his mind for weeks the one word "Woodmen." For some time previously he had given thought to the proposition of founding a fraternal benefit society that would be a marked improvement over all existing organizations. Now he had found the very name for it. Now he could proceed with the preparation of a ritual which would glorify the practical woodsmen, the pioneers who had cleared—with beetle, axe and wedge—a pathway for civilization through trackless forests.

For many months the first Woodman fashioned his fraternal structure. He little dreamed that in the future his labors would influence the lives and mold the opinions of millions of his fellow men and women. In his wildest imaginings he could not have conceived the thought that by generations yet unborn he would be revered as the founder or co-founder, directly or indirectly, of no less than seven of the largest and most successful fraternal beneficiary institutions in existence. The root from which all of them sprang was Joseph Cullen Root, Founder and First Head Consul of the Modern Woodmen of America, Founder and First Sovereign Commander of the Sovereign Camp of the Woodmen of the World. The other five "Woodmen" societies, either through being originally organized as auxiliaries, or as regional jurisdictions of one of these parent bodies, are able to trace their lineage back to Father Root. Although separate and distinct institutions—each of them independently governed and differing in methods of operation—all of the so-called "Woodmen" organizations are nevertheless branches of the same tree and cherish the same common ideal—the protection of the home. The Christian world today is composed of a multitude of churches and denominations, but the adherents of all of them worship the same God.

On the evening of January 3, 1883, twenty-one charter members met in Lyons (now annexed to the City of Clinton, Iowa). Root obligated them and the first Woodmen Camp was born. It was indeed a humble beginning! A provisional Head Camp of the Modern Woodmen of America, made up from those present, elected Joseph Cullen Root as Head Consul to serve until the first regular Head Camp Session should convene. By the end of that year ten camps had been instituted, and the infant organization boasted a membership of 562. Five years later the number of Camps had

increased to seven hundred, and the total membership to twenty-four thousand. Foremost among the builders in those formative years was Fred A. Falkenburg, a man who was destined to become—with Root—the co-founder of the Woodmen of the World in 1890. During the Autumn of 1889, the long smoldering fires of internal dissension burst into flame within the ranks of the Modern Woodmen of America. Two powerful factions were struggling for the control of the Society. Serious charges were made by certain officials against each other. Head Consul Root after seven years of strenuous effort was obliged to abandon his herculean task and retire at the end of his term because of this free-for-all fighting. The undersigned was privileged to know both Root and Falkenburg, two remarkable men differing widely in their characteristics, yet withal a complement of each other. My earliest years in the field service of the Woodmen of the World of Denver, Colorado, brought me in intimate touch with F. A. Falkenburg, our Founder and First Head Consul. His matchless eloquence, his unwearying labors and untiring devotion were instrumental in bringing thousands of worthy men within the ranks of this Order. In the first chapter of an unfinished history (in type-written manuscript) Falkenburg tells the following story of the inception of the Woodmen of the World:—

“In the month of November, 1888, the writer was a delegate to the Head Camp Session of the Modern Woodmen of America held at Des Moines, Iowa. A peculiar law in force in that Organization provided that any proposed amendment to the fundamental laws must be published in the official organ at least six months prior to a regular Head Camp Session. The Modern Woodmen of America was confined by its original charter to operate only in the States of Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and Colorado. The Order was founded on the proposition that a ‘group of States of equal healthfulness’ would be a great improvement over the plan of any similar organization then in existence; better than a national organization operating in all of the States under a single jurisdiction; better than a national society doing business throughout the entire country through the medium of separate State jurisdictions. The group of States above named were chosen as not only ‘equally healthful,’ but more salubrious than any other group that could be selected with equal population.

“Realizing that the rapidly growing Western States were at least among the most healthy in the nation, the writer caused to be published in the official organ of the Modern Woodmen of America, six months prior to the 1888 Head Camp Session at Des Moines, a proposed amendment to the Constitution, whereby Montana, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, and California might be included in the charter of that organization. Arriving at the Des Moines convention, we consulted with Head Consul Root, Head Adviser Roose, and other officials. We were informed that it would be next to impossible to secure sufficient votes in the Session to adopt an amendment adding additional States to the chosen territory of the organization. The States in which the Modern Woodmen of America was then operating contained a combined population of about fifteen million. It was believed by a majority of the M. W. A. delegates that the Order should permanently confine its operations to that field.

