

## EVOLUTION OF SHIPPING AND SHIP-BUILDING IN CALIFORNIA. II.

COMPILED FROM PERSONAL NARRATIVES OF CAPTAINS DOMINGO MARCUCCI, JOHN G. NORTH, PETER OWENS, PATRICK TIERNAN, GEORGE MIDDLEMAS, JAMES DICKIE, IRVING M. SCOTT, AND OTHERS.

### CAPTAIN NORTH'S NARRATIVE.



CAPTAIN John G. North, Master ship-builder, was born in Throndhjem, Norway, on the 15th of December, 1826. Of the land of the Vikings, the long lineage of his hardy family has left its impress upon the Nation's history. At the age of fifteen, he entered the Government service, passed a highly successful examination at Horten, his papers being signed by Jensen, Royal ship-builder, in a very commendatory style.

He was placed in charge of the building of twenty gun-boats for the Norwegian Navy, and after fulfilling his trust in a most satisfactory manner, he was given a subsidy and permission to go to America to study American methods of ship-building. He arrived in Philadelphia July 29th, 1848, from there to New York, Bath, New Orleans, Boston and Portland, working at his trade in each place. He then made up his mind not to return home, and sailed the latter part of 1849 as first mate on the ship "Viking," for Valparaiso. On his arrival, the "Viking" was condemned, so he shipped aboard the vessel

"Saratoga" as ship-carpenter, the 23rd of May 1850, sailed from there on the 30th, and arrived in San Francisco on the 28th of July 1850. Arriving here, he, like everybody else went to the mines, but a few months of that life soon proved to him that he was not fitted for it, so he came back to the city, starting in with one small steamer in company with the late William H. Moore as captain, making from the beginning \$20 to \$40 a head daily. This small beginning became the nucleus around which such names as General Redington, Captain James Whitney, Benjamin Harts-horne, Captain William H. Moore, Richard Jessup, Captain Seymour and others formed the California Steam Navigation Company, which afterward swayed the entire inland trade of California. This company, owned the "Surprise," "John Bragdon" and "Cornelia," all eastern built boats.

On the site of the old Union Foundry, in 1852, the barge "Sacramento" was built for Moor, Page & Co., and then the first stern-wheeler of California, the "Phineas," afterwards wrecked, for General Redington. In 1853, following each other in rapid succession, came the "Cleopatra," for Captain Taylor, by Captain Moore, the "Belle," "Gem No. 1," and twenty-three other hulls, barges and schooners. In 1854, the first side-wheel steam vessel ever built in San Francisco Bay for a foreign port, the "Flore de las Andes," for Captain Canty and sent to Costa Rica. Then the stern-

wheeler "Clara," for Captain Webster, as an Alameda Ferry-boat. Captain North had now made some \$30,000 so he thought he would try a venture for himself, and the first three masted schooner ever built on the Pacific Coast to sail for a foreign country was built. She was named after the well known actresses of that day, the "Susan and Kate Dening." The ladies presented the vessel with a full suit of flags, which cost no small sum of money in that day. An item of \$370 for champagne for launching purposes, is noted among the expenses. She cost \$28,000, was sent to Australia on her first trip. The captain proved a rogue, and the vessel a total financial loss, although she was afterwards sold to the Government and she was used as a dispatch boat, between Australia and New Zealand for

many years. Captain North lost every dollar, besides his labor. In 1855 the "Success" was built for a Marysville Company, and the "Pardee," for Captain F. Foy, the "Colorado," for Hartshorne & Johnson. He took her in sections to the Colorado river, and there built the first steamer for the Gulf of California. On his return, he built a small 45-

foot model of a side-wheel steamer for the veteran, A. W. Lockhead. The "Thomas Payne" and the "Red Bluff" for the California Navigation Company were finished in 1855, and 1856 opened with the "James Blair," for Captain Gunnell, and the first ferry-steamer to Oakland, the "Contra Costa," for Charles Minturn, was built in 1857. Up to this time he had turned out of his yards over 120 hulls of different

