

This reprint comes to you with the best wishes of the Los Angeles Westerners. It marks the first step in a new program which should make this year's work a profitable and memorable phase in the study of the Early West. This piece — and others to come during the remainder of the year—is designed to replace the former **BRANDING IRON**.

These reprints will come to you at irregular periods. The number of mailings will be governed by the material made available for reproduction. Have you something of interest you would like to share with The Westerners?

Two excellent meetings with full crowds have featured the January and February round-ups of this year. Despite rainy weather, the Los Angeles Westerners have turned out in full force for each program.

The January session presented Dr. Frederick W. Hodge, of the Southwest Museum, in a paper on Charles Loomis.

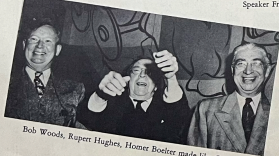
Frank Dobie, visiting professor and author from Texas, spoke to the Corral in February, discussing the Coyote.



Lindley Bryson, Bob Woods, Frank Dobie, Art Woodward talk it over before the meeting.



Speaker Frank Dobie.



Bob Woods, Rupert Hughes, Homer Boelter made like Coyotes.

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THE OLD SIDE-WHEELER SENATOR

by ARTHUR WOODWARD

One of the most famous steamers on the California coast in gold rush days was the old *Senator*. She was a handsome craft when she first arrived from New York and dropped anchor in San Francisco bay, October 21, 1849 after a voyage of a trifle over seven months.

At that time she was well fitted throughout. There were four bridal suites all hand-somely furnished. The outside staterooms were done in rosewood and the decking of the main saloon was made of alternate panels of walnut and ash.

The *Senator* was placed, almost immediately, on the run between San Francisco and Sacramento and was the first deep water steamer to reach the latter city on November 8, 1849. Her pilot at that time was Lieutenant James Blair, U.S.N., who had been an associate of the Aspinwall's in New York and came to California at the height of the gold rush.

This old side-wheeler was black hulled and brigantine rigged and from the beginning she was a money maker for her owners. Men were more than anxious to reach Sacramento in those days and steamer travel was much better than walking or riding in a wagon or on horseback. The fare from San Francisco to Sacramento was \$30 and if one wished a berth, that was \$10 extra, otherwise the unfortunates who had no berths stood up all night.

Freight rates were \$40 to \$50 per ton and during the first year the *Senator* was in service she showed net profits of \$60,000 per month.

In 1869, the *Senator* was rebuilt for coastwise trade. At that time the deck was raised over two feet and she was lengthened to 226 feet. She had a beam of 30 feet, a draught of 9½ ft., and was 13.5 feet deep. Her cargo capacity was 1,012 tons.

For many years the *Senator* was a familiar sight in all of the California coastal ports. Captain Coffin was in command when she first started on her coastwise run, later Captain Thomas W. Seeley was the commander. The latter gentleman was a great poker player and after the *Senator* dropped her hook-off San Pedro, the Captain would leave the ship in charge of his mate, Mr. Butters, and straightway climb aboard the first stage coach for Los Angeles where he would put up at the Bella Union. Here he played poker continuously until the ship had gone to San Diego and returned to San Pedro. If at this time he was not flat broke or hadn't won all of his fellow-players' cash, Captain Seeley would keep right on with the game, frequently delaying the sailing of his vessel for another twenty-four hours. Unfortunately the Captain was killed in the explosion of the *Ada Hancock* at San Pedro, April 27, 1863, and the coast lost another of its colorful characters.

In the middle '60s the citizens of California took a violent dislike to the ships operated by the Steam Navigation Company because of its poor management of the vessels plying along the coast. The *Senator* in 1865, prior to its renovation, was frequently referred to as "the old hulk," "the floating coffin" and "the rotten old *Senator*."

It will be noted that this broadside advertising the merits of the *Senator* is dated nearly ten years after the unfavorable publicity and five years after the ship had been partially remodeled.

In 1882 the old veteran was retired after thirty-three years service, her engines were removed and she ended her days as a coal hulk in New Zealand. Thus passed one of the most famous of our California craft.

Sources: MacMullan, Jerry, *Paddle-Wheel Days in California*, Stanford University Press, 1944
Newmark, Harris, *Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853-1913*, The Knickerbocker Press, N. Y. 1916
Original broadside in the Del Valle Family Collection, Los Angeles County Museum, size, 11½" x 18¼".