The executives in charge of the Oregon Steam Navigation Co. no doubt thought they’d scored a solid win when they bought the sternwheeler Gold Dust in 187\*\*\*\*\*. They could not have been more wrong.

OSN mostly owned all the steamboats on the Columbia River, and its rates were set accordingly. But here and there, there were still steamboats running around that OSN did not own. These would compete with OSN boats, driving down prices for passengers and freight and therefore hurting profits.

In 187\* there were two such boats that were particularly annoying for the big company: Capt. Uriah B. Scott’s prop-driven steamboat Fleetwood, and the Gold Dust. The Fleetwood was competing with OSN on service from Portland to the Cascade rapids — where Cascade Locks would be built a few years later — and the Gold Dust, a more conventional sternwheeler, worked the middle Columbia — from the Cascades to The Dalles.

By snapping up the Gold Dust, OSN had put both boats out of business. There was nothing at the Cascades — just a couple ferry docks and a portage road. Nobody was going to book passage to the Cascades if he or she would be unable to continue on to The Dalles, right?

Right. Scott, the sole remaining independent boat captain, found himself running a line for which there was no market. What to do?

It’s not clear what OSN thought he would do. Maybe they didn’t think beyond just scoring this point. But what they should have thought about was the Fleetwood itself.

Scott was a gifted naval architect — probably the best designer of steamboat hulls in Oregon history. This was the fellow who’d eaten the lunch of the Willamette River steamboat monopoly, the People’s Transportation Co., several years earlier, and done it with the Ohio, a boat so crude and ugly that it had made him an object of ridicule — until he launched it and they realized it could haul freight in water less than a foot deep.

Scott was building his business from the little end to the big. The Fleetwood was his first foray into the bigger river, and he had a second boat coming on line soon — the Telephone, named after a brand-new invention about which everyone was very excited. The Telephone was intended to challenge the Oregon Steam Navigation Co. on the lower Columbia, on the run from Portland to Astoria. It would prove to be the fastest paddle-wheel riverboat ever built.

But that was all in the future. For the present, Scott found himself with a prop-driven riverboat that was plenty fast in its own right, and downright palatial in its appointments, and noplace to run it. What to do?

What to do but move ahead with plans to offer service on the lower Columbia, a little ahead of schedule?

Soon the Fleetwood was making the run from Portland to Astoria. This was a run for which OSN charged passengers $5 — this at a time when many working Oregonians made less than $5 a month. Scott priced his service at $2.

Crickets started chirping in the Oregon Steam Navigation ticket booth.

Not only was the Fleetwood far cheaper than the competition, it was more luxuriously appointed and considerably faster. Passengers shaved several hours off their travel time by choosing Scott’s boat. In fact, Scott probably could have charged $6 a head and still packed ‘em in, because the Fleetwood represented a premium service.

The competitors settled into a new equilibrium on the lower river, in which OSN was very much the junior player — especially after the Telephone came on line as well. The erstwhile monopoly had to console itself by squeezing the farmers and traders who took its boats back and forth from The Dalles and points east — a line along which OSN controlled all the portage routes and railroads, and therefore couldn’t really be challenged.

But the Portland to Astoria route was the biggest and most profitable run on the river, and OSN probably found itself wishing it had left Scott alone on his Cascades run.

Scott subsequently formed the Columbia River & Puget Sound Navigation Company, expanding to provide service in the Seattle-Tacoma area as well. It was a very successful company, and as the era of the sternwheel riverboat came to an end, operated the most famous riverboat on the Columbia — the enormous, plush and speedy Bailey Gatzert, known to those who found its wake excessive and annoying as the “Daily Bastard,” the only Oregon riverboat that’s actually had a piece of music written for it.

OSN became part of Henry Villard’s railroad company, Oregon Railway Navigation; increasingly, Villard moved it from a model of steamboats supported by railroad lines to railroad lines supported by steamboats.

The whole party was over by about 1914. A few sternwheelers soldiered on after that, but for the most part, freight and passenger service were handled by rail.

**Title**[Remains](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=title&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Remains) of the [steamer](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=title&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=steamer) [FLEETWOOD](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=title&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=FLEETWOOD), [Vashon](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=title&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Vashon) [Island.](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=title&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Island.) **Photographer**[Curtis](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=creato&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Curtis), [Asahel](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=creato&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Asahel), [1874-1941](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=creato&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=1874-1941) **Date**1908 **Notes**[Abandoned](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=descri&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Abandoned) in [Tacoma](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=descri&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Tacoma) in the [1890's;](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=descri&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=1890%27s;) [towed](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=descri&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=towed) to [Dockton](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=descri&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Dockton) on [Vashon](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=descri&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Vashon) [Island](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=descri&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Island) and [beached](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=descri&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=beached) in the [late](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=descri&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=late) [1890's.](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=descri&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=1890%27s.) **Subjects (LCTGM)**[Ships--Washington](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=subjec&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Ships--Washington) [(State)--Vashon](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=subjec&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=%28State%29--Vashon) [Island;](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=subjec&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Island;) [Ship](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=subjec&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Ship) [accidents--Washington](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=subjec&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=accidents--Washington) [(State)--Vashon](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=subjec&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=%28State%29--Vashon) [Island](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=subjec&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Island) **Subjects (LCSH)**[Fleetwood](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=subjea&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Fleetwood) [(Ship)](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=subjea&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=%28Ship%29) **Location Depicted**[United](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=covera&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=United) [States--Washington](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=covera&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=States--Washington) [(State)--Vashon](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=covera&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=%28State%29--Vashon) [Island](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=covera&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=Island) **Digital Collection**Asahel Curtis Collection **Order Number**[CUR511](http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOFIELD1=order&CISOROOT=all&CISOBOX1=CUR511)