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SALMON FISHERIES

—ON THE—

COLUMBIA RIVER.



—ISSUED BY THE—

WASHINGTON FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION.

ILWACO, PACIFIC CO., WASH.

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PREPARED BY—C. C. DALTON. CHAIRMAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.



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A Great Industry.

An Interesting Review of the Columbia River Salmon Fisheries of the State of Washington.

Of the many great natural resources of the state of Washington, the fisheries are one of the most importance. Columbia river salmon are world renowned as the finest of canned fish. The great foreign, as well as domestic demand for this most palatable article of preserved food, is well known, and it would hardly seem necessary to take up the subject before the people of the state of Washington. Yet it is a fact that comparatively few people of this state are aware that the greatest portion of the vast salmon fisheries and canning industry of the Columbia river is owned, operated and conducted in the state of Washington. The commercial world generally knows only Oregon as the state that cans the Columbia river salmon, yet it is a fact that one-half the salmon canned on the Columbia river are caught by residents of Washington.

During the fishing season of 1892, from April 10, to August 10th, 565,550 cases of salmon were packed on the Columbia river, the value of which was nearly \$3,000,000. Of this amount of canned fish the Washington canneries packed about 200,000 cases. If all the fish caught by Washington fishermen were canned by Washington canneries, the annual pack of Washington would exceed that of Oregon canneries. A large number of the fishermen on the Washington shore dispose of their catch to the Oregon canners, which accounts for the increase of the Oregon pack over that of Washington.

The salmon fishing industry of the lower Columbia river, on the Washington shore has increased so greatly and so rapidly within the past six years that it seems strange that so little attention has been paid by our state legislature regulating the same. On account of the great amount of capital invested and the vast number of persons em-

ployed, the fact is patent to those who are interested, that we must, if we wish to continue this vast resource, look to the future as well as the present, to devise means to regulate, foster and perpetuate this great industry. The fishermen of the lower Columbia are fully alive to the situation, and request the Washington legislature to remedy existing evils and pass such laws as will best serve the interests of the business for the future.

The Washington Fishermens association, is an organization composed of fishermen and others, residents of the state. The object of the Association, is found in Article 2, of the by-laws of the association:

SECTION 1.—The object of this Association shall be to promote and fishing industries of the State of Washington; to assist in building and maintaining fish hatcheries; to induce legislation by petition or other lawful means to protect the industry and those engaged in it; to extend to its members, aid and assistance when necessary.

Hon. A. S. Bush, member of the House, from Pacific county, the principal location of the salmon fisheries, has prepared a bill which fully covers all the points in question, and if passed will be of lasting benefit.

In this statement an endeavor is made to defend the charges made by gill-net men against the mode of fishing by pound-nets, the principal method of fishing by the fishermen of Southwestern Washington. In speaking of violations of our laws, of mob rule and riot, by gill-net men we wish to be understood as referring to the gill-net men of Oregon. Wahkiakum county on the State of Washington shore is the location and home of numbers of gill-net fishermen, among who are many of her best and influential citizens. Many of these people are the pioneers in developing the lower Columbia, and who have by hard labor made pretty farms along the shore, and during the summer months also engage in the remunerative salmon fishing. The pound net men of Bakers Bay would be pleased and believe it would tend to the best interests of the fisheries, and the gill-net fishermen of Wahkiakum county, if closer relations existed between pound-net and gill-net fishermen which we believe would be to-day, were it not for the interference of the Fishermens Union of Astoria. The Washington shore has been ruled by Oregon long enough, and we hope our present legislature will legislate to the interests of our own state on this matter.

