

woodmen of the world history

woodmen of the world history is a fascinating journey through time, revealing the origins, growth, and legacy of one of America's most influential fraternal benefit societies. This article explores how the Woodmen of the World began, its founding principles, key milestones, and its profound impact on communities nationwide. Readers will discover the organization's unique rituals, the symbolism behind its iconic monuments, and the ways in which it provided financial security and social support to its members. The story of Woodmen of the World is not only about insurance and brotherhood but also about shaping American culture and community values. Whether you are curious about fraternal organizations, interested in American social history, or researching genealogy, this comprehensive guide offers valuable insights into the enduring legacy of Woodmen of the World. Continue reading to learn about its origins, evolution, key achievements, and how it remains relevant in modern times.

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Origins and Founding of Woodmen of the World

The history of Woodmen of the World begins in the late 19th century, a period marked by the rise of numerous fraternal benefit societies in the United States. Joseph Cullen Root, a visionary leader, founded Woodmen of the World in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1890. Root was inspired by the biblical imagery of clearing the forests and making a place for civilization, seeing it as a metaphor for helping people build secure lives. The organization was established to provide financial protection, specifically life insurance, to its members at a time when such security was rare and desperately needed.

Woodmen of the World rapidly attracted members due to its promise of mutual aid, affordable insurance, and a sense of belonging. The early years were dominated by a mission to help families avoid the financial hardships that often followed the loss of a breadwinner. The society's structure promoted unity, support, and communal responsibility, setting it apart from other organizations of the era.

Core Principles and Mission

At its heart, Woodmen of the World was founded on principles of benevolence, protection, and fraternity. The group sought to foster loyalty among its members and encourage them to care for one another in both good times and bad. Its mission was not only to offer life insurance but also to promote moral character, citizenship, and community involvement.

The organization's guiding values included the following:

- Mutual aid and support among members
- Commitment to family and community welfare
- Promotion of ethical behavior and good citizenship
- Providing affordable, reliable financial protection
- Encouraging fellowship and unity

These principles shaped every aspect of Woodmen of the World's operations and have remained central to its activities throughout its history.

Growth and Expansion Across America

Woodmen of the World experienced rapid expansion during its early decades. By the early 20th century, the organization had established thousands of local chapters, known as "camps," across the United States. As membership grew, so did the range of benefits and services offered. The organization was able to provide not just life insurance, but also accident and health coverage, scholarships, and disaster relief.

The society's growth was fueled by word of mouth, effective leadership, and a reputation for integrity. Woodmen of the World's inclusive approach welcomed men from various backgrounds, contributing to its broad appeal and strong national presence. Membership peaked in the mid-20th century, with millions of Americans participating in its programs and activities.

Rituals, Symbols, and Traditions

Distinctive rituals and symbols have always played a significant role in the identity of Woodmen of the World. These traditions fostered a sense of unity and belonging among members while also communicating the organization's values to the broader public.

The Axe, Log, and Stump Symbolism

The most recognizable symbols associated with Woodmen of the World are the axe, log, and tree stump. These elements reflect the organization's motto:

"Clear the way." They symbolize strength, endurance, and the collective effort required to build and protect communities.

Initiation Rituals and Ceremonies

New members underwent elaborate initiation rituals designed to instill the principles of brotherhood, charity, and mutual aid. These ceremonies were kept secret to foster a sense of mystery and camaraderie, while also reinforcing the values and ethical obligations of membership.

Uniforms and Regalia

Members often wore distinctive regalia, including sashes, badges, and ceremonial axes, during meetings and public events. These uniforms served to identify members and reinforce the organization's traditions.

Woodmen of the World Monuments and Legacy

One of the most enduring legacies of Woodmen of the World is its unique contribution to American funerary art. The society is widely known for commissioning and providing tree-stump-shaped headstones for deceased members, especially during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These monuments can be found in cemeteries across the country and have become iconic symbols of the organization's history.

The tree-stump headstones often feature the Woodmen of the World emblem and may include carved axes, mauls, and other timber-related tools. These gravestones serve as lasting tributes to the values of fraternity, solidarity, and remembrance.

