

BIG FISH STORIES

ALL ABOUT THE SALMON INDUSTRY OF THE NORTHWEST, WHICH AMOUNTS TO MILLIONS.

(Special Correspondence of the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.)

CHICAGO—Would you like to hear big fish stories that are true stories?

If so, open your ears and listen to James S. McMillin, the Duke of San Juan.

You may not have heard of him. Still he is the nabob of the most important of our Puget Sound islands, an island which once came near involving us in war with Great Britain. San Juan Island lies just under the boundary line between the United States and British Columbia. In our old treaties it was stated that the boundary was on the 49th parallel to Puget Sound, and thence along the marine channel through that sound out to the sea. The San Juan archipelago lies on the south edge of the channel, but the British decided to construe the route further south and make these islands a part of their territory.

SAVED BY A HOG.

It was the cackling of geese that saved Rome. It was the rooting of a hog that saved these islands and the vast fishing industry, of which they are the center, to the United States. The hog belonged to a British resident of San Juan Island. It rooted out the potatoes of an American resident and the American shot the hog. This brought up the question of the ownership of the island, which was involved in the question of jurisdiction. The governor of British Columbia proposed to send troops to bring the American offender to Victoria for trial, and the American governor of our territory sent Captain James Pickett to prevent it. Pickett was the same man who afterward made that famous charge at Gettysburg. He took a company of troops to San Juan and warned the British on the gunboat, which was sent to settle the matter, that if they landed he would fire upon them and there would be an international war. They did not land. The trouble continued, however, and General Winfield Scott was sent out by the president to settle it. A temporary arrangement was made by which the British took the northern half and the Americans the southern half of the island, and later the settlement having been referred to old Kaiser Wilhelm, the grandfather of the present kaiser, he decided that the direct channel lay north of San Juan. This made the island an American possession, and so it is to this day.

San Juan Island is the chief one of the San Juan archipelago. It is only five miles one way by 14 miles the other, but it is the northwest corner of the United States, and especially valuable because the greater part of it is pure stone. It is in fact a pure white marble, from which is made the most of the best lime of the Pacific slope. It has enormous factories and furnaces for making lime, and James S. McMillin, who has been nicknamed the Duke of San Juan, is their owner.

BIG FISH STORIES.

San Juan Island is also right on the track of the millions of salmon which come in every year from the sea to spawn in the fresh-water rivers; and it was as to fish that I talked with the Duke of San Juan. Said Mr. McMillin:

"The salmon brings Uncle Sam more wealth than any other fish in his waters. The catch of Puget sound is worth about \$5,000,000 a year, and in 1902 more than 24 million pounds of such fish were caught in the Oregon rivers. Alaska salmon brings in several million dollars, and altogether a large proportion of our 50 million dollars' worth of fish products come from salmon."

"You people of the east know nothing about fish as they swarm in our western waters. How would you like to sail for half a day through a school of fish from one to three miles wide and so thick that it blankets the face of the ocean? I have done that again and again, not far from San Juan."

"What would you think of rivers so packed with salmon that they fill the streams from bank to bank—so thickly packed that were they not so slippery and the water not so deep—you could walk over them from one bank to the other. I have seen that."

"What would you think," continued the duke, as he looked into my wide bulging eyes, "of great vats of salmon 60 feet long, 40 feet wide and 40 feet deep—vats so big that you could drop a four-story business block of 40 feet front down into them—and all solid salmon? We have scores of such vats. We empty the fish into scows and carry them to our packing houses, whence they are shipped to all parts of the world."

"These are big stories," Mr. McMillin, said I.

"Yes, but if you will come to San Juan I will show you all that and more. Our salmon exports are now greater in value than our lumber exports, and they are growing year by year."

BLAINE'S EIGHTY-POUND CHINOOK.

"Is this fishing business a new one?" I asked.