Since the year 1883 when the first few pound nets were placed in Bakers Bay of the Columbia river, off the Washington shore, in Pacific county a strong jealousy exhibited on the part of the Astoria, Oregon, gill-net fishermen has existed against Washington pound-net men which feeling had developed at times to open riot and anarchism. In the years of 1884 the gill-net fishermen of Astoria organized themselves into a Union styled the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union. The protective features of the order were simply to say that only gill-nets should be used in catching salmon; that pound-nets or other modes of fishing on the Columbia river be done away with; that the union fix the price that canneries must pay for fish. The Union with successful leaders and a large percentage of the numbers, being men who had no interests either in Oregon or Washington, except the transient residence of from April until August, the fishing season, soon became a large and powerful labor organization, whose influence and power was so great, that in order to fish a gill-net on the river without molestation a membership into the Union was first necessary.

As the number of pound-nets increased on the Washington shore the hatred of the Astoria Fishermen became more bitter. With the exception of the frequently cutting of pound nets, in the night no direct conflict was had with our Washington fishermen until the year 1886 at which time the union had set the price to be \$1 each. The canneries refusing to meet this demand a strike was ordered by the Union. Washington fishermen in attempting to deliver fish to the Astoria canners, were met on the river by Astoria fishermen, who threw our fishermen's salmon overboard and admonished them to not attempt a second occurrence. Our men being in the minority, and without protection, were forced to accede to the commands of these lawbreakers and thus lie idle the best part of the season, at a great loss.

In 1887 a second strike was ordered and on account of the same reason of being powerless to resist, our men did not again fish until the strike was declared off by the Union. At this time however, the Union were not so fortunate in their efforts to suppress fishing during the strike. About Rainier, on the Oregon shore, were gathered quite a few non-union gill-net men. They were lately from the east, and not finding other employment were at the time of the strike, offered boats and nets to fish, by the canneries. The water being very quiet about the locality and the dangers not existing as at the mouth of the river, the

prairie men accepted the situation. They were called the "cow-boy fishermen" and were happy with their success in earning from \$25 to \$50 per week, instead of that amount yearly in Kansas, as they expressed themselves. This all did not meet the approval of the union, who frequently forwarded orders from their Astoria head-quarters to the cow-boy fishermen to quit fishing, which command was not heeded. An attempt was made to annihilate them. One night a fleet of fishing boats sailed from Astoria to Rainer to intimidate these non-union men, who comfortably housed away in their home, a floating scow, prepared for an attack. The cow-boys not coming to terms the attack was made with the result of the union having charge of several funerals that took place at Astoria a few days later.

Not wishing to further abuse the cow-boys the efforts of the Astoria fishermen were next entirely turned to the pound-net men of Washington determined to use every means within their power to ruin our fishermen. On the night of May 7th. 1887 by a well defined and premeditated plan an immense fleet of gill-net boats loaded with men came down from Astoria, to opposite Ilwaco. and cut to pieces and set afire pound nets, cut pile drivers, scows and boats loose and fired a large amount of fishing gear stored on floats or scows. Residents of Ilwaco that were sleeping on these scows or pile drivers were forcibly taken away, roughly treated and placed on an island in the middle of the river to meditate in exile over the woes of a Washington pound net man. The final termination of this riot was a loss of about \$40,000 to Washington fishermen, and one person killed and another wounded, both of Ilwaco. From August until the middle of November in this state fall fishing for salmon is carried on at Willapa Harbor and Grays Harbor. Up to the season of 1886 the greater number of fishermen engage in these places were these same Astoria gill-net fishermen. But in 1887 Grays Harbor proved to be good water for pound nets and a number of Washington pound net men were on the ground and had their nets in operation the fall of 1887. This so angered the Astoria rioters who pleased over the success of their devilish work at Ilwaco the preceeding spring, endeavored to repeat their action on the Harbor. They mistook the fact however that they had not the same superiority inland in this state as they had on the river bordering Oregon, and when they endeavored to repeat the Ilwaco outrage,

they were given a reception similar to the one experienced at Rainier; which was also followed up by the arrest and conviction of the leaders of the mob.

The Washington pound nets increasing greatly on the Columbia, and the Washington fishermen also increasing in numbers, and taking effectual and determined measures to prevent their property from again being destroyed, the Astoria men became cautious, and have not destroyed property so openly, and only act slyly and damage our pound nets at intervals, when they believe our men to be off guard.

