

Caspar Lumber Company Ships

J. G. Jackson, and later the Caspar Lumber Co., had the misfortune to lose most of his ships by wrecks. This seemed to be the inevitable end to most ships that operated along the coast in the lumber trade.

Jackson's first schooner, the "Cora", while loaded with 1,200 posts and 25,000 feet of lumber, was wrecked at Caspar on April 13, 1883 when its hawsers and mooring lines parted while a heavy sea was rolling into the harbor. The vessel struck on the south rocks and quickly broke up.

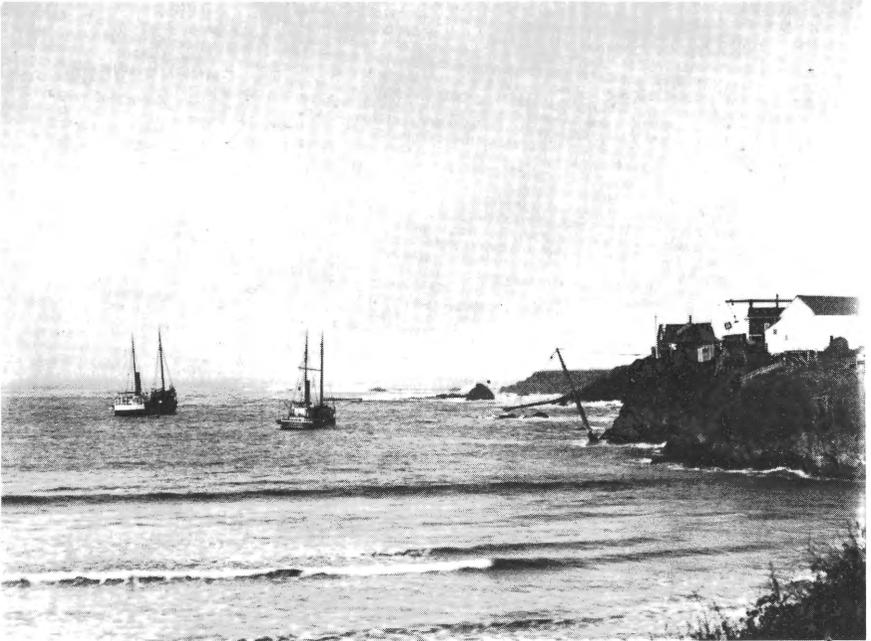
The "Elvenia" was loading at Caspar on the afternoon of December 28, 1875, when the sea began rolling in heavy. Both anchors were out, and early in the evening the crew left the vessel and was barely able to get ashore. She began dragging and at 10:00 pm she was high on the beach near the mouth of the river. She was taken off the beach about January 12, 1876, apparently with little damage as she was loaded and sailed shortly after

The "Elvenia" wasn't so lucky on her next trip ashore. She left Caspar Creek on April 24, 1897 with a cargo of lumber for San Pedro. She was carried along by the land breeze at about 6 knots. When she passed the mouth of the river, Capt. Johnson found himself in a dead calm, the breeze on the river had left him. The schooner was caught by the tide, the anchors were dropped but would not hold, so she was carried upon the rocks near the mouth of the creek. The vessel, dismasted and waterlogged, was pulled off the rocks and towed to San Francisco by the str. "Protection" to save the cargo.

The "Abbie" seems to have had better luck, as there is no record of her being wrecked.

The "Maxim" had its share of bad luck too. On April 20, 1878, she collided in San Francisco Bay off Meiggs Wharf with the sch. "Vine". Both vessels had only minor damage, with the "Maxim" only losing her nightingale. During the disastrous storm of November 22, 1885, she was wrecked at Caspar and was pretty well broken up on one side, also requiring a new keel. She was repaired at Caspar and was soon loading lumber again. She was finally wrecked in January 1907 somewhere between San Francisco and Eureka, records do not seem to indicate where or why.

The company did not seem to have any better luck with its steam schooners. The "Caspar" (first of that name) had its first trouble when it went ashore at Noyo in 1893. It was gotten off in a leaking condition and towed to San Francisco by the str. "Noyo" and repaired. It was only a few years later that she met her end. She



The steam schooner "National City" loading at Caspar from the Collection of San Francisco Maritime Museum.



Steamer "Alliance" ashore at Caspar, April 5, 1903, with a steam schooner in background loading from Caspar Lumber Company wire chute. Note wooden chute closer to shore for loading to deck of vessel by a slide-system.

