

= Robert Deniston Hume =

Robert Deniston Hume ( October 31 , 1845 ? November 25 , 1908 ) was a cannery owner , pioneer hatchery operator , politician , author , and self @-@ described " pygmy monopolist " who controlled salmon fishing for 32 years on the lower Rogue River in U.S. state of Oregon . Born in Augusta , Maine , and reared by foster parents on a farm , Hume moved at age 18 to San Francisco to join a salmon @-@ canning business started by two of his brothers . They later re @-@ located to Astoria on the Columbia River , where they prospered . After the death of his first wife and their two young children , Hume moved again and started anew in Gold Beach , at the mouth of the Rogue .

In 1877 Hume bought rights to a Rogue River fishery , then built a salmon cannery and many other structures and acquired all of the tidelands bordering the lower 12 miles ( 19 km ) of the river . He remarried , invested in a small fleet of ships and a salmon hatchery and expanded his business interests to include a store , hotel , newspaper , and many other enterprises in Gold Beach and in the nearby community of Wedderburn , which he founded . Canning , shipping , and selling hundreds of tons of salmon over the years , he became known as the Salmon King of Oregon .

Hume often wrote editorials , engaged in litigation , appealed to legislators , and waged political campaigns to protect his business interests . Running as a Republican , he was twice elected , in 1900 and 1902 , to represent Coos and Curry counties in the Oregon House of Representatives . According to his biographer , he voted self @-@ interest first and conservative positions second , resisting Populist ideas in vogue at the time .

Among his publications were a series of articles about fish management , collected and reprinted as Salmon of the Pacific Coast in 1893 . Despite his efforts to maintain a steady fish supply through egg @-@ collecting and fish @-@ rearing , salmon catches on the Rogue , rising in some years and falling in others , generally declined over time . Seventeen years after Hume 's death in 1908 , the state closed the river to commercial fishing .

= = Early life = =

Robert Hume , the youngest surviving boy in a family of 12 children , was born in Augusta , Maine , on October 31 , 1845 . Because his parents , William and Elizabeth Hume , had little money , he was adopted by the Robert Denistons when he was four years old . After growing up on the Deniston farm , he went to San Francisco at the age of 18 to work in a cannery operated by two of his brothers . In 1867 , when Hume was 22 , he and his brothers , who had moved north to Oregon , opened the first cannery on the Columbia River near Astoria . In 1869 he married Celia Bryant , with whom he had two children . The first , a girl , died while still a baby . The second , a boy , died at age 4 in 1875 , and Celia Hume died shortly thereafter . Celia and the two children were buried in Lone Fir Cemetery in Portland .

Although Hume had prospered , buying several Columbia River canneries between 1872 and 1876 , when his wife and children died , he sold most of his holdings and returned to San Francisco . There he bought a steamer , the Alexander Duncan , and searching for new purpose in life , traveled north along the Oregon coast . While visiting Ellensburg ( later renamed Gold Beach ) , he decided to buy a salmon fishery near the mouth of the Rogue River in Curry County . There in late 1876 , " he took up his career once again in one of the most isolated and desolate sections of the Pacific Coast " .

= = Lower Rogue empire = =

After building a cannery , warehouse , bunkhouse , mess hall , and other buildings and hiring fishermen , Hume opened his salmon business in 1877 . He acquired ownership of all the tidelands along both sides of the lowermost 12 miles ( 19 km ) of the river ; this gave him virtual control of fish populations migrating between the ocean and spawning beds upstream . Over the next 32 years , Hume 's company caught , processed , and shipped hundreds of tons of salmon from the Rogue . Meanwhile , he remarried and expanded his business interests to include a store , hatchery , hotel ,

saloon , and sawmill , and other enterprises involving shipping , a newspaper ( the Gold Beach Gazette ) , real estate , and ranching .

