PIONEER HOTEL KEEPERS OF PUGET SOUND*

In casting about for a subject for this occasion, it has occurred to me that some reminiscences of the pioneer hotel keepers of the Sound might not be altogether uninteresting, for they filled a very important place in our early history. It must not be forgotten that in the early days of what is now the State of Washington the sawmills on the Sound were the centers. There the logger sold his logs and bought his supplies; there the early ranchers took their products for sale, and purchased what they did not raise.

Naturally at the mill ports were practically all the stores and all travel was to and from, or between these places, so that the hotel men were known far and wide, and as each had his own individual peculiarities they furnished subjects of comment to a lot of men who had little to talk of and anecdotes of each one of them rapidly traversed the whole Puget Sound basin.

One can hardly realize today, with the Cities of Olympia, Tacoma, Seattle, Everett, Bellingham and Port Townsend, with the multiplicity of steamers, large and small, traversing all over the Sound, what it was in the early sixties when the settler in the eastern part of King County freighted his bacon and produce by canoe to Port Gamble, and carried back perhaps his year's supply of flour, sugar, coffee, boots and tobacco, being two or three weeks on the trip. A trip to Victoria was the height of ambition of every logger who found himself with spare money after his boom was sold.

As Port Discovery was a center for all the country west of that place, so was Utsalady a center for the Skagit and Stillaguamish River valleys and even further north. Each mill port had its agricultural country tributary to it as well as its timber lands, and so, as I said before, the hotel keepers were the men best known in the territory.

Starting down on the straits and coming in on the flood tide, the first hotel keeper met with was Old Bill Law, who kept a ginmill at Dungeness. As to his character I have no personal knowledge, but in the words of one who knew him, "It wasn't a really, truly hotel, but just a place to stop." One stranger who landed there from a canoe in 1861 inquired for the hotel and was directed to the one-story shack that stood on what was then known as "Whiskey Flat." On asking for the landlord he was answered by Old Bill Law himself, and on inquiry

as to the possibility of getting dinner, Bill told him to go right in and help himself. He would find a side of bacon hanging on a nail, butcher knife on the table, with plenty of kindlings by the fireplace. "Just cook it to suit your taste and eat all you want." That the lodging furnished the occasional traveler was on a par with the cuisine goes without saying.

The first hotel of which the writer has personal knowledge was that at Port Discovery, kept by one of the characters of the Sound, Jack Pugh. The hotel was situated on the beach above the mill and at the foot of quite high land, which shut out the sun and made it very dark and damp. Of the house itself, it was some improvement on the one at Dungeness, for there was a cook and dining room and rooms upstairs that were used to sleep in, but of the proprietor himself a book could be written, and a mighty laughable one, too. In person Jack was a tall, heavily built Nova Scotian, with a very high-pitched, squeaky voice, which startled the stranger much as he would be by hearing an elephant squeak like a mouse. Rumor had it that Jack had deserted from the English navy at Esquimalt, but he was whole-souled in spite of his uncouthness. It is told of him that on one occasion he had sent a stranger up to one of the rooms for the night; in a short time he returned to the barroom with a complaint that the sheets and pillow slips were too dirty for anyone to sleep in. Jack was apparently amazed, for he explained to his guest "that more'n a hundred men had slept in that bed and no one had ever complained before." Complaints as to the conditions of the roller towels on the washroom porch was always met with the retort that the towels had been there for a month or more without any fault finding. The comical part of it lay in the point of the voice of this good-natured giant; it disarmed anger. Some of the remarks he would make when "sitting in" a poker game would have led to bloodshed if voice and man had corresponded. It is related of him that on a visit to Victoria, with his wife and little son, the little fellow became much interested in a monkey, the first he had ever seen. Enquiring of his father "who it was?" Jack replied "it was one of his cousins on his mother's side."

Coming next to Port Townsend, we find almost the first hotel-keeper there to be Harry Tibbals, who was later Sound pilot for the San Francisco steamships. He was succeeded by one J. J. Hunt, who for many years kept the old Cosmopolitan Hotel. This was the principal hotel of the place until about 1875, when the Central Hotel was built, which was conducted by William Dodd, better known as "Jersey." But for a good stiff game of poker, the Cosmopolitan was the best known house in all this section of the territory, some not en-

tirely bloodless. Being the port of entry, many seafaring men congregated there, and at times made the town lively in more senses than one.

The writer's only recollection of Port Ludlow was the killing of Jack Brun, the hotelkeeper, on Christmas Eve, 1863, when trying to quiet a drunken brawl. He was spoken of as a very quiet, inoffensive little German.

