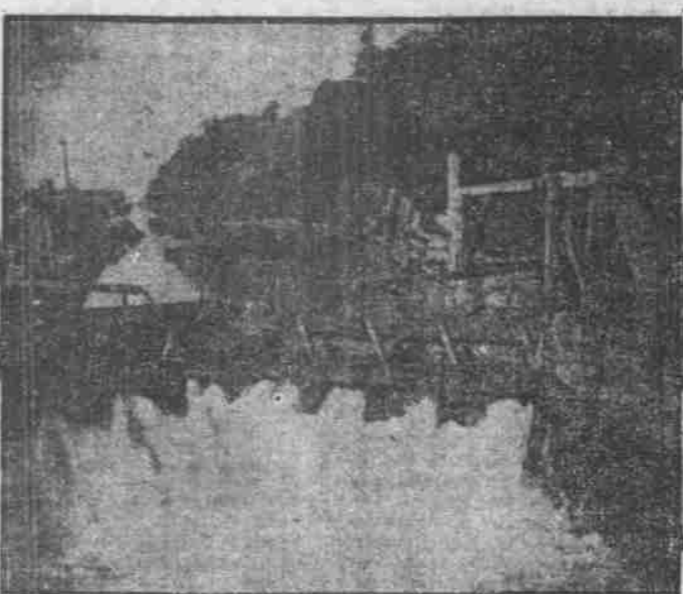
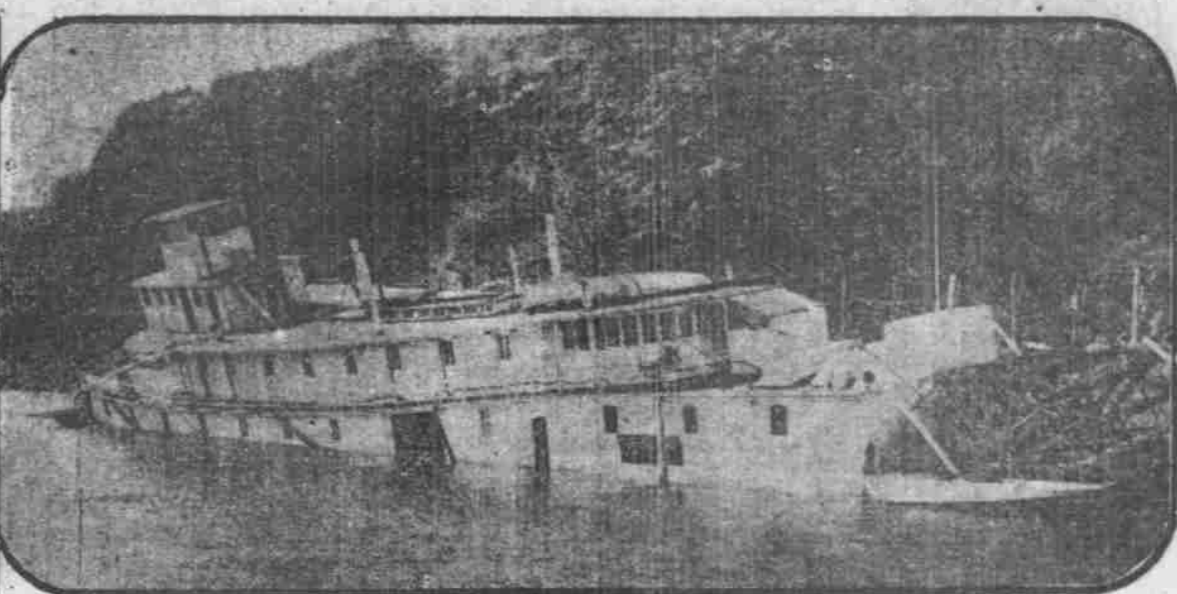


"MULTNOMAH", 1853



OLD LOCKS.....OREGON CITY



WRECK OF STEAMER Wm. M. HOAG.

Early Navigation on Willamette



As years count, it has not been so very long since the shores of Simpson's "lovely river" were a wilderness, untrod save by the moccasined feet of the Indian who, armed with feathered shaft and bow, threaded the dusky gloom in search of game.

Such a scene was necessarily slow and not altogether unattended with danger. Sometimes the fragile branches broke and the boat went whirling down the angry tide, for even the "bright Willamette" shows signs of temper at certain seasons of the year.

Life as a river steamer was one long chapter of accidents, and she finally ended as a floating sawmill, after having proven a disastrous investment to her owners, in her first capacity.

The Walmette, another steambot of the same date, was considered the most magnificent boat on the inland waters of the Northwest. She was not, for some reason, a success on the upper river route, and was "lined" over the Falls and taken to the Sacramento, in California.

Blown to Atoms.