- Tree-stump gravestones were provided as a benefit to members' families
- Each monument is unique, often personalized with the member's name and lodge number
- They have become a subject of interest for cemetery historians and genealogists

Community Impact and Social Significance

Beyond providing insurance and financial security, Woodmen of the World played a vital role in shaping American communities. The organization encouraged civic engagement, volunteerism, and support for public causes such as education, disaster relief, and healthcare.

Woodmen of the World lodges often served as social hubs, hosting community events, charity drives, and educational programs. The society's philanthropic activities helped build schools, libraries, and parks, leaving a lasting imprint on towns and cities throughout the United States.

Modern Era and Contemporary Role

In recent decades, Woodmen of the World has adapted to changing social and economic conditions while retaining its core mission. Now operating as WoodmenLife, the organization continues to provide life insurance, retirement planning, and community service programs. Its modern initiatives focus on financial literacy, youth education, and supporting families in need.

Though the rituals and regalia have evolved, the commitment to community service and member support remains strong. WoodmenLife has embraced technology and innovation to remain relevant, ensuring its members receive the protection and benefits that have defined the organization for over a century.

Notable Members and Leadership

Throughout its history, Woodmen of the World has attracted a diverse membership that includes influential community leaders, politicians, and businesspeople. The organization's leadership has consistently emphasized ethical conduct, member welfare, and service to society.

Noteworthy members have contributed to the organization's development and helped promote its values nationally. Dedicated leaders have guided Woodmen of the World through periods of change, ensuring its survival and continued relevance in modern America.

Conclusion

The history of Woodmen of the World is a testament to the enduring power of community, mutual aid, and shared purpose. From its 19th-century origins to its ongoing contributions as WoodmenLife, the organization has played a significant role in American social and cultural life. Its legacy is evident in the iconic monuments, strong community programs, and the countless families who have benefited from its support. The story of Woodmen of the World continues to inspire those who value fraternity, service, and the spirit of helping others.

Q: What is the origin of Woodmen of the World?

A: Woodmen of the World was founded in 1890 in Omaha, Nebraska, by Joseph Cullen Root. Root was inspired to create a fraternal benefit society that provided life insurance and mutual aid to members, reflecting values of community and financial protection.

Q: What do the tree-stump gravestones symbolize in

Woodmen of the World history?

A: The tree-stump gravestones symbolize the organization's motto "Clear the way," representing strength, endurance, and the collective effort to build and protect communities. These monuments also reflect the society's roots in timber symbolism and serve as a tribute to deceased members.

Q: What was the primary purpose of Woodmen of the World?

A: The primary purpose of Woodmen of the World was to offer affordable life insurance and financial security to its members while promoting principles of benevolence, mutual aid, and community service.

Q: How did Woodmen of the World impact American communities?

A: Woodmen of the World played a significant role in building social networks, supporting public initiatives, organizing charity events, and providing aid during disasters. Its lodges often served as important community centers.

Q: What are some common symbols associated with Woodmen of the World?

A: Common symbols include the axe, log, and tree stump, all representing the ideals of strength, unity, and clearing the way for progress. These symbols are often seen in the organization's regalia and monuments.

Q: How has Woodmen of the World evolved in modern times?

A: Today, Woodmen of the World operates as WoodmenLife, continuing to provide insurance, financial planning, and community service programs while adapting to the needs of modern members and embracing new technologies.

Q: Who can join Woodmen of the World or WoodmenLife?

A: Membership is open to individuals who share the organization's values and are interested in its insurance products and community activities. Over time, membership criteria have become more inclusive.

Q: What kinds of benefits did members receive?

A: Members received life insurance, accident and health coverage, scholarships, disaster relief, and access to social and community programs.

Q: Why are Woodmen of the World lodges called

"camps" ?

A: The term "camps" reflects the organization's timber-related symbolism and the concept of working together to clear new ground, reinforcing the themes of unity and progress.

Q: Are there any famous people associated with Woodmen of the World?

A: Over the years, Woodmen of the World has included many notable community leaders, politicians, and business figures, though its focus remains on serving ordinary members and their families.