Riot not having achieved the object, the Astorians have long since resorted to the legislature of Oregon. and national government, and with the aid of labor organizations are doing all possible to create public sentiment against pound nets by false charges and misstatements, thus expecting to have laws passed doing away with the pound net method of fishing, and leaving the river alone to the gill nets. They charge pound nets are an obstruction to navigation and a menace to life; and that pound nets are a monopoly and confine the fishing of the many to the few.

Now let us take up each charge separately.

In the first charge no specific argument is advanced against pound nets being destructive to salmon, except that they catch small salmon. We admit that small fish are sometimes caught in a pound net and there confined, freely swimming about in the large pound, the meshes of the net being too small to admit of escaping. But it is not admitted that these small fish are salmon. On this question there is much diversity of opinion. Many practical fishermen claim these small fish are not an undeveloped Chinook salmon, but a different specie, and that they are a fully developed fish. It is a peculiar feature of this small fish that they are all males under eight pounds in weight, while at, and above that weight come the female with fully developed spawn. Hon. L. T. Barin, present U. S. Marshal for Oregon and formealy State Senator from Clackamas county in that state, and a well-known authority on salmon, holds to the above opinion. Prof. Jordan of the Stanford University, terms these same fish, young salmon.

The general opinion is that when salmon ascend the river they

do so to spawn, and when that function is performed, the salmon does not again return to the ocean, but dies. Now if such is the case, what difference does it make as to the final termination of that fish, whether it dies naturally, or is caught and used as an article of commerce.

The following clipping from a fisherman correspondent to the Cathlamet Gazette, (Wahkiakum County, Washington,) seems a good argument on the subject :

EDITOR GAZETTE:—I, for one do not see any sense in the theory of having mercy on the live young salmon, and utterly slay every mother of a 500 brood. That means all kinds from away outside of the bar right up to the spawning grounds, can be captured and slain.

If "Alexis" would study the matter without prejudice, he would find that the gill-net fishermen have no stones to throw, in that they do more to destroy the salmon industry on the Columbia, than all other methods of fishing put together, for they only take the fish that do the spawning. If "Alexis" mother had been killed three months before he was born, what would have become of him? Would it not have gone as hard on him as the babies on Puget Sound? I am a gill net fisherman myself, and have I not helped to over-fish the river? I don't believe Alexis' trash, only last winter when he fished some traps around Bugsley's Hole. If he was to fall into the river from his fishing scow now, and get drowned, we would hear no more of "Alexis." He has been in the country about five years at the outside, and only talks from hearsay.

J. OSTERWOLD.

It would also be imagined from these complaints that the catch of these small fish was great. This is a mistake. Some days a pound net man may catch ten or twelve small fish, at other times the catch may run from one to six, and for a week at a time none whatever. They are useless to the fishermen, only for home use or to give away, for the canner will not can them. The argument is often used by practical salmon fishermen "that it is of benefit to the salmon to remove these stunted male fish from the water, as they are of such inferior quality as to only disturb the Chinook spawn, and are as detrimental to the propagation and growth of salmon, as a scrub male animal among blooded stock."

At first thought it would seem that the gill-net man was of a very magnanimous spirit in having the salmon industry so at heart, as to himself forbear catching these small fish so as to foster the fisheries. But when one is fully acquainted with the fact that the mesh of a gill net is four inches square, commonly called an eight inch, and a size too large to gill the small fish who slip through the mesh, and

it the mesh were made smaller, it would be too small to gill the big salmon, the object of the gill-net man can readily be seen, and he will be classed as an excellent joker, or one who pursues the "dog in the manger" policy.

Now to show how the pound-net men feel on the small fish proposition, they are willing to waive all rights as to the justice of catching these small fish, and they ask the legislature of the state of Washington to pass an act prohibiting the catching of any such fish under fifteen inches in length.

