

LOUIS SIMPSON RISES FROM RANKS OF THE LABORER TO HEAD OF GREAT CORPORATION

Following Closely His Father's Policy of Fairness in Every Way to Employe, There Has Never Been a Strike or Threatened Strike at the Coos Bay Plants Operated by the Simpsons.



Capt. A.M. Simpson, the Original 'Cappy' Ricks.

In these days of shipbuilding booms along the Oregon coast and in the Oregon rivers, as well as along the Coast and in the rivers and harbors to the north and south of us, we are apt to forget, or perhaps never knew, that there was for many years a shipbuilder on the Pacific who was really a pioneer and whose labors for a half century were towards building up and maintaining a merchant marine on the Pacific and the waters of the Occident.

Take a reef in your think tank and cast your eye down the coast to Coos Bay. Go up the channel from the Pacific past the old city of Empire, under the great bridge of the Southern Pacific Railway, up to the old sawmill that stands along the water front of the present city of North Bend, and you go farther around to a shipbuilding plant, where you will see two or three vessels under construction and as many more being repaired.

Why, dear readers, that shipyard was established about 52 years ago and has been in active operation ever since. It never had any guarantee, it never had a kindly and fatherly Government to commandeer man for it, never had any man or any set of men to establish the guarantee of labor, never had material guaranteed. No. The indomitable fighting owner of that plant had for over 50 years to fight his way alone.

That man was Captain A. M. Simpson, of the last few years perhaps oftener spoken of as "Cappy Ricks," for the imitable Peter B. Kyrle, with his facile pen and the fertile imagination of a Scott or a Dickens, has given A. M. Simpson a niche in the gallery of fame and thereon has builded up "Cappy Ricks," a character so strong and yet so lovely, so masterful and yet so sweet and tender, that every person who has read the stories in the Saturday Evening Post is asking for further contributions.

activities on Coos Bay, for there were no other shipyards in Oregon for almost half a century. It was in 1856 when he decided to begin operations on Coos Bay. So he bought "the makings" of a mill on Sutter's Creek, California, and shipped the outfit on a schooner to what is now North Bend. The schooner and cargo were lost and with them his brother, Louis Simpson, who was the captain. So his first Coos Bay venture was a disastrous one, and a man of less caliber might have quit then and there.

But that was not the Cappy Ricks way. In later life he once said to an interviewer that his life work had been "getting knocked down and getting on his feet again."

First came the old square-riggers, followed by the two-masters. Then the three-masters, schooner rigged. They in order threatened the six-masters, each one being an innovation introduced by Cappy Ricks, and each model whittled out by him. And then came the steamers, the lumber carrier of today, another innovation of Cappy Ricks.

And so the work has gone forward for more than half a century. At one time had more than 30 vessels plowing the seas. He had all sorts of interests in all sorts of places—was always getting knocked down and getting on his feet again! But always in fair fights, always recovering in good humor—always and never he was square in all of his dealings.

Fair Treatment Held Best. Along the latter part of his career his activities were carried on under two cooperative names, A. M. Simpson & Co. and the Simpson Lumber Company. His brother, Captain Robert W. Simpson, his partner in the former company, died in 1888, and Cappy purchased the interest in the latter over the management of all the Simpson interests. He, up to that time, received \$150 a day, the same as the other laborers of the time. He was given charge he ran things about his own way, which was really the following out of his father's policy to the very letter—fairness in every way to every employe, from the day laborer to the most skillful artisan.

Consequently there has never been a strike or threatened strike at any of the Coos Bay plants of the Simpsons, and there were many until the death of Cappy Ricks and the sale of the operating plants. The town of North Bend was platted and was really a creature of Louis J. Simpson's brain. The great 50-acre park, one of the finest in the state, was given to North Bend by "Louie" Simpson, as his friends call him.

To get back to where we started, let me say to any employer who knows all about the present activities in the shipbuilding industry, that if we had had in Oregon 50, 40, 30, or even 20, years ago a few men with the presence, the "grit," the fighting qualities, the breadth of view of the Simpsons, particularly Cappy Ricks, we would not be where we are today. We would have ships in all quarters of the Occidental waters, which really means as well the Oriental waters. But our capitalists were, apparently, afraid to lend their influence or money to anything that as for the most of the time they did not understand. Their investments were where they could find the security at any time of the day or night. And if they did make an investment that turned out to be a loss, they would not be where we are today.

Yes, Oregon has lacked men of the Cappy Ricks type—men who spent their lives in "getting knocked down and getting on their feet again."

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vegetables, with bits of meat floating around, is a good example of a one-dish meal, well known to all the British. We also have the Irish stew, which Americans seem to have dubbed "Mulligan's."

