

Ship Building in Oswego

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SHIP-BUILDING IN OSWEGO.

Its Past and Present--Collector Cooley Interviewed on the Subject--He Gives Some Interesting Reminiscences--Attributes the Decline of the Industry Largely to High Tariff.

The noticeable decrease which the ship-building industry has suffered in recent years and the comparatively few workmen who are at present engaged in that occupation is often a cause of comment in Oswego. To ascertain some facts on the subject, a PALLADIUM reporter called yesterday upon Mr. Clark Cooley, the Canal Collector, who probably possesses a more extensive knowledge upon the subject than anyone now living. Commencing with the epoch beginning in the year 1835, during which the large hill extending from the foot of Third street to the river on the East, was leveled and occupied by numerous ship yards, he stated that shortly after the establishment of these, between six and seven hundred workmen were employed as ship carpenters, caulkers, joiners, sail makers and ship smiths.

Oswego Palladium, October 26, 1888.

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The industry supported between 1,500 and 2,000 persons. The wages were good and commodities cheap, and a general prosperity was the result, many comfortable fortunes being accumulated. Among the early shipbuilders were G.S. Weeks, who built steamboats, propellers and vessels; Doolittle & Mollison, who leased the dry dock between Second and Third streets; Thomas Collins, Henry Doville, Peter Lamoree, John E. Lee and others. At a later date there followed George Goble, James Navagh, Peter Dufrane, William Wilmott, Brown Morgan, and P. Gallagher. Owners of fleets of vessels and canal boats

were Truman Wyman, Fitzhugh & Littlejohn, C.C. Cooper, Bart Lynch, Daniel Lyons, M. M. Wheeler, Dunn & Cummings, E. & O. Mitchell, A.G. Cook, Thomas Martin, McCarthy & Marsh as well as others. During the winter from 150 to 200 men were employed repairing ships and canal boats, thus forming a separate industry in itself.

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The reciprocity enjoyed with Canada formed a great aid and the navigation interest was at its height. Said Mr. Cooley during the interview: "I have seen the river so closely packed with vessels that

during the interview: "I have seen the river so closely packed with vessels that I could cross it by walking from deck to deck and have known steamers to be obliged to run alongside schooners to land their passengers who then reached the shore by the novel method mentioned above. Vessels brought immense quantities of grain which was partially aged at the mills and shipped inland by canal. Now, however, the industry of building is practically extinguished and only about 15 to 25 persons find employment at an industry which formerly gave work to hundreds.

"What are the reasons for this decline!" Asked the reporter.

"The railroads and free canals are in a measure responsible, but I consider the chief cause to lie in the huge tariff which followed in 1845 the low one under which these industries had flourished. Immediately after that period ship building began to shrink, the expense of construction not profitable. Canada not being cursed in this manner soon proved herself a more active competitor that we could withstand the duties placed upon lumber, iron, _?_ and other materials was very high and acted strongly against us. I remember the case of Captain John Joyce whose vessel was badly damaged by the Welland canal and it was rebuilt in Canada, but before being allowed to return to the United States was taxed by the Custom house officers a duty of \$4,000 in gold, which was then bringing so high a premium that he was forced to pay in the end almost the original value of the ship. This is one instance _?_ the



Oswego Harbor

