

## Wright..Steamboat.

The Col. Wright was commanded by Capt. Len White, an experienced stern wheel steamboat man. The boat was built with a mast that carried a huge square sail which proved of material advantage during the season of winds that are regular trade winds up the river.

Previous to 1859 the Columbia from The Dalles upward had been navigated only by Indian canoes, the Hudson's Bay company's batteaux and for a short time immediately before this date by a few flat bottomed sailing craft freighting to Wallula which was then old Fort Walla Walla.

Successful steam navigation was established that year by the building of the Col. Wright, a stern wheel boat, at the mouth of the Deschutes by Lawrence W. Coe and R.R. Thompson. These men had secured a contract government contract for carrying freight for Fort Walla Walla and this business they had handled with the flat bottomed batteaux or schooners propelled by sail and wind power.

The start up the river was made on April 18 with a dozen passengers, the owners of the boat and 50 tons of freight. The first obstacle was the John Day River Rapids..

..Coe and Thompson added other boats to the service and in 1862 when the Oregon Steam Navigation Company was incorporated a merger was formed, the owners of the upper river boats becoming heavy stockholders in the new company. (material in between previously copied from older material)

The Dalles.

## Ferry Boat Captains.

J.W. Troup

J.W. Troup who captained the boat, 1878, wheat, Walla Walla. At 21 made captain. Moved to the Dalles Cascade run, made superintendent of the OR and N. Then to Seattle with Canadian Pacific Princesses line in 1873. Persuaded Ainsworth to build Harvest Queen.

J.W. Troup commanded the Harvest Queen from the time it was built, about 1878 to 1890.

It was 200 feet long. The boat ~~also~~ carried much of the Walla Walla wheat down the Columbia to The Dalles.

After the railway came in as far as the Dalles.....

Troup started career at 18, captain at 21. He was regarded as the dean of the Columbia river captains.



Col. Wright.

On April 18, 1859, the Col. Wright left her landing at Deschutes for the upper river.. built at the Deschutes, selected just above its mouth where there was a bridge and a wagon road from The Dalles. the bridge was owned by Victor Trevitt.

Time from Deschutes to Umatilla, on upper river, being 24 hours, return in 18 hours.

In 1861 the Wright made the first trip ever made by a steamer up the Snake and on up the Clearwater. . Two other trips were made this far, than a landing at the confluence of the two streams which place Victor Trevitt named Lewiston and the place across the river Clarkston

half pilot house. Six passenger alone out of the 70 or 80 came over to the crowd and a passenger meant "20 apiece them. Directly he called the <sup>engineer</sup> steamer (Capt. Coe ) and said, keep up the steam, and be ready to leave as soon as the freight is in about half an hour fifteen minutes before the leaving time two whistles were blown, the signal for leaving. Then there was a general stir on the Spray and scouts were sent over to the Wright asking what was up, where you going down the river.. then the big rush, the black line streamed down the cobble beach to the Wright, Capt. Baughman and A. Pankeny, purser and manager. A. Pankeny his father, majority owner was in town.

The Col. Wright was not an imposing ship.. She had only a half house below and carried her freight in the hold. but had a very comfortable cabin and dining room all in one. The built-in seats could be opened out and made into beds and she had two staterooms aft opposite the galley, for ladies. But she was a little and but little faster than her competitor, the Spray.

Some 65 of the Spray's passengers that would have gone down on her, had the Wright been laid out at her landing until the morning as usual and represented a passenger toll of some \$1,300. As we turned the Devil's Elbow a mile or so below the black smoke was rolling out of the Sprays stack at Gold Harbor Old Harbor at the head of the Umatilla Rapids, the Wright tied up for the night and the passengers made up their bunks and played cards. I about an hour we looked up the river and here came the Spray. Of course we expected her to come alongside for the night, never dreaming that she would attempt to run Umatilla rapids at night, but on she went. The rapids were bad enough in daylight but at night, bright moonlight though it was, was an unheard of thing. We watched her anxiously for thought it was



an o positionboat, swe did not want to see them come to Grief.

But down through the upper gate and then away across the river and backing down around the upper riffle, then back and down through the surging roaring middle riffle and past the nip at the gravel bar and around the angleworm turn at the foot of the rapids, all safe and sound.

A marvelous act and only Capt. Eph could have done it. But at Devils Bend the Spray came to grief and struck the noted and dreaded split rock. But on he went patching the leak so as to keep her dry. On through Canoe Encampment and Owhyee, Rock Creek, Indian and then Needles Eye at John Days and finally Five mile and Hell Gate.

All of them bad enough in the day time, but at night. Of course he missed Umatilla, where we picked up some 10 passengers at Grand Boddaqd and at Grand Ronde, landing some five more. Although we landed at Celilo with near 100 passengers. As we passed

Columbus, they were hauling the Spray out, for repairs, they having ways there. Baughman characterized it, a dirty Irish trick. But it won out. It proved that Capt. Baughman was a steam boat pilot par se with few equals and no superior and finally the grand old man, the xdean of river pilots.

