



ANDERS WILSE

THEN: The view, recorded by the Norwegian Anders Wilse in the 1890s, looks north on the waterfront from a little way north of Columbia Street. The Seattle Coal Co. trestle shows on the far right crossing Railroad Avenue at Madison Street.

NOW: The familiar Marion Street overpass to Colman Dock misses "repeating" the Seattle Coal Co. trestle in the "then" photograph.

Set For Rush Service

WITH HIS BACK to Columbia Street, Anders Wilse nearly straddled the most westerly of 16 rails (eight tracks) that crowded Railroad Avenue to record this waterfront Gold Rush scene. The year is probably 1898, but it may be 1899.

The flooring here is not dirt but very worn planking, almost pulverized in places, and dangerous. Some planks were removable for convenient dumping. Beneath the trestle, the tides slipped back and forth through whatever rubble or refuse might have been dumped there.

During the Gold Rush this two-block section between Columbia and Madison streets was an oddity. The docks were stubby and the services mostly local. In 99 days during the late winter and spring of 1898, 107 ships sailed for the Klondike from this waterfront, but most of them from piers that were either north of Madison or south of Columbia.

The leaning sign nailed to the wall of the building far left reads, "Portable Aluminum Houses, Frost and Fire Proof, Just the Thing for Alaska, Weight 150 Pounds." Other signs in the area show that one could buy a salmon from C&M Fish or AAA Fish, get almost instant nourishment at McGintry's Oyster and Chops House, board the West Seattle Ferry (through the distinguished façade to the left of the power pole) or catch either of



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two popular "Mosquito Fleet" steamers: the Greyhound for Edmonds and Everett or the Flyer for Tacoma.

I confess that the contemporary photo was taken a few yards west of the Norwegian Wilse's position. (Railroad Avenue was later widened for wagons.) That way I stayed out of harm's way and could "repeat" the cluster of men in the "then" with the 4th- and 5th-graders of Happy Medium School, who were on a waterfront tour with their teacher, Reba Utefsky. 📷

Paul Dorpat specializes in historical photography and has published several books on early Seattle.

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