

River Boats Numerous in '50's

300 Miles on Inland Oregon Waters Traversed by Captains on Steamers; Eugene Had Regular Service; Tualatin, Clackamas, Pudding and Yamhill Rivers Utilized

BY CAPT. FRANK J. SMITH

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THE history of early navigation on the Willamette river began in 1846 when the Ben Franklin and Mogul, sail scows owned by Dr. Newell ran between the falls and Champoege, followed later by the Salem Clipper owned by Captain Leonard White who operated as far up the stream as New Orleans, a landing south and east of what is now known as Corvallis. Steam navigation began with the Hoosier on the Willamette above the falls in 1851 and from then on river steamers became numerous. During the intervening years between then and today there have been periods when 16 regular carriers were in service at

one time in order to keep the traffic moving. The cycle of 80 years began with one only on the route with Salem as her terminal. Volumes could be filled with interesting data of these early day packets. Races, traffic wars, rates and anecdotes of the lives of the operators may be recounted but the space allotted prohibits their mention at this time so this article will be confined to the shrunken navigable miles of this stream as it appears today compared with the many miles navigated in the past.

Head of Navigation Up River at Salem

Salem now has the distinction of being the present head of navigation on the Willamette, 84 miles south, by the winding channel, from its entrance into the Columbia. This short stretch of navigable water, for a river that is referred to as the "Gateway of the Willamette Valley," does not reflect much credit on the thriving municipalities that line the banks of this river south of Salem. The fact that navigation ends at Salem is a difficult matter to understand, especially when the residents of this prolific valley as far south as Springfield are clamoring for an open river that will put them on a rate parity with more fortunate towns below that have a connection with tidewater.

By referring to the marine history of this river it will be found that there has been a shrinkage in the navigable waters of the Willamette and its tributaries amounting to 216 miles since the advent of steamboats. Authentic data discloses the startling fact that steamers have been navigated on these waters for a distance of 300 miles. Segregated, they are apportioned as follows:

Main streams from mouth to Springfield, 185 miles. Clackamas river, one mile. Tualatin, 30 miles. Pudding River, 10 miles. Yamhill, 20 miles. Luckiamute, 18 miles. Santiam, 22 miles. Booneville Slough, five miles, and the Long Tom, nine miles.

Steamer to Eugene Regular in 1858

Beginning in 1858 the steamer James Clinton, the first steamboat to reach Eugene, ran regularly from seven to eight months in a season to that city and was soon followed by other boats that made Springfield the head of navigation. In 1874 the Ohio by maintaining a schedule demonstrated that the river was navigable at that period as far as Springfield. The A. A. McCully and other large carriers frequently visited Eugene and brought capacity loads of farm products to tidewater. In the eighties the Oregon Pacific railroad established a connection between Eugene and San Francisco via Yaquina Bay steamers and the Willamette river steamer "Three Sisters." In 1894 the steamer Eugene ran regular trips to Eugene and in 1899 the enterprising citizens of that city built and operated the steamer "City of Eugene," a successful low water carrier.

The Willamette flows past Eugene and numerous other towns today as of yore before it meets the tidewater boats at Salem. Bridges have spanned the streams, docks have crumbled and a tangled undergrowth covers hundreds of farm landings of the steamboats that once proved a barrier against unjust rates.

Navigation on Tributaries Went to Small Towns

The Clackamas once enjoyed the unique distinction of boasting of one mile of navigable water. This

Best Wishes

BY S. SUMPTER SMITH
Manager, Medford Mail-Tribune

THE publishers and staff of the Medford Mail Tribune extend to The Oregon Statesman congratulations upon reaching the 80th milestone as a newspaper, with the wish for continued long life and prosperity.

"The continued service of The Statesman for over three-quarters of a century has been of distinct value to the state, the Willamette valley, and the city of Salem."

was from its mouth to the Clackamas Paper Mills, now known as Parkplace. In 1868 the steamer Alert made frequent calls to that then new industry.

