



Photo. by L. J. Hicks—

PRESENT VIEW OF PORTLAND, LOOKING NORTHEAST, SHOWING PART OF BUSINESS SECTION.

—View from Portland Heights.

Commerce in Its Infancy

The Large Part River and Ocean Traffic Has Played in Portland's Growth.

THE maritime interests of Portland have ever been the greatest factor in her commercial greatness. In locating the city on the banks of the Willamette, its founders gave it all the advantages for trade distribution that accrue to any inland city which springs up in the heart of a prosperous region. At the same time the splendid system of waterways has from the earliest times enabled deep-water ships to reach the Portland docks with ease, thus bringing the producers of this state into direct communication with the markets of the world. When we consider the vast importance of the maritime commerce of the present day, while we are also enjoying the advantages of transportation afforded by four transcontinental railroads, with innumerable feeders, it is easier to comprehend the extent to which Portland's existence was dependent on marine traffic in the early '50s. This traffic, which "drew the water" together and spread the race apart, was the one artery through which the commercial lifeblood of Portland and Oregon surged. Railroads at that period were rare, indeed, even in the most thickly populated states of the Union, and in Oregon were so far in the future that they were hardly thought of. The dense forests made road-building slow and costly work, and accordingly we find in the records of the vanguard of civilization who crossed the plains frequent mention of the construction of rafts, which were used in floating the pioneers down the Columbia and up the Willamette. The bateaux of the trader and freighter supplanted the raft of the pioneer homeseeker on nature's highways, and it in turn gave way to the nifty, wheeling little steamers, the first of which appeared on the Columbia a few months before the birth of The Oregonian. A year later the steamboat invaded a new field above the falls at Oregon City, and before the close of 1851 there were half a dozen steamers plying on the Willamette, enabling the hardy settlers along that stream to reach a market with the products of the soil, which previous to this time had been practically worthless on account of poor transportation facilities.

The pioneers who had taken the land route to the new West, while nearing the coast had sighted many a rich and beautiful location for homebuilding east of the Cascade Mountains, but through fear of the Indians kept moving on. Reports of their observations, however, had the effect of interesting the government, and in due season soldiers were detailed and settlements appeared along the Middle and Upper Columbia. Steamboats ran regularly in 1851 between Portland and the lower Cascades, and that year the James F. Flint, the pioneer steamer on the Middle Columbia, went into service, giving Portland additional territory on which to draw for trade. Portland's population at this period was not sufficiently large to offer a market for very much of a surplus of the comparatively small amount of farm products which the settlers were sending in, but the ocean traffic grew apace with that of the river, and wheat, oats, beans, butter,

hides, tallow, potatoes, etc., began to figure on the outward manifests of the ocean craft along with the furs of the trapper and the lumber and piling which had formerly afforded the only cargoes for the vessels which came here with merchandise from the outside world.

Prior to 1850 Portland was dependent entirely on small sailing vessels for connection with the rest of the world. The pioneer Beaver, the first steamer on the Pacific Ocean, made occasional trips from Puget Sound and British Columbia to Vancouver Barracks in the '30s, and in the early part of the '40s, but as she was owned by the Hudson's Bay Company she cut no particular figure in building up trade in Oregon. In June, 1850, however, the Carolina, the first American steamship to enter the Columbia River, arrived at Portland, and was followed a few weeks later by the Gold Hunter, mentioned elsewhere as the first Oregon investment in steamship property. The financial troubles of the Gold Hunter hampered her usefulness as a regular means of communication, but a year later the Columbia was placed on the route between Portland and San Francisco, and, connecting with the latter port with the Panama liners, brought Portland into touch with the rest of the Nation. The Columbia had but a limited freight capacity and her revenue was mostly secured from mails and passengers. This, together with the rapidly increasing business due to the influx of settlers from the East and from the wanting gold excitement in California, led to the building of the small coasting bark, brig and schooner. The Columbia bar was at its worst in those days, and, from the rare old relics which sailed between the Willamette port and San Francisco, it is apparent that shipowners did not believe in sending good vessels here. The big fleet of clipper ships which were built in 1849 and 1850 to bring goldseekers to the coast remained in the round-the-Horn traffic for many years, and made San Francisco the base of supplies for the entire Pacific Coast, freight for Portland being transhipped at that port, and the coasters which brought it to Portland carried Oregon produce for the Eastern markets by the same route.

