

# Iron from Oswego, Oregon

*From the Grand Era of Cast Iron Architecture in Portland –*

*By William J. Hawkins, III*

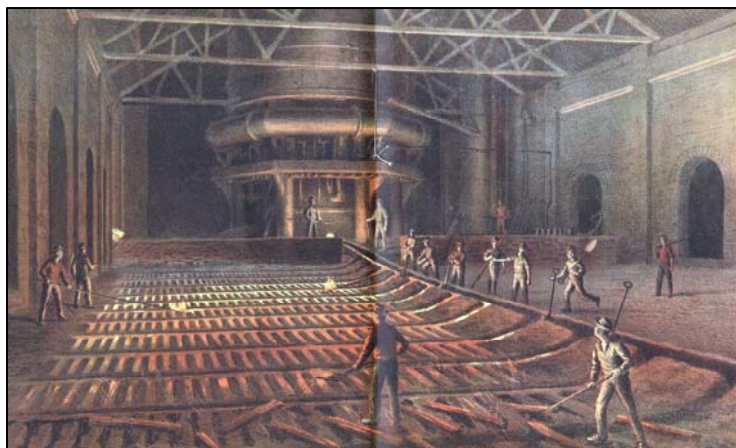
The iron industry was in every way analogous to the early growth and development of the state of Oregon. Interest in finding deposits of iron ore dates to as early as 1841. By 1844 large amounts of ore had been discovered near **Oswego, Oregon** – only seven miles from Portland. The mining and smelting of iron locally was closely linked to the predominant role of iron in Portland's architecture.

Even though Portland's first cast-iron building fronts were imported from San Francisco, by 1867 the majority of cast-iron fronts were made locally, with iron produced by the **Oregon Iron Company** and its successors – the **Oswego Iron Company**, and the **Oregon Iron and Steel Company**. Local production of iron was promoted by some of the most prominent men in the Portland business community, perhaps with the hope of making Portland one of the great iron-producing centers of the country. **William S. Ladd** - the founder of both Portland's Ladd & Tilton Bank and Salem's Ladd & Bush Bank – was also *president* of the **Oregon Iron Company**. The company was incorporated in 1864 and along with William S. Ladd, **Henry Failing** – who built his own cast-iron fronted buildings, as well – was a major stockholder. In 1866 the company built the massive stack for its furnace and installed the major machinery. The stack still stands today and significant preservation efforts are devoted to the site by the **Oswego Heritage Council**.



*Oswego Iron Company  
Blast Furnace, 1866*

*Source:  
Lake Oswego Public Library*



*Pig Iron Manufacturing at Oswego, 1889*

*Source: West Shore Magazine*



*Oswego Iron Blast Furnace, 2009*

*Source:  
Oswego Heritage Council*