

THE WEST SHORE.

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**For the West Shore.
OREGON SHIP BUILDING.**

BY THOMAS R. MERRY.

The first impression that the new comer has of Oregon, (at least it was my first) is that it is a vast grain garden with such a broad expanse of arable land that it could produce not only grain enough to feed all the other Pacific States and territories, in the event of a drouth, but also have a large surplus for exportation to foreign markets. This is especially true of the Willamette valley, which contains less waste land in proportion to its total area, than any other section of the same size in America. Drouths are entirely unheard of there, and the only failure of crops that can possibly occur, would be through an excess of rains. Hence its superiority over the Sacramento

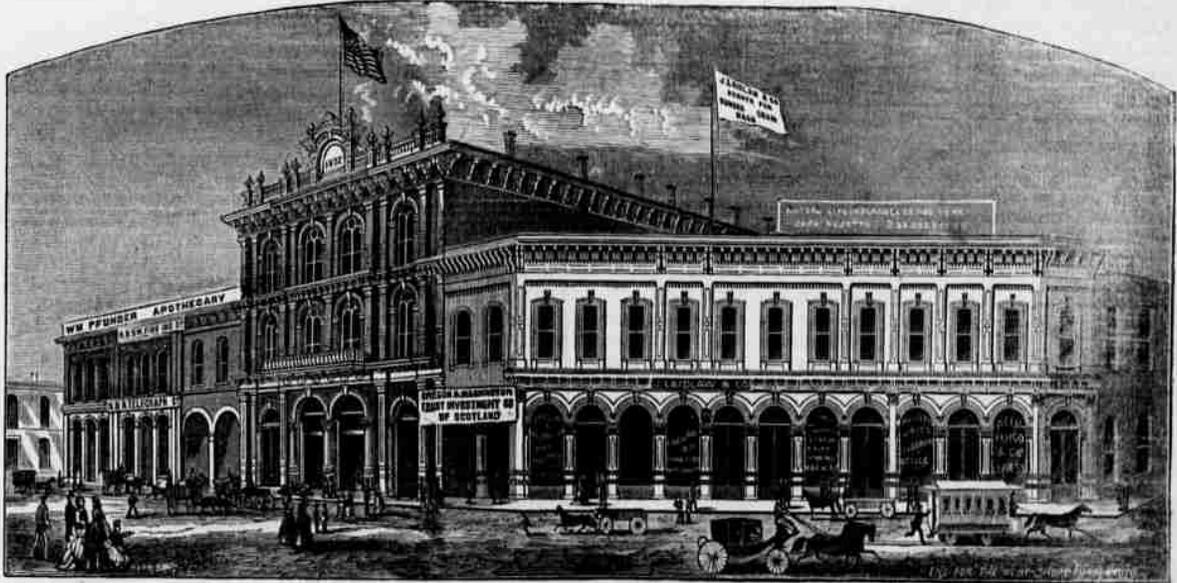
and San Jaquin valleys in California, where the rains cease after the 1st of April, is a matter beyond dispute.

But all this wealth of golden grain is valueless without a liberal supply of tonnage to carry it into the markets of the old world, where it may be exchanged for such former articles of luxury as civilization has now transformed into necessities of every-day life. So long as the carrying trade is restricted to foreign bottoms, or even to vessels of American build, owned outside the State, there is but little margin of profit for the State of which the primary producer is a citizen. And it will only be when Oregon capital owns the keels which bear her grain to Cork and Liverpool, as well as the grain itself, that our state will rise to her true commercial dignity and display to an admiring world the opulence

of her resources. This fact seems to have been hitherto overlooked by the financiers of Portland, the commercial and monetary center of the State. It is true that Portland has the finest fleet of stern-wheel steamers (for their size) of any city in America. Nothing that I have seen can surpass the *Bonita* for speed nor the *City of Salem* for lightness of draught; and owners of those vessels can well be proud of their achievements. But why does Portland build no ships? And why are her wharves lined with the red flags and lean iron hulls of British vessels? I answer, for want of well directed enterprise. I have heard men say that the fir timber along the lower Columbia river is unfit for the building of deep-water ships, and that it is inferior to the fir of Coos Bay and Puget Sound. In vulgar parlance, "I won't have it!" For my own

part, I ask no better illustration than the following:

