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Work and the Human Condition

Annotated Bibliography

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This bibliography is comprised of sources for research on the subject of the salmon canning industry in the Pacific Northwest. Of particular interest to the researcher is the early history of hand-canning and its mechanization and the changing cultural and gender make-up of the work force with industrialization in the 19th and early 20th century.

Apex Packing Company, in Great Hall of Washington History. Washington State History Museum, Tacoma.

This exhibit details the history of the cultural and gender make-up of laborers in the Pacific salmon-canning industry. Included are excerpts from Francis Seufert's important memoir Wheels of Fortune, with many useful photographs. It is demonstrated that until the 1880s, salmon canning was performed by seasonal laborers of Slavic, Scandinavian and Chinese descent. What was named "China's first hundred" brought the first large influx of Chinese laborers to Seattle in 1913 to learn Western Technology. The "Iron Chink" in the early 1900s changed the cultural make-up of salmon canning, and it became dominated by Caucasian workers. "After 1918 women entered the canneries in

large numbers replacing men who moved on to shipyards and lumber mills”. This exhibit provides a useful overview, with areas of interest for further study.

Augerot, Xanthippe. Atlas of Pacific Salmon. Berkley. University of California Press, 2005.

This atlas with extensive source notes and bibliography contains many colorful maps showing locations of hatcheries, salmon import and export locations, and farming regions. Augerot writes that “the way people fish reflects society’s cultural organization”. Chapter two discusses the indigenous peoples of the North Pacific and their role in the industry. Photos of the first cannery in 1864 with a brief discussion of the role of industrialization in the salmon trade are included. The cultural and political aspects of the trade are discussed, and the atlas goes on to cover types of salmon, climate change and the threat of extinction. While the focus is mainly on the salmon itself, it serves as an excellent visual resource on the topic.

“Automated salmon cleaning machine developed in Seattle in 1903.” Historylink.org. 1

January 2000. Accessed February 2009.

<http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=2109>

This historylink.org essay discusses the development of the “Iron Chink” invented by Edmund A. Smith. Smith’s creation which was named with “unselfconscious racism” was designed to be fifty-five times faster than a human worker and was immediately in

demand by factory managers. The focus at the time was on increasing efficiency and profit, with little concern for the thousands of displaced workers brought about by the machine. Sources and links to related topics are provided.

Boxberger, Daniel L. "Ethnicity and Labor in the Puget Sound Fishing Industry."

Ethnology 33 (1994): 179-191.

Boxberger examines the role of ethnicity in the commercial salmon industry in the Puget Sound region. He discusses the pre-conceived notions of employers regarding race and skill, reinforcing "classic rationales of racism". A chart depicting the racial composition of the workforce from 1890-1935 details the role of Asian, Native American and European American laborers. By 1930 with the implementation of machinery, European Americans had come to dominate the work force in the industry and those of "non-European heritage were pushed to the periphery". Boxberger goes on to argue that it was not necessarily that different groups had particular skills but that "those who controlled capital assumed that it was so". "The minority ethnic groups generally provided the labor power but did not have access to capital; their ability to penetrate the industry was prohibited". The article includes good bibliographic information.

Boxberger, Daniel L. "In and Out of the Labor Force: The Lummi Indians and the

Development of the Commercial Salmon Fishery of North Puget Sound, 1880-1900." Ethnohistory 35 (1988): 161-190.

Boxberger details in this article the early salmon fisheries in the North Puget Sound region. He describes how the Lummi Indians made up a significant portion of the labor force, but as the fisheries developed, the Lummi were largely pushed out of the industry. Boxberger examines “the Lummi in their capacity as an ‘internal colony,’ politically and economically dependent on the dominant society.” This is a good, detailed description of one of the cultural aspects of the salmon industry and the cultural tensions which dominated it from very early on.

“Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).” Ourdocuments.gov. Accessed 26 February, 2009.

< <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=47> >

This web article includes a visual image of the original document, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The article discusses the significance of the act in that it was the first to prohibit immigration based on ethnicity. Those workers already laboring in the United States were affected as well, as they were refused citizenship and unable to return if they chose to leave the country.