“The writer returned to his home in Lincoln, Nebraska, resolved to give the West a fraternal institution similar in character, but if possible an improvement over the original organization. The refusal to extend its charter (and the broad intimation that this policy was to be permanent) was the first incident which had its influence in this direction.

“In May, 1889, the writer moved from Lincoln, Nebraska, to Denver, Colorado, where organizing work resulted in phenomenal success. The first six Modern Woodmen of America camps organized by the writer and his assistants contained sixteen hundred and ninety-six charter members, a record unequaled in the history of fraternalism. Soon there were forty camps in Colorado, and fully three thousand members. A dark cloud then appeared on the horizon of the Modern Woodmen of America. A vindictive, merciless quarrel arose between some of its Head Officers. Thousands of dollars were expended by the Head Physician, and all the influence he could bring to bear was utilized to break down the character and integrity of Head Consul Root. Confidence in the whole Society was shaken. Colorado being the State most remote from the Fulton, Illinois, headquarters and its membership being the youngest, its three thousand members naturally dwindled down to fourteen hundred in an incredibly short space of time. Something must be done. Something was done. We had promised them something fraternal; they told us we had given them something infernal. Our reputation was at stake. The internal conflict of the Modern Woodmen of America had now reached the Illinois Courts. We were satisfied of the innocence of Head Consul Root as far as matters of serious import were concerned. We were positive that there was an ulterior motive behind a prosecution which in time had amounted to persecution. We believed we could see the injustice and the politics of it. We corresponded with Head Consul Root, informing him that many members were dropping out of the Order in Colorado. We notified him that we would immediately start a new organization and invited him to join us in the enterprise at the expiration of his term of office in

November, 1890. Head Consul Root came to Denver in April, 1890, and we conferred together at the Windsor Hotel. After much persuading he consented to join the writer in such an undertaking. We were ready, had he refused, to organize the Sovereign Camp in Denver on a basis of twelve jurisdictions in the United States, each consisting of 'groups of States of equal healthfulness.' But he did not refuse. Hands were grasped, eye spoke to eye, heart spoke to heart, and this was the inception of the Woodmen of the World."

The authority for the organization of what is now known as the Woodmen of the World is derived from an organizing convention held in Omaha, Nebraska, on June 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th, 1890. The following is quoted from the minutes of that convention, as recorded by F. A. Falkenburg, who acted as Secretary.

"Upon call of Joseph Cullen Root and F. A. Falkenburg, the following gentlemen met in the club room of the Paxton Hotel, Omaha, Nebraska, on June 3rd, 1890:—Joseph Cullen Root, F. A. Falkenburg, F. F. Roose, Dr. W. O. Rodgers, W. N. Dorward, Robert T. Court, John Thomas Yates, Col. B. Wood Jewell, and W. Murray Guiwitts. Dr. W. O. Rodgers was elected Chairman and F. A. Falkenburg Secretary of the meeting.

"F. A. Falkenburg, Joseph Cullen Root and F. F. Roose were appointed a committee to formulate and submit a Constitution. The basis of organization was determined as follows: To provide for a Sovereign Camp, Head Camps, Ladies Camps and other departments, branches or additions that may be in the future determined. That twelve Head Camp Jurisdictions shall be defined in the United States and one or more in the British possessions. That the sum of benefits to be paid on the death of a member in good standing shall not exceed \$3,000. Falkenburg's amplified form of ritual was accepted, to be incorporated as part of the ritual of the Sovereign Camp.

