

Tri-Weekly Astorian

ASTORIA, OREGON:
D. C. IRELAND, Editor.
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THE COLUMBIA RIVER SALMON FISHERIES.

Writer for the TRI-WEEKLY ASTORIAN,
WASHINGTON IRVING, in his much read "Astoria," related the manner of taking the Salmon of the Columbia river by the natives, before the devices of civilization and science encroached upon the pristine method. At that time many Indians lived along the river subsisting mainly upon the fish, taken from its clear waters, and exchanging their surplus catches with interior tribes for hides and land game.

When the Pioneers came upon the river they secured and preserved the fish for their own use, but as the settlers became more numerous, and commerce began to grow, the new comers likewise engaged in the traffic of the Salmon, until now the catch amounts to about one million dollars in coin per year.

The Custom-house records at Astoria show that there were shipped from the Columbia river during the year ending October 31st, 1873, the following amounts of Salmon:

- To Liverpool, 3,000 cases and 200 kits;
- To China, 1,500 cases and 63 barrels;
- To Melbourne, Australia, 475 cases;
- To Honolulu, 20 cwt-smoked, 1,512 barrels, 267 half barrels, 30 quarter barrels, 151 kits and 77 cases;
- To Port Townsend, 287 packages, and 20 kits;
- To San Francisco, 68,890 cases, 1,961 packages, 189 tiers, 2,798 barrels, 1,738 half barrels, 119 quarter barrels and 101 kits;
- Amounting in value to about \$700,000.

The quantity and manner of curing of the packages are unknown, but the cases are of canned, and the barrels, kits, etc., of pickled or salted Salmon. This statement does not include all that has been carried to sea from the river, because some of the sailing coast vessels do not report at the Custom-house. There is not included the amounts also consumed by the States and Territories bordering on the river, so that we think the number taken during the past season can safely be estimated at 500,000, of a value of \$1,000,000.

The Columbia river Salmon are said to be the best on this coast. In the waters north of here are fabulous quantities of plump fish, but they are considered less finely flavored, though few, perhaps, could distinguish them apart on the table. The fish here average twelve pounds each, net, but of the numbers there is no counting them. In April they enter the river, and continue to do so until August, pushing their way up stream, leaping rapids and floundering on shoals to the head waters of the Columbia, and its tributaries.

Though many persons think the supply inexhaustible, the history of depleted rivers on the Atlantic coast, any the present scarcity of the fish in the Sacramento, admonish us to not rest too confidently in the opinion of the many, but to encourage the growth of the fish in our river. Many fish destroy themselves, trying to leap the rapids on their voyage to the spawning grounds. It has been ascertained, by actual experiment, that the Salmon, after entering and living for a season in the ocean, return to the same streams in which they began life. The greater then, the number produced in any stream, the greater will be the "run" in the future fishing seasons. There should, wherever practicable be placed fish ladders or other means by which the transit of the fish over the falls of the rivers would be facilitated.

There is one place deserving of especial attention, the Wallamet falls. Over them the fish seldom leap, yet above them are miles and miles of pebbly streams favorable for the preservation and hatching of the spawn of these fish. Besides increasing the quantity of fish, enabling them to ascend the Wallamet would afford the people of the valley the opportunity of getting the fish fresh from the water. Salmon taken near the sea are the best, but for immediate consumption, transportation in the water is better than any other, and the fish taken from the river at Eugene would be preferable to those carried from Chinook by boat and rail to the same place.

The catch next year, if the "run" should be as good as the last, will reach near one million fish, and the business increasing one hundred percent. Immense, indeed, is the supply that cannot be exhausted at that rate. If there should be fish enough the business of preserving them will continue to increase so long as the market does. The market for pickled Salmon was confined, before the continental railway, chiefly to Honolulu and home demands. The fish would not bear shipment through the tropics on long voyages, but

with the completion of the railway the market was extended, not only for pickled but also for fresh Salmon. By packing in ice the fish can be taken by the car load from the Sacramento to New York fresh, where they being as high as one dollar per pound. It will be years before the culture of the Salmon in the Atlantic slope can limit the market there, notwithstanding in its behalf. But preserving the fish in cans, as meats and vegetables are preserved, opened the whole world as a market. When the canning was commenced on the Columbia river five years since, it was difficult to effect sales of fish so preserved. Purchasers had to be solicited, and consumers made acquainted, with the novelty. This year, however, orders were received from Europe before the first fish could be taken, one firm having an order ahead for 15,000 cases. All the fisheries have been able to realize as fast as the Salmon could be placed on board ship, and no longer will canners have to beg of the people to taste an unknown dish.