Formerly the Sacramento river was the great salmon river of the coast, and had numerous canneries from San Francisco to Sacramento. The amount of salmon taken were enormous, and today the Sacramento river salmon canning is about a thing of the past. The river is fished out and but comparatively few salmon are caught.

What destroyed the salmon fishing on the Sacramento river ?

Pound nets and fish wheels were not the cause, FOR THERE HAS NOT BEEN A POUND OR FISH WHEEL OPERATED ON THE RIVER. Our gill net friends must answer the question, and their only competent answer can be: The salmon of the Sacramento river were fished out by gill nets because artificial propagation was not sufficient to supply the demand.

The pack of salmon on the Columbia river from 1884 to 1887, decreased greatly and the enemies of pound nets charged the decrease to the destruction of fish to the pound nets, although the only argument advanced was the catching of the small fish which we have already taken up.

Following is the pack of salmon on the Columbia river from 1883 to 1891 inclusive:

1883	1,106,600
1884	985,285
1885	835,715
1886	933,354
1887	987,890
1888	1,118,372
1889	1,714,875
1890	1,627,867
1891	1,578,954

It will be observed that the pack from 1888 to 1891 was greater than any previous year. There were in operation in 1890 and in 1891

and 1892, double the number of fish traps of all the preceding years.

If the pound nets were a destruction to salmon, why was the catch and pack greater from 1888 to 1891, than from 1884 to 1887 ?

Why did the catch of salmon decrease from 1884 to 1887, when there were not over 50 pound nets on the river, and whose catch was comparatively nothing compared with the thousand or more gill nets on the river at that time?

If pound nets were a destruction by catching young salmon, could the few nets in the years from 1883 to 1886, be so destructive as to cause this great decrease in the salmon pack ?

The only candid answer must "No." The reason of the decrease on the Columbia must be attributed to the same cause that contributed the decrease on the Sacramento.

The supply of fish was not sufficient to meet the urgent demand of the fishermen and the canner. Season after season the demand for salmon was so great, and the occupation of fishing so remunerative that the amount of fishing gear in the river was annually increased, and so many salmon were caught, that but few fish were able to reach the spawning grounds to deposit the spawn that three or four years later would develop to full grown salmon, to again enter the river. At times during the seasons, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886, and 1888, an unlooked for large run of fish occurred. This would happen at a time when the cannery provided for a light pack, were unable to care for the fish and had to limit each gill-net and each pound-net to a certain number of salmon that would be purchased by the canner. The result terminated about this manner. A gill net and pound net would be limited to say 30 salmon per day during the run which would continue from a day to a week. The gill net man would "lay out" his net for a drift, and when he concluded to "pull up" would have from any number to 75 salmon in his net. The canner would only accept the limit. What would be done with the balance, now in the boat and dead? THROWN OVERBOARD.

How did the limit affect the pound-net man? He went out to his net and could estimate one hundred salmon swimming about in the pound. He placed the thirty in his boat for delivery to the cannery, and seeing enough fish in the pound to supply the limit for the next two or three days, he closed the tunnel to the net, so no more fish

could enter the pound. Which method of fishing in these cases is the most destructive to salmon?

The salmon fishing and canning interest having developed to such a vast extent, and the sudden decrease in the number of fish caught, created considerable alarm. In fact it was thought by some that salmon canning was a business of the past. In 1887 the Oregon legislature took hold of the question, appointed a board of fish commissioners and appropriated funds to build and operate a hatchery for the artificial propagation of salmon. The hatchery was operated very successfully and hatched out millions of young salmon, the effect of which was the increased run and catch of fish in the year of 1892. The year following the establishment of the Oregon hatchery and fish commission, a similar effort was attempted in the territorial legislature of Washington, but the bill failed to pass.

The pound net fishermen believe that great results can be attained from artificial propagation, and they also believe the fishermen and cannors should bear the burden of the expense of conducting and operating the hatcheries, and they request the legislature of Washington to require a tax levied for such purpose, on the salmon caught and canned on the Columbia river, as stated in the bill introduced by Mr. Bush.