In the year 1857 an old low pressure steamer called the *Albatross* (formerly the *S. B. Wheeler*) was condemned at Honolulu, her engines taken out and shipped to Astoria. At some point on the lower Columbia river, the hull of a new steamer was built in 1859, in which this machinery was placed and the new craft christened the *Eliza Anderson*. This vessel has seen very severe service on the coast of British Columbia, frequently crossing the straits of Fuca at times when it seemed impossible for any small vessel like her to live in so heavy a sea. Last summer at Seattle, I went aboard of her and found all her timbers to be sound as the day they were hewn. Now any steamship man will tell you that the timbers of a steamer will



ANKENY'S NEW MARKET BLOCK, FIRST ST., BET. A AND ASH, PORTLAND. Photo by Buchel & Stolte.

decay much faster than those of a sailing vessel, owing to the amount of salt water that is always leaking from about the boilers and pumps. Yet this old and shamefully neglected craft is sound and staunch in her sixteen years. Taking this as an example of the quality of Columbia river timber, I have no hesitation in expressing the belief that Portland can build ships for the European grain trade, capable of lasting fully twenty-five years.

Vessels for the coasting trade have been built at San Francisco ever since 1853, but it was reserved for Washington Territory to turn out the first full-rigged ship for blue water. Gilbert A. Meigs, of Port Madison, Kitsap county, was the man who stood the egg on its end. In 1871 he commenced, in connection with Aaron J. Westervelt, of New York, the construction of the ship *Wildwood*, now on her return from Liverpool to San Francisco. Unfortunately, a difficulty sprang up between them when the ship was first started and Mr. Westervelt returned to New York in disgust. This led to the vessel being finished in a very

different style from Mr. Westervelt's design, as he intended her to be the counterpart of his celebrated ship *Sveapectator*, which is accredited with two trips from New York to San Francisco inside of ninety days, but the *Wildwood*, though not what Westervelt intended she should be, is a credit to the territory. She sailed from Burrard Inlet, British Columbia, with a full cargo of lumber and made the run to Melbourne, Australia, in forty-six days.

The second ship built on the Pacific Coast is the appropriately named

WESTERN SHORE,

Launched at North Bend, Coos county, Oregon, October 8th 1874. She was designed by Capt. A. M. Simpson, her principal owner, and built by John Kruse, the architect of the North Bend shipyard. Her joiner work was by Frank Gibson, polished work in cabin by Fredrick Mark and painting by Peter Gibson. She is 1188 tons burthen, out measuring the *Wildwood* about eighty tons, but being of fuller lines and able to out-carry her at least 125,000 feet on a cargo of lumber. Her spars are

the handsomest sticks ever seen in Liverpool, if the Captain of the British ship *Pattordale* is any competent judge. Her rigging and canvas were designed by Capt. R. W. Simpson, the resident partner at North Bend, and I must here take occasion to say that this is a very important matter in ship-building. If you put too little canvas upon a ship, she will be too slow to go after a doctor, if you put on too much, she will bury herself by the head and have no buoyancy. Now the *Western Shore* is not a very elegant ship above water, aside from her superb spars, but she has easy and graceful lines below, and sheds water easily from her stern. Her cabin is of Oregon myrtle, relieved by door-posts of the Sandwich Island tamana, and was done by a quiet little old Dutchman in Marshfield. He subsequently did the cabin of the barkentine *Tam O'Shaner* for the same parties and made, if anything, a better job of it. It will pay any man interested in the resources of Oregon to visit the latter vessel when she arrives at Portland (where she is a regular trader) and I am confident

that "Uncle Pat" will treat him hospitably for my sake.

The *Western Shore* arrived in San Francisco on the 26th day of November 1874 and commenced loading grain for Liverpool, for which port she sailed on the 29th of January 1875. She was a standing joke for the marine reporters of the San Francisco press who dubbed her the "Oregon canal-boat," "Webfoot scow," "Coos Bay Ark," "North Bend cheese-box," &c. Meantime, the quiet and unpretentious Yankee who designed her, sat back and silently munched his quid in the solitude of his little office on Market street. He was "waiting for the verdict." San Francisco's pet ship, the *Three Brothers* had sailed for Liverpool, a few days before with a pending wager of \$5,000 against the English ship *British King*. But nobody thought of putting up a dollar on the "Oregon barge," which towed to sea that bleak winter afternoon with 1940 tons of wheat in her hold and staunch little Wesley McAllep on the quarterdeck. She lay becalmed all that night and all next day off