

A newspaper article transcribed Dec,2025, by Neal Paddison, ussoregon.com

The newspaper, “**The Republic Sunday**”, December 15th 1901, St Louis Mo.

Where the wrecked Oregon is being rebuilt Famous battleship now rests in dry-dock at Puget Sound Naval Station.

Special correspondent of “The Sunday Republic”.

Bremerton, Puget sound, Washington December 8th, after the laps of nearly 4 years the famous battleship Oregon is again in the dry dock at Puget sound naval station where she lay in February 1896 at the time the USS Main was blown up in Havana harbor. The Oregon had been built in San Francisco but, because of insufficient docking facilities there she had to proceed to the naval station in Puget sound to have her bilge keels put on. (*** see foot note**), While still in dry-dock the startling news of the Main’s disaster was received. From Washington DC quickly followed orders for the Oregon to proceed around the horn and reinforce the North Atlantic squadron. Work on the battleship was hurried along, and she was soon ready for what proved to be a record-breaking trip. Secretary long, in his Annual for 1898 made this mention of the famous run from Puget sound to key West:

“The performance of the Oregon on her trip from Puget sound was so exceptional as to justify a brief reference. Leaving Puget sound on March 6th she made the long journey of over 14,500 mi to Jupiter inlet on the Florida coast, and was not delayed an hour because of her machinery. The only stops were made for coal. Immediately after coaling at key West she took her place in the blockade list at Santiago and in the great battle of July 3rd quickly developed a power greater than that obtained on her trial trip and a speed only slightly less, easily distancing all the other ships immediately engaged except the Brooklyn and forcing the fleetest of the Spanish cruisers to surrender”.

Present visit made necessary by wreck in Orient.

The present visit of the Oregon to the naval station here was made necessary because of the severe damage sustained when she ran onto the uncharted rocks in the Gulf of Pe-chi-li, (****see foot note**), at the time of the recent international complications in China. It is probable that she will not be in commission again for 6 months at least, so extensive are the repairs and reconstruction work planned, which will cost \$300,000.

It was on a bright beautiful day in the latter part of October that the majestic worship steamed from the wharf at Puget sound naval station into the dry dock that will be her berth for several months to come. The Oregon had been at the naval station several weeks getting ready for the overhauling. Her ammunition had been taken off at San Francisco, they’re being no magazines here large enough to hold it. Because of the strain sustained by the worshiped when she grounded on the rocks in Chinese waters, it was necessary to take special precautions in docking her. For days previous to the docking, preparations were made for the event. Certain parts of the ship forward were strengthened with heavy timbers and the blocking in the dry dock arranged under the direction of carpenter J P Yates of the Oregon crew, so that it would not interfere with the broken sections of the keel and plates. Then a line was stretched across the dry dock to show just where the worship should stop, and the water was turned in. As soon

as the required depth was reached, the ponderous Gates were opened and the warship steamed in, with her colors flying and the Naval station band playing "Hail to the chief". The gates were again closed as the water was pumped out, slowly, The big ship settled down gently on the blocks and timbers placed to receive her, and divers sent below ascertained that the ship rested evenly. Shoring was placed in position on Port and starboard sides, the dock was pumped dry and the extensive work of reconstruction was ready to proceed.

Carpenter J P Yates, who knows the great warship from stem to stern well, under naval contractor Hibbs, superintend the work of rebuilding the ship. Mr Yates was with the Oregon at the time she struck the rocks in the Gulf of Pe-chi-li, where he took charge of the temporary repairs that enabled her to proceed to Kure Japan, where she was put in the dry dock and patched up.

Carpenter Yates graphically describes the accident.

"It was an anxious time," said Mr Yates, "when The Oregon was grounded in Chinese waters". "When we struck, the water began rushing in and flooding the decks and we thought our time had surely come. The pumps were put to work and the water finally lowered, enabling us to go below and ascertain the extent of the damage. By groping about we learned in a general way that where the ship had struck on the hard flint rock a midships, she was badly hurt. The keel for some distance was bent upwards fully 19 in, a number of the plates were crushed and torn frames were broken, rivets started and other damaged done inside".