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Woodmen of the World History: A Legacy of Brotherhood and Service

Have you ever heard the whispers of a fraternal organization dedicated to helping others, steeped in tradition, and boasting a rich history spanning over a century? This is the story of the Woodmen of the World (WOW), an organization that has touched countless lives through its fraternal bonds and commitment to providing financial security and community support. This comprehensive exploration delves into the captivating history of the Woodmen of the World, tracing its evolution from humble beginnings to its enduring presence today. We'll uncover its founding principles, examine key milestones, and explore its lasting impact on society. Prepare to journey through time as we unravel the fascinating saga of the Woodmen of the World.

The Genesis of a Brotherhood: Early Years and Founding Principles (1890-1920s)

The Woodmen of the World first took root in the late 19th century, a time of significant social and economic change in the United States. Founded in 1890 in Omaha, Nebraska, by Joseph Cullen Root, the organization emerged from a desire to create a fraternal benefit society that prioritized both mutual support and financial security for its members. The early years were characterized by rapid growth, fueled by a strong sense of community and the promise of life insurance protection – a

crucial need for working-class families at the time. The organization's name, evocative of the strength and resilience of nature, mirrored its mission: to provide a solid foundation for its members and their families. Early recruitment heavily focused on rural communities, reflecting the agricultural roots of many early members. The rituals and symbols of the organization further cemented a sense of brotherhood and shared purpose.

Expansion and Consolidation: Navigating the 20th Century (1920s-1980s)

The 20th century presented both challenges and opportunities for the Woodmen of the World. The Great Depression tested the organization's financial strength, but its commitment to its members helped it weather the storm. Through strategic adaptations and a steadfast focus on providing reliable insurance products, the WOW maintained its relevance. Throughout the mid-20th century, the organization continued to expand its reach, both geographically and in terms of the services it offered. This period saw a diversification of its insurance portfolio and a greater emphasis on member engagement through social activities and community initiatives. The organization adapted to changing societal norms and demographics, while still retaining its core values of fraternalism and mutual aid.

Modern Woodmen of the World: Adapting to a Changing Landscape (1980s-Present)

The latter half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century witnessed a significant shift in the landscape of fraternal organizations. The Woodmen of the World responded by embracing modernization and technological advancements. While upholding its traditional values, the organization invested in updated operational systems, improved member communication, and expanded its online presence. This adaptation allowed the Woodmen of the World to remain competitive and continue serving its members effectively in a rapidly evolving world. Today, the organization continues to thrive, offering a wide array of financial products and services, along with opportunities for community involvement and social connection.

The Enduring Legacy of Service and Community

The history of the Woodmen of the World is more than just a chronicle of financial success; it's a testament to the enduring power of human connection and mutual support. From its humble beginnings to its current status as a significant fraternal benefit society, the WOW has consistently prioritized its members' well-being and contributed positively to the communities it serves. The organization's commitment to providing financial security, coupled with its dedication to fostering a strong sense of brotherhood and community, has secured its place as a noteworthy and lasting institution. Its history serves as an inspiration, highlighting the profound impact a dedicated group of individuals can have on society.

Conclusion

The Woodmen of the World's journey is a compelling narrative of resilience, adaptation, and unwavering commitment to its members. Its enduring legacy is a tribute to the founding principles of mutual support and financial security, principles that remain as relevant today as they were over a century ago. The organization's story provides a valuable lesson in the power of fraternity and community, offering a glimpse into the transformative impact of shared purpose and collective action.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What types of insurance does the Woodmen of the World offer? Woodmen of the World offers a variety of insurance products, including life insurance, annuity products, and supplemental health insurance. Specific offerings may vary by location.
2. How do I join the Woodmen of the World? Membership in the Woodmen of the World typically requires applying through a local representative or online application process. Eligibility criteria may apply.
3. What is the significance of the Woodmen of the World's name and symbolism? The name "Woodmen of the World" symbolizes strength, resilience, and the interconnectedness of nature, reflecting the organization's commitment to supporting its members and fostering a strong community.
4. What charitable activities does the Woodmen of the World participate in? The Woodmen of the World actively engages in various charitable initiatives supporting communities through financial contributions and volunteer work, focusing on areas like youth development and disaster relief.
5. What is the difference between the Woodmen of the World and other fraternal organizations? While many fraternal organizations share similar goals of mutual support and community building, the Woodmen of the World distinguishes itself through its strong emphasis on providing financial security through insurance products in addition to its social and community engagement activities.

