

DID YOU KNOW?

There were several reasons why the construction of San Diego's first lighthouse was delayed. Among them were the lack of a road to the site high on Point Loma, the changing of lighthouse administration, a mix-up in lens procurement, and the following:

The Portland Commercial

Monday, September 26, 1853

Wreck of the Bark Oriole on the Columbia Bar

Total Loss of Vessel and Cargo

By letters received here on last Friday morning, we learn of the wreck of the Bark *Oriole*, Captain Lentz, laden with the material for the erection of a Light House on Cape Disappointment, under the following painful circumstances:

For eight days previous to Monday the 19th inst' [sic], the *Oriole* lay off the bar waiting for a pilot, and at length having succeeded in procuring the services of Capt. Flavel, and the wind proving favorable, it was determined to enter by the new channel; but scarce had she gained the breakers ere the wind lulled, and a strong tide running out forced the vessel among the breakers, and she struck in seventeen and a half feet of water, sprung a leak, and went down in fifteen minutes. Fortunately she had two sea-worthy boats on board, in which the crew and mechanics engaged for the purpose of constructing the light house, in all thirty-two in number, put to sea where they remained all night, and were picked up by the pilot boat early next morning.

Nothing could be saved, the clothes, tools, and other necessaries belonging to the passengers were entirely lost, and they were landed at Astoria utterly destitute, but owing to the kindness of the citizens of the place, they did not long remain unprovided for, and the rescued sufferers have returned their warmest thanks to the benevolent citizens for their attention. The following is printed from a copy of the letter:

We, the undersigned on behalf of the crew and passenger of the Bark Oriole, of Baltimore, beg to return thanks to the pilots of the Columbia bar for their kindness in their endeavors to save us after the wreck, and supplying us with clothes, &c.; [sic] and we also wish to testify to the skill, seamanship and coolness of Capt. George Flavel, the pilot in the moment of danger, and that he from knowledge of the bar and coast was instrumental in our being landed safe.

We also return our sincere thanks to the citizens general of Astoria, who upon our arrival displayed a degree of kindness never surpassed by any community under similar circumstances, Lewis H. Lentz. On behalf of the others and crew. Frank X. Kelly, On behalf the passengers.

The *Oriel* [sic] has been in use for the past few months in carrying the supplies to the light houses on the coast, and at the time of the catastrophe she was deeply laden, drawing twelve feet of water.

What renders this occurrence more singular is that five vessels crossed the bar a short time previous to the wreck, and Schooner M Vasser, Capt. Dodge, was within hail at the time of the occurrence.

This is the fourth vessel that has been lost by a similar casualty with a short time, all of which might have been easily rescued if [word indecipherable] boat was in readiness to take them to an anchorage, and we hope some company will enter into the speculation of providing such a boat, and we doubt not but that the enterprise will be found as profitable as it will be useful.

(End of newspaper article.)

As it happened, in time, Captain George Flavel earned appointment as one of the first bar pilots at the Columbia River Bar. He gained wealth with a business of managing pilot boats and with other entrepreneurial enterprises. Captain Flavel is another story, but his Queen Anne-style mansion is now a museum in Astoria, Oregon.