"At the time we went on the rocks the weather was fair and the sea comparatively calm. We were apprehensive that a storm might come up and wash us off the rocks and sink us in deep water before the holes could be plugged. It was an anxious time from the captain down to the youngest apprentice. The grand old ship made so fine a record and was such a splendid fighting machine that we hated to think of losing her. While every effort was being put forth to get her in condition to stand a trip to the nearest dry dock, a foreign warship stood by ready to render any assistance as necessary. Mattresses, bedding, canvases, and tarps were stuffed into the holes. We finally, after 7 days, slid off the rock, only constant pumping kept her up until we reached Kure Japan, where she was promptly docked. The accompanying photographs taken for the Japanese government soon after she was placed in the dry dock gave an excellent idea of the extent of her injuries. How we ever managed to keep her afloat on the trip to Kure was a 9 days wonder to all who saw the terrible holes in her hull".

Richmond Pearson Hobson's report on the vessel.

"Naval contractor Richard Pearson Hobson, who had been ordered from Manila, to Kure, made a thorough examination of the Oregon and reported her condition to the Navy department at Washington DC, with recommendations as to the repairs necessary. In view of the large cost and the long time that it would take in the dock at Kure to permanently repair the Oregon, it was recommended that she be fixed up temporarily, to enable her to reach a home port and there be completely overhauled. This plan was carried out. The Japanese government assisted in every way possible. The weakened parts of the warship structure were strengthened with shoring. Where ever possible the plates were riveted, holes were patched up with wood and covered with plating, the spaces in the inner bottom were filled with cement and made perfectly water tight. In that condition the Oregon was enabled to reach Puget sound safely."

Naval contractor Hobson, in his report on the Oregon's accident said in part: "There are two principal injuries, both occurring forward where the vessel struck heavily upon the hard flint rock, the first lying a midships, forward of the forefoot, about 20 ft in length and extending

about 10 ft up on each side; The second occurring on the port side, aft of the first from the edge of the keel plate for about 12 ft up the side, extending over a length of about 20 ft. In both injuries, indentations are deep and abrupt but the plating escaped tearing in the first. In the second, however, it is badly crushed and torn.”

The naval contractor further suggested “that to make proper permanent repairs the outside plating and the inside structure adjoining would have to be removed practically over the whole area of the two principal injuries, and almost all of the material involved in the injury on the port side would have to be renewed.”

When in commission, the Oregon has a compliment of 490 officers and men, with 50 Marines. There being no necessity for that number now, the crew has been reduced to 101 officers and men and six Marines. The officers at present on duty with the Oregon are: Captain C M Thomas, lieutenant R F Lopez, E A McCauley and T W K**said; PayMaster D J Hanache, J P Yates and machinists T J Green and W H Wood.. C. E. C.

Foot note* (editor’s note: The first three battleships, USS Indiana BB1, USS Massachusetts BB2, and USS Oregon BB3 were built without bilge keels. Naval architects at the time thought the keels would interfere with dry docking, but, they needed to be added later. It was discovered that when the big guns were fired to broadside, the ship would rock violently to and fro. It took too long for the ship to settle to then reload, re-aim and fire again. The keels added the necessary drag to stabilize the ship. Because of her hasty dispatch to the Cuban conflict, they were never tested until they went into battle,,,, they worked)

Foot note **, USS Oregon (BB-3), was involved in the Boxer Rebellion, a significant conflict in China from 1899 to 1901. On June 28, 1900, while steaming through the Bohai Strait to reinforce allied forces at Taku, the ship struck an uncharted rock, identified as Pinnacle Rock, near the Changshan Islands. This incident caused damage to the ship's hull, and it remained grounded for a week until being refloated on July 5, 1900. After a 9 day trip to Kure Japan temporary repairs were made.

The Bohai Strait, where the incident occurred, connects the Bohai Sea to the Yellow Sea and is located in northern China, near Beijing and Tianjin. The Changshan Islands, where the incident took place, are approximately located at 37.8°N latitude and 122.5°E longitude. This is based on the general location of the islands in the Bohai Strait, directly north of Penglai.