Crawford, John M. “Salmon Industry and the Salmon Cannery Association.” Pacific Fisherman Feb. 1912: 14-15.

This article, written by a then member of the Puget Sound Canner’s Association discusses the founding of the association “for the purpose of gathering, compiling, classifying and disseminating reliable data and information regarding the canned salmon

business”. He discusses the high failure rate of businesses in the industry due to the unreliability of the resource, and competing business owners. The canneries employed more than 12,000 workers in Washington State at this time; the association endeavored to promote this industry which was so important to the economics of the region.

Freeman, Otis W. “Salmon Industry of the Pacific Coast.” Economic Geography 11 (1935): 109-129.

Freeman discusses the then current use of the “Iron Chink” from 1903. The machine was praised for its minimization of labor in canning, with much discussion of the new time saving devices, including number of minutes saved. Photos of workers in these early canneries are included and the rotary filling machines which were used to add salt and fill cans with salmon. The new limitations on hourly workers to eight hour days and forty hour weeks (as of 1934) are discussed. “In canning salmon the machinery arranged on a line (did) the work with economy of time and labor. Formerly salmon were dressed by hand, with Chinese preferred for this labor”.

Friday, Chris. Organizing Asian American Labor. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

Friday discusses the important role played by the salmon industry in the economic development of the Pacific Northwest. The book focuses on the ethnic and gender make-up of workers, their work culture and community life. He discusses the oppression faced

by Asian American workers and the establishment of unions as well as the strong social community. Photos of the workplace and use of the “Iron Chink” are included with drawings and maps of the canneries and locations. Friday includes extensive chapter notes with detailed source citations providing an excellent starting point for further study.

Gyory, Andrew. Closing the Gate: Race, Politics and the Chinese Exclusion Act.

University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Gyory examines the Chinese Exclusion act, which was unique in that it barred a group from entering the U.S. based upon race. He attributes labor movement pressures, racism and political pressure as the basis for its development. Implications of the act “changed forever the nations image of itself as a beacon of hope, a refuge for the poor and the oppressed the world over”. The importance of the act is stressed, as it laid the foundation for future racist exclusion laws. Gyory suggests this was not due to pressure from workers but a political move, intended to gain voter confidence. The article details the progress of the act itself in congress and explains the motivations for and social consequences of this important act. A short bibliography of Library of Congress papers follows the text.

Iron Chink, in Great Hall of Washington History. Washington State History Museum,

Tacoma.

This fish butchering machine from 1903 was called the “Iron Chink” by white cannery workers in Bellingham, Washington. It was designed to “decapitate, slice open and gut the salmon”. The exhibit highlights the racial segregation between “White, Indian and Chinese” workers and the resentment aimed at highly skilled Chinese butchers which brought about the racially-charged naming of the machine. Its aim was to “free employers from hiring Chinese butchers who were the dominant force in the salmon industry”.

Lyons, Cicely. Salmon and Our Heritage. Vancouver: Mitchell Press Limited, 1969.

Chapter 8 of Lyons’ book focuses on canneries and the importance of the salmon industry to the history of the Pacific Northwest region. Drawings and photographs from the early 1900s depicting boats, fishing and canning are included with a spare emphasis on the workers themselves.

Muszynska, Alicja. Cheap Wage Labor: Race and Gender in the Fisheries of British Columbia. Montreal: Mc Gill-Queen’s Press, 1996.

Muszynska analyzes the role of race and gender in wage labor, focusing on the fishing industry. The book covers many topics related to industrialization and salmon-canning including capitalism, patriarchy and an analysis of Marx’s division of labor. She writes, “Salmon canning began in earnest in the 1870s and represented the first capitalist assault on the provincial fisheries.” She discusses how the new division of labor

facilitated the cannery operators in segregating workers based on gender and ethnicity, further promoting racist and sexist concepts. Muszynska focuses on British Columbia, but includes substantial information on the Puget Sound region as well. Tables listing the pay associated with various cannery jobs for each white male worker and the comparable rates for non-white and female workers are included.