kinds. In 1858

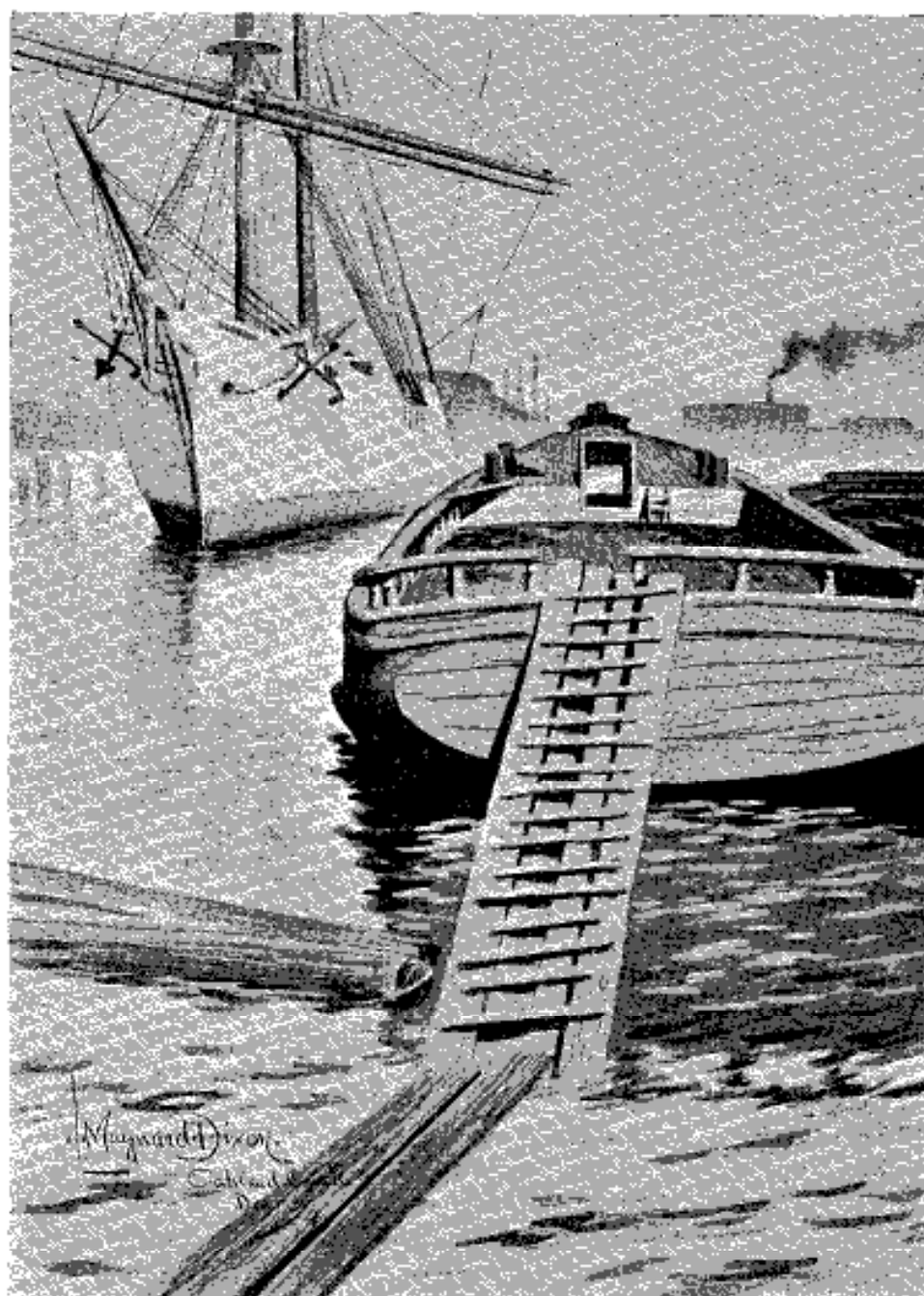
he received a very advantageous offer to go to Russia, and he contracted to build a steamer (the first ever built on the Pacific Coast) for the Russian Government. This was the stern-wheel steamer "Admiral Kasaeurt" for the Amoor river, Manchuria. She was put in frame just where the railroad offices and yard is now on the south side of Townsend street between Third and Fourth. He

went over to the Amoor with the steamer in pieces, put it together, received high praise from her owners, but he could not be prevailed upon to remain, so after eight month's absence, returned. The schooner "Mary Alice," for Captain Benson, was his first work, and then the keel of the beautiful steamer "Chrysopolis," now known as the "Oakland," was laid. This was the



CAPTAIN JOHN G. NORTH.





THE OLD AND THE NEW.

largest boat up to this time built in San Francisco, about 950 tons, 245 feet long and 40 feet beam. (The "Chrysopolis" on her trial trip recorded the fastest time ever made between the pier and Benicia, 1 hour, 19 minutes). She was launched one beautiful moonlight night, the 2nd of June, 1860, and all San Francisco came down to Third and Townsend streets to see it. Then comes "Gem No. 2," to

boat Point was a memory.

