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ASTORIA'S GREAT FUTURE.

In his article on the "Commercial Seaports of the Northwest," an extract from which was published in last Wednesday's Astorian, Mr. Schenck shows how Astoria's development is likely to affect the trade of the entire northwest, as follows:

"A large, convenient seacoast port at the mouth of the Columbia would change the whole tonnage flow of the Pacific northwest, and concentrate it along the Columbia route in time, except from a limited northerly area. It would draw away from San Francisco most of her northern buyers. The Southern Pacific Company probably realizes this, and having a monopoly in San Francisco and California, prefers to favor that port until forced to come to the Columbia mouth.

"Portland was located and attained much of its growth under the primitive pastoral conditions of a water route in an agricultural country. The river was the only important mode of transportation, necessarily a slow mode. In such case, the agricultural and developed areas closely hug the streams. The early settlers in Oregon had sought out first the open valley bottoms of the Willamette, comparatively clear of heavy timber. There was but one single thread of transportation, the river, and but one small area to be served, the Willamette Valley. It was the natural thing in any exclusively river route, and before the great towage system had cheaply made steam available for all classes of boats, that ocean vessels should penetrate well inland, if the developed region lay there only. A hundred miles of wilderness, and two days' slow river navigation, separated the inland buyers from any possible coast port, or mart of trade. Any past attempt to draw such a mart down to the coast, far away from the buyers of the only developed region, was eminently foolish. It merely indicated what would have been best and most desirable for the ocean carriers in a fully developed country well provided with railways and towage systems. There was then no necessity for the mart of trade to consult either convenient radical arrangements to all of the country, or to pay much attention to the wilderness between herself and the coast. But railways put buyers at a coast port and mart of trade practically as readily as at a mart a few miles inland, and all conveniences and advantages can be concentrated at the coast port therefore, without consulting relative distances for buyers from inland houses.

"We now find all the Pacific coast developing, not merely a small isolated valley. Therefore the great and convenient mart of trade for all must be situated to accommodate all. This mart of trade must not ignore the coast, or require it to go inland a long distance counter to the movement of products. Philadelphia held commercial supremacy inland until railway lines developed, and her buyers could quickly reach New York. Now Philadelphia sends her manufactures there to be sold, to a great extent. The fact that a city has attained a large growth does not now long compel the failure of others more naturally situated for certain lines of business, as is seen by the growth first of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and more lately of Superior and Duluth, all within Chicago's territory. Capital accumulates faster, is more free and combinations are more readily made in favor of the desirable location, than in former days. The coming of railways, not as mere crossing points (as Portland will be when Astoria is

reached), but as necessary and final terminal trans-shipping points, is what finally decides such growth. That Superior could thus spring up in defiance of St. Paul and Minneapolis, proves the truth of such a statement.

"On examining Portland's location with reference to routes of transportation, we find it remarkably liable to future isolation. Portland attaches great value to a location at the 'head of navigation,' and makes this the test of commercial superiority. If this be such a test, Portland's loss of supremacy is certain. That city is not at the head of Columbia river navigation, but a good 25 miles by water remote from it. The 'head of navigation' of ocean vessels for the great future business of the Columbia basin must be sought on the Columbia itself, above Vancouver. It is not possible that the great but unwieldy tows from the Columbia will double back on their course and run counter to their coastward direction, and run up the narrow Willamette (narrowed still more by contracting dikes) and against a swift current (made still more swift by contracting dikes), to Portland.

"The natural route of the Union Pacific is not to climb over the hill point opposite Portland, but to follow a water line gradient down to the end of the hill point and to cross the Willamette below Portland. Surveys were made some years ago from Troutdale westward. The deviation of the present route over the hill from a direct route to the ocean, the difficult climb westward from Troutdale, and the very difficult work of passing freights through the cramped West Portland yard, will be thus avoided. The Pennsylvania road has just made such a cut-off, avoiding Philadelphia en route to New York, and such cut-offs are being introduced at many great cities which are not terminals.

"Railways from Puget Sound, after crossing the Columbia to Hunter's Point, find the ocean as near as is Portland. As Astoria develops competing ability for ocean exports and imports, none of the tonnage of this character from or to the Sound will pass through Portland. The Northern Pacific and the Canadian Pacific have already made efforts to secure Astoria business, and with rail communication will draw much Astoria tonnage away from Portland. Should the Great Northern decide to follow the east bank of the Columbia, it will make a serious mistake in thereby being less conveniently situated for Astoria business.


"There is nothing left then to Portland except the original Willamette valley, to reach which in early days Portland's locators ran away from all other territory. But this valley lies almost wholly westward of Portland, and when railway lines from the valley reach Astoria, it will require an unnatural backward movement, eastward and counter to the desired direction, to take export tonnage from that valley to Portland.

"The Southern Pacific east side road is the only line naturally tributary to Portland. It is one of the poorest paying freight routes on the Pacific Slope. Its gross earnings are hardly a fourth of the average earnings of railways per mile. This is due to a succession of tremendous summits and depressions (the summits at Sisson's, at the Skidways, at the Rogue River-Umpqua divide, and at the Umpqua-Willamette divide); to snows at these summits; to side-hill locations, excessive curvature and to long stretches of wild, unproductive country. Some time in the future a coast line from California to Astoria and Puget Sound will be secured by snug fitting to the hills, and by good judgment in adjusting gradients to the coast benches. It will constitute the thoroughfare of the Pacific Coast.

"The Willamette will be a feeder to Portland until the great towage systems capture the boats at Oregon City in small tows, and combine them into large tows at the mouth of the Willamette en route to the Columbia mouth. Just as the Hudson river tows from the canals pass Albany. At present this Willamette feeder is subject to a lockage charge at Oregon City that lessens its value, and will aid the railways from the valley to Astoria in competing with it. The river also is so shoal that much of its traffic is suspended a large part of the year.

"We find no timber of importance necessarily tributary to Portland, and even for her home consumption she is sending to the Lower Columbia for logs. There are no great or small valleys, except the Willamette, trending towards Portland and directing their products inalienably towards her. Export coal from the Nehalem will not take three sides of a quadrilateral and come to Portland for export. In other words, there is very little tonnage originating in Portland, to draw ocean vessels there when railways reach Astoria."

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