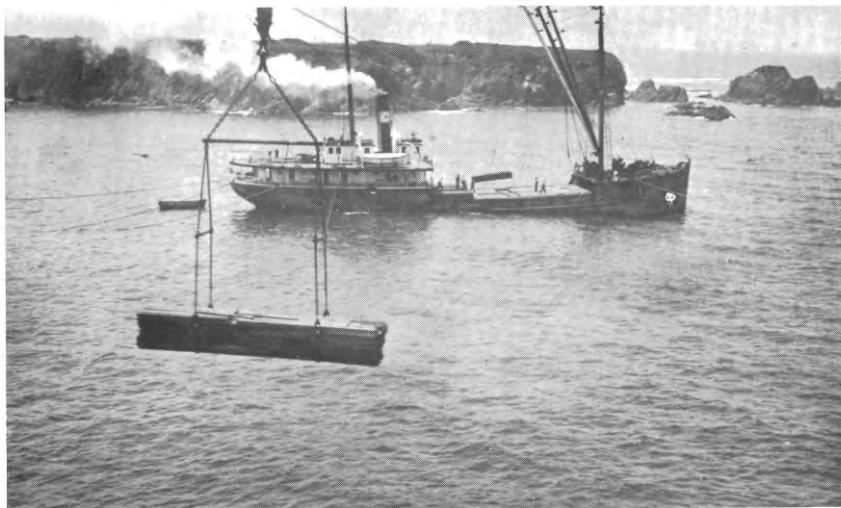
left San Francisco on October 22, 1897 to go up the coast and after passing Point Reyes she was into a southeast gale. While watching for the whistling buoy off Point Arena at midnight, the fog closed in. The noise of the storm being so great, the crew did not hear the buoy and struck on Sanders Reef. The boats were swung out but the steamer careened and they were washed away and lost. A big wave washed the crew overboard. There were fifteen men in the crew but only two survivors, Capt. Anfinsen and Chris Larson, a sailor, who managed to make a raft of some wreckage. The two men were seen at daybreak and about noon two men at Iverson's Landing managed to launch a boat and rescue the two survivors.

The "Jewel" was next in line for disaster. In June 1893, she had lost her rudder on the rocks at Westport and was towed to San Francisco by the tug "Rescue". On December 9, 1899, she left San Francisco after spending several weeks being repaired with the machinery improved and new boilers. She had arrived at Caspar and taken on 250,000 feet of lumber when the weather turned bad, so the captain decided to run out to sea and remain off for the night rather than remaining at Caspar, where all the crew would have to stand by all night in the event the mooring lines might part. The captain stood watch until 2:30 am of the following morning, January 13, 1899, when he turned in leaving orders to be called at 5:00 am with instructions to the mate to stand off and on for a mile, but visibility being bad apparently the current and wind put the vessel into the breakers without the mate realizing it. As soon as she hit the beach she speedily began going to pieces. The vessel was valued at \$30,000 and the cargo at \$5,000.

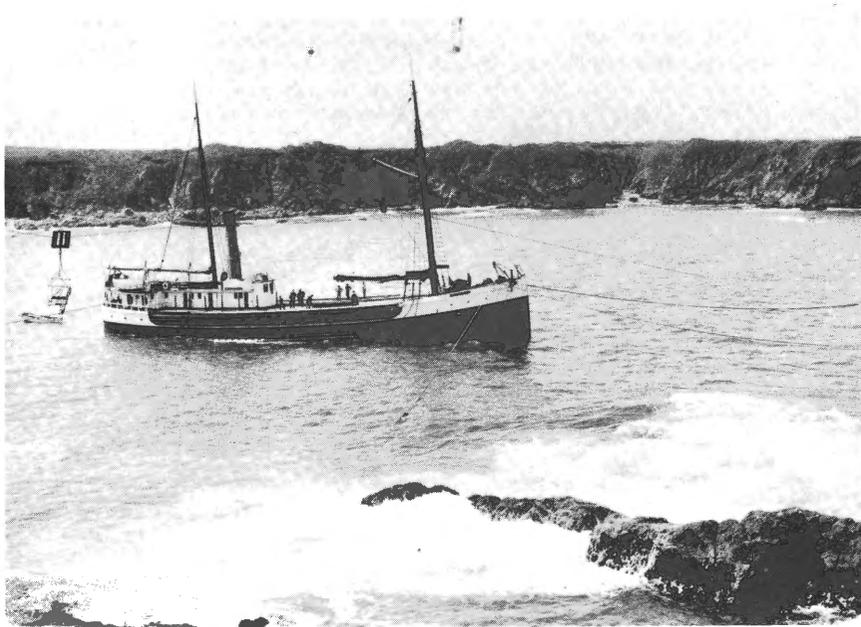
The "Samoa" left Caspar with 360,000 feet of lumber and headed south. In a dense fog, in the early hours of the following day, January 29, 1913, the officers lost their bearings, ending up on the beach four miles north of Point Reyes. The weather was so dense that the crew could only see a yard or two from the ship. Fortunately the fireroom didn't flood immediately and they were able to blow the whistle which was heard by the crew at the lifesaving station, who had a difficult time in ascertaining the location of the "Samoa". The lifesaving crew started shooting its line to the ship, and on the fifth try it fell on board. Soon a breeches buoy line was rigged and the ship's crew was brought ashore. The steamer, which had a value of \$40,000, was a complete loss and so was the cargo, which was worth \$7,000.