In our journey we would next stop at Port Gamble, where the Teekalet Hotel was kept by John Collins in the early days. Few need to be reminded that he was the same John Collins who ran the old wooden Occidental Hotel in Seattle for many years and became very widely known. But in those days the hotel had a strong competition in the second story of one of the company's buildings, as almost everyone who traveled in those days carried his blankets rolled up in an Indian mat, they naturally "camped" on the floor in this large room and felt more at home than in a bed at the hotel.

Going up Hood Canal some eighteen or twenty miles bring us to Seabeck and the hotel there, conducted by D. K. Howard, familiarly known as "Denny" Howard. A most genial host indeed was this same "Denny," but, Seabeck being off the ordinary line of travel, not as well known as some of the others. When the mill burned and the company decided not to rebuild, "Denny" was forced to leave, but among the Hood Canal people D. K. Howard has never been forgotten.

Before proceeding up the Sound, it will be well to notice the old mill at Utsalady, where the hotel was kept by Peter Djorup, who, according to local tradition, ran away from some vessel loading there in the early days and finally got into the hotel business. Peter was well known in that section. Much logging being done at Port Susan, the Stillaguamish and Skagit Valleys, the natural place of supply was the mill at Utsalady.

Back on the west side of the Sound again and we drop into the old mill town of Port Madison, long the county seat of Kitsap County, with genial Philip Wist as our host at the hotel. Who, having seen Philip a bit mellow, will ever forget his singing and dancing? The writer has spent many enjoyable evenings in the comfortable, homelike house.

And now we have at last reached Port Blakeley, best known of all the mill ports of Kitsap County. Either in 1873 or 1874 James Taylor built quite a large hotel about a half mile south of the mill, and had Thomas Jackson as a partner, to whom he sold out after a couple of years. This place was run for several years, but caught fire and burned to the ground. In 1875 or 1876 the mill company built the present hotel, which was rented and operated by James Taylor,

who had built the one before mentioned. A couple of years later D. J. Sackman bought in with Taylor, and after the death of the latter secured his interest from his estate and ran it until his death, in 1889. The Sackman estate sold the business to Malcom McDonald, who continued it until his death. But pioneer days had long passed, and these later deals are only mentioned because the writer was more familiar with the parties named than in other places on the Sound.

My recollections of the mill at Port Orchard, the site of which is now known as Enatai, are very meager, my only knowledge of the place being confined to the time I was engaged as one of the crew of the old ship "Helios" in helping to load her with lumber. However, the company got into difficulties at this time, and with the lower hold only partly filled, we shifted to Williamson's mill at Freeport, now West Seattle, to complete cargo. I am sorry now I did not jot down some of the Williamson reminiscences before he passed away, as they would have been invaluable in a paper of this character, but memory plays us tricks at times, which must be my excuse for not being able to say more at this time.

It is needless to mention the old Occidental Hotel at Seattle, run by John Collins, whom we have previously mentioned, but further south on Commercial Street was the New England, run by a man named Harman. It was not as large as the Occidental, but as the proprietor was married, with daughters well grown, it was a much more quiet place than the former and was well patronized.

One can hardly believe, when visiting Seattle now, how we used to wade through the sawdust from the head of Yesler's wharf up to the old Occidental Hotel, or, turning to the right, walk a two-plank sidewalk down Commercial Street to where the New England Hotel set up on a bit of a knoll with the beach on two sides within a biscuit toss.

The hotel at Tacoma, the mill town sometimes called "Old Tacoma," was built by a man named Steele, who came there from Cariboo with some means. But the one best known in business was Johnnie Filler, who ran the place for the widow after the death of Steele. Later he married the widow and carried on the business for a number of years. Johnnie came to the Sound from Australia and was a very genial little fellow and rather a favorite with his patrons, but he was a great billiard player, and many of them could not forgive him for trying to steer the cue ball with his cue after the stroke was made.

Perhaps the best known hotel to strangers was the one on the wharf at New Tacoma, for outside of the Halstead House, at the top of the grade, it was the only one in the place. The railroad depot

at that time was on the wharf, so that passengers got out at the hotel. Many people came in at this time from as far east as Chicago, attracted by the railroad real estate boom, and many of them had never seen salt water before. Dinner was always served at this hotel shortly after the arrival of the train, and it was customary to serve as a prelude to the regular dinner a half dozen steamed clams. It was not uncommon that a second helping was called for. The guest was always told he could have all he wanted, even to making a whole meal if he so desired.

At Olympia we find in the early days Landlord Galliger, of the New England Hotel; Henry Cock, of the old Pacific House, who was succeeded by E. T. Young, who changed the name to Young's Hotel. These were the prominent hotels in those days, but Aunt Becky Howard, a negress, was the favorite of all who hailed from south of the Mason and Dixon line and divided honors and cash in the sixties.

Any mention of Olympia would be incomplete without the name of Captain Doane and his celebrated Oyster House. While coming later than the others, he catered to a class of trade that made his name and fame known all over the state through the legislative assemblies.

W. B. Seymore.