Netboy, Anthony. Salmon of the Pacific Northwest. Portland: Binfords and Mort, 1958.

In his book Netboy explains the important role salmon has played in Pacific Northwest history. The focus is on conservation along with a history of canning, fishing and manufacturing. History is presented on the early Native American fisheries and the competing “white man’s” fisheries, catching and canning on the Columbia River. Included is a detailed map of the Columbia River system. The focus of the bibliographic materials is on conservation and environmental issues.

Newell, Diane. The Development of the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry. Montreal: McGill-Queens Press. 1989.

Newell presents a history of the development of the pacific salmon-canning industry. The book focuses on British Columbia, also detailing other regions of importance in the trade including the Puget Sound Region. A map from 1904 shows the locations of canneries and cannery districts with an analysis of competition and most prized locations. Newell writes about the first cannery established in Puget Sound in

1877 which was located in what is now Everett, Washington, later moving to the then small town of Seattle. The second was built in Tacoma “the then aggressive rival of Seattle in a contest for supremacy”. Some early cannery names included “Apex Packing Co.”, “Ocean Packing Co.”, and “Rosario Straights”.

Newell, Diane. “The Rationality of Mechanization in the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry Before the Second World War.” Business History Review 62 (1988): 626-655.

Newell discusses in this article reasons why manual labor persisted in the salmon-canning industry throughout the Pacific Northwest, even as mechanization had overtaken other areas of food processing. She argues that rather than a series of poor business decisions as has been previously asserted, that the landscape, the resource itself and the social make-up of laborers made for a sound justification for the delay of mechanized labor. A useful map of salmon-canning districts, a chart detailing the changing make-up of the work force from 1918-1942, and a discussion of the history of the cannery development from 1871-1966 are included.

O’Bannon, Patrick. “Waves of Change: Mechanization in the Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1864-1914.” Technology and Culture 28 (1987): 558-577.

O’Bannon begins the article with a brief description of canning and food processing technology in the second part of 19th century America. He examines the

importance of salmon-canning to the development of the region and the challenges posed by the seasonal nature of salmon availability, and the complicated nature of salmon processing. Following is a discussion of the Oriental Exclusion Act, which banned new Chinese laborers from entering the region. This had a stifling effect on the industry as fewer highly-skilled laborers were available, ultimately forcing the remainder of canneries into mechanization. This is an excellent and detailed overview of the history of the industry.

Rockwell, Cleveland. "The Columbia River." Harper's New Monthly Magazine. Dec. 1882: 3-15.

Cleveland discusses the development of the salmon industry. "From a small beginning in 1864 or 1865, it has arrived at the proportions of a great business, employing large capital and thousands of men". Pen and ink drawings of the fisheries deemed unsightly by Cleveland and fishing on the river are part of the article. The racial attitudes of the time are illustrated: "the labor employed is almost exclusively Chinese-a monotonous work for which they prove well-fitted".

Seufert, Francis. Wheels of Fortune. Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1980.

The first portion of Seufert's book contains a written history of salmon fishing and canning in the Pacific Northwest. A discussion of the dominant role of Native Americans early in the industry and the role of Chinese workers is included. The second

portion of the book is devoted to photos of early fishing, the region, fish wheels, Seufert's cannery before and after mechanization, and the people who worked there. Photos of canning labels provide insight into the cultural associations of salmon canning through the years.

Smith, Courtland. Salmon Fishers of the Columbia. Portland: Oregon State University Press, 1979.

Smith opens with a description of early fisheries and the Native American role in salmon-fishing in the late 1800s. Chapter four deals specifically with immigrant workers, the Chinese domination of the early canneries and the development of the butchering machine named the "Iron Chink". "Although the machine replaced many Chinese workers, the Chinese Exclusion Act created enough of a labor shortage that few laborers in the crews were displaced". The chapter goes on to detail the process in which the Chinese were replaced by other immigrant workers as industrialization progressed. The book contains good photos of workers in the canneries, and photos showing the role of women in the early 1900s as male workers moved on to other industries. A good index is included and photographs and paintings are well cited.