In regard to the charge of pound nets being an obstruction to navigation, that is a subject for the general government to consider. It is a well known fact that the Federal authorities are very jealous of any obstructions to navigation, and are ever watchful that the interests of navigation are protected, hence, if the Washington pound nets were an obstruction to commerce, and a menace to life, would not the U. S. Government abate the same? To show the correct position of this matter, let us take an actual late occurrence. Plying between Astoria, Ilwaco, and Fort Canby are three steamers, daily, who are tenders to the various salmon canneries, and who run between these points from April 'til August. From June until September, the large and magnificent side-wheel passenger steamers "Ocean Wave," and T. J. Potter ply between Portland and Ilwaco, carrying thousands of summer resorters to the Ilwaco ocean beach.

Last spring, on account of the shifting of Sand Island towards

the Ilwaco shore the course of the channel was changed, so that a number of pound nets were in the line of travel and in the way, especially in the night, of these large steamers making the turns so as to reach the Ilwaco landing. The steamer captains laid the matter before Major Handbury, U. S. A. stationed at Portland, Oregon, who has jurisdiction over such matters. The major immediately ordered a survey made and some twenty pound nets were ordered removed at once and desiring a wider channel for 1893, forty traps were marked and ordered out after the fishing season of this year, which were cheerfully complied with by the pound net men.

The statement that pound nets are a monopoly and operate to the benefit of the few to the detriment of the many is a charge, the truthfulness of which cannot be conceived by one acquainted with the situation. What benefit does the pound net man have over a gill-net man. If a pound net man can place in the water one two or three pound-nets, has not the gill-net man the same privilege? and can not the gill net man operate as many gill nets as he chooses, if he desires to hire additional help, the same as the pound net man is required to do? Washington fishermen however have this advantage over the Astoria gill-net men. Bakers Bay on the lower Columbia is peculiarly adapted for pound net fishing while the conditions are not the same on the Oregon shore.

The average cost of a pound net is \$800, while a gill-net and boat is \$400. In the construction of a pound net about \$200 of the original cost is expended outside of the state of Washington for piling, lumber knitting of the web, and labor, thus for the construction annually of the 320 pound-nets in Bakers Bay \$192,000 is expended for labor. After a pound net is constructed and ready to fish two men can operate the same or two men can operate two or three traps.

Since pound-net is the popular method of fishing on the lower Columbia, on the Washington shore, it would be only right and proper that the Washington legislature take up the matter now and regulate this mode of fishing in such a manner as would give the citizens of this state a license of their rights to the waters of this state, and foster and perpetuate this great industry of the state. Since more nets will undoubtedly be placed in the river every year, it is therefore necessary that the distance between nets be regulated by law, so as to not allow

of nets being placed too close together, thus leaving a passage way for sail boats and an opening so as the salmon may have an opportunity to pass up the river to spawn. In order to prevent any one person from having a monopoly of the fishing ground, the number of pound nets any one resident should be allowed to fish should be limited to three, thus allowing all an opportunity to engage in the business that so choose, and upon an equal footing.

The following statistics taken from the report of this state Fish Commissioner pertains solely to Pacific County and show the extent of the industry in this one county alone. It will be noted that \$107,506 is monthly paid out in wages during the spring fishing season. Thus for the four months of the active season \$430,024 is paid for wages. This is in addition to the \$192,000 paid for the labor used in the first cost of construction of the pound nets before ready for operation. There was in operation this season :