"Comparatively so with us. The big salmon fishing of the west was for a long time confined to the Columbia river, where the Chinese salmon men came from. The Chinook was the first to be put upon the market and it is best known. It is one of the finest of the salmon and about the largest. I have seen Chinook fish weighing 40 pounds apiece, and some are caught which weigh 80. When James G. Blaine was at the height of his popularity his Oregon friends sent him an eighty-pound salmon. It arrived in Washington in good condition, was cooked by a famous chef and served whole at one of his dinners. When you remember that it takes a good chunk of a boy to weigh 80 pounds you may get some idea of the size of that fish."

THE DELICIOUS SOCK-EYE AND TYEE.

"What is the character of your Puget Sound fish, Mr. McMillin?"

"There are different varieties of salmon, you know, each of which has its own nature and habits as well as its particular home and spawning ground. The fish are all born at the headwaters of rivers. They swim down to the ocean as minnows and live there for four years, when they come back to the spot where they were born to lay the eggs for another generation. They come by the millions and tens of millions, in great herds of many companies, each fish going back to the place of its nativity to lay its eggs and die."

"Among the best and most numerous of the Puget Sound salmon are the Sock-eyes, and an especial favorite is the Tyee or King salmon. The Sock-eye is smaller than the Chinook. It weighs from five to seven pounds, according to the season. In some seasons we catch millions which average five pounds apiece, and in others the average is seven pounds or more. The Chin-

ook makes directly for the rivers, and it is caught there only. The Sock-eyes sport about through Puget sound on their way to the streams; and their course is such that we can catch them as they come in fresh from the ocean."

"I do not know that you are aware that the salmon does not feed at all after he starts on his long voyage from the salt water to the sources of the rivers. The journey takes weeks, and during this time he must live off his own fat. The result is that fish taken far up the rivers are lean and they lack

carrying them aloft, empty them into the boat with which the wheels are connected. Our traps are a series of great heart shaped enclosures walled with nets, so that the fish go into them and point about from one to the other trying to get out until they finally come into a great vat-like net which will hold 30,000 or 40,000 at one time. I have seen such a trap with more than 100,000 big salmon in it."

"But how do you get the fish into the trap?" I asked.

"We take advantage of the habits and customs of the salmon. They have their own way of doing things and they will do the same things over again the

"It does. We drive down piles about a hundred feet long and faster than nets to them. When the final net is full, the fish are emptied by pulling up one end of the net and rolling them out into the scows. Indeed we haul fish much as you haul dirt in scows from the dredging boats. Steam tugs drag the scows to the canneries. In emptying the nets, we sometimes fall out the fish with great dip nets which are worked by a steam engine just as a pile driver is worked."

THE DEATH JOURNEY OF THE SALMON.

"Do all salmon come from the salt water to the rivers to spawn?"

"Yes," replied Mr. McMillin. "And so far as we know in about the same way and at about the same age. Silver plates bearing the date have been fastened to baby salmon going down the river and those same salmon have been caught on their return. In all cases the time is four years, so that we know four years to be the age of the salmon."

"The salmon makes this last journey to die. The swim song is nothing to his death pilgrimage. He fights his way through salt water, and fresh, stemming the tide and seemingly going fastest where the waters are strongest. In the rivers he jumps the rapids and makes his way over stones and rubbish. He often bruises himself, tearing his skin, until at last he reaches the spot where the young salmon are to be born. There he stays to die."

"But Mr. McMillin, why do you speak of the salmon as 'he'?"

"Yes, but I use the pronoun as indicating both sexes. The male and female salmon go together and every female has her male follower, who will fight for his place near her as the bull seal fights for the cows on the seal islands. The two keep together until the female salmon drops her spawn. Soon after that they die. In some places the dead fish are piled one upon another in such masses that their stench pollutes the country around."

SALMON NOT PLAYING OUT.

"But where so many fish are caught, I should think it would result in the extinction of the race? Will not the salmon soon die out as the buffalo has done?"

