

An Illustrated History of the State of Washington, by Rev. H.K. Hines, D.D., The Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago, IL., 1893

HON. ANDREW WASSON, President of the Commercial Bank of Port Townsend, and one of the representative citizens of that city, was born in Schenectady, New York, December 25, 1839, son of James T. and Ann (Coombs) Wasson, of Scotch English ancestry and natives of the same city. Up to his fourteenth year young Wasson attended the public schools of Schenectady; then, being ambitious for adventure, he went to the East Indies and in 1855 rounding the Horn for San Francisco, where he arrived on March 4, of that year. Imagining that the source of great wealth lay in mining, he then visited the mines of Camptonville, Shaw's Flat, and Table mountain, and from one years experience realized about \$8,000, he then invested in a standing crop of grain and potatoes in the Pajan valley, Monterey county, and lost nearly all of his laboriously earned savings. In the fall of 1857 he was appointed Deputy Sheriff of Monterey county and served two years, and rendered heroic and valuable assistance in capturing a desperado who was tried, and sentenced and who was the first man hanged by law in Monterey county. In 1859 Mr. Wasson engaged in the stock business and in 1861 was appointed lighthouse-keeper at Point Pinos, one of the first appointments made by President Lincoln on the Pacific coast. Our subject held that office for ten years, then resigned and was elected Sheriff and Tax Collector of Monterey county and served two years. At this time Vasquez and his notorious gang of desperadoes were terrorizing southern California, and Mr. Wasson, with a carefully selected corps of deputies tracked and pursued Vasquez's gang for fourteen consecutive days, capturing Moreno and breaking up the organization. For this heroic service, the State of California, by special act of Legislature, awarded him \$3,600, and the county of Monterey \$2,600. Completing his term of service he then purchased 1,000 acres of land in the Salinas valley and followed farming for about two years. During the session of 1879-80-81 he was Sergeant-at-Arms of the California State Senate. He then engaged in mining speculations in Mexico, where he operated very successfully for about five years. In 1887 he came to southern Oregon, bought 2,266 acres of land and planted 10,000 prune trees; then one of the largest orchards in the State. He subsequently sold this property, and in 1888 came to Port Townsend, deeming the same an excellent locality for profitable investment. Mr. Wasson was Representative from Jefferson county in the State Legislature of 1891, serving on many important committees, and introducing the so called "Wasson bill" for regulating tariffs on railroads in the State, which was voted by Acting Governor Langhton. On September 19, 1891, Mr. Wasson was appointed by President Harrison, Collector of Customs for the Puget Sound District, which embraces eleven sub-ports along the coast and British line. This is one of the most important customs districts of the country as regards the enforcement of the Chinese restriction act, and by reason of the facilities for the evasion of the revenue afforded by the natural features of the country, and by the proximity to the Canadian border, the collector has the most difficult duty to perform of any similar official in the Union. New questions have constantly arisen, making the duties of office onerous and burdensome; but without fear or favor Mr. Wasson has pursued a line of justice, and held the office above reproach or scandal. He has been actively engaged in city development, and is a large holder in real estate and improved residence and business property. He is president of the Commercial Bank; and as stockholder is interested in the nail works and other business enterprises. He was married in Sacramento, California, April 7, 1882, to Miss Minnie Snook, native of New York. Socially, Mr. Wasson affiliates with the F. & A. M. and I.O.O.F.

Submitted to the WA. Bios Project in January 2004 by Jeffrey L. Elmer

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