The "South Coast" was sold and later wrecked while owned by Hobbs, Wall & Co. The second "Caspar" was also sold. This was followed by the "Lakme" which was scrapped in 1927.

The company owned the "Excelsior" the shortest period of time, as shortly after it was purchased it was



The steam schooner "Caspar" loading at Caspar with a close-up view of the sling and pulley taken from the "head house". San Francisco Maritime Museum Collection



Caspar Lumber Company steam schooner "Samoa" being loaded by the wire chute at Caspar. From the collection of Stanley T. Borden.

rammed by the well-known passenger steamer "Harvard" at San Francisco on February 7, 1916, and was so badly disabled that it sank soon after near the Mile Rock in the Golden Gate.

The last steamer, the third "Caspar", while proceeding very slowly in a dense fog on October 2, 1937, struck Point Reyes Rock 33 miles north of San Francisco. The crew worked valiantly, and with the last remaining bit of steam finally beached the vessel in 15 feet of water in Drakes Bay. There were two large holes in her hull, one 10 feet wide and the other 3 feet wide, through which water poured into the hold. She was refloated and repaired. On December 16, 1937, she collided with the str. "Julia Luckenbach" in San Francisco Bay. The latter was apparently undamaged as it continued on its way to Portland, but the "Caspar," with a damaged bow, was obliged to go to the shipyard for repairs. The "Caspar" was laid up in 1939. During World War II it was taken over by the Army and later wrecked in Alaska.

SAILING VESSELS

- "Cora" 155 tons, built 1867 at Port Orchard, Wash., not known when acquired by J. G. Jackson. Wrecked at Caspar on April 13, 1883.
- "Elvenia" 148 tons, 98.0'x29.7'x8.2', built 1872 by H. D. Bendixsen, Fairhaven Calif. for J.G. Jackson. Wrecked at Caspar on April 24, 1897.
- "Abbie" 146 tons, 98.5'x29.5'x8.3', built 1876 by H. D. Bendixsen, Fairhaven Calif. for J.G. Jackson. Disposition unknown.
- "Maxim" 117 tons, 92.0'x27.2'x7.2', built 1876 by H. D. Bendixsen, Fairhaven Calif. for J.G. Jackson. Wrecked in Jan., 1907 between San Francisco and Eureka.

Note: All the above vessels were two-masted schooners.

WOODEN STEAM SCHOONERS

- "Caspar" 300 tons, 132.5' x 33.0' x 11.0', 150 hp, built 1888 by Hanson & Frazer, San Francisco for Caspar Lbr. Co. Wrecked on Sanders Reef, Point Arena on Oct 22, 1897
- "Jewel" 265 tons, 134.0' x 33.0' x 10.3', 150 hp, built 1888 by Alex Hay, San Francisco, not known when acquired by Caspar Lbr Co. Wrecked at Caspar on Jan. 13, 1899.
- "Samoa" 377 tons, 151.0' x 33.5' x 10.7', 350 hp, built 1898 by Fulton Iron Works San Francisco. Purchased 1902 from Beadle Steam ship Co., wrecked at Point Reyes on Jan. 28, 1913.



WOODEN STEAM SCHOONERS

- "South Coast" 301 tons, 131.5' x 32.2' x 10.5', 150 hp, built 1887 by Chas. G. White, San Francisco. Purchased 1903 from J. R. Hanify & Co. Sold 1917 to Fyfe-Wilson Lumber Co.
- "Caspar" 648 tons, 175.1' x 38.3' x 12.4', 450 hp, built 1907 by Lindstrom Shipbuilding Co., Aberdeen, Wash. Purchased 1911 from J. Homer Fritch as the "Capistrano" and renamed. Sold 1930 to Alaska Salmon Co.
- "Excelsior" 526 tons, 175.5' x 35.0' x 13.1', 366 hp, built 1893 by P. Matthews, Eureka, Calif. Purchased either 1915 or 1916, probably from Northwestern Steamship Co. Sunk at San Francisco on Feb. 7, 1916,
- "Lakme" 529 tons, 176.8' x 38.8' x 12.6', 366 hp, built 1888 by Thomas Peterson, Port Madison, Wash. Purchased 1916 from Charles Nelson. Scrapped 1927.

STEEL STEAM SCHOONER

- "Caspar" 739 tons, 175.5'x34.0'x14.5', 700 hp, built 1904 by United Engineering Works, Alameda, Calif. Purchased 1925 from Alaska Packers Assoc. as the "Nushagak" and renamed when 2nd "Caspar" was sold. Laid up in 1939. Taken over by Army during World War II