

Chamber of Commerce Report.

ASTORIA, NOV. 4, 1878.

Gentlemen of the Astoria Chamber of Commerce:

Our constitution imposes upon your officers the duty of making annual reports. This being the close of the first year of our present organization, I will endeavor to briefly discharge the duty pertaining to the chair.

Although we are trained from earliest infancy with the example of the bundle of rods before us, we often neglect organizations until times of more than ordinary emergency. For several years there had been a Chamber of Commerce in Astoria, but with few members and still fewer workers, until a year ago when the removal of the light-house inspector, and threatened removal of the buoy depot from this place, aroused our citizens to the importance of organization and unity of action.

THE ORGANIZATION.

One year ago the Astoria Chamber of Commerce was organized with constitution and by-laws, room rented and salary provided for the secretary, on whom was imposed much labor. Many of the citizens became members. The wisdom and power of the organization are manifest in the results that have been accomplished.

The effort to remove the buoy depot was thwarted. An appropriation for the erection of a first-class light on Tillamook head was secured from congress; also, an appropriation of \$5,000 for survey of the entrance of the Columbia river, with a view to making permanent improvements thereat. The survey has been made. An appropriation was made for a tidal station but the bill was lost, (so it has been reported) by the enrolling clerks, and failed to become a law.

RESULTS OF ORGANIZATION.

The Chambers resolutions assisted in obtaining aid for the canal at the Cascades. Through our efforts in part the revenue cutter Thomas Corwin has been retained at this port. The known fact of a cutter being stationed here inspires confidence among owners of vessels desiring to come to Astoria and the Columbia river. Steamship lines have promised to not discriminate against the mouth of the river in transportation from San Francisco to interior ports of this state, and vice versa.

The Chamber has given a medal to one ship-master, Capt. Harris, of the Aberyswith Castle, for humane conduct in standing by the ship Pilgrim when in distress. A regular and direct mail by steamship from San Francisco is now enjoyed by the citizens of Astoria and vicinity. Other matters are under way, some depending on congressional action for their consummation; others on the orders of department heads. Among the first is the Astoria and Forest Grove railroad. The senate has under consideration the extension of the time and giving the grant to any other company that will build the road. This should pass, or the land be opened to settlement, this winter. Of the second is the mail connection at Kalama between here and the Sound country. We hope to secure connection one way very soon,—from here over. The boats from Astoria reach Kalama forty minutes after the train has left for the Sound. As they do not leave Astoria on schedule time, but two hours later, the connection can be very easily made if the postal department would but direct it.

COLUMBIA RIVER BAR.

We would call the Chamber's attention to the improvement of the Columbia river bar. Although the appropriations for the lower Wallamet read: "And Columbia river from Portland to the sea," those in charge of the disbursements expend none as low down as Astoria, except it be to note the changes made in Sand island and Point Adams. The special fund of \$5,000 for the mouth of the Columbia was expended this summer. What plans were recommended for the future we have not learned, but we should urge congress to carry on the work. If no plans have been devised, the Chamber should determine on one and ask for the means to execute it. There are only twenty feet in the south channel at mean low tide, which under certain circumstances

may be diminished to sixteen or seventeen feet, an appalling fact, considering the present demands of our commerce for large ships, our hopes to be a commercial port, and the design of some of our neighbors to absorb our foreign trade.

Within a year several vessels laden with cargoes have struck upon this shoal of the bar, and one sunk at sea soon after striking. All attention should not be given to the river above and the place of landing the ships. Some whose position and education would seem to fit them for judging, say that the south channel can be deepened to thirty feet at low water by the scouring process, dragging or raking the bottom and the current carrying away the loose sand and sediment. The shoal is narrow with deep water on each side. This method was tried on Hogs back, near Tongue point, in 1875, and has remained open without any work since. But little time and money would be needed to open a channel in this manner. The original plan proposed by the Chamber was to construct a dyke from point Adams out to Clatsop spit. I see no reason yet against that idea. We should however ascertain at once the ideas of those who made the surveys this summer and had the matter in charge, that we may take necessary action.

THE CASCADE CANAL.