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woodmen of the world history: Freemasonry in Context Art DeHoyos, S. Brent Morris, 2004
In *Freemasonry in Context: History, Ritual, Controversy* editors Arturo de Hoyos and S. Brent Morris feature work by renown Masonic scholars. Essays explore the rich and often times controversial events that comprise the cultural and social history of Freemasonry.

woodmen of the world history: As Above, So Below Lynne Adele, Bruce Lee Webb, 2015-11-15
"There's an inspiring and wacky solemnity in these organizations—high values reinforced through

pageantry and performance in an ecumenical social setting—which deep down must also have been a whole lot of fun. Now it's as if that foundational Other America, that underpinning of the America we know, has gradually eroded, and here we remain, living in a world that is a mere shell, a movie set, of the world that made our world manifest, that brought it into being, and all we have left are these perplexing masks, banners, and costumes to puzzle over.” —David Byrne, from the foreword

Featuring more than two hundred outstanding objects gathered from private and public collections, *As Above, So Below* provides the first comprehensive survey of the rich vein of art created during the “golden age” of the American fraternal society. By the turn of the twentieth century, an estimated 70,000 local lodges affiliated with hundreds of distinct American fraternal societies claimed a combined five and a half million members. It has been estimated that at least 20 percent of the American adult male population belonged to one or more fraternal orders, including the two largest groups, the Freemasons and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. The esoteric knowledge, visual symbols, and moral teachings revealed to lodge brothers during secret rituals inspired an abundant and expressive body of objects that form an important facet of American folk art. Lynne Adele and Bruce Lee Webb introduce the reader to fraternal societies and explore the function and meaning of fraternal objects, including paintings and banners, costumes and ceremonial regalia, ritual objects, and an array of idiosyncratic objects that represent a grassroots response to fraternalism. Setting the art in historical context, the authors examine how fraternal societies contributed to American visual culture during this era of burgeoning fraternal activity. Simultaneously entertaining and respectful of the fraternal tradition, *As Above, So Below* opens lodge room doors and invites the reader to explore the compelling and often misunderstood works from the golden age of fraternity, once largely forgotten and now coveted by collectors.

woodmen of the world history: A World History of Railway Cultures, 1830-1930 Matthew D. Esposito, 2021-08-29 *A World History of Railway Cultures, 1830-1930* is the first collection of primary sources to historicize the cultural impact of railways on a global scale from their inception in Great Britain to the Great Depression. Its dual purpose is to promote understanding of complex historical processes leading to globalization and generate interest in transnational and global comparative research on railways. In four volumes, organized by historical geography, this scholarly collection gathers rare out-of-print published and unpublished materials from archival and digital repositories throughout the world. It adopts a capsule approach that focuses on short selections of significant primary source content instead of redundant and irrelevant materials found in online data collections. The current collection draws attention to railway cultures through railroad reports, parliamentary papers, government documents, police reports, public health records, engineering reports, technical papers, medical surveys, memoirs, diaries, travel narratives, ethnographies, newspaper articles, editorials, pamphlets, broadsides, paintings, cartoons, engravings, photographs, art, ephemera, and passages from novels and poetry collections that shed light on the cultural history of railways. The editor's original essays and headnotes on the cultural politics of railways introduce over 200 carefully selected primary sources. Students and researchers come to understand railways not as applied technological impositions of industrial capitalism but powerful, fluid, and idiosyncratic historical constructs.

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woodmen of the world history: The Texas Supreme Court James L. Haley, 2013-02-15 “Few people realize that in the area of law, Texas began its American journey far ahead of most of the rest of the country, far more enlightened on such subjects as women's rights and the protection of debtors.” Thus James Haley begins this highly readable account of the Texas Supreme Court. The first book-length history of the Court published since 1917, it tells the story of the Texas Supreme Court from its origins in the Republic of Texas to the political and philosophical upheavals of the mid-1980s. Using a lively narrative style rather than a legalistic approach, Haley describes the twists and turns of an evolving judiciary both empowered and constrained by its dual ties to Spanish civil

law and English common law. He focuses on the personalities and judicial philosophies of those who served on the Supreme Court, as well as on the interplay between the Court's rulings and the state's unique history in such areas as slavery, women's rights, land and water rights, the rise of the railroad and oil and gas industries, Prohibition, civil rights, and consumer protection. The book is illustrated with more than fifty historical photos, many from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It concludes with a detailed chronology of milestones in the Supreme Court's history and a list, with appointment and election dates, of the more than 150 justices who have served on the Court since 1836.