Outside ports along the Oregon and Washington coast began to attract attention from the enterprising Oregonians in 1851, and the sloop Killamook was built at Astoria and made regular trips to Tillamook and Shoalwater Bay, thus adding to Portland's field for trade. The steamship Sea Gull was on the route between Portland and San Francisco in 1851, and called both ways at Port Orford, Trinidad and Humboldt, all of these ports taking a certain amount of produce and merchandise from Portland.

The maritime commerce of Portland and Oregon is the keystone from which her commercial greatness has built. Fifty years ago it was a matter of a few thousand dollars a year. Now the value of the products carried on ocean vessels between Portland and the sea is \$20,000,000 a year. The diminutive sailers, Francis and Louise, J. R. Whiting, Susan Abigail, George and Martha and similar

craft have given way to the largest sailing ships afloat, which move unhindered to the sea, with more cargo aboard than the craft of 10 years ago could carry in a dozen trips. The river has done much for Portland, and Portland has not been derelict in her duty to the river. The channel to Astoria is in such shape that 24-foot ships go through without touching and without delay, and by another year the Government will have the improvements at the mouth of the river in such shape that there will be no more delay below Astoria than is now experienced above that point.

Barnhart Was There.

Among those who were present when the first number of The Oregonian was taken from the press was Major W. H. Barnhart, who arrived here in the Fall of 1849, and is now a resident of this city, and, so far as he knows, with Amos N. King and Mrs. Stephen Coffin, is the only person now living here who was here in 1849. Mr. Barnhart's name did not appear in the first copy of The Oregonian, but he was at that time bookkeeper for Norris & Co., one of the advertising firms. Early in the year 1851 Norris & Co. went out of business, and

Life on the River

Crude Accommodations on Steamboats—High Fares—A Couple's Predicament.

ASTORIA, Or., Nov. 21.—In answer to your request for some reminiscences of the early history of Oregon, and especially of the first navigation of its rivers, I do not know that I can give you much more of a detailed account than you will find in the "Maritime History."

When I first came to Oregon, with the Mounted Rifle Regiment, under command of Colonel Loring, arriving in Oregon City October 12, 1849, the regiment was obliged to make its winter quarters there, as no provision had been made at Vancouver for them. Oregon City at that time was quite a busy place, and numbered some very pleasant, sociable people, and, inasmuch as many of the officers brought their families with them, and we had also an excellent regimental band, altogether it made a gay and lively town. The only means of transportation was by horseback, or by water in canoes or

rather tedious. An Englishman by the name of John Thomas was the owner of a very pretty Whitehall boat, and for the moderate sum of \$5 would bring a passenger from Portland to Oregon City. With a company crossing the plains, holding the position of sutler, was a man by the name of James Frost, an energetic, speculative, able-bodied man, who, with his brother, became interested in a sawmill down the Columbia, near Clifton, known as the Hunt mill. Frequent tedious trips awakened him to the fact that something better was required in the way of navigation, and he enlisted the aid of some residents of Astoria, among them General Adair, Sam Goodwin and others. They decided on building a small side-wheel steamer. With the assistance of Tom Smith, an engineer and foundryman of Oregon City, the boat was built, machinery placed and ready for her maiden trip, in command of Captain Jim Frost,

route, for \$50. The rate of speed depended very much on the assistance of wind and tide. A couple of young Indians who had considerable knowledge of the river were employed as pilots, but an occasional lay-up on a sandbar retarded the passage, which under favorable circumstances on the up trip would take from 15 to 20 hours.

After Frost I took charge of the boat for a time, and later a young Missisippi steamboatman by the name of Makay was in command. After the Little Columbia came the Lot Whitcomb, a fine steamer, built at Milwaukie, and named after an old resident of that burg. With Captain J. C. Ainsworth in command, and Jacob Kamm as engineer, she was ably handled. From this on, steamers increased and multiplied rapidly, both on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, above and below the falls at Oregon City. I cannot enumerate the names and dates of the coming out of the various crafts, as I left Oregon in 1852, and was absent for a number of years before coming back to resume steaming in the employ of the old O. S. N. Co.

