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CLATSOP COUNTY.

Its Past, Present, and Future—Historical, Statistical and Topographical.

This county occupies a position at the gateway to the great Pacific Northwest. It is the extreme northwest county of the State of Oregon and is bounded, north by the Columbia river, south by Washington and Tillamook counties and west by the Pacific ocean. It is about fifty miles long, from north to south, with an average width of thirty miles and an area of 1,500 square miles. By the census of 1880 it shows a population of 7,260. These figures, however, are too high, as they were taken during the fishing season, when a great number of transient men, fishermen and Chinamen, were employed about the canneries. It is reasonable to say that the permanent population of the county is about 5,500. The principal occupation of the people is fishing, lumbering and dairying. But few farms have been opened up and these are located along the various rivers and rivers that put in to the Columbia and into the ocean, and about the bays and inlets that indent its shores. The surface of the county is covered almost wholly by immense forests of pine, spruce, fir, maple and myrtle. The soil is generally good, and along the creek and river bottoms excellent. No portion of the coast can excel it in the production of vegetables of nearly all kinds, and of timothy, clover and other kinds of hay. Grain is also produced in reasonable quantities wherever tried, but the moisture will always prevent a successful raising of wheat. Various kinds of fruit yield immensely; peaches, however, do not thrive well. Of those who have settled in the country and opened up little farms, most of them devote their attention to dairying, for which the country and climate seem particularly adapted. The salmon canneries and lumber establishments along the river, furnish an excellent market for butter, eggs, poultry and vegetables; and those who apply themselves with patience and perseverance, to these vocations, are making comfortable homes. The climate is remarkably healthful and invigorating. Lying as it does contiguous to the ocean, its climate is a very equable one, the breezes from the Pacific prevent all approaches of the sultry season, objectionable in many parts of the United States, while the warm winds from the Japan current moderate the winters, that a laborer may brave the open air at any time and feel no need of coat or vest.

Thousands of acres of tide flats yet remain to be reclaimed by dyking, which has been tried in one or two instances, and demonstrated to be a success. Lands thus reclaimed are of the very best for meadow, to be found anywhere. Thousands of acres of timber lands, yet belong to the Government, and may be had under the homestead or preemption laws, and by labor will in time be transformed into farms. Here hundreds of families may yet get homes for the mere taking; but the heavy forests are, to be cleared away, the stumps removed and roads built; for as yet the country is almost destitute of other highways and thoroughfares than those furnished by its bays and rivers. But little of the country presents an even surface and much of it is rugged and mountainous. The valleys are small, but fertile and free from rocks. The forests are an almost impenetrable jungle, tangled and festooned by a great

variety of the densest undergrowth. The soil is a clay on the hills and sandy loam on the bottoms and the small plains near the beach. The people of the county have for many years lived in hopes of a railroad which should connect them with the interior, and have aspired to thus make at Astoria, the great commercial and shipping point for the Pacific Northwest. Astoria, its county seat, is situated on the south side of the Columbia river, fifteen miles from its mouth, and can boast the oldest settlement in the State of Oregon. In fact a post was established there forty years before a settlement had been made elsewhere in the State. Its history is so closely identified with the early history of the coast and the discovery of the Columbia river, that it would be an injustice to this spot of such historical interest, not to give a brief recapitulation of the early struggles of the adventurous men who first braved the perils and dangers of the Columbia bar, the wild unknown regions on either hand and the barbarians who inhabited them. Omitting the initial expeditions, by early Spanish and other navigators, we will come down to 1792, when the Vancouver expedition was about entering what is now the great inland sea of Washington Territory by the straits of Juan de Fuca. During that summer a complete examination of the islands of the Sound and vicinity had been completed. Most of the names applied to the islands, bays and inlets, of the Sound and adjacent seas and country, had been given them by Vancouver and afterwards were further published and confirmed by Wilkes, in his verification of the operations and discoveries of preceding discoverers. This was in 1841. Captain Gray's discovery of the Columbia river, was by him reported on his return to Nootka Sound. On the 12th of October, 1792, the Vancouver expedition sailed south; the Daedalus entered Gray's harbor and to the Chatham, commanded by Lieut. Broughton, was assigned the duty of entering and exploring the Columbia.