"F. A. Falkenburg having agreed to organize the Western or Pacific Jurisdiction, and not being able to accept an active office in the Sovereign Jurisdiction, for that reason accepted the position in that Executive Council of Sovereign Manager. Joseph Cullen Root having agreed with F. A. Falkenburg that at the termination of his office as Head Consul of the Modern Woodmen of America the following November, he would not again be a candidate for that office, but after the first of January, 1891, he would accept the position of Sovereign Commander and devote his entire time thereafter to the duties of that office, upbuilding the Order in the East and South, the following resolution unanimously prevailed, which constitutes the authority for the action of F. A. Falkenburg in organizing the Head Camp, Pacific Jurisdiction on June 28, 1890, and calling the First Head Camp Session thereof on August 11, 1890:—

"RESOLUTION:—Whereas, F. A. Falkenburg of Denver has been duly commissioned by the Sovereign Commander as the Head Consul of the Pacific Jurisdiction, and

Whereas, the Sovereign Camp does hereby declare that said Jurisdiction shall consist of the following States and Territories, to-wit: Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Washington, Oregon and California, and that

Whereas, it has been ascertained from creditable sources that many prominent Woodmen in the State of Colorado deem it to the best interests of all the members in that State as well as to the fraternity at large that Colorado become a part of said Pacific Jurisdiction, therefore,

Be it resolved, that F. A. Falkenburg as Head Consul of the Pacific Jurisdiction be hereby authorized and instructed by this Sovereign Camp to proceed on and after this fourth day of June, 1890, with the organization and building up of said Pacific Jurisdiction until the third Wednesday in June, 1894, or until his successor is elected and installed.

Resolved further, that this Sovereign Camp hereby consents to Colorado becoming a part of the Pacific Jurisdiction, if by a majority vote of all Camps of the Modern Woodmen of America in Colorado the same shall be favored, and the said F. A. Falkenburg is hereby instructed and authorized to take such action as he may deem best, and the action of said Colorado Camps, if favorable, shall take effect as soon as they may decide the matter by their vote."

In harmony with the above authority, on May 23, 1890, F. A. Falkenburg received a communication from Joseph Cullen Root, specifically authorizing him to extend such invitation to the Colorado Camps of the Modern Woodmen of America, and on June 10, 1890, Falkenburg mailed a letter to all of the Camps of that Order in Colorado, stating the reasons why it would be advisable for those Camps to attach themselves to the new Western Jurisdiction of Woodcraft. The conditions existing in the Modern Woodmen of America at that time were very unpleasant to its Colorado membership, as may be seen from the following quotation from Head Consul Falkenburg's report to the First Head Camp Session held in Denver, August 11th to 13th, 1890:—

"The great mystery which has for some time hung like a pall over the affairs of the old jurisdiction; the negligence of the officers of the old Head Camp and carelessness in attention to details which have been important to the Colorado membership; grave doubts as to the integrity of those who handle the funds of that jurisdiction together with the feeling inspired by the continuous issue of the "Maul and Wedge", a paper issued and edited by a deposed officer of that Order, which was full of hatred and malice against those who had been instrumental in having him deposed, together with publications of the "Echo", which while refuting and denying the charges against the management, produced almost as much discontent and dissatisfaction throughout the Colorado membership as the "Maul and Wedge". While this was purely a personal attack by Dr. P. L. McKinnie upon the Hon. Joseph Cullen Root, the beloved Founder of that order, and while in every instance where the Executive Council or the Courts made investigation, Dr. McKinnie was found to be wrong, and Root innocent, yet it became evident that the concentration of power was too great to long continue under its present charter in the State of Illinois. The majority of the Board of Directors must live in that State, which was evidently unfair to all the other States which, in equity, have an equal right to be represented on the Board of Directors. Also, during the past ten years many of our members have moved to places without the jurisdiction of the old Head Camp; as the Order progressed in membership and in popularity the demand increased for the promul-

gation of the Order nationally, that men of good repute and sound in body and mind might partake of the benefits of Woodcraft. The old Head Camp, restricted by its charter to certain States, has persistently refused to extend its jurisdiction. It was therefore deemed best by Head Consul Root to promulgate the Sovereign Camp of the World, which should have control of all territory not covered by the charter of the old jurisdiction."