If not too wordy for your columns, I might mention one or two little episodes, rather amusing, in which the little steamer bore a part. One of these introduces the name of Amory Holbrook, at that time the Attorney-General of Oregon, and one of the most inveterate practical jokers in the country. He had no mercy or scruples in carrying out his jokes to the bitter end when he once started in, as I knew to my sorrow afterwards, when practiced on myself. At Vancouver resided Governor Ogden, in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company business at that place. Like Dr. McLoughlin, of Oregon City, he was a noble, kind-hearted man. His daughter was the wife of a Mr. McKinley, in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company store at Oregon City, and their home was on the bluff above the city. One night Governor Ogden received word that his daughter, Mrs. McKinley, was very ill, and required his presence as soon as possible. The Governor mounted his horse, and, accompanied by his Indian servant, made his way as rapidly as possible by Indian trail, through the timber and darkness to Oregon City, climbed the bluff and knocked at the door of the McKinley home. In answer to his inquiry he was told that Mrs. McKinley was in perfect health, and asleep. The Governor said nothing, but remained overnight, and in the morning, meeting Holbrook, who could not disguise his satisfaction, surmised at once where the summons had come from. The Governor made no complaint, but bided his time.

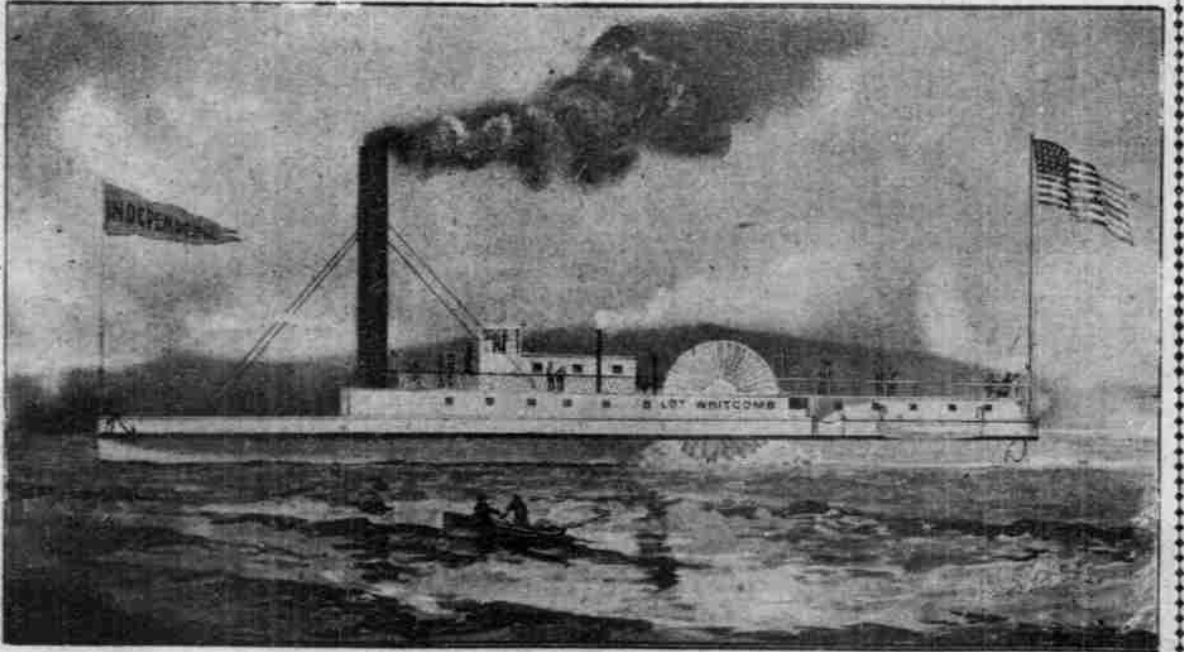
Some short time after, on arrival of the steamer from San Francisco, mails being brought up from Astoria, Holbrook received important documents calling him at once to San Francisco on legal business. The little steamer Columbia, of which I had charge at the time, carried the mails and passengers from Portland to Astoria, calling at Vancouver on the way for mails. While lying at Vancouver, some few passengers, among them Holbrook, went up to pay their respects to Governor Ogden. Holbrook mentioned to Governor Ogden that he was on his way to San Francisco on some important business. While his guests were being entertained in the most friendly manner, the Governor stepped from the room, told his servant to go down to the boat, present his compliments to the steward and say that Mr. Holbrook requested him to give his valise to the servant to take up to Governor Ogden's residence for the purpose of getting some papers from it. The valise was handed up at once and carried to the Governor's residence. In due time the passengers returned to the steamer, all feeling pretty jolly after the Governor's generous donations, and, all being ready, the steamer proceeded on her way to Astoria. On arrival there, passengers for San Francisco prepared to go aboard the ocean steamer at once, as she was ready to go out on arrival of the mails. Holbrook could not find his valise, and great excitement was in order. When the steward was questioned he replied at once that it had been delivered to Governor Ogden's servant, on request of the Governor, and had not been returned.