With number one steers costing the retail butchers 29 cents a pound, the average family. But the thrifty housewife can turn her attention to the concoction of thick soups, chowders or purées from fish, and delicate bisques of fish or oysters.

Two Pounds Sufficient. Place two pounds of skate in a pot and cover with cold water, say about two quarts. Let simmer for one or two hours, and it should produce a fish stock of strong stock, as rich as beef bouillon.

Place the fish in a large piece of muslin, and squeeze out the water. The part of the skate which comes to the market here is usually the barndoor wings of the larger skates; the smaller ones, with their almost human, little old-man faces and queer bodies, we seldom see.

when the American flag was far flung and proudly flung to the breeze on every port of the seven seas; when the Yankee captain and the Yankee tar were looked up to by the maritime folks of all nations.

Good Old Days Recalled. These were the good old days of a half or three-quarters of a century ago. Conditions have greatly changed. We have no merchant marine now. Our flag is not far flung to the breeze anywhere. Why? Go down to the halls of Congress and ask that question. Go down there and ask why it is necessary at the present time to exhibit all of this feverish haste to build ships, and then more ships, ask the members of the House or Senate why it has happened that we allowed England, France, Germany, Norway and Sweden to chase the American flag off the seven seas and all other seas—ask why these and all other nations took away from us what the sturdy men of Bath, of Nantucket, of Portsmouth and other shipbuilding ports fought for and won for us.

Never mind cogitating about that. It all came about through too much fool legislation. We are now paying dearly for it, and the toll is only beginning to be taken. It may be that sanity has returned to our lawmakers and that in time Old Glory may proudly be seen flying, as of yore, in every considerable port of the universe. Let us hope so. And, anyhow, after this little war is settled, let us settle all our individual and collectively, swear to swear with a mighty oath any damfool Senator or Congressman who attempts to pass a law giving the United States the worst of it in our battles for the world's sea trade.

In Bath, Maine, there lived in the middle of the last century, a family of shipbuilding and shipshalling folks by the name of Simpsons. This was the third generation of that particular Simpson family, and we have only to deal with three of the sons of that day, say 1850. These were A. M. L. P. and Robert. A. M. (Cappy Ricks) was born in 1828. He went into a shipyard as a boy and learned the trade. He was a thrifty lad and saved his money, so by the time he was 23 years old he had a little nest egg, his principal asset being the one-thirty-second interest in the vessel just then outfitting at the dock of his father's shipyard—the Birmingham.

Unfortunate Investment Costly. When the news of the gold strike of 1849 came to the Bath shipyards there was a feverish anxiety to get vessels started for the new field, and one of the first was the Birmingham, upon which was the embryo Cappy Ricks as supercargo. This vessel arrived in the Golden Gate harbor on the 11th of April, 1850. It would make too long a story to tell of the trials and tribulations Cappy Ricks had in getting started on his way to fame and fortune. He soon accumulated about \$1500 by work in the gold mines near

Stockton. But this and the share held in the Birmingham soon was lost in an unlucky venture in operating the vessel.

Then, with little capital save eloquence and imagination, he went into the lumber business, with particular interests in its transportation. He was successful from the start and by the following year he was interested in the Potomac, and she was wrecked on the Columbia. Soon Cappy came to Oregon himself and made several ventures here. At that time Scottsburg, on the Umpqua, was a better business point than Portland, and he visited that town. While there he heard of the Coos Bay country and walked down there. That is, he got down to the channel and found a settlement near what was soon known as Empire, a town that became the county seat when Coos County was organized. In 1852 Cappy had a lumber mill at Astoria, soon another at Hoodlum. Then the coal mines on Coos Bay were opened and Cappy built vessels to carry it to San Francisco, where his headquarters were. He lost three vessels in this venture, and the Astoria mill turned out to be a failure. But Cappy Ricks never recognized defeat. He never carried any insurance on his mills, vessels or cargoes, nor on his lumber. During his active operations he lost more than 25 vessels and cargoes and many thousands of dollars worth of lumber. His losses by fire all told were about \$1,500,000. But never a grumble from Cappy.

MEMBERS OF WEBFOOT CAMP, NO. 65, WOODMEN OF THE WORLD, PLANT WAR GARDEN FOR FAMILY IN MOUNT SCOTT DISTRICT.

Front Row, Sitting, Left to Right—F. C. Willis, William Chapin, G. W. Mohr, L. A. Schorn, John Adams, H. L. Barber and O. P. Phillips. Standing—City Treasurer William Adams, T. Atkinson, E. Daniels, City Commissioner A. L. Barber, Dr. C. Daniels, C. S. Kimball, A. F. Elvath, E. W. Larned and A. J. Hodges.

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