PETERSBURG

(Continued from Page One)

the new business and affairs of the now over 50-year-old community.

While John E. Sales, retired wharf contractor, lays claim to being the first man who ever stopped on what is now the Petersburg townsite when he camped there back in 1896 while on his way from Juneau to Wrangell on a prospecting trip, it was the late Peter Buschman, after whom the town was named, who started a cannery there in 1901 around which the fishing population commenced to centralize and which developed into the present town. The original Buschmann cannery is now the Pacific-American Fisheries plant occupying a centre position on the waterfront there.

SOMETIMES CALLED "LITTLE NORWAY"

They say there that the nucleus of Petersburg's population was a virtual transplanting from the old land of a Norwegian fishing community. In fact it is sometimes called "Little Norway" and the customary fine traits of Scandinavian citizenship are in evidence on every hand—in the well developed town, up-to-date, spotless and well-kept homes and gardens, the modern and efficient equipment in business and public service.

The economic and industrial mainstay is its halibut and salmon seining fleet, sometimes described as the "white fleet," an array of some 97 stout vessels valued at $1,500,000 now moored for the winter at their floats on the Petersburg waterfront, their owners maintaining their permanent residence there the year round.

But Petersburg is by no means entirely dependent upon its halibut fleet. There are three salmon canneries located there and a fourth about four miles distant. It has three shrimp canning plants, two crab canneries, two cold storage plants (one of four million pounds and one of one million pounds), one sawmill at the town and another at Scow Bay, four miles down the Narrows.

Five hundred workers find employment in the industrial plants of the community. Shrimp and crab canning for many years have provided winter work while other lines of fishing activity have been quiet.

Petersburg is the center of an important fur farming industry, and is the headquarters for numerous fur farms. A Territorial Experimental Fur Farm is located there and is of considerable aid to fur farmers.

The municipality of Petersburg operates its own hydro-electric plant and water systems, deriving its source from what is said to be the second highest dam on the North American continent. The up-to-date telephone system is privately owned.

Petersburg claims to have the finest harbor in Alaska, stories about the tricky tides of Wrangell Narrows at that point notwithstanding.

On Thomas Bay, sixteen miles north of Petersburg and across Frederick Sound, Petersburg expects to see the materialization in the fairly immediate future of one of two large pulp and paper mills to be established in southeastern Alaska (the other being at Ward's Cove, Ketchikan). There is a 25,000 h.p power site there and around it a great timber stand, bids for which are to be opened in Washington by the Department of Agriculture on February 1 of next year under the terms of the Tongass timber mill enacted at last session of Congress to provide timber for the use of pulp mill and other major timber industries in southeastern Alaska.

The people of Petersburg take a conservative stand on the question of statehood for Alaska. They favored the principle of statehood on the recent vote but since they took the vote, they have been thinking it over again and Earl Ohmer says today that, if he was voting again, he would vote against statehood, "not because I am opposed to it," he explains, "but because I do not think we are ready for it yet. I have been thinking that here we have in Alaska a territory one-fifth the size of the United States, with a population of 80,000 people—half of them Indians and many other thousands who have little, if any, stake in the country. Who is going to carry the overhead of statehood then? Who else but the small industrial operators? No, I think now that we should have some big industries established, some more development and population before we have statehood. I am afraid we could not pack it under present conditions.

Community service in Petersburg finds its expression through an active Chamber of Commerce and a Rotary Club. Masons, Elks and Sons of Norway are the fraternal organizations. The American Legion also has its branch. Churches number four—Lutheran, Catholic, Presbyterian and Salvation Army.

FINE SCHOOL IS LANDMARK

A fine modern school building is one of the outstanding landmarks. It accomodates 250 children and has 15 teachers. Adjacent to the school is one of the finest gymnasiums in Alaska.

Civic government is headed by a mining man, Carl Velvestad, who is mayor. James Taylor is the hard-working town clerk.

Business establishments include one bank, one hotel, fifteen retail stores, one moving picture, one weekly newspaper—Petersburg Press,—a man-and-wife enterprise conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Clare Wilder.

There is one resident doctor and a ten-bed hospital which meets the normal needs of the community which is not so very far from Juneau the capital city of Alaska.

Petersburg has about fifteen miles of highways running to out of town residences and tributary industrial plants. There are 250 automobiles in the community—another evidence of the well-to-do- average of the population.