After a fire destroyed the hatchery and several other Hume buildings in 1893 , he moved many of his holdings to the opposite side of the river , where he founded the city of Wedderburn in 1895 , naming it " in honor of the ancestral castle of the Humes of Scotland " . Floating some of his unburned buildings to Wedderburn from Ellensburg , he added a new hatchery , offices , a new home , many other buildings , and a horse @-@ racing track . He started another newspaper , the Wedderburn Radium , and applied successfully for a post office , which opened in 1898 and was run by a Hume employee in Hume 's general store .

As his businesses grew , he added to his fleet of ships , big ones to ship salmon to San Francisco and smaller ones for shallow waters and for towing larger ships in and out of the Rogue mouth . In 1879 he bought the steamer Varuna and the tug Mary Hume and started a shipyard at Ellensburg . In 1880 he added the steam schooner Mary D. Hume , the tug Pelican in 1883 , the schooner Berwick in 1887 , the steamer Thistle in 1888 , and replacement craft in subsequent years . Returning ships brought goods for Hume 's general store .

Throughout his career , the store was one of the central components of his business . It was a center of supplies and news for the people of the Rogue , who awaited the arrival of the fall provision ship with anticipation and anxiety , for this vessel was the only source of winter provisions . It provided Hume , the employer of the great majority of the citizens of Gold Beach and Wedderburn , with a means of repossessing the wages of his employees and of profiting on the exchange .

Hume became known as the Salmon King of Oregon and referred to himself as a " pygmy monopolist " in an autobiography published in the Radium between 1904 and 1906 .

= = Politician = =

According to Hume 's biographer , Gordon B. Dodds , Hume " entered politics both as officeholder and as lobbyist to protect his realm from the assaults of anti @-@ monopolists " . Between 1890 and 1910 in Oregon , Populist ? Progressive coalitions led by W.S. U 'Ren and Governor Sylvester Pennoyer , a Democrat , battled business @-@ oriented Republican factions based in Portland . In 1892 , John H. Upton , the Populist candidate for the state legislature from Coos and Curry counties campaigned mainly in opposition to Hume 's monopoly on the Rogue . Political threats like the one posed by Upton as well as threats from the Alaska Packers ' Association ( APA ) , which had begun fishing the Rogue , led Hume to write political editorials , file lawsuits , endorse candidates , petition the legislature , and eventually to run for office himself .

In 1894 , Hume , hoping for a seat in the state legislature , campaigned in support of Populist demands such as unlimited coinage of silver , more regulation of large corporations ( like the APA ) , and large @-@ scale government spending for internal improvements . Dodds says that this approach " illustrates Hume 's view of the purpose of a political campaign : The program advocated should be one that would win , and not necessarily the program that the party or the candidate believed in . " After losing this election , Hume went to Salem , the state capital , in 1895 to lobby for bills that might favor his business interests . In 1896 Hume , switching to the Republican Party , used his newspaper , the Wedderburn Gazette , to support Republican William McKinley for the U.S. presidency .

In 1900 Hume , running as a Republican , narrowly won election to represent Coos and Curry counties in the state legislature . Shortly after taking office , Hume helped scuttle a bill to repeal a law passed in 1899 that gave the owner of tidelands the exclusive right to fish the waters in front of them . Since Hume owned all the tidelands on the Rogue , the law gave him a monopoly on fishing its lower reaches . On issues unrelated to his business interests , Hume generally voted conservative . He won re @-@ election in 1902 , garnering 934 votes ? less than half of the total cast ? to the Democrat 's 807 , the Socialist 's 219 , and the Prohibition Party 's 142 . During his second term , Hume fought to keep the tidelands law intact and continued to support laissez @-@ faire government and low taxes . Hume attempted but failed to win nomination for a seat in the state Senate in 1904 , a seat in the state House of Representatives in 1906 , and a seat in the state

Senate in 1908 . Dodds sums up Hume 's political career by saying :

His accomplishments as a legislator were slight ; only one of his bills ever passed . On the other hand , he spoke and voted against many measures that were defeated and his credo of legislative decision was , first , his own interests and , second , support of a conservative position . In the midst of the Progressive era he remained a " stalwart among the stalwarts " , although during the Populist regime he had expediently yielded for a time to free silver .