The above clearly shows that it was the intention of Root and Falkenburg to organize the Sovereign Camp of the World of the Modern Woodmen of America; not interfering with the existing organization by that name in the territory which it then covered, and which it at that time did not anticipate extending. The Modern Woodmen of America not taking kindly to the action of Root and Falkenburg in the matter, not only declined to become a jurisdiction of the Sovereign Camp of the World, but soon amended its original charter so as to enlarge its theatre of operations. On this account the new organization dropped the name of Modern Woodmen of America and incorporated in Nebraska under the name of "Sovereign Camp of the Woodmen of the World." Joseph Cullen Root, John T. Yates and their associates are recorded as the incorporators. Fred A. Falkenburg, William A. Willard and Edward W. Douglas filed articles of incorporation in Colorado for a separate and financially independent beneficiary jurisdiction under the corporate name of "The Head Camp, Pacific Jurisdiction, Woodmen of the World". (In July, 1916, our Twelfth Head Camp Session amended the Articles of Incorporation by changing the name of the Association to "WOODMEN OF THE WORLD".) The two new Woodmen organizations, with headquarters at Omaha and Denver respectively, severed all connection with the Modern Woodmen of America. They boldly entered its field, now that the Modern Woodmen of America had carried the fight to them by starting Camps in portions of the United States outside of its original territory. This naturally engendered bitter feeling and keen competition which continued for many years. The undersigned rejoices to report that now—almost fifty years later—the management of the different "Woodmen" societies are very friendly disposed toward each other, and in perfect accord on all matters affecting the welfare of the fraternal system of home protection. In the fraternal world the so-called "Woodmen" group are today the strongest numerically and financially.

Let us return, however, to the stirring days of the beginning in 1890. Every Camp in Colorado of the Modern Woodmen of America, with the exception of two, unanimously voted to accept Head Consul Falkenburg's proposition, and become part of the new organization with headquarters in Denver. On June 28, 1890, Falkenburg issued an official announcement accepting the Colorado Camps as a part of the Pacific Jurisdiction, and naming the following as Provisional Head Officers: Head Consul, F. A. Falkenburg; Head Adviser, W. A. Willard; Head Clerk, Edward W. Douglas; Head Banker, Howard Evans; Head Managers, Theodore H. Thomas, John W. Browning and John K. Shireman; Head Escort, E. W. Varley; Head Watchman, H. T. O'Reilly; Head Sentry, T. B. Pyles; Head Physician, Dr. Clayton Parkhill and Head Consulting Physician, Dr. T. A. Hughes. The First Head Camp Session was called by Head Consul Falkenburg to meet in the Charles Building, corner of Fifteenth and Curtis Streets in the city of Denver on Monday morning, August 11, 1890. The following neighbors, each of them representing a Colorado Camp, were present: C. P. Essick, O. E. George, N. O. Davis, F. A. Shepard, W. A. Smith, Anson S. Rudd, J. R. Bailey, S. D. Butler, John W. Browning, Bo Sweeney, N. F. Clark, W. H. Moreland, Chas. M. Campbell, J. F. Bishop, D. W. Elliott, John C. Kennedy, Chas. F. Jackels, L. A. Purcell, Frank Dulin, A. O. Downs, Frank C. Goudy, John K. Shireman, L. J. Cumings, J. S. Blair and C. C. Goodale. With the Provisional Head Officers the Session numbered thirty-seven in all. To this convention Head Consul Falkenburg reported with reference to every transaction, from his appointment as Head Consul until the meeting. His report was thoroughly studied by the committee appointed for that purpose and his official acts unanimously ratified. A Constitution was adopted and the First Head Camp Session adjourned in due form on Wednesday, August 13, 1890.

F. A. Falkenburg, our Founder and First Head Consul, was born in Indiana on January 30, 1857, the son of a Methodist preacher. He was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of his native State in 1879. The chairman of his examination board was General Benjamin Harrison, who later became President of the United States. Shortly afterwards young Falkenburg was named Auditor of the Toledo, Cincinnati and St. Louis Railroad. His next business connection was as secretary and treasurer of a wholesale publishing company in Chicago. Later he moved from Chicago to Lincoln, Nebraska, where he conducted a wholesale book and stationery business. None of these vocations appeared to satisfy his ambition. During the eighties he came in contact with Joseph Cullen Root, Founder of the Modern Woodmen of America. Now a new world seemed to have opened before him. Within the range of his vision loomed a vast army of earnest men who in the future could be formed into a great brotherhood to perpetuate, through practical fraternity, the ideals of pioneer days. He would help to organize such an institution and spread its gospel. Falkenburg, our Founder, has passed from us and the veil is drawn, but he still lives in our hearts, and the impress of his life's work will endure.