The engineer has recommended further appropriations for the Cascade canal and locks. His efforts should be seconded by our resolutions. The contract let embraces about one half of the canal. The further appropriations should be made immediately, so that a second contract could be let before or at least by spring. According to the plans there are about 5000 feet of crib work for break water below the canal to be constructed. It is thought by the uninformed that the great length of time required to complete the locks as some talk of, will be in the construction of this breakwater if at all. Correspondence should be at once opened with the officer in charge in regard to using the canal before this breakwater shall be constructed, and while it is being built, if any great time shall be required to erect it. Robt. A. Habersham, assistant engineer, reported in 1874 that boats could reach the foot of the canal by a little improvement in the channel on the north side of the river. He says: "One quarter of a mile lower down (below the principal rapids) is a lesser rapid, formed by a ledge of rock which extends across the channel from shore to shore, having however, a depression 200 feet wide and from 40 to 60 feet deep near the north shore, through which the current runs at the rate of nine miles per hour. This depression forms the principal channel at this point, and by blasting a portion of the ledge, so as to increase the water way, the force of the current will be so reduced that steamers can easily ascend to the foot of the principal rapids just below the neck, the point which in a former report I designated as the best side, in my judgment, for a canal and locks." This seems to have been, at that time, Major Michler's idea also, and the estimated costs of the canal, locks, and blasting the ledge, was \$700,000. He so telegraphed the chief of engineers, February 12, 1875.

In December of that year he was relieved by Major Wilson and next year we find in his report the simple statement that it will be difficult and expensive to construct the canal. Subsequently a change or new plans was proposed. Instead of blasting the ledge it was proposed to crib from the lower end of the canal down the river 5,000 feet, forming a breakwater. Estimated cost, \$1,544,545. On this plan the work has commenced, but no part of the crib work is included in the present contract, and only about one half of the canal distance, which is 2,100 feet, is covered by it. Mr. Habersham's idea of blasting out a portion of the ledge is approved, for immediate use at least, by our secretary, who has recently visited the place.

RIVER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED.

We do not suggest a change in the plan, but to get a quicker use of the canal, suggest a temporary connection by way of the channel over the ledge. The improvements on the Columbia river above the

Wallamet should be hastened with all possible dispatch. It is said, (correctly, no doubt), that it takes all the wheat crop of eastern Oregon and Washington territory to pay the freight transportation up and down the Columbia river.

About 9,000 passengers, and 2,500 tons of freight were carried over the portage at the Cascades in the eleven months ending June 1st, 1876. This year I am told there will be about 75,000 tons carried over, but of passengers I am not informed. It is said by some in the employ of the steamboat company that some of the boats on the upper Columbia have made their weight in gold several times over. An exaggerated statement; but tends to sustain the fact of the great cost of transportation on the river.

SIGNAL AND TIDAL STATION.

No effort should be spared to secure a signal and tide station here at Astoria. With the tidal observatory in complete running order, there would be no necessity of vessels going down to look at the mouth of the river to determine the practicability of crossing. They could read its condition more accurately in Astoria, and twice to twenty hours in advance of a heavy sea. Long waves fifty minutes apart, which lower the water on the bar to 16 feet, but cannot be seen on the surface of the water, are accurately noted in the tide house. Much expense and inconvenience would be saved shipping, particularly steamships, thereby.

It might be appropriate to inquire whether or not the steamship companies would not pay something toward maintaining a tidal observatory here until the government takes it in hand. A trip from here, to the bar and back, or lying at anchor several days can frequently be saved by consulting the tidal observer, Mr. Louis Wilson, when the apparatus is in running order.

OUR EXPORTS FOREIGN.

In the way of exports a larger amount of salmon went directly foreign this year than ever before, and nearly all of it also through the custom house at Astoria. The cheap rates of the opposition carried some to San Francisco that would otherwise have gone foreign direct.

Wheat exports foreign, by way of San Francisco had nearly ceased, there being but 4000 tons in 1877, but opposition rates having increased the amount to 25,000 tons in 1878, this fact caused the president of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce last January to state that, should the intentions of the companies to carry cheaply be carried out, the bulk of Oregon's surplus products will be sent there in future. We and, the whole Columbia valley, should see to it that as little as possible of any foreign exports and imports be carried by coasters between this port and San Francisco.

Nearly all the tin-plate used by our canneries is imported by way of San Francisco. True much of it is carried there in ballast, but efforts should be made to have vessels carrying here direct, to bring such ballast also.

Exports foreign from port of Astoria six months ending Dec. 31, 1878:

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Salmon July and August.....   | \$ 563,234  |
| Wheat and flour during the six months, together with small amounts of salmon, lumber and miscellaneous articles.. | 742,266     |
| Total for the six months..  | \$1,305,500 |
| Total domestic exports from Astoria Oregon for twelve months ending June 30, 1878                                 | \$2,253,406 |
| Total exports from Portland same year.....  | 3,974,561   |

THE REFRIGERATOR PROCESS.

