



FRESH-WATER SALTS INVESTIGATE RIVERS OF ROMANCE

Career of Adventure Had by Inland Mariners Rivals Even the Spiciest of Tales Related of the Spanish Main.



BY DE WITT HARRY.
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FACES outdo fiction. People are more interested in the achievements of flesh and blood men than in the imaginary deeds of some hero who is the figment of an impressionistic author's mind. No one begrudges men worldly wealth when they gain it by sheer ability and foresight. The almost unwritten pages of Columbia river history hold the investigator breathless.

The hardy race of river pilots and navigators that were developed in Oregon with the inception and spread of navigation of the interior streams of the northwest had no peer in the annals of American literature. Some of their achievements were told in a previous chapter; now comes a further continuation of their alluring deeds.

Thoroughly imbued with the essentially American characteristic of individuality, they were quick to seize opportunity and needed no accident for their work. They neglected no chances, they were creators; made their own openings and, once started, saw the thing through to the finish. It is a difficult matter, even at the present late day, to adequately realize the value of their pioneer services to the Oregon country.

Fortunes Founded Here.

Fortunes that were reaped from the rivers of the northwest were legion, and these pioneer accumulations of wealth were the foundation for some of the largest of the estates now existent in the country. The capital that was thus attracted to Oregon has been of incalculable value in making possible the present-day prosperity of the region. Why this phase of life in the pioneer growth of this corner of the United States has never received more attention will ever remain a mystery.

From the day when Lot Whitcomb conceived the idea of building the famous river craft that bore his name, to the present, the steamers that bustle ply the Columbia and its network of branches have been making history. One hundred and twenty-seven years ago Admiral Vancouver, the British explorer, made the first soundings at the mouth of the Columbia and sent the first accurate chart of the bars and spits to the admiralty in London. Ever since these soundings have been the basis for work at the Columbia's mouth. They showed, in detail, the conformation of the channels at the point where the huge river met the sea, and the river itself to above Astoria.

Could Vancouver visit this stream today he could not believe his senses,

for here, at Portland, is located an ocean harbor over a hundred miles from the sea. Should he place his leadman in the chains and start sounding he would hardly credit his senses when the chart, as the line reeled out to the distant bottom, would call for from 45 to 160 feet and he could find no bar. But his astonishment would be greater should he start a journey inland, as he would find an almost uniform channel way through of more than 35 feet depth.

Bar Project Begins.

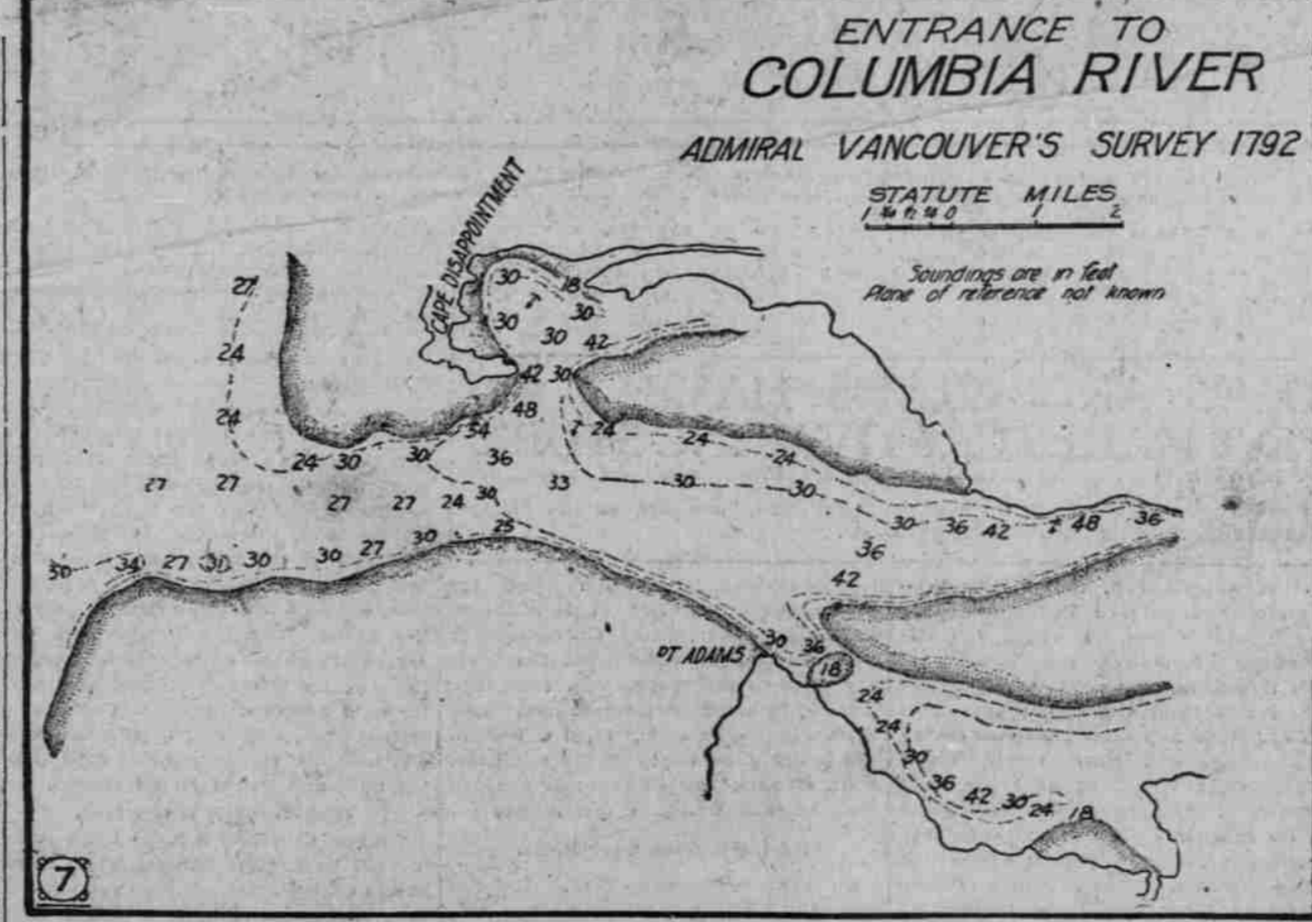
When Vancouver first charted the mouth of the river he found the depth about 27 feet. This was in 1792. In 1882 the river mouth had shoaled alarmingly and the United States engineers recommended a jetty project, with the result that congress appropriated the necessary funds and the south jetty was started. At this time the river depth was about 21 feet in the main channel and ocean craft desiring to enter frequently had to lay to outside for days and even weeks for a favorable opportunity when tide and weather would allow them to make the perilous bar passage.