Catching the fish on the upper Columbia was formerly done by half-naked savages, standing on the rocks or temporary scaffolding, over rapids and shoals, and spearing the fish as they appeared near the surface to leap the falls, or floundered in the rocks. On the lower Columbia the fish were drawn ashore by rude seines. At Chinook point (opposite Astoria), the shore is a shelving bank of sand, three or four miles long, on which the fishermen went to haul the seines. The Anglo-Saxons soon availed themselves of this fine fishing grounds. The fish taken at this point were called "Chinook Salmon," in contra-distinction to those taken at the falls and stood better in market. There not being many places along the banks of the river sufficiently sloping for the dragging of seines another net was brought in to requisition called the gill net. The meshes of this net are of such size as to admit the head of the fish sufficiently to entangle and hold it fast by the gills. The nets are about two fathom wide with sinkers on one edge and small buoys on the other, which cause them to float perpendicularly when stretched in the stream. They vary in length from one hundred to three hundred fathoms. Two men with a boat attend each net. The net is extended across the channel and allowed to float down with the tide while the boat passes back and forth along the line of buoys watching for fish and keeping the net afloat.

The fish, ascending the river, thrusts its head through the meshes of the descending net and becoming entangled disturb the buoys over it which immediately summons the men in the boat, who coming to the spot lift that portion of the net, strike the fish a blow on the head, cast it into their work till the boat is full of fish or they have drifted the proper distance when they take the net into the boat and go back to the fishery. Two men will sometimes catch three hundred fish in one night. "Drifting" is generally done at night so the fish cannot see the nets, but many were caught last season during the day in cloudy weather.

Packing at first was done by the fishermen, who would make their nets, boats and barrels through the Autumn and Winter, and fish during the run of Salmon, salting them in large tanks till the rush was over when they would transfer their catch to barrels. With the preservation of the fish in hermetically sealed cans began a great improvement in the business. The canneries also prepare outside of the fish season, for packing, but their consumption of fish is so great and rapid that they purchase fresh fish largely in addition to what their own men take, paying from twenty-five to thirty cents per fish. This furnishes an opportunity for fishermen (strictly speaking) to ply their avocation. A boat and net, bought for three hundred dollars, or rented on shares, is all the outfit needed.

When the first canning establishment began operating on the river the manner of preserving the fish was said to be a secret of great depth, and marvellous stories were circulated to the effect that the man who possessed the mysterious knowledge, plied his art within the closed brick walls of a boiling room, so full of heat and steam that few could live within. By some means however others became familiar with the mystery, or supposed they were, and another cannery started, but something was lacking, the charm did not work, fish spoiled and several thousand dollars were lost. But in time others succeeded and now there seems to be but little secrecy about it, no more than in canning peaches or tomatoes. The fish are cut into pieces corresponding to the size of the can, and packed in raw, with a little brine, when the can is partly sealed and placed into a cauldron of boiling water till the fish is cooked.

has increased in profit and in magnitude the past year, and next season there will be double the facilities for preserving fish judging from present preparations. Eight canning establishments were in operation this last season. Now six more are being erected and additions made to the old ones. Last season but one steam tender was owned by the fisheries, next year there will be three, two small steam boats having been recently purchased for that purpose. These boats will be used to bring the fish from the different "drifts" to the cannery and in transporting their own freight generally. Cases of canned salmon ready for market are estimated to cost five dollars each, while they sell at home for seven to eight dollars, and are now quoted in the Australian market at sixteen dollars per case. Three of the fisheries this season put up about fifteen thousand cases each, clearing doubtless thirty thousand dollars apiece. The outlay for fixtures is chiefly for boats, nets, and machinery for manufacturing the cans. Aside from what wharfing may be necessary, the buildings are cheap. A location is generally chosen where the channel approaches near the shore so as to render much wharfing unnecessary. The principal article of import used is tin which is brought in the block and manufactured into cans at the fishery. The cases are bought ready made of our Oregon box manufacturers by all the fisheries we believe, except Westport. In connection with that one is a saw mill which furnishes the lumber and it makes its own boxes and barrels. The heads and trimmings of the fish were thrown away by all till the last season, when J. West of Westport utilized the heads by extracting the oil from them which proved to be a profitable experiment. It is to be hoped that more will do likewise hereafter.

Labor is generally performed by white men, though troubles incident to that kind of labor have caused one or two establishments to employ chinamen to do the indoor work. The fisheries are in isolated places where new hands cannot be secured in a moment. During the fishing season not a moment should be lost, as the fish should be preserved on the same day they are brought in. Losses have occurred by the laborers getting liquor and disqualifying themselves for labor for several days and suspending the work. Isolated locations are chosen with an eye to being removed from temptation. All the principal fisheries on the lower Columbia are within forty miles of Astoria.

An Inspector of Salmon was formerly appointed by the State but as he could not visit the different fisheries when needed he was obliged to trust much to the honesty of the packers, and the office was soon abolished. Now each firm puts its individual brand upon the packages sent out and stands or falls by its reputation. A few fish are caught in traps formed of stakes driven in the bottom near shore. The principal danger encountered with the drift nets is the Seal which pursues and preys upon the Salmon. They get into the nets sometimes and being strong do more or less damage, though when captured compensate somewhat in oil for the harm done. It might be well to mention another species of fish called the fall Salmon which enter the small creeks near the ocean in October and are much better for being dried and smoked than the spring Salmon as they have less fat. Large quantities are taken from the creek, at the Seaside House, just as they enter from the ocean. Several persons are there now engaged in salting and smoking them. With a small seine two men drag out one and two hundred fine fish at each haul.