In 1854 the Gazelle was built, at a point on the bank of the river, opposite Oregon City, by a company organized for the purpose of founding a rival town. Fate apparently frowned upon this ambition. The first boat constructed by the company was burned before she was fairly completed; the second, the ill-fated Gazelle, was blown to atoms within 20 days after launching.

holer explosion, in which, although the destruction of the boat was complete, no one was fatally injured. It is chronicled that "two passengers who were playing cards in the after-cabin at the time were lifted bodily and found themselves sitting in a dazed condition, but unhurt, upon the debris which floated near the wreck."

The St. Claire was not much more than a steam scow, and was available only for freighting purposes, but she achieved fame, by her successful leap in mid-air over the falls at Oregon City. In the never-to-be-forgotten year of 1861, it was during the great flood in December that her captain brought her safely down.

In 1860, according to the records, a genius at Corvallis concluded that steamboats were too expensive to operate, so he rigged a craft with tread mill machinery and cattle and horses for motive power. Coming down the river on her first trip, the vessel ran, or rather walked, ashore, at McGoogian's Slough, where she stayed till the motive power had devoured all the oats and hay aboard. Then the skipper, undeniably a man of original ideas, was forced to sell his oxen and give up that method of river transportation.

The Reliance was one of the fastest of the early boats on the Willamette. It is recorded to her credit that she once made the trip from Oregon City to Salem in six hours and a half, including the time occupied in making no less than nine landings.

Prosperous Days.

Those were gay and prosperous days in the history of steamboat traffic on the Willamette. Both the Reliance and her rival in speed, the Active, carried bands of music, and their respective arrivals and departures were notable events, celebrated with joyous acclaim by the inhabitants of the towns along the route. When a boat was due at any point on the upper river the farmers and their families gathered there from miles about, and when the hoarse shriek of her steam whistle woke the echoes, as she neared a town, the whole population, even to the babies and the dogs, turned out to welcome her.

"Fannie Patton" is a name dear to the early inhabitants of Salem. The craft so named was also a Canemah boat, having been built and launched from that pioneer boatyard in August, 1865, and she was further known as "Salem's Pride." A corporation of the Capital City owned and operated her and she bore the name of the wife of an honored citizen of the place.

Not the least interesting chapter in the story that might be told of early navigation on the ever-beautiful Willamette is that descriptive of the countless attempts, sometimes successful, but often failures, to supply the small towns upon the tributaries of the river with steamboat service. The Santiam, the Long Tom and many other streams whose adjacent territory is now effectually tapped by railway lines, were once considered navigable for light-draft steamers, for varying distances from their confluence with the Willamette.

The Ohio.

The queerest craft that ever plied the waters of any stream was, it is claimed, the Ohio. She was built, so reads the record of her construction, with a box hull and a flat bottom. When completed her draft was only eight inches. She was known along the river as the "O. H. Ten."

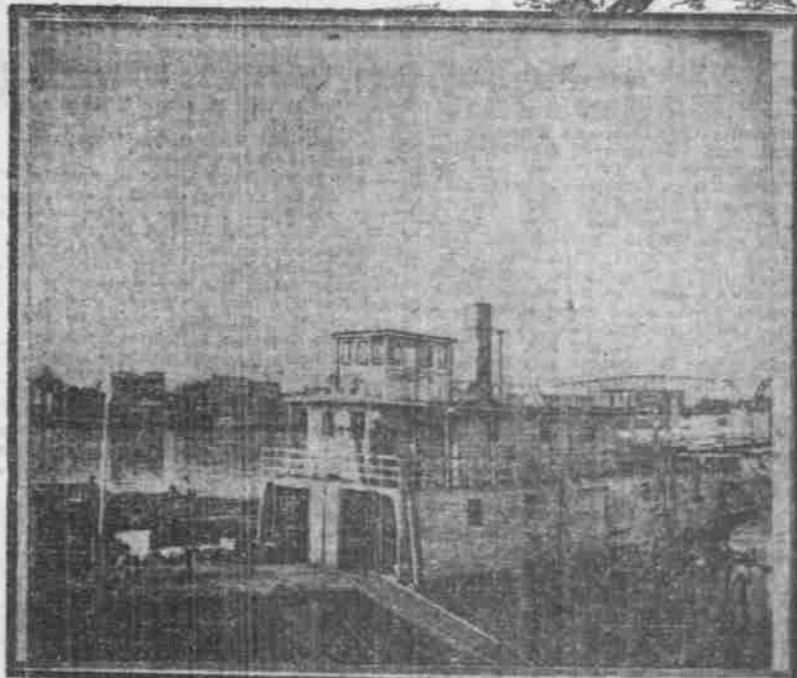
Judging from the history of the craft that have been operated on the Willamette during the last half century, the fate of a river steamer is either tragic or ignominious. Her term of usefulness is brief, and if she escapes fire and flood, submerged snags and gravel bars for a decade, she is dismantled and turned into a scow or a barge, dependent upon some still vitalized craft for towage.