With the progress of the jetty and the scouring action of the current the channels were changed and the depth gradually increased, until Clatsop spit began moving north and managed to again close the channel, which, some 20 years later, placed the engineers face to face with a totally incomprehensible problem, as they discovered that the channel was but two feet deeper and that they had less than an inch a year to show for their work and expenditure of money. Immediately they set about the solution of this difficulty, with the result that a further extension of the south jetty was recommended and the additional construction of a shorter work on the north, the purpose of the two confining arms being to hold the current of the river in check and force it to dredge its own channel.

Safe Harbor Results.

This recommendation met with government approval and the work was again taken up, with the result that the most sanguine predictions of the men in charge of the work have been fulfilled, and the Columbia river bar is no more, it being possible for any ocean-going vessel to enter in perfect safety in almost any weather. And while this work has been going on at the mouth of the river the development of the upper reaches of streams has been by no means neglected.

Expenditure of some \$14,000,000 in various projects of dredging and channel opening, the most essential being the construction of the Celilo locks, has produced a system of inland waterways that has but one peer



1—High and dry, one of the fast little steamers gets annual overhauling. 2—R. R. Thompson, who went to New York and sold \$2,000,000 of Oregon river navigation stock. 3—In the old days Dan O'Neill was admiral of a Hudson's Bay company bateaux fleet. 4—Willamette locks opened a long stretch of navigable waters. 5—The J. N. Teal is a type of the fast high-powered boats developed in Oregon. 6—Captain and crew of the old Portland rode to their death over Oregon City Falls. 7—One hundred and twenty-eight years ago Admiral Vancouver made this chart of the Columbia's mouth.

in the country. Recently the state of New York, with government co-operation, disbursed some \$150,000,000 in the development of a barge canal that has but a small percentage of the tonnage value that the streams of the Oregon country possess. Nature has done more for this region than any amount of skillful engineering and money could accomplish.

But while all this has been going on, while man has been co-operating with natural forces to make safe the ingress and egress at the river's mouth, and the safe and rapid navigation of her upper reaches and tributaries, the pioneers among the navigators have been steadily doing their best to demonstrate the necessity for the immense projects that have been carried to a successful conclusion. It was their exploration and demonstration of the value of the traffic that forced the nation to take a hand to

aid the territory served by the natural streams, and while engaged on this work the first-hand river men and their craft have had many adventures.

River Life With Afloatmen.

Starting with the launching of the Columbia at Astoria by General Adair and of the Lot Whitcomb at Milwaukie, the annals of river history are rife with almost unbelievable tales of breathless adventure. On the upper reaches of the rivers, barred as they were by rapids at Oregon City on the Willamette and at Cascades and The Dalles on the Columbia, makeshift means for handling the freight offered were employed, the solution of the difficulty depending on the inventive genius of the men engaged. Even prior to the advent of steam navigation of the lower river by the two boats launched in 1859 the upper

reaches of the Willamette were being developed.