—Rev. Thomas Condon State Geologist, has been requested to prepare a series of lectures, beginning with the most simple truths of science and covering the whole range of geological inquiry; and we are informed that the preparations are so far completed that the first lecture of the series may be expected on the evening of Wednesday, December 10th, in Portland.

NEW SCHOOL BOOKS.—I have just received all the different kinds of New School Books required to be used in this State, that can now be found in San Francisco. Also, Slate pencils, Blotting pads, a good assortment of Stationery, Drawing paper, CARD BOARD, Perforated board, Ink, (Carmine, Purple and Black). Likewise a new stock of Crockery, Clocks and a large assortment of Lamp Chimneys, all of which will be sold cheap for cash.

PERSONAL.—The undersigned is under many obligations to the man who broke into his farm house, and took the locks from all the doors, and carried away other articles from the premises—that he did not take the windows and doors also, and burn the balance of the house. I like to be neighborly, and if it would be an accommodation to the person calling on me to have the keys also, he can call on me and be accommodated; and if he desires to take the windows and doors, and will let me know of his desires, I will furnish him a screw driver with a moderate charge only.

NEW ADVERTISEMENTS.

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Great REDUCTION in Prices!
Selling Less than Cost

THE ENTIRE STOCK!

—OF GOODS—

AT THE STORE OF THE LATE GEORGE SUMMERS, deceased, ASTORIA OREGON, HAS TO BE SOLD;

And in order to settle up the affairs of the estate, the undersigned, administrator, is now offering the entire line, embracing a very desirable quality of goods at prices below actual cost.

Call and Examine for Yourself.

All persons having bills against the estate will please present the same, with proper vouchers for payment. And all persons owing the estate will please come forward and settle, or make arrangements to settle the same, and save costs.

C. S. WRIGHT, Administrator.

Fancy Poultry for Sale.

THE UNDERSIGNED, ABOUT TO REMOVE from Astoria, offers his stock of fancy Poultry for sale, at the following reduced prices:

Silver Spangled Hamburgs.....	\$7.50 per pair
Buff Cochins.....	5.00 "
Light Brahmas.....	5.00 "
Duck-Wing Game.....	3.00 "

All Chickens are warranted to be Pure blooded.

A. J. MEGLEK, Astoria, Oregon.

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THE DONATION LAND CLAIM OF ALVA CONDIT, on Clatsop Plains, One of the Finest Situated places in Clatsop County, Consisting of Six Hundred and Forty Acres, nearly all under fence, with a nice Orchard, together with Stock, Plows, and other Agricultural Implements, including a new Wagon, team of Horses, harness, etc., is now offered for sale on very favorable terms. For particulars, address, ALVA CONDIT, Skipanon, Clatsop Co., Ogn.

Paul Schoen,

PIANO REPAIRER

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From the House of MATTHIAS GRAY, 623 and 625 Clay street, San Francisco, Cal., and Odd Fellow's Temple, Portland.

THE ONLY TUNER, WITH ONE EXCEPTION, to whom Mr. Gray has ever given a Written recommendation.

Mr. Schoen will soon visit Astoria, and orders left at the ASTORIAN OFFICE will be promptly attended to.

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STEINWAY & SONS' PIANOS, GUILD, CHURCH & CO.'S PIANOS, "BURDETT" ORGANS.

For Rent—or Sold on Installments.

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FRANK FABRE, at the Central Market, Portland, has enlarged his COFFEE stall, and added such improvements as will enable him to provide Epicures with the best in the Market. Parties furnished with Hot Coffee on short notice. Give the Central Market Coffee Stand a trial.

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New and Second-hand Furniture

Spring, Hair, Feather, Moss, Wool, and Pulu Beds, Blankets, Spreads, Sheets, Pillows, Pillow Cases, etc.

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Large assortment of Groceries, Liquors, etc., at Private Sale. Liberal advances made on consignments.

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MISCELLANEOUS.

J. W. WELCH, FRANK ROBSON, JAMES W. WELCH & Co. TEAMSTERS. Office at J. W. Gearhart's Store, Astoria.

ORDERS LEFT WITH MR. GEARHART for any kind of Teaming, will be promptly attended to. Wood of all kinds constantly on hand. Orders solicited.

THE HOMESTEAD PROPERTY, belonging to the estate of A. Crosby deceased, is for rent. For particulars apply to H. S. AIKEN, Administrator Astoria, Nov. 29th, 1873 of said Estate.

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Pacific Boot and Shoe Store, Is now prepared to wait on his customers.

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With our long experience and small expense we are enabled to sell cheaper than any other house in the city of Portland. As the proverb goes—\$1.00 saved is \$2.00 made: Call and see and give us your trade.

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Saws of all kinds Straightened and Repaired, and all kinds of Saw Teeth made and repaired and saws turned and straightened. Orders attended to promptly.

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