"No. A single fish lays tens of thousands of eggs, and if only a small part of the eggs should hatch there would be plenty to keep up the supply. We are now protecting the salmon, and the government has established hatcheries at the head waters, where millions of minnows are produced every year. The state of Washington also maintains 19 large hatcheries, which during the past season have turned into the streams about 38,000,000 spawn. These minnows are now fish starting out on their way to the sea, and they will come back at a stated time to enter our traps and be a part of the fish food of the world. It is a great

scheme, isn't it, this being able to hatch a fish and start him out to his pasture lands in the ocean, knowing that he will come back just four years later, fat and juicy and ready to eat."

"It is not alone man, however," continued Mr. McMillin, "that is the enemy of the salmon. One of its greatest pests is the ordinary brook trout. This fish follows the female salmon, swimming under it, so that it may eat the eggs as they drop. Indeed, it is almost impossible to get trout to bite while the salmon are running, they are so overfed with salmon eggs. The salmon knows this and tries to prevent it. It often flips its tail so as to dig out a hole in the sand, in which it drops its eggs, hoping the sand will cover them. I have often seen this in the shallow streams of Alaska."

"Is there much money invested in the fisheries in Washington?"

"The amount is something like \$5,000,000," replied Mr. McMillin. "At least that is what it was last season. It then gave employment to about 10,000 persons, whose earnings amounted to more than \$3,000,000."

"Is Washington the chief salmon supply point?"

"Yes; it surpasses Oregon or any other."

WASHINGTON STATE BOOMING.

"How are times in your state, Mr. McMillin?" I asked.

"Washington is growing rapidly, both east and west. The Puget Sound region has been greatly benefited by Alaska and the trans-Pacific trade. Seattle has now 150,000, and it is about the most business-like town of the west. Everyone is making money there."

"How about eastern Washington?"

"That part of the state is rapidly improving. We are redeeming much of it by irrigation. Land that we used to consider nothing but barren sand has been watered, and it is now the most fertile part of the country. Ten years ago it was not considered worth taking up on account of the taxes. Now it is valued at from \$200 to \$400 per acre, and several hundred thousands of acres have been redeemed. We have some excellent wheat lands in the eastern part of the state. The soil is deep and rich, and it often brings from 25 to 35 bushels per acre as a first crop. We are doing a good deal of dairying, and are now making millions of pounds of butter and cheese. As to irrigation, when the ditches, which are now in course of construction and proposed are completed, we will have more than a million acres of that kind of land."

UNCLE SAM'S LUMBER YARD.

"Are your timber lands not pretty well cut off?"

"No," replied the Washingtonian. "They have been only nibbled around the edges. We have about the greatest lumber yard that Uncle Sam owns, and we have enough to last for a hundred years, with an annual cut of 2,000,000,000 feet. The geological survey estimates that we have now standing more than 100,000,000,000 feet of timber. You

people have no idea of the extent of our forests, nor the size of the tree. A single Washington tree has yielded 80,000 feet of lumber. That would be enough to build shingles and all seven five-room cottages, and to leave sufficient wood from the slabs and limbs to heat the families living in those cottages for one year."

"What kind of woods have you?"

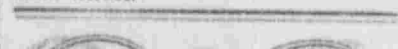
"A great many," was the reply. "The Washington fir is stronger than oak. It grows as straight as an arrow, and has no limbs for the first hundred feet. It is used as spars and masts by the shipping of the world, and is valuable for railroad work and bridge building. Then we have the cedar, which makes the shingles which are shipped all over the east. Millions of you people sleep every night under Washington shingles. The spruce is a white wood, somewhat like pine, which is used for all kinds of boxes, wooden ware and furniture; and we have also pine and hemlock for the same purpose. We are doing a great deal of wood working now, and are shipping wash, doors, furniture, rails and boxes all over the west. We are annually paying out in wages \$25,000,000, through our mills and logging camps; and we have about \$37,000,000 now invested in the lumber industry. We are shipping lumber by rail all over the United States, and by steamboat to nearly every country on the Pacific and also to Europe."

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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