Captain James D. Miller owned a flatboat 65 feet long with which he made two round trips weekly between Canemah and Dayton and Lafayette. Captain George Pease had a larger boat on the same run, and the two alternated. On the down trip they carried from 300 to 400 bushels of wheat each voyage, for which they received 50 cents per bushel freight, and on the upriver run they charged \$25 per ton measurement and had all the business they could care for.

Indian Motors on Boats.

Of course, these boats had to have power, but this was an easy matter of solution for the doughty captains, for they likely had in mind the example set by the ancient Roman triremes and employed paddlers, not slaves as in days of old, but swartly Indians, skilled with the canoe and

expert river navigators. Captain Miller had four of these units in his Indian engine, and paid them at the rate of \$16 per day. The beauty of this type of motor was that it was elastic and additional cylinders could be placed in operation at need, and Captain Pease had a more up-to-date affair, as his was a six-cylinder motor. Gasoline and ignition troubles were unheard of, and it was not necessary to even crank the engine at starting, though a certain amount of careful priming was no doubt necessary at times. There is no record, but there is more than a possibility that at certain times a judicious mixture of fluids to the carburetors of the cylinders assisted materially in the rapid propulsion of the craft.

The Columbia of Astoria did a profitable business from the time of her launching in the river trade, plying between Portland and the river mouth, 24 hours each way, with frequent trips to the portage at Cascades. The charge was \$25 per head for passengers and the same amount for a ton of freight, and frequently the passengers were jammed aboard as thick as possible. The Columbia lived but a short time and her engines were transferred to the sea during a June freshet.

Bateaux Handed Trade.

Writing of this period, Dan O'Neill, the veteran pursuer, describes some of the difficulties of navigation. "Open boats and man power were the only means of getting goods through, and on several occasions he took charge of fleets of bateaux belonging to the Hudson's Bay company. The boats carried about a five-ton cargo each and were handled by a crew of six Indians, about five of them being in a fleet. Vancouver would be left in the afternoon and the first landing and night's camp would be made near where St. Johns now stands. This was prior to 1850, when the river steamers entered the field. Milwaukie would be reached the second night, and the following night Oregon City. But it was in getting through the first rapids just below Oregon City that the first trouble was encountered. Here the Indians would wade and tow through the swift current, "patient and enduring, good-natured and willing, as long as they received their dollar a day and plenty of fresh beef," said O'Neill.

One of the events that O'Neill tells of was the arrival of a cargo of schoolmarm's for the Oregon schools. At this time, in 1851, he was in command of the Columbia and had the pleasure of taking this delightful assignment through to their destination. It would be interesting in view of the certainty that these more than

fascinating women must certainly have, in a great number of cases, later relinquished their books for marriage to trace some of their adventures.

Lot Whitcomb Braves Ocean.

The Lot Whitcomb, after her launching at Milwaukie on Christmas day, 1850, engaged in river traffic until 1854, with an unvarying career of prosperity. However, in this year, her owners decided that she was too expensive a boat to run and sold her to a San Francisco firm, and in that year she steamed out to sea, was picked up at the bar by the steamship Peytonia and towed to San Francisco. Rough weather was encountered, but the staunch little Willamette-built craft made the trip successfully and passed through the Golden Gate with three feet of water in her hold. Her name was then changed to the Annie Abernathy and she ran for a number of years on the Sacramento river.

From 1851 on the development of river traffic in Oregon was exceedingly rapid. In this year half a dozen boats made their advent into the prosperous trade along the ribbon of water that stretched into the interior. On the upper Willamette this year the diminutive Hoosier made her bow in the trade between Canemah and upriver points. She was made from a ship's longboat, lengthened out, and her motive power supplied from a pile-driver engine and boiler. George Pease was the pilot and purser and she was in service for a long time. In this year Captain Alexander Sinclair Murray brought the steamer Washington, which he had purchased on the Sacramento river, to Portland on the Canemah-upper Willamette run. This trade did not prove profitable and Murray ran her down to Portland in 1852 and placed her on the Portland-Oregon City run, where she ran until superseded by another Murray-owned craft, the Portland.

Barrel Boat Makes Debut.

Then came the Multnomah, another of the famed pioneer boats, and a real queer customer, for she arrived in sections and was called the barrel boat on account of the type of her construction, as she was built of stave-like timbers. She went into service from Canemah to Corvallis and was the first boat to ascend the river to the present agricultural college city. On some of her trips the Multnomah brought down as high as 1500 bushels of grain and enjoyed quite a profitable trade. The Canemah, an opposition boat, made her initial trip on the same route about this time, and managed to obtain the mail contract, and Nathaniel Coe was

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