There are wrecks strewn along the upper river, and they are not all visible to mortal sight. The members of transportation companies—those, more particularly speaking, organized on the co-operative plan—could tell many a tale of dis-

pointment and disaster. And as for the steamboat captains themselves, the experience of each would fill a good-sized volume, if written out in interesting detail. There was a charm about steamboating on the river, in earlier days, that is largely lacking in these latter times.

Gave Good Service.

Contrasted with the big, handsomely appointed boats that now come and go on the Willamette, passing with ease from the lower to the upper river through the splendidly constructed locks at Oregon City, those pioneer steamers were perhaps insignificant. But when it comes to a comparison of records, when achievements are taken into consideration, it is at once apparent that they were not without distinction. They were built for use, not beauty, and in their brief but invariably eventful careers they rendered efficient service, and to this day they are remembered and spoken of with pride and affection by their whilom captains and crews. The people who journeyed up and down the river in their crowded and inconvenient cabins, and the farmers who watched and waited for their coming and hailed the arrival of a boat as an



"EGALITE"

speech that brightened the gray monotony of rainy days in winter, will tell you that no modern mode of travel can yield a tinge of the enjoyment to be gotten out of a trip on the river in those primitive and perilous times, before the locks were built, before the comfortable and spacious steamers invaded the upper river, and the railway came with its Pullman cars and its other evidences of modern progress.

Crumbling to Decay.

Once populous and busy towns like Buena Vista and Peoria are, under the new and existing order of things, deserted and crumbling to decay. The roomy warehouses that, less than half a century ago, were yearly stored with the cereal products, oats and wheat and barley raised and harvested in the Valley of the Willamette, almost to the exclusion of everything else, are but tottering ruins. Their floors, where, when the cargo was taken on and the boat ready for departure, the deckhands danced with the village maidens, to the sound of the fute and the violin, are green with mold, or fallen, quite away. The whistle of passing steamboats echoes sadly along the shores where once the eager crowds gathered to welcome their humble predecessors; for the finest boat on the river, in this period of rapid progress, is powerless to awaken more than a mild degree of interest in the dwellers by the waterside.

LIECHEN M. MILLER.



"RELIANCE"

year 1862. And yet any captain who had experience in those earlier days will tell you, with a sigh and shake of the head, that in spite of steam and steel and perfected proportions, freighting on the river is not what it once was.

First Organized Service.

It was not until 1850 that any regularly organized transportation company began to operate upon the Willamette. Prior to that time small boats and barges, owned by private individuals, or by the Hudson's Bay Company, at Vancouver, did most of the carrying, reinforced, as occasion required, by the large and light canoes of the Indians who peopled the shores of the lower river.

All the craft built and owned by that first company were flatboats that had to be poled or "lined" up stream, and which were, as a rule, manned by Indian crews. It was slow, hard work, getting up the river in those days, and it required the service of willing hands and an unlimited store of patience to accomplish the journey at all. Sometimes, when the nature of the shore or the swiftness of the current rendered towing impossible, or polling ineffectual, the great, awkward barge was drawn up stream by means of the willows that drooped and trailed along the river's margin, and to which the dusky boatmen clung. The progress in



CAPT. W. J. JOHNSTONE.

Multnomah's Advent.

The Multnomah was built in the East and brought out to Oregon in sections. She was put together at Canemah and launched in June, the same month and year as the Washington. She was not beautiful—at least, her portrait does not convey the idea of grace—but she possessed both power and speed, and was enthusiastically welcomed by the inhabitants of Corvallis and its outlying districts, for she was the first boat to ascend to that point, Albany having previously been considered the head of navigation on the river. However, her passenger accommodations so far exceeded her capacity as a freight carrier that it was not found profitable to operate her upon the Corvallis route, and so, at the end of the year, she was transferred to Portland and ran for 12 years upon the lower Willamette and Columbia. The Canemah, a somewhat larger and slower craft of local construction, took the place of the Multnomah in the traffic of the upper river.

Not a boat that plied the waters of the Willamette in that first decade of steam navigation on the river but had an eventful, if sometimes brief, career. There was the Shalwater, whose original title was all but forgotten in the seven years of her existence, during which period she steamed under four different names. Her

As she went over the falls, her whistle sounded a wild, wailing shriek that was echoed back from the hills beyond the river. It was the craft's dying protest against her untimely fate—a fate which was shared by her captain and one of her crew. In the steamer's safe was money to the amount of \$2000. The safe with its contents, to this day, for aught man knoweth to the contrary, reposes on the bed of the Willamette.