That settled the matter. Holbrook saw that he had been paid in his own coin. He returned to Portland by the little steamer the next day, a sadder and wiser man, and waited one month for the next steamer to arrive from San Francisco.

At another time my sympathies were with a young couple en route from Vancouver to Astoria. After the regiment had removed to Vancouver, many social gatherings were gotten up, and at one of these, given by the wife and daughters of Captain Llewellyn Jones, a young and very pretty young lady from Astoria was one of the invited guests. She was much admired by the young officers, and especially so by one who, when he was ready to return home, obtained leave of absence for a few days in order to accompany her down the river. They could have but little privacy, inasmuch as the small after-cabin could boast of two board seats, one running on each side of the dining table, and terminating to a point at the extreme end. Everything went smoothly along till we reached Woody Island, about 15 miles from Astoria. Here we met a strong wind and a flood tide. The little boat had not the power and strength to fight the two, and we were obliged to come to anchor. The pitching and rolling were fearful, and my two young passengers were soon in the agonies of seasickness and were helpless. I placed them in as comfortable a position as I possibly could, with their heads close together, at the end of the cabin, put a bucket between them for joint use, and hung a blanket across by their feet to shut them from view. As the wind and sea subsided, we journeyed on, and eventually reached our journey's end. It was a touching position, and I used sometimes to remind the young lady of it, but she did not remember it as an amusing episode. DAN O'NEILL.

Christmas in 1850.

The late John Wilson, than whom no man was ever remembered with more affection, once told how he had endeavored to give two little girls a happy Christmas in 1850. "Those old days!" remarked Mr. Wilson. "Did I have any Christmas then? Not much of a one. I was boarding with a family where there were two little girls. I thought a great deal of them, and about Christmas time I thought I would buy them some candy. There was no candy in the settlement, as I found to my regret. Finally, a man told me he thought there was a saloon-keeper who had some candy in his pice. I looked him up. He had four candy jars in which candy had been kept, but they had been empty for months. However, in the bottom of each there was an accumulation of candy dust and broken bits. Would he sell the remains in the bottom of those jars? There was not more than an ounce in each jar. Yes, he would sell them. "How much?" "Five dollars." "I got the candy—it was better than nothing."



LOT WHITCOMB, FIRST STEAMER BUILT ON THE WILLAMETTE RIVER.

On Christmas day, 1850, the steamer Lot Whitcomb was launched at Milwaukie, amid a great jubilation. She was named in honor of the founder of the town, and was commanded by Captain William S. Hazen, W. H. H. Hall, pilot, Jacob Kamm, engineer. She was 100 feet long, 24 feet beam, 5 feet 5 inches depth of hold. Captain J. C. Ainsworth afterward succeeded to the command. She was first put on the Astoria route, and later ran on the lower river altogether. In 1854 she was taken to California.

Mr. Barnhart went into business immediately after, and Shubrick Norris was bookkeeper for him during the time he remained here. So far as he knows, Mr. Barnhart is the only person now living here who was in business here in the winter of 1850-1, and even the firm names have disappeared. For about half the time since Mr. Barnhart's arrival here in 1849 he has been a resident of Portland, and the other 25 years he has resided in various parts of the state.

small sailboats. Between Oregon City and Portland and Vancouver the travel was generally on horseback, through heavy timber, and wagon roads were hardly known. A trip down the river to Portland, in pleasant weather, by rowboat or canoe, was very easy and exciting, shooting through the rapids at the mouth of the Clackamas and the numerous whirrs and eddies below; but coming back, unless favored by a good up-river wind, it was

in the early part of July, 1850. The name given was the Little Columbia. The boat was small, and not at all a harbor of comfort for passengers, having no sleeping accommodations, and not much sitting-room, but, compared with the former modes of travel between Portland and Astoria, was a great improvement, and the modest fare of \$15 was willingly paid. I remember presenting a bill to Dr. Wilcox, of Portland, for three trips between Portland and Astoria, and meals en