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(1896)

The death of Lawrence S. Coe which occurred in San Francisco removes one of the men who held an important place in the early history of steamboating in Oregon. With his passing away R.R. Thompson is the sole survivor of those who 37 years ago organized the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, that during his life was a great factor in the commercial history of the state.

Lawrence Coe came to Oregon from New York in the early 50s with his father, Nathaniel Coe who was the first government official of the postal service in the northwest.

For a number of years he made his home at Hood River and engaged in the transportation business. He first started in business with the running of sailboats between the cascades and the dalles and afterward built the little steamers Mary and Wasco to play the waters of the Middle Columbia river.

Later with R.R. Thompson he built the steamer Venture at Cascades. It was intended to steam the vessel up to the dalles and then take it overland to Celilo for the purpose of running on the Upper Columbia and Snake rivers. The trial trip was to be made under the management of Capt. Coe but through misundertaking the lines were cast off before the engineer was ready and the Venture went over the cascades.

Afterward she was sold, her name changed to Umatilla, taken to Fraser river during the mining excitement of 1858 and earned a large amount of money for her owners. The loss of the Venture in no way discouraged Coe or Thompson. They immediately built the steamer Col. Wright, after receiving a contract to transport army supplies to Fort Walla Walla and other interior posts. Previously such supplies were carried from the mouth of the Dalles Deschutes to old Fort Walla Walla, now Wallula, in Hudson's Bay company batteaux and other craft propelled by sail and oar.



The Col. Wright was the first steamer to navigate the waters of the Columbia and its tributaries above The Dalles and after she had gone into such service her owners joined the combined companies and on Dec. 29, 1860, formed the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, more familiar under the name O.S.N. Co.

In 1861 the great number of people seeking the gold mines of Idaho and Montana made it necessary for the O.S.N. Co to furnish better facilities at the portages than were afforded by teams, in order to keep up with business. Capt. Coe was sent to New York to purchase locomotives, cars and rails for the full equipment of the portage at the cascades and the Dalles and this material with a complete machinery plant for shops at the Dalles was shipped around the Horn in a vessel chartered for that purpose. In the spring of 1863 both portages were finely equipped and prepared to do business in an expeditious manner.

Sept 1, 1863, Capt. Coe resigned his position as the officer in charge of the business of the company east of the cascades, sold out all his interests and removed with his family to San Francisco.

There he engaged in the mining business, was at one time president of the Yellow Jacket company but only realized that there was an inside ring manipulating affairs after he had lost all his money, something like \$125,000 which he had made in Oregon.

The clear sound of the engineer's gong at dawn the next morning found everybody up, all interest centering on Umatilla rapids for if this obstruction could be passed success for the enterprise and the country was assured. These rapids were formed by three separate reefs a half mile apart from each other and will always be a difficult place in the river although the government has expended thousands of dollars to improve them during the past years.

The three reefs were made without injury, the boat trembling and creaking in every part as it breasted the current, the water pouring over the bow and deck in a flood and she slid into the open river again just as the breakfast bell rang calling to material things after the war of giants.

General congratulations took place at the table. The owners were happy and the passengers could now go on by horseback in a few hours to Walla Walla. But the captain was cautious. "Well, boys, he said, we are up but we have to go down.

The Colonel Wright arrived at Wallula at 9 o'clock sighting the first home of a white man since leaving Deschutes and Higgins, the solitary inhabitant came out to take the lines. Here stood the old adobe fort, erected by the Hudson Bay company years before and now occupied by the army quartermaster who used the building as a warehouse.

Two hours later the load was discharged, the passengers embarked on the hurricane decks of Cayuse horses furnished by the Indians, the lines were cast off and the boat was headed down stream on the homestretch. The speed was astonishing. Umatilla was run without accident and with a full head of steam on, the captain reached John Day at dusk and could still see threatening rocks rising from the boiling water. It was plain sailing to Deschutes which was reached as the steward was lighting the cabin for supper having been out on the famous run two days, inaugurating one of the greatest enterprises in history



the Northwest.

During this year regular trips were made between Deschutes and Wallula and an exploring trip up to Priest Rapids. Up to 1860 the character of the Snake river was wholly unknown. No white man since the fur traders had passed up or down.

With the new decade gold discoveries on the Clearwater attracted attention and miners were routed from Walla Walla overland to the mouth of that river where it flows into the Snake and on to the gold bearing district where the towns of Oro Fino and Florence sprang up like magic in these successful diggings. Early in the spring of this year the army quarter master employed the Colonel Wright to ascend the Snake as far as the mouth of the Palouse, a point on the direct ~~road~~ land route for army supplies by wagon for Fort Vancouver Colville. The steamer succeeded in making Palouse and a warehouse was maintained there.

