

THE ASTORIAN.

SATURDAY AUGUST 2, 1873

COMMERCIAL STATISTICS.

Report on the Harbor and Shipping of the port of Astoria—Facts Important to the Public.

At a meeting of the Astoria Chamber of Commerce, held in May last, a committee was appointed to prepare statistics of the harbor and shipping of the port of Astoria...

Your committee to whom was referred the matter of harbor, and shipping intelligence, beg leave to offer the following:

The water front of Astoria, varying from a quarter of a mile to a mile in width affords over six miles of secure anchorage for the largest classed vessels...

Should the demands of commerce require, about five consecutive miles of dockage may be cheaply constructed from the river bank to the edge of the channel...

The central portion of the harbor is just twelve miles inside the Columbia river bar, on which there is twenty-four feet of water at extreme low tide...

There is the following named depths of water at the points mentioned at high tide: Walker's Island, 10 ft. for 1/2 mile below Rainier Carr's Woodyard...

The channel is often crooked, and difficult of navigation, and the bar at the mouth of the Willamette river is subject to annual deposits of sediment from back water of the Columbia.

We find that the carrying trade of Oregon is now chiefly done by vessels of light draft and small capacity.

That these are subject to a tax of \$8 per foot draft as pilotage; from four to ten days' delay, and \$300 to \$400 towage, over and above what they would have to pay, did they receive and take in cargo at Astoria.

Table with columns: Pilotage 15 feet @ \$4 up, Six days demurrage @ \$30, Towage up, down.

Equivalent to over four cents per bushel on the cargo of 600 tons outward bound. This is but a fraction of the expense to the State growing out of present arrangement of the arrivals and departures by sea.

By careful inspection of the shipping registers, we find the average draft of all vessels now in use, ranging between 1,000 and 1,200 tons, to be 20 1/2 feet, and the average of all larger ones but 21 1/2 feet.

A ship of 3,000 tons can carry wheat from Astoria to Liverpool for twenty cents a bushel less than a 1,000 ton vessel can do from Portland...

Table showing costs: A ship of 1,000 tons is worth \$60,000, Interest at 10% cent., and insurance 4,400, Depreciation at 10% cent. 2,000, Wages 5 months, for Captain \$150, two mates \$100, steward \$50, and 12 seamen at \$25 each 2,540...

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Or, a dividend of 19 per cent. on cost of the larger ship as against 5 per cent. on that of the smaller. Or, to reduce both to 5 per cent., the 3,000 ton ship will carry wheat to Liverpool for over a third less than the 1,000 ton vessel...

It may be said that several large vessels have loaded at Portland, but the Custom House records show that of the twenty vessels named below, comprising all the vessels of any size that have sailed from the river with wheat, from a fourth to over one-half of the cargo was brought down to Astoria in steamboats and here put on board.

List of vessels exporting wheat from Oregon, showing amount of bushels taken on at Astoria and Portland:

Table with columns: 1872, Ships, No. Bush. at Astoria, No. Bush. at Portland. Includes entries for Annie M. Small, Navigator, Electro, etc.

Again, deep sea vessels never like to leave the salt water. Coasters are willing to steamboat it, but large vessels avoid steamboat grounds.

The striking of a vessel on any of the bars of the river, even if no immediate damage is discovered, is sufficient cause to render null and void the policy of insurance...

Should a ship be lost under such circumstances, not a dollar of insurance could be collected on the vessel, and if the owners were responsible, the underwriters upon the cargo would hold them for the value thereof.

Now as to the safety of the Columbia river. Exact data is wanting of the whole number of vessels that have crossed the bar, but from certain periods during which the data is complete, we are enabled to approximate very closely...

Barks Mendon, and Merrithew, lost January 12th, 1853, came in without pilots, wind failed after getting in, and they drifted ashore. Bark Oriole, lost September 19th, 1853. Brig Detroit, lost Dec. 22, 1855, on outer spit.

Only eight vessels in twenty-one years. Eight out of 10,500. One out of 1,312, or one-thirteenth of one per cent. of the shipping coming into the river. Of this number, four were coming in without pilots. It further appears that nearly every loss during the time under review, was the result, not of a rough bar, but of the wind falling after the vessel had crossed thus leaving her to drift on the sands.

of course there could be no rescue. It is safe to say that, had there been a tug at hand, every vessel thus far lost on the bar might have been saved. Since the placing of the tug Astoria upon the bar, or pilot grounds in 1869, there has been no loss, and with proper care on the part of tug and pilots, there need be none for many years to come.

The commerce of Oregon has heretofore been taxed by underwriters far above the proper and reasonable rate. But, as the rate of insurance is made up from a knowledge of the actual pro rata loss incident to a given harbor, when such data is to be had, or guessed at from general impressions...

Another important point gained by making Astoria the exporting harbor, would be the employment of home capital in the river transportation, instead of foreign, or outside, as is now done.

The committee are under obligations to Mr. VanDusen, Mr. Hare, Collector of Customs, and the Pilots, for valuable information. Respectfully submitted, J. H. D. GRAY, A. S. MERCER, W. W. PARKER, Committee.

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