The Tualatin has been navigated from its mouth to Centerville, above Hillsboro. By the winding channel the distance is 30 miles. Prior to 1860 the Hoosier, Yamhill and Swan operated on this stream and in 1867 the Onward, commanded by the Kellogg family, carried the commerce of Washington county to boats on Oswego Lake and by a portage to the Willamette.

The Pudding River was navigated for a distance of 10 miles to a point known as Irvings Bridge by the steamer Moose, commanded by Captain John Kruse on February 18, 1860. Although this steamer was cleared to within three miles of Gervais, to a point known as Parkersville, the upper reaches of this stream were never utilized. The Yamhill has been successfully navigated for 20 miles.

"Hoosier" First on Upper River
The first steamer that operated above the falls at Oregon City, the Hoosier, used this stream to Dayton in 1851, followed soon by others that reached McMinnville after that town was founded in 1853.

The government put in a dam and lock at Lafayette to encourage navigation and has kept an oper-

ator stationed there in idleness for many years as no boats call for its opening. In 1902, Captain Riggs with the Mildred Hazen succeeded in reaching a point known as Briedwell, a few miles west of Amity.

The Luckiamute, a very crooked stream, in Polk county, was navigated by the Luckiamute Chief commanded by Captain J. L. Smith in 1878. He ascended as far as Lewisville, 18 miles by river though only 10 by land. As his boat was equipped with a portable boiler and engine that had once done duty in a threshing outfit the power and speed were not sufficient to make it a success.

The Santiam river has been navigated for a distance of 22 miles. In the early days frequent trips were made as far as Jefferson by the largest carriers and it was not an unusual sight to see steamers loading at the Jefferson mills. In 1871 the steamer Calliope, Captain Copely, succeeded in reaching Lebanon and pioneer small steamers reached the forks of the Santiam.

Booneville Channel, just above Corvallis, once added another five miles of navigable water and for many years this rich farm land sent out their products by steamboat.

The Long Tom with nine miles of navigable water had steamers calling at Monroe for years. Over 30 years have elapsed since the shippers have heard the welcome blast of the Gypsy commanded by Captain Lee calling for farm hands to load grains for tidewater.

The same river continues to flow through this valley, its volume of water has not appreciably lessened, boats built on modern lines have been perfected, the utilization of high power steam and diesel machinery has been developed, the government has expended many thousands of dollars in improving the channel and the building of locks and it is clearly up to the shippers to use this stream as it now exists and thereby compel the government to come to their assistance in rescuing this once marine artery from being the sewer of the valley.

THE FIRST SLOGAN

"Salem is the horse capital of Oregon."—Statesman, Mar. 16, 1890.

Vital Factor

BY PAUL COWLES
Executive Assistant,
Associated Press

"I learn that the Statesman is soon to celebrate its 80th year of continuous publication. That must be a record for the Pacific northwest and perhaps for the entire Pacific coast.

"During those eighty years The Statesman has been a vital factor in the growth of the great state of Oregon. Let us hope it will continue the good work for another 80 years and more."

North Counties In Washington Cut up in 1853

Issue of The Statesman of March 19, 1853, contained laws of the territory dividing Thurston County and creating out of it the additional counties of King, Pierce, Jefferson and Island in what is now the State of Washington. The county seat of Thurston County was fixed at Olympia. It also contained a law for the locating of a territorial road from Salem to Dayton and from Salem to "to or near Theodore Prater's former residence in Polk county" via Anderson's Ferry.

Other roads located were from Winchester to Jacksonville; from Spores' Ferry in Lane County to the Umpqua valley. Another law made the emigrant road from Oregon City to the DesChutes river a territorial road.

Free Mail Given In 1887; Boxes Placed at Homes

Free delivery of mail in Salem began July 1, 1887.

Here were the locations of the first mail boxes: Commercial street, South Salem, at residence of R. H. Dearborn; corner of Cottage and Trade; corner of Summer and Court; on Asylum avenue near the end of Chemeketa; corner State and Tenth; near W. L. Wade's store, in North Salem; corner Commercial and Division; corner Commercial and Center; Corner Liberty and Court; "one yet to be determined" says the news account.

