

SAILING VESSELS IN THE SAN DIEGO TRADE

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It was the opening of railway connections to the north, and a boom in real estate, which made San Diego a port of some importance in the deep-sea sailing trade toward the close of the Nineteenth century.

A rapidly expanding population brought its increased needs for lumber, for building materials and for fuel. The building of the railway between San Diego and Los Angeles resulted in the movement into port here of quantities of steel, of railway ties, and later, of coal which supplied the entire Santa Fe Railway system as far east as Albuquerque, N. M. A shipyard and a foundry had to be supplied with pig-iron and with coke, and the shelves of early merchants were stocked with Yankee notions brought around Cape Horn in American windjammers.

Coal and cement from foreign ports, however, formed the backbone of the inbound trade. Of outbound trade, there was but little. A few ships loaded out with wheat or hay, but in the vast majority of the cases, they left here in ballast, generally for the Columbia River, to load wheat. In those days the harbor was clean, and clam shell dredges brought the sand ballast up from the bottom, onto lighters, and into the ships.

The coal trade saw its greatest activity in the sailing vessels—mostly British—from Australia, although it is worthy of note that the first coal to be imported here came from Departure Bay, B.C., in the American bark *Columbia*; a little vessel of 559 tons, she had been built in New York in 1846, and at the time of her arrival here—Nov. 13, 1885—was owned in San Francisco. She arrived here just five days before the railway to Los Angeles opened.

The coming of the railway brought further import business, for at that time, there was no such a thing as Los Angeles harbor; San Diego possessed the only sheltered port, capable of handling large offshore craft, south of San Francisco.

But even as they reached their peak here, the sailing ships were reaching their peak in other channels of world trade. After the Gay Nineties, the sailing trade fell away sharply here. The inroads of steamers, of railways, sounded the death-knell of the sailing ship here as elsewhere.

How slowly and easily things moved in those days may be shown by the following table of the number of days to San Diego from the various ports—times which were excepted as a matter of course, with no one objecting to the delay:

FROM	AVERAGE TIME	BEST TIME	RECORD MADE BY
Antwerp	143	115	Vandura, 1903
Baltimore	163	151	Wm. H. Starbuck, 1891
Cardiff	148	117	Sierra Ventana, 1896
Glasgow	167	147	Agnes Oswald, 1892

Hamburg	145	125	Alsterkamp, 1900
Honolulu	26.5	26	Nuano, 1913
Liverpool	148	111	Stracathro, 1891
London	142	104	Glamis, 1890
Newcastle, N.S.W.	80	48	Buenos Ayres, 1888
Newcastle-on-Tyne	153	121	Lisbeth, 1909
New York	199	139	Wm. G. Davis, 1893
Philadelphia	169	125	Acme, 1910
Puget Sound	136	10.5	Big Bonanza, 1897
Swansea	116	10	Star of Italy, 1892
Yokohama	41	38	Kaiwo Maru, 1938

Data used in compiling this table and the table of sailing vessels which is appended hereto came from three sources; the backbone of the compilation is an old log-book in the possession of the Port Pilots, taking from 1888 to 1902. The record was run back to the beginning of 1885 by scanning the files of The San Diego Union, and was extended to the present date from the same source and from records of the United States Custom House at San Diego. Although Smythe's History of San Diego, printed in 1907, gives a table of the number of ships arriving each year, back to 1878, and credits Custom House records as the source, efforts to find these records, further back than 1892, have met with failure. Due to the fact that the pilots' data make up most of the record, it lists only the deepwater sailing vessels—with those of the square riggers in the coasting trade which took pilots. The Custom House records, of course, list only vessels in the deepwater trade, and so, in going back through newspaper files, it was decided also to limit the listing to the foreign arrivals and to square-riggers in domestic trade. Hence the list does not include the many schooners which called here with lumber, up to a quarter of a century ago. It would be safe to say that most of the schooners built on the West Coast, up the World war period, have been in port here.

The list as completed contains the names of 492 vessels. Of these 234 were British, 154 American, 45 Norwegian, 27 German, 12 French, 7 Swedish, 5 Japanese, 2 each of Chilean, Italian and Russian, and one each of Dutch and Mexican. By rigs, the list shows 245 barks, of which 45 were four-masted; 202 ships, of which 3 are listed as four-masted; 20 barkentines, 13 schooners, 7 brigantines and 5 brigs. Beyond doubt there are discrepancies in the list, due largely to the fact that there are two schools of thought in the matter of naming a four-masted vessel which is square-rigged on fore, main and mizzen and fore-and-aft rigged on the jigger. Many hold that such a vessel obviously is a four-masted bark and are willing to fight in defense of their views, while others are equally insistent that the possession of a square-rigged fore, main and mizzen makes the vessel a ship, regardless of how many other masts she may have. In the interests of peace, this discussion will not be opened in these pages. Further errors probably crept in because of the fact that early newspapers might call a vessel an American ship today and a British bark tomorrow, although as much of this as possible has been checked out by the use of an early Lloyd's Register. There may be slip-ups in the differentiation between brigs and brigantines. It is felt, however, that the present journalistic habit of using the word "sloop" to describe anything which sails, had not yet crept in.