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woodmen of the world history: Freemasons For Dummies Christopher Hodapp, 2021-10-26
Unravel the mysteries of the Masons All the myths and rumors about Masonic organizations probably have you wondering what do Masons really do? Questions like this one are a natural by-product of being the oldest and largest secret society in the world. This book is an ideal starting place to find answers to your questions about the secret and not-so-secret things about Freemasonry. Now in its third edition, this international best-seller peeks behind the door of your local Masonic lodge and explains the meanings behind the rituals, rites, and symbols of the organization. Along the way the book covers nearly 3,000 years of Masonic history, introduces you to some famous Freemasons you already know from history books, and explains the relationship with related groups like Knights Templar, Scottish Rite, Order of Eastern Star, and the beloved fez-wearing Shriners. Look inside the book to learn: What it takes to become a member of the Freemasons, and what you can expect when you join How Lodges are organized and what really goes on during Masonic ceremonies The basic beliefs and philosophies of Freemasonry, including how Masons contribute to charity, and society in general The origins behind some of the wild myths and conspiracy theories surrounding Freemasonry and how to debunk (most of) them Written by a 33rd degree Scottish Rite Mason and the Public Relations and Marketing Director for the Grand Lodge F&AM of Indiana, *Freemasons For Dummies* is a must-read guide for anyone interested in this ancient fraternal order, whether you're looking to join or are just curious about some of the more mysterious aspects of Freemasonry.

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woodmen of the world history: Historic Cemeteries of Portland, Oregon Teresa Bergen and Heide Davis, 2021 Portland's historic cemeteries are some of the most beautiful and overlooked cultural treasures in the city. Full of fascinating secrets and eerie tales, these greenspaces are also the perfect spots for walking, biking and birding. Explore twenty-five burial grounds with public art in the form of remarkable tombstones that vary as much as the Portlanders they commemorate, including suffragists, spiritualists, Romani kings, politicians and murderers. From a photographer who captured the golden age of Broadway musicals to a celebrity orangutan, Portland's graves are full of surprises. Come along with cemetery sleuths Teresa Bergen and Heide Davis as they share their insights into the Rose City's remarkable past.

woodmen of the world history: Modern Woodman Magazine Frank O. Van Galder, 1919

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woodmen of the world history: History of Kansas State and People William Elsey Connelley, 1928

woodmen of the world history: From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State David T. Beito, 2003-06-19 During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, more Americans belonged to fraternal societies than to any other kind of voluntary association, with the possible exception of

churches. Despite the stereotypical image of the lodge as the exclusive domain of white men, fraternalism cut across race, class, and gender lines to include women, African Americans, and immigrants. Exploring the history and impact of fraternal societies in the United States, David Beito uncovers the vital importance they had in the social and fiscal lives of millions of American families. Much more than a means of addressing deep-seated cultural, psychological, and gender needs, fraternal societies gave Americans a way to provide themselves with social-welfare services that would otherwise have been inaccessible, Beito argues. In addition to creating vast social and mutual aid networks among the poor and in the working class, they made affordable life and health insurance available to their members and established hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the elderly. Fraternal societies continued their commitment to mutual aid even into the early years of the Great Depression, Beito says, but changing cultural attitudes and the expanding welfare state eventually propelled their decline.