On the 20th day of October, the Chatham crossed the Columbia bar and anchored in Baker's bay, while the ship Discovery proceeded to San Francisco bay. Broughton, leaving his ship at Baker's bay, ascended the Columbia in small boats to a point twelve miles above the mouth of the Willamette, and on the 12th day of December established a post on the north bank of the Columbia, which he named Vancouver and which is to-day, the flourishing town and post of that name; six miles by land, and eighteen by water from the city of Portland. Having performed the duty assigned to him, he returned to Baker's bay, where his ship and crew awaited him, recrossed the Columbia bar and joined Vancouver at San Francisco. Thus we see that nearly one hundred years ago the Columbia river was explored for more than one hundred miles and a settlement made on its banks, within sight of the Queen City of the great Northwest, then an interminable forest, the haunt of savages and wild beasts. The extensive, and beautiful Willamette valley was then unknown, and the adventurers, who ventured as far as Vancouver, were applauded for their daring and zeal, in thus penetrating, as was then believed, the very heart of a wild and savage wilderness. Could these same adventurers now visit the same region, what a change would gladden their hearts. No buoys then marked the treacherous shoals and rocks of the Columbia bar. No prior experience told them of the dangers that encompassed them in the wild breakers, that are now the terror of a maritime world. No forts with embattlements and loud-mouthed cannon then frowned upon them, or disputed their passage to the placid waters of this great river, since made famous for its majesty and the grandeur of its romantic scenery. No lighthouse then smiled its friendly greeting to this stranger bark, or flashed through the darkness its gleams of warning. Ilwaco now occupies the spot where the strangers first landed; then all was sombre wood, roaring flood, towering rocks and forest so dark and lonely, that no member, even of this adventurous crew, dared venture alone into its forbidding shades. Where now long docks, with dozens of steamboats and tugs, lie safely moored and ships from all parts of the civilized world, anchor and feel a perfect security, where the greatest fishing establishments of the world now stand, filled with thousands of busy hands, and mills with rattling machinery, ship yards, store houses, hotels, shops, saloons and the busy hum of the lively little city of Astoria, all was quiet, lonely, desolate. The very air was heavy with loneliness; no friendly voice greeted their coming; no hand was found ashore, to make fast the line of this wandering ship. Clatsop plains and Fort Stevens sent out no kind greetings from the habitations of man. The great Columbia flowed quietly on to the ocean, through ceaseless wood and mountain gorge, and "heard no sound save its own dashing." The Red man of the forest fled before the strange, white-winged monster, and viewed it with awe and terror from a distance. On the 15th of November, 1805, the expedition fitted out under President Jefferson, after an overland journey of the most extreme peril and hardship, reached Cape Disappointment, under command of Messrs. Lewis and Clarke, who traversed the Columbia from its source, in the Rocky mountains, to its mouth, and interested the whole world with a narrative of their travels, discoveries and adventures. Their first camp was made on the north side of the river, where they remained but a short time, when they crossed to Clatsop beach and constructed a block-house, within the limits of the present Clatsop county, where they remained till March 1806. In June 1810, the first settlement west of the Rocky mountains was attempted at Oak Point, on the south bank of the Columbia by Captain Nat. Winthrop of the ship Albatross from Boston. Sailing July 6, 1809, Captain Winthrop rounded Cape Horn, visited the Sandwich Islands and arrived at the mouth of the Columbia May 25th. On the lowlands near the mouth of the river, a site was selected, land cleared, a store and dwelling erected and seeds planted with the brightest prospects, which were, however, dispelled by an inundation, caused by the rising of the waters of the river. Captain Winthrop abandoned his enterprise and returned unfavorable reports of the country and prospects. It was during the year 1810 that enterprising John Jacob Astor, organized the Pacific Fur Company, and to his efforts and daring enterprise we are indebted for the first settlement on the Columbia river. The plan was the establishment of a trading post at the mouth of the Columbia, from which were to be trading posts established through the

country reaching as far east as the Missouri river. Between the posts on the Missouri river and the Columbia were to be kept a regular system of communication. The scheme was one of gigantic proportions and required nerve, skill and enterprise, in a degree hitherto unknown and untried. Two expeditions were fitted out simultaneously for the mouth of the Columbia river. The ship Tonquin under the command of Captain Thurn proceeded via Cape Horn, while Wilson P. Hunt led a party overland through the unknown mountains and deserts between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. On the 24th of March 1811, the Tonquin entered the Columbia and selected a spot on the south bank of the river, and on the 12th day of April, commenced the erection of a fort and store-house on the present site of the City of Astoria; nearly seventy years ago. Mr. Astor's enterprise was calculated to arouse the opposition of the Northwest Company of Canada, who, prompted by their jealousy of so bold and formidable a rival, determined to foil the interloper Astor, and to secure possession of a country, the wealth and worth of which they had acquainted themselves. To avoid a conflict with British men-of-war and the danger of the impressment of certain British subjects whom he had on board and who had joined in his scheme, Mr. Astor secured as a convoy, the U. S. frigate Constitution, until the Tonquin should reach a point beyond the waters of the Atlantic and out of danger. The N. W. Co. sent out a party under the management of David Thompson, which was to reach the mouth of the Columbia in advance of the Tonquin and take possession in the name of His Majesty King George. The rigors of the winter, however, the deep snows in the mountains and lack of acquaintance with the country and the delays incident to so long a journey, so retarded Thompson and his party that he had only reached the Spokane river, still east of the Cascade mountains, when the Tonquin arrived at the mouth of the Columbia. Thus Astor's project gained a firm footing. Astoria was founded and Thompson was forced to content himself with the establishment of a post at the Spokane. Thompson, however, on his journey, distributed the British flag to the natives, and took possession of the country along the route, in the name of the King, for the N. W. Co. In June following, the Tonquin sailed north along the coast and on the west shore of Vancouver island was taken by the Indians and all her crew except an Indian interpreter, were murdered. During the same year the Astor Company established other posts and commenced trade with the Indians. On the 12th of December, 1813 the British sloop Raccoon entered the Columbia and finding Astoria defenseless, took possession in the name of the King and exchanged the stars and stripes for the British flag and changed the name from Astoria to Fort George. Other complications had arisen to embarrass the founder of Astoria.



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