"North's Shipyard" was an accomplished fact. He had now secured the rebuilding of the "Brother Jonathan," and that was the first work done at the new yard. Here in March, 1861, the steamer "Brother Jonathan" (which was built in New York in 1851) was broken up, down to the floor timber heads, and reconstructed with entirely new materials, of Puget Sound hard pine. Her

run between Sacramento and Red Bluff, and the fine steamer "Yosemite" was built in this year over at the Potrero. It was close quarters now at Steamboat Point, the "Frenchman's House" and "Wingards White Mule", were getting to be things of the past. Meeting the Taylor Brothers one day, he asked them how much they wanted for the "Potrero Point". Bradshaw's Point was nearer, but the depth of water was not so regular. After a talk with "Old Man," Captain Anderson, the amount agreed upon was paid over, and Steam-

frames were sided in, making a surface of eighteen inches for receiving planks and fastenings. The whole floor of white and live oak was perfectly sound, caulked and consequently water tight. Her former depth of hold was 21 feet 6 inches, with three decks, but it was now rebuilt to measure 19 feet of hold with only two decks. The hull was diagonally strapped with iron  $\frac{5}{8} \times 4 \frac{1}{2}$ . The ship clear through was square fastened, outboard planks, butt-bolted and tree-nailed through. New white oak stern, new water wheels, new windlass, new set of spars, consisting of three masts, with new rigging, and she was well and thoroughly caulked with metal sheathing, and her boilers were known as the "Martin's patent."

It makes one's heart thrill to think of his efforts to break in that bleak rocky spot for a shipyard. Just where the Pacific Rolling Mills have their shops ground was broken and the "Brother Jonathan" was hauled out along shore. What an undertaking! No steam apparatus, no sliding ways, just sheer Viking nerve. Great timbers set in the ground, immense pulley blocks and hawsers. One night old Commodore Allen came out with a gang of 150 Chinamen to pull on the cables, and soon the steady tramp of men and the mild (?) remarks of Captains Allen and Anderson could be heard. The old steamer was crawling about an inch in ten minutes up the well-greased ways, when suddenly with a crash, a hawser parted, every yellow Chinaman dropped his hold and ran for dear life over the hills toward the city, accompanied by the blessings of the captains. The "Jonathan" didn't come up that night.

This was the first shipbuilding done at the Potrero, a fitting beginning in 1861 for the crowning achievement in 1893 of the glorious "Olympia." Then came the steamer "Yosemite," so long the crack steamer on the Sacramento, now plying between New

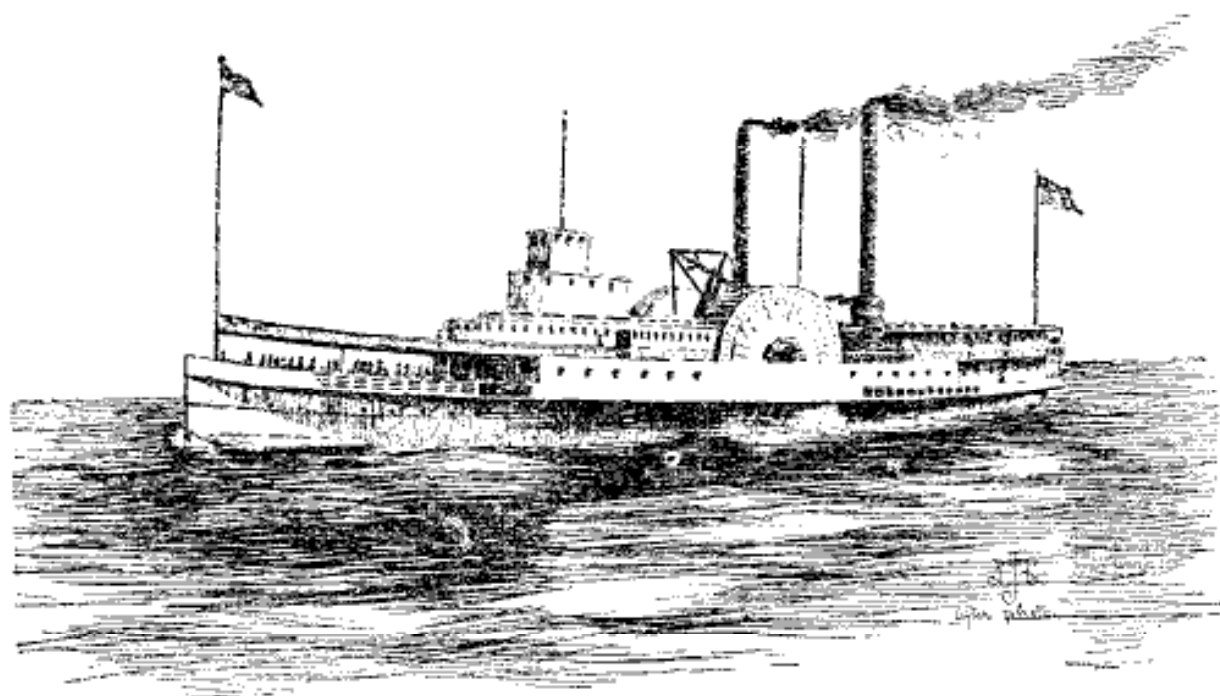
Westminster, Vancouver and Victoria. She bears her laurels well, having beaten the Scotch-built steamer "Islander" in a fair race some months since. Now comes the "Colorado" for Hartshorne & Johnson for the Colorado Company, the "Wohare" for the same company, the twin schooners, whose time has never been beaten, the "George Lewis" and "de Euphemia," the twin steamer "Reform" for Captain Nelson, the pioneer steamer for the fruit trade of the Sacramento river, for the company now known as the California Transportation Company, and the "Washington" for Captain Benson. Then the crowning of all steamboat building up to this time—1865, in the steamer "Capital." No money was spared to make her the finest of her class. She vied with the famous "Mary Powell" of New York fame. We must not forget the beautiful little steamer "Parthemus," built to use as a ferry-boat around the city front. In the meantime much other work was going on. The steamer "Cornelia" was cut in two, her stern hauled away forty feet and a section of forty feet built in. The work was successful and she made better time than before; steamer "Pacific" refitted, steamer "Constantine," iron ship, hauled out and made good as new.