Hewn Stone Used As Foundation Of Statehouse

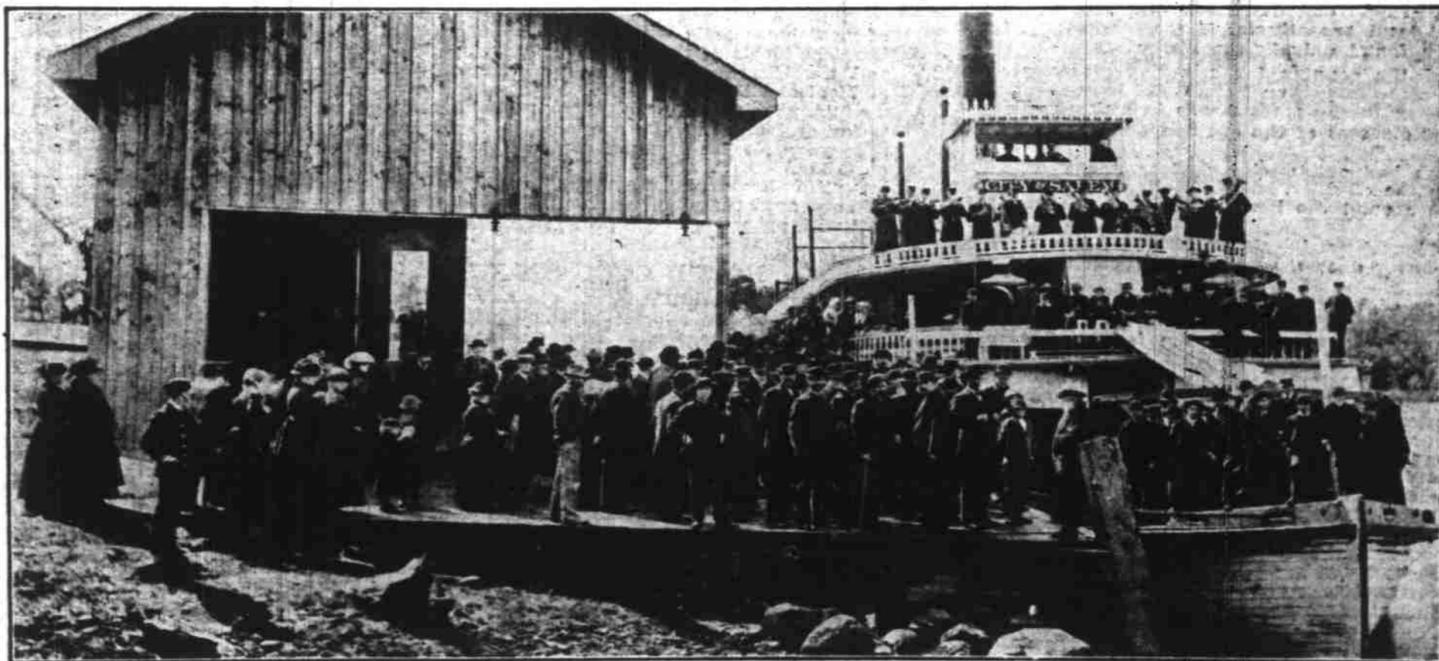
"The Capitol. The foundation of the territorial Capitol at this place is nearly completed. It is constructed of hewn stone of which material the whole structure, we understand, is to be composed."

"Court House. A first class court house is being erected in this place. Its cost will be about \$15,000."—Statesman, June 28, 1853.

INFANT INDUSTRY

"J. M. Crane proprietor of the flax spinning machine, is on the incoming boat and will probably be in Salem tomorrow."—Statesman, May 23, 1877.

EXCURSION ON "CITY OF SALEM"



THE "CITY OF SALEM" WAS ONE OF THE LEADING BOATS ON THE RIVER. THE SALEM BAND MAY BE SEEN ON THE TOP DECK

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