Fish traps.....	320
Sail boats.....	53
Pound boats.....	154
Hand pile drivers.....	38
Steam pile drivers.....	7
Plungers.....	3
Small steamers and naphtha launch.....	3
Gill nets and boats.....	107
Seines and outfits.....	6
Small skiffs and dinghys.....	60
MEN.	
Number employed on traps.....	430
“ “ steam drivers.....	35
“ “ plungers.....	6
“ “ gill nets and boats.....	214
“ “ seines.....	36
“ “ shore hands, (white).....	22
“ “ (Chinese).....	101
Total value of fish traps.....	\$ 256,600 00
“ “ sail boats.....	5,800 00
“ “ pound boats.....	6,160 00
“ “ small skiffs and dinghys.....	900 00
“ “ steam pile drivers.....	8,400 00
“ “ hand “ “.....	2,850 00
“ “ plungers.....	2,100 00
“ “ steamboats and launch.....	5,000 00
“ “ gill nets and boats.....	42,800 00
“ “ seines, nets and outfits.....	3,700 00
Total.....	\$ 333,610 00

Total number of men employed and wages paid:

420 trap men, \$65 per month each.....	\$ 27,300 00
35 steam driver hands, \$75 per month each.....	2,625 00
6 plunger hands, \$65 per month each.....	390 00
36 seine hands, \$65 per month each.....	2,340 00
214 gill net men, 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ cents per fish.....	41,200 00
22 shore hands (white) \$80 per month each.....	1,760 00
201 " (Chinese) 44 cents per case.....	31,891 00

Total..... \$ 107,506 00

Among the many newspaper comments by correspondence and otherwise, written on the subject. The following editorial from the Portland Oregonian sums up the situation very fairly:

"A few days ago a correspondent paid his respects to the fish wheels and recommended that their use be prohibited by law, venturing the opinion that "seines and gill nets are the only true ways of fishing." In this he exactly agrees with the seine men, but not with the gill-net men, who are so much opposed to seines, pound traps and all "contraptions" for catching fish save the kind they themselves use, that they have been known to argue with the rifle on the subject. The objection to the fish wheel is that it catches too many fish. To prohibit then, would be to declare by statute that the most economical way of conducting the fishing business shall not be used. We do not go into the shoe factory and say the patent pegging machine shall not be used. Why should we seek to prevent the lowering of the cost of production of a can of salmon by legislating against a labor-saving machine.

The reason given for this demand for a law against the fish wheel is that too many fish are being caught, and that not enough are permitted to reach the spawning grounds to maintain the supply in the river, and if this thing be permitted to go on the salmon industry will be ruined. This is all true in a measure, but why seek to cure the evil at the expense of one class of fishermen, and permit the others to go ahead unmolested? It would surely be more equitable to stop the business of catching salmon entirely for a period, than to put the burden all upon the owners of fish wheels. One of the state fish commissioners offers a far more sensible, equitable and practical remedy. He would extend the close season in the spring until the 1st. of May, by which time the most vigorous of the fish, the ones that really reach the highest spawning grounds, will have passed up beyond the nets, seines, traps and wheels. He would also largely extend the area of spawning ground by putting in a practical fishway at Willamette and its tributaries above Oregon City.

This increase of propagation, rather than curtailment of fishing, is the true policy to pursue. The salmon constitutes one of the greatest natural resources of the state, and the industry of supplying it as food to the market, both fresh and preserved, should be developed and maintained. Every effort should be made to have it yield more money. Practical legislation looking to increased

natural propagation is what is wanted. But this is not sufficient. Artificial propagation should also be pushed to the highest point. The present hatchery on the Clackamas is not doing satisfactory work. It has an easy capacity of 6,000,000, and might be made to turn out 10,000,000; yet this year less than 2,000,000 young fry were put into the river. The hatchery belongs to the state, but is operated by the United States fish commission. The arrangement is not productive of satisfactory results. It is believed the state could do much better if it attended to the whole business. One or more new hatcheries might be built on tributaries of the Willamette. There might be 20,000,000 young salmon put into the water every year if the proper efforts were made, and an infinitesimal tax on the salmon caught would pay the cost of doing the work. Catching fish with a net is an old and honored process, but it has no sacred rights. Many an old method of doing business has had to give way to a newer one accomplishing greater results. Instead of trying to cut off fish wheels for the benefit of gill nets, let us turn our efforts in another direction, and see if we cannot make the salmon so plentiful that even the fish wheels cannot catch them all."