One night it had been raining, as it used to rain, and rivers of water were pouring down through the ship-yard, just where the gas works now are; the "Constantine" had been hauled out comfortably. Captains Thorne and Kohl were happy. Up comes old Captain Anderson. "You'd better come down to the yard; the Mississippi river is running under the ways and they are spreading." Sure enough, when North and his assistants got down there, the steamer was touching the ground on one side, while the water was making havoc around the blocks. Captain North stood quite still for a moment; it meant thousands of dollars loss to him. Then men were sent across

the hills to Mission street for hydraulic pumps; others were detailed to light up fires to see what damage was done. The whole Potrero turned out to assist; the rope walk men came down, and before 12 M. next day the "Constantine" stood on an even keel again.

Then came the night the big ship "Hariman" broke the chain just as she was up, and went whizzing down into the water, each link of chain striking the other making a continuous line of fire, the heavy falls giving out reports like great guns. Captain North looked impassively at the ruin and disaster. Every man standing by him was dumb. It was 2 A. M. "Boys," said North, "go home and get your coffee; I'll see you again in the morning." When he came in, he said to his wife, "Chain's broke again, I'm going to bed." Nerved by his indomitable pluck he negotiated a loan with the Clay-street Bank of \$47,000 at 1 per cent. a month, and before 3 P. M. had a gang of men and two steam launches at work, and in two weeks was ready for business. It is needless to tell of his untiring activity. It is woven into the history of San

Francisco. But enough; he needed a rest, and the "boom" had struck the Potrero. He had grown tired of buying the "De Haro" title over and over again; had grown tired of the mud, the "cut," the "toll gate," the "bridge." He wanted to see "Gamle Norge" once again, so selling the then well known "North's Ship Yard" to a syndicate he returned to Norway. While at his native city, Throndhjem, he drew plans and superintended the building of a light draught stern-wheel steamer, to be used as a government transport, and called her the "Potrero." He was on board a Russian corvette when the Suez Canal was thrown open; at Paris during the first week of the siege, and afterwards at the capitulation; in Rome at St. Peters' when the "infallibility" was proclaimed; in Hamburg when Sedan and Strasburg fell; up and down the Thames through the works of Mandsley-of-Armstrong on the Tyne; through the Scotch yards on the Clyde, across to the Krupp Iron Works, to the Italian Navy Yard. After three years, back to California. No rest for that grand, active brain, for that man whose "word was as good as his



STEAMER, CAPITAL.

bond." Business in his line was dull, but he did not despair. His words were prophetic—"It will come sure, not for me, but for others; the Potrero will be known for iron ship-building yet." He concluded to go down to Guatemala. There he contracted to build two steamers for the Honduras R. R. Co., and also to build fifty miles of railroad. He invested largely, and after remaining a few months returned to California for supplies. He then went back to Guatemala, finished his contracts, but was attacked with the fateful fevers of that country, and returned to California. A

week later, September 19, 1872, he died, leaving as monuments to his genius and ability a new section to the city, the Potrero Ship Yard, fifty-three bay and river steamers, and 273 hulls of all descriptions, every one of them models of their class, staunch and true. It was a saying those days that if John G. North built a vessel it was not necessary to insure her. A truer friend and a more honorable and generous man never lived. He was known to take off his overcoat and give it to a destitute sailor. Pioneer ship-builder, hail and farewell! for "surely his works do follow him."