

## Short Stories of Transportation

In the stirring story of transportation development in Alaska no chapter is more entertaining than that dealing with the pioneer Alaska Commercial Co. and its successor the Northern Commercial Co. But brief mention was made in the press dispatches of the death at San Francisco May 6th of Leon Sloss, son of the founder Louis Sloss. Leon was the president of the N. C. up to the time of his passing. This man and his various companies played a truly important part in the upbuilding of the territory. Unfortunately a man's achievement is frequently ignored for a great many years after his death. For that reason Railway & Marine News hastens to credit Mr. Sloss with wonderful ability in building up this transportation system of the North under much adverse criticism and truly trying climatic, economic and social conditions.



The Late Leon Sloss

He carried to a successful end the work begun by his father more than fifty years ago.

It is not the intention to here review at length the history of the old Alaska Commercial Co. or its successors, as the details will be found in the issues of this publication for June 1st, 1913, and June, 1918. Suffice to say that the Northern Commercial Co. is still successfully operating under that name in the North and the transportation system is operated by the White Pass & Yukon Route. At the opening of the summer season in 1913, when the Northern Navigation Co. and the Northern Commercial Co. were under the same management and directed from the headquarters at San Francisco, the fleet consisted of thirty-two steam vessels and thirty-two barges, with a capacity of 30,000 tons. Several of these vessels notably the Sarah, the Susie and the Hannah had a gross tonnage each of 1,211, they being stern paddle steamers and beautifully fitted up, and for years the operations of this company on the Yukon River in the Canadian territory of Yukon and United States territory of Alaska, enabled the company to successfully claim that it operated the longest river route in the world with large steamers.

When the United States acquired Alaska from Russia in 1867, the Alaska Commercial Co. took over many of the old Russian trading posts and to this day it, with its successor the Northern Commercial Co., has been prominently identified with the development of the territory. Whenever a bone fide gold find was reported the company was among the very first to open up a trading store and to make transportation to the camp possible.

This was continued through all the early days in Alaska

prior to the Klondike discovery and in addition to furs and fish taken to San Francisco during that period, the vessels of the company would frequently go to the Southern city with cargoes of ice taken from the floating bergs in front of the icebergs of the Southern coast. When news of the Klondike was flashed to the world from Seattle in July, 1897, the Alaska Commercial Co. immediately made plans to take care of the crowds that were expected to move northward in '98 and '99. Experts were sent East to confer with river steamboat men on the Ohio and Mississippi. They contracted with Howard & Co. at New Albany, Ind., to draw the plans for a type of river boat and barge that could be utilized on the Yukon. At New Albany the plans were carefully laid down, the machinery and equipment built and assembled, and then the entire outfit was knocked down and shipped to Seattle where they were transferred to ocean boats for Unalaska. All the lumber was loaded at Seattle and likewise shipped to Unalaska. There during the winter of '97 and the spring of '98 the busiest shipyard then in the United States was established and it was here that were built the three famous boats named above, the Susie for Mrs. Niebaum, the Sarah for Mrs. L. Sloss, and the Hannah for Mrs. L. Gerstle.

It was a pioneer country and in many cases the trading posts were isolated and often entirely removed from the jurisdiction of the law. For all that the posts were managed and many a living sourdough of today owes his start in life to the fair dealing or accommodation of one of those frontier stores of the old A. C. Furthermore ask any of the real pioneers of the North and he will have something friendly to say of that company, notwithstanding the fact that it had a monopoly, while many will deeply regret the passing of Leon Sloss, of whom it can be said was a friend of Alaska.

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At 11 o'clock one night recently the Morse towing office in New York received a call from the steamship Caledonier of the Royal Belgium line which was anchored off Liberty. The steamer was loaded for sea, but her condenser tube suction line was plugged, and her steaming out was being delayed. A Morse lighter, which is included in the company's floating equipment, was sent out with a diver, and the line was cleared. The vessel was saved drydocking charges and further delay by the Morse company's prompt attention in time of need.

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Captain Merl LaVoy, of Seattle, Wash., who has been employed by the American Red Cross to photograph the educational-travel film, "The Children of the Sahara," has recently completed the tour of Algiers and Tunis which he undertook in the discharge of that task.

Capt. LaVoy is well remembered in the Pacific Northwest from the photographs that he took of this section, also of British Columbia and Alaska. This is the same LaVoy who ascended Mt. McKinley in Alaska, accompanying a party of scientists and who photographed that famous mountain peak probably from the highest point ever reached by a man with a camera, although this statement is not made by the writer with an accurate record at hand. However, his photographs of Mt. McKinley were published in various noteworthy magazines. Eight or ten years ago he was engaged in taking commercial photographs of the notable scenery of Alaska along the Copper River & Northwestern Railway and along the coast of Prince William