In 1861 a Seth Slater of Portland wished to transport a load of miner's supplies to the Florence district and agreed with the owners of the Wright to make the trip up the Snake River. When the boat left Deschute, Celilo had not yet been used as a name for the lower end of the route. It was full of freight and passengers bound for the Salmon River diggings, mining talk, sluices, long toms, rockers, pans, pay gravel and bed rock being terms heard from all sides.

Those people were to be dropped at Wallula although all desired to share in the fortunes of the boat but the captain ~~would~~ would undertake no further responsibility than Slater's contract.

After entering the Snake river the captain touched on an island where an enormous tree had lodged from a former highwater and the crew and volunteer passengers were ~~landed~~ landed with axes kept for this purpose to add to the supply of fuel. Upon disturbing the trunk of the tree a nest of rattlesnakes was also disturbed and a dozen were killed.



At Palouse an enterprising person had strung a rope ferry and passage of the boat was barred by the wire cable which swung barely above the current in the middle of the river, far too low to pass under. The ferryman tried to persuade the captain that it was impossible for his boat to make the river on account of the rapids above although his opinion may have been ~~biased~~ biased by the thought that if upper navigation was assured his ferryboat business would be ruined. Unfortunately the wheel of the steamer caught in the wire and snapped it like a pipe ~~stem~~ stem.

Palouse Rapids now confronted the boat, the ~~river~~ river being in such immense volume with the June rise that the tide of speculation rose to high water mark among the passengers. Inch by inch for two hours the gallant "Eight" strove for the summit, reached it and the first difficulty vanished. At the head of the rapids on the right bank was Fort Taylor, now called Grange City, a small earth embankment with a single cabin remaining and a solitary soldier on guard, waving his hat as the boat passed by.

The rapids above which were ~~heavily~~ and feared ~~by~~ were named by Captain White Texas "rapids, a polite term for a more unhappy place where no water is." A line was put out, the sail set and a favorable breeze rising in the nick of time, the boat forged ahead faster than the cable could be hauled in, entangling it in the wheel. Still the boat propelled by both steam and sail rushed over the crest like a thing ~~bewitched~~ bewitched. A landing was made and an hour spent in cutting the cable out of the wheel.

No Indians had been seen on the river until now when an encampment came into view, deer skin lodges besides a stream, canoes, fisheries on the bank and a herd of horses browsing on the hillside.

The evening was spent in music and song. Charley Frush and his banjo



banjo together with his charming tenor voice carried all the other days far away.

At daylight the boat was under way so no one was lying in bed. At 8 o'clock a house was seen on the banks of the river on the trail from Walla Walla to Lapwai, where a ferry was located. This was the great Nez Perce trail, the chief thoroughfare between the upper and lower countries as these regions were called in those days. There was quite a crowd of people about the house waiting to be ferried over the river and pack trains were strung along the trail on both sides all in motion one way, going to the mines. As the boat came up, the travelers rushed down the bank and some firing off guns and pistols, which was answered by tooting of the steam whistle and cheering in return.

The captain was for a time undecided which river to ascend, the Snake or the Clearwater but as the pack trains were headed up the Clearwater the boat was headed into that stream. As the boat approached the Indian agency at Lapwai the chief, Lawyer, cried out to his people, look, here comes a water wagon. Few Indians had ever seen a steamboat. Here a few minutes were spent, the Indian agent and Lawyer were invited aboard and then the boat steamed on. After a hard day's work the captain concluded he could go no further with safety and with Mr. Slater's consent the merchandise was landed about twenty five miles above the agency.

The Col. Wright made two more trips up the Clearwater in the next three weeks and as the water fell a new depot had to be located. The tongue of land between the Snake and Clearwater rivers at their junction was selected as a terminus and as a suitable place for a town to grow up as a distributing point for mining and military supplies.

The name of Lewiston was bestowed upon the new tent city by Victor Trevitt who was at the landing one week later where three hundred people were awaiting transportation. In response to a demand for a name at the upper end of the route for the billing of goods, Trevitt said,

call the place Lewiston for the first whiteman who set foot on the spot."

The boat's trip down was a rapid one, stiff places and rapids which took hours to ascend and vanishing on the return.

This trip from Deschutes to Slaterville consumed three and a half days, the return downstream being accomplished in eighteen hours.

Coe & Thompson's freight charges from Deschutes to "allula by batteaux" were one hundred and five dollars per ton. With the success of the "right" the charges were reduced to eighty dollars per ton and the batteaux had to go out of commission. Wood for fuel cost ten dollars per cord. Captain White's wages were five hundred dollars per month.

As an illustration of the large business done at this time the following figures taken from the books at The Dalles for tickets for the trip up alone: Steamer Col Wright, March 7th, \$2,625; March 29, \$2446; March 31st, \$1570. This was in 1862.

Coe and Thompson added and other boats to the service and in 1862 when the Oregon Steam Navigation Company was incorporated a merger was formed., the owners of the upper river boats becoming heavy-stockholders in the new company. The achievements of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company from this period until it was finally merged into the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company form an important part of the history of the northwest in its development.