= = Hatcheries = =

Although Hume had shown no early interest in salmon conservation on the Columbia and elsewhere , on the Rogue he tried to protect the fish supply . Disappointed with his company 's catch in 1877 , he built a hatchery in Ellensburg , and in all but 7 of his 32 years on the river he operated hatcheries along the Rogue .

Through his newspapers , lawsuits , lobbying , and speeches made while a member of the Oregon Legislature , Hume tried to influence public opinion about artificial fish propagation . In 1893 , he published a series of articles , later reprinted as *Salmon of the Pacific Coast* , that summarized his ideas about ichthyology . In 1897 , Hume persuaded the United States Fish Commission to run an egg @-@ collecting station at Elk Creek 150 miles ( 240 km ) from the mouth of the Rogue . Hume built the station , and the government paid the salaries of the workers who collected the eggs and shipped them to Hume 's hatchery in Wedderburn . Although his observations on salmon were well received in some quarters , they " often conflicted with the opinions of other pioneers in the field " , and his attempts to control upriver fishing and dams met with resistance and with arguments that he was overfishing the river at its mouth .

Despite Hume 's attempts to preserve the fishery , fish runs , oscillating from year to year for a variety of reasons , trended downward over time . The total reported Rogue River salmon catch in 1877 , Hume 's first year on the Rogue , was 531 @,@ 000 pounds ( 241 @,@ 000 kg ) ; the peak catch was 1 @,@ 632 @,@ 000 pounds ( 740 @,@ 000 kg ) in 1890 , and the catch in 1908 , the year of Hume 's death , was 476 @,@ 000 pounds ( 216 @,@ 000 kg ) . As fish runs continued to diminish , the state legislature closed the river to commercial fishing in 1935 .

= = Family life , death , and legacy = =

In December 1877 , the year after his move to Ellensburg , Hume married Mary Duncan , the 19 @-@ year @-@ old daughter of a former New Zealander , George Duncan , who had lost his fortune in the stock market and hoped to make another by canning salmon in the U.S. According to Dodds , Mary led a relatively secluded life , working in her flower garden , writing letters , and talking to friends , and occasionally selecting clothing for Hume 's store or acting as his secretary when he was sick . Although business occupied Hume most of the time , he seemed to value his wife 's help , Dodds says , and " events indicated their mutual affection " .

In October 1908 Hume was traveling on the schooner *Osprey* , which was towing another ship , *Enterprise* , when a storm arose . The *Enterprise* was wrecked , but *Osprey* rescued its crew and arrived safely in Wedderburn . Hume , who had been exposed to wet and cold , grew ill , rallied briefly , then died on November 17 . According to Dodds , " His dying wish was that he be buried at Hunt Rock overlooking his empire on the Rogue . " In 1912 , after she had sold the Hume holdings in Curry County , Mary Hume had Hume 's body moved to San Francisco .

Opinions vary about Hume 's fish theories and practices , which influenced state and federal salmon management for many decades after his death . " Hume was ahead of his time " , Dodds says , " in his belief in hatcheries , in his practice of retaining fry [ immature fish ] in feeding ponds , and in his belief in the home @-@ stream theory of salmonology . " Another writer says that " Robert Hume 's efforts to restock the Rogue with hatchery fish were an early glimmer in the dawning of a new era on the river and in the nation at large " even though " his motives may have been suspect , and the practice a less @-@ than @-@ perfect solution " . An environmental historian says that while many Oregonians regarded Hume as a salmon expert , " his reputation often exceeded his

results " . A late 20th @-@ century fisheries scientist sees Hume as " a keen observer of the salmon  
's natural history , although he did not always interpret his observations correctly . "