

C.A. THAYER & SALMON PACKET

1912-1924

By 1912 steamers had captured most of the lumber trade, so the owners of sailing ships had to find a new cargo or sell their vessels. *C.A. Thayer* was sold to “Whitehead” Pete Nelson, who sailed her to Alaska for 12 years, carrying fishermen and supplies to his salteries. Each fall *Thayer* returned to San Francisco loaded with barrels of salted salmon.

The 1st Salmon Run
On April 12, 1912, *Thayer* began her life as a salmon packet, departing San Francisco loaded with supplies including salt barrels, a small barge, and lumber to build a house at the new salting station.



SAFR J7.5,134



SAFR P268



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The Salt Salmon King

Nelson ran his very successful business from a bar across from the Ferry Building and hired workers from the islands of his native Sweden. The “Salt Salmon King” (center), and friends pose for this photo.

Dancing with Hilda

On long voyages north, the crew welcomed any kind of social diversion. Nelson often brought his wife, and in 1918 his daughter, Hilda. Fisherman Carl Johnson remembered that trip most fondly: “We had a good time then, you bet. Hilda was seventeen years old—a good, high-spirited girl. We was up dancing on deck and everything. Pete tells me, ‘Charlie, you up and dance.’ We had a clear deck that year. Gustafson played the banjo . . . and we danced with Hilda in the evening, all the way North.”