Efforts have been made to slaughter beef here, send the choice portions to San Francisco in refrigerators and "can" the remainder. The refrigerators used were defective or at least not sufficient for the work, but from the experiment it was ascertained that beef could be so disposed of and with profit.

The different canneries that are idle in the winter, might combine, secure ice this winter, put proper refrigerators aboard the steamers, and next spring before fishing, and in the fall after the close of salmon season, furnish San Francisco epicures choice cuts, and have the remainder without cost to "can."

CANNERIES CONSIDERED.

There is much to be considered concerning the canneries which would lie idle one half the year as dead capital, making the lower Columbia a bee hive in the summer,

but a desolate place the balance of the year. Labor is higher by reason of its short employment, and desirable laborers are scarce and difficult to obtain. Our population is transient, and all business is sadly affected by the irregular current. With the salmon laws for propagation, it is hoped that the annual supply of salmon will continue so that when one catch is over another may be reasonably expected in its season; but the working season of the cannery should be lengthened. Canning beef would assist, also, pork and beans, berries, etc. Last season, just closed, Mr. John West, of Westport, put up a number of cases of wild black or dew berries, which are as much better flavored than the ordinary canned black berries, as the fresh wild are than the cultivated berry. The quantity of wild berries are limited, but who has tested the adaptability of the lands below Mount Coffin for growing berries of different kinds? A fortune may lie at our doors in this business awaiting the energy of some one to develop it. I am informed that ground is being prepared near Fairfields Point for the growth of berries as a trial. In some parts of the United States a large and profitable business is carried on in cranberry culture and shipment.

CRANBERRY MARSHES.

Much wealth and commerce might be added to this county if this new field was opened up, as natural signs indicate that it might be. Good cranberry meadows in the east are worth from \$500 to \$2,000 per acre. Wild cranberry marshes extend from Fort Stevens south the full length of Clatsop plains, and from Unity, W. T., to Shoalwater bay, and beyond. The wild berries are now in our market.

On the Sound also are cranberry marshes and the greater energy displayed among the people there is forming companies to reclaim and put into cultivation these marshes. In a quiet way I have been trying for several years to have this industry tested here, and I am glad to be able to report that one man, a stranger, came here a couple of years since with mind disposed, and means sufficient, to undertake it in a small way. Last spring he planted some vines received from the east, and some natives. The growth the past summer has been all that could be expected, besides producing some berries; a thing unknown in the east, where it is expected to take three years to come into bearing. The imported vines have grown faster, look better, and produced finer berries, than the native. This place is located north of the Skipanon.

LOCAL ENTERPRISES.

Leather manufacture and ship-building should be encouraged. The manufacture of leather in this county is increasing, but not in proportion to the growth of the state, nor is it as large as it should be considering the vast quantity of tanning material, hemlock; right at hand. In the last report of the officers of the Portland Board of Trade they say that parties east offer to come out to this river and start business if they could be exempt from taxation for fifteen or twenty years. The citizens of Astoria could well afford to give property, equal to what the taxes would be, to have a good firm start here in either one or both of these enterprises.

NARROW GAUGE RAILWAYS.

Narrow gauge railroads are absorbing much interest in different parts of the United States. It is claimed that they are much cheaper than the standard gauge, and yet able to do all the business except on the trunk lines. Such a road is in operation in Yamhill county, in this state. Companies have organized in several parts of our state for the purpose of building such roads in their respective localities. Citizens of Astoria should consider the matter of building such a road to Tualatin plains, in Washington county, unless the Oregon Central railroad company very soon extends the McMinnville road this way. A narrow gauge would be peculiarly suited to the country lying between here and Forest Grove. It is thought by some that with a little liberal encouragement by the people of Clatsop county, a company with ample means could be induced to build the road.

JOHN Q. A. BOWLEY,  
President Astoria Chamber of Commerce.

NEW ADVERTISEMENTS.

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OF CALIFORNIA,

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OFFICE—Northeast corner of Stark and First streets, PORTLAND, OREGON.

Net Cash received for Fire Premiums in 1877.....\$325,511 04

Assets, Jan. 1, 1878.....\$578,065 50

Liabilities—

Losses unpaid.....\$1,628 57

Dividends ".....1,937 00 5,295 57

Surplus for Property Holders.....\$572,450 47

Losses paid in Oregon in six years.....\$114,516 72

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