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woodmen of the world history: *Studies in Greek Scenery, Legend and History* James George Frazer, 2022-08-15 DigiCat Publishing presents to you this special edition of *Studies in Greek Scenery, Legend and History* (Selected from His Commentary on Pausanias' 'Description of Greece,') by James George Frazer. DigiCat Publishing considers every written word to be a legacy of humankind. Every DigiCat book has been carefully reproduced for republishing in a new modern format. The books are available in print, as well as ebooks. DigiCat hopes you will treat this work with the acknowledgment and passion it deserves as a classic of world literature.

woodmen of the world history: Restoration and History Marcus Hall, 2010-02-01 Once a forest has been destroyed, should one plant a new forest to emulate the old, or else plant designer forests to satisfy our immediate needs? Should we aim to re-create forests, or simply create them? How does the past shed light on our environmental efforts, and how does the present influence our environmental goals? Can we predict the future of restoration? This book explores how a consideration of time and history can improve the practice of restoration. There is a past of restoration, as well as past assumptions about restoration, and such assumptions have political and social implications. Governments around the world are willing to spend billions on restoration projects - in the Everglades, along the Rhine River, in the South China Sea - without acknowledging that former generations have already wrestled with repairing damaged ecosystems, that there have been many kinds of former ecosystems, and that there are many former ways of understanding such systems. This book aims to put the dimension of time back into our understanding of environmental efforts. Historic ecosystems can serve as models for our restorative efforts, if we can just describe such ecosystems. What conditions should be brought back, and do such conditions represent new natures or better pasts? A collective answer is given in these pages - and it is not a unified answer.

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woodmen of the world history: South Toward Home Julia Reed, 2018-07-31 In considering the pleasures and absurdities of her native culture, Julia Reed quotes another Southern writer, Willie Morris, who said, "It's the juxtapositions that get you down here." These juxtapositions are, for Julia, the soul of the South, and in her warmhearted and funny new book, *South Toward Home*, she chronicles her adventures through the highs and the lows of Southern life—taking us everywhere from dive bars and the Delta Hot Tamale Festival to an impromptu shindig on a Mississippi River sandbar and a coveted seat on a Mardi Gras float. She writes about the region's music and food, its pesky critters and prodigious drinking habits, its inhabitants' penchant for making their own fun—and, crucially, their gift for laughing at themselves. With her distinctive voice and knowing eye, Julia also provides her take on the South's more embarrassing characteristics from the politics of lust and the persistence of dry counties to the "seemingly bottomless propensity for committing a whole lot of craziness in the name of the Lord." No matter what, she writes, "My fellow Southerners have brought me the greatest joy—on the page, over the airwaves, around the dinner table, at the bar or, hell, in the checkout line." *South Toward Home*, with a foreword by Jon Meacham, is Julia Reed's valentine to the place she knows and loves best.

woodmen of the world history: The Grapevine of the Black South Thomas Aiello, 2018-11-01 In the summer of 1928, William Alexander Scott began a small four-page weekly with the help of his brother Cornelius. In 1930 his *Atlanta World* became a semiweekly, and the following year W. A. began to implement his vision for a massive newspaper chain based out of Atlanta: the Southern Newspaper Syndicate, later dubbed the Scott Newspaper Syndicate. In April 1931 the *World* had become a triweekly, and its reach began drifting beyond the South. With *The Grapevine of the Black South*, Thomas Aiello offers the first critical history of this influential newspaper syndicate, from its roots in the 1930s through its end in the 1950s. At its heyday, more than 240 papers were associated with the Syndicate, making it one of the biggest organs of the black press during the period leading up to the classic civil rights era (1955-68). In the generation that followed, the Syndicate helped formalize knowledge among the African American population in the South. As the civil rights movement exploded throughout the region, black southerners found a collective identity in that struggle built on the commonality of the news and the subsequent interpretation of that news. Or as Gunnar Myrdal explained, the press was "the chief agency of group control. It [told] the individual how he should think and feel as an American Negro and create[d] a tremendous power of suggestion by implying that all other Negroes think and feel in this manner." It didn't create a complete homogeneity in black southern thinking, but it gave thinkers a similar set of tools from which to draw.

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woodmen of the world history: History of Kentucky William Elsey Connelley, Ellis Merton Coulter, 1922 The present work is the result of consultation and cooperation. Those engaged in its composition have had but one purpose, and that was to give to the people of Kentucky a social and political account of their state, based on contemporaneous history, as nearly as the accomplishment of such an undertaking were possible. It has not been the purpose of those who have labored in concert to follow any line of precedent. While omitting no important event in the history of the state, there has been a decided inclination to rather stress those events that have not hitherto engaged the attention of other writers and historians, than to indulge in a mere repetition of that which is common knowledge. How far they have succeeded in this purpose a critical public must determine.

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