It is odd enough that this flourishing town should, until the advent of the Union Steamship Co. and the Camosun, have been served by only one passenger steamship line—the Northland Transportation Co. (formerly Alaska Steamship Co.) with the steamer Alaska. The big Northland freighter Square Senate was there on Saturday loading out canned salmon. Three air lines serve Petersburg, running to and from Juneau and Ketchikan to connect with the mainline Pan-American Airways from Seattle. One of the principal community ambitions now is to obtain the establishment of more adequate accomodations for air services including a possible airstrip.

SHIPS AND WATERFRONT

The Catala, Capt. W. McCoomb commanding, arrived in port at 1:30 Saturday afternoon. The heavy schedule of calls prevented the ship from reaching Prince Rupert, the northern terminus of her run, Friday, which is her usual day of arrival. Only six passengers disembarked at Prince Rupert, M. Ryan, Mrs. J. Ryan, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis and two children. The Catala left for Vancouver and ports of call enroute at 4 p.m.

The Catala was in River's Inlet during the time of the big blow last Thursday and early Friday morning and so escaped any of the unusual seas that must have been lashing the open stretches of Queen Charlotte Sound. The Prince Rupert, which sailed just as the wind was reaching its climax, apparently wasn't affected by the adverse weather for she was reported to be on time at Ocean Falls.

The M.V. Lucidor, with Capt. Oscar Peterson in command, arrived in Prince Rupert at 6:30 Friday evening with 47 cars of frozen fish from Alaska destined for trans-shipment over Canadian National lines to Eastern United States. From here the Lucidor will leave for Everett and Seattle, Washington, where the remainder of her cargo will be unloaded.

Last week's 70-mile gale off the Queen Charlottes took some time to blow itself out, for Sunday was rough enough in and around Prince Rupert, and Saturday had a few drawbacks. The wind had force and rainfalls were heavy. Shipping schedules however, were quite well maintained.

Forty thousand Japanese wish to return to fish in northern waters and, to this end, have petitioned the American authorities. The request has been denied for the reason that the fishing areas alrady thrown open to Japanese is ample to supply the country's needs. There will be no change.

It is perhaps not generally known that salmon fishing in California, despite destruction of spawning beds and losses of young fish in irrigation diversions and intensive commercial and sport fishing still remains the most important fishery in California. This applies chiefly in the northern part of the State.

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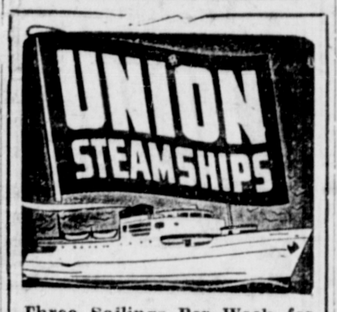

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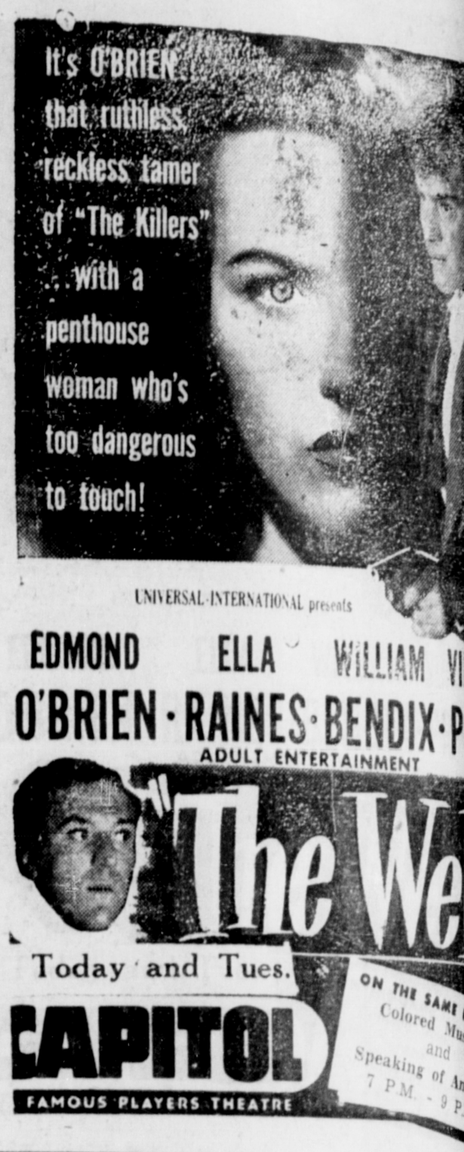

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