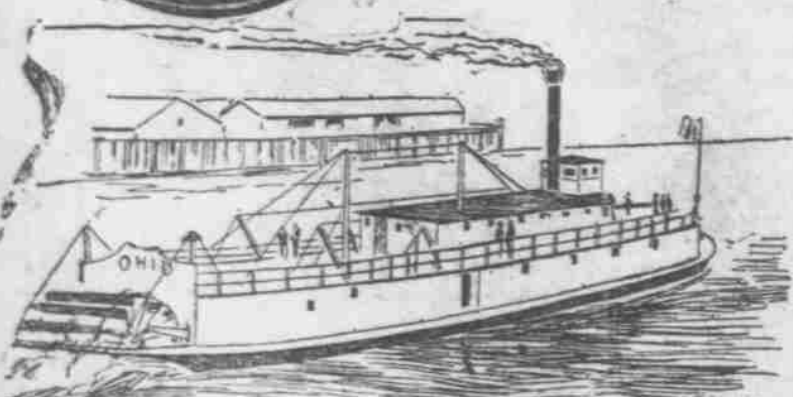
Her Dying Protest.

Agent Frank J. Smith, of The Dalles, Portland & Astoria Navigation Company, who has had many years experience in inland navigation in the Northwest, and to whom, among others, the writer is indebted for supplying information for this article, says this concerning the lost safe:

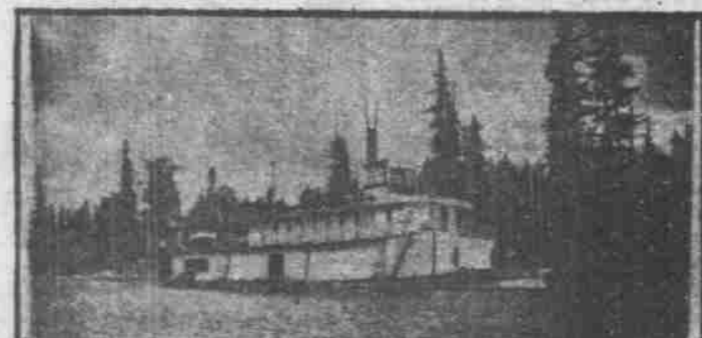
"Time has wrought great changes in the face of the ragged cliff over which the Willamette tumbles, and now the spot where the Portland struck is a shell-like basin, the rim of which appears above the surface and in the center of which is barely 16 feet of water."

"Aware of this, some old-time steambotmen, 25 years after the disaster, left Portland to endeavor to get the safe and its precious contents. There seemed little to contend against, excepting the accumulation of silt and debris beneath which the safe lies buried, for the change in the face of the fall has left the basin dead water, without current or cataraet. The treasure-hunters took a full and complete outfit to aid them in their work, but their attempts proved futile." Captain Smith regards it as unlikely that the safe will ever be recovered.

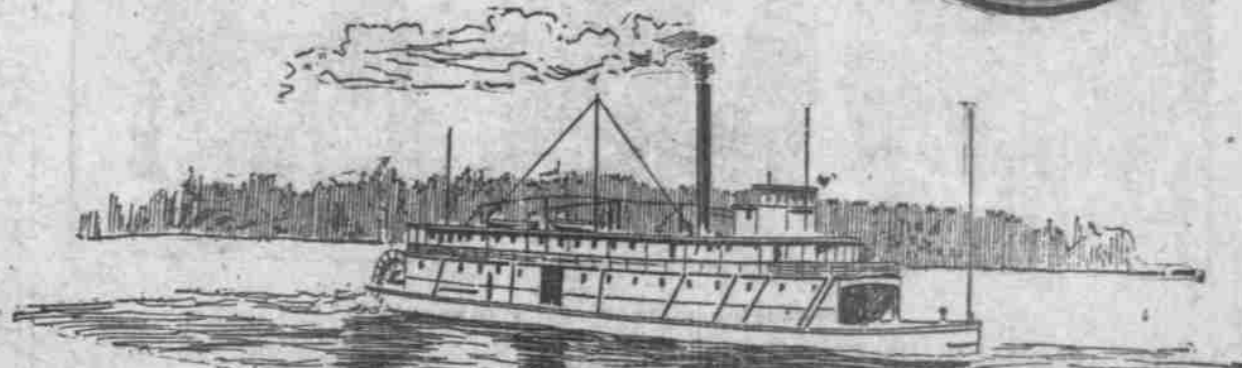
The Elk was a small steamer, built by farmers to run on the Yamhill, and chiefly memorable on account of an effective



OHIO



"CITY OF EUGENE"



"WILLAMETTE CHIEF"