

Astoria the Home of the Salmon Industry of the World.

ASTORIA and the surrounding section has the unique distinction of being the poor man's "Utopia," because of its great fishing industry which is known the world over. The salmon industry of the Columbia has been a by-word on the west coast for generations and will last for generations to come.

Here the poor man enters into business without capital, he has no master and is his own boss. During the fishing season thousands of men engage in the fishing business on the percentage basis without any outlay beyond a small fee for a fishing license and enough to hold him over for a few days. The man with a few hundred dollars becomes independent in one season by making the purchase of a fishing boat and a net, at an expenditure of not less than three hundred dollars.

Years ago the fishing on the Columbia was mostly done by men who dropped into this section, worked a few weeks or months, and then passed on to other fields of labor and enterprise. Today the fishing is done by men who live in Astoria and other cities along the river all the year around. They are men of families who have become independent as long as the fishing lasts, which will be for many years to come. Some of them are men engaged in other work such as farming, carpentering and like occupations, who spend the season on the river fishing when they are not busy at their own trades.

Salmon fishing on the Columbia is the only occupation of the kind in the world where from four to five thousand men work for themselves. The product they secure is the finest meat put into cans, and there is no need to feed or care for the stock from which this meat is secured. The average salmon crop on the Oregon side of the Columbia River alone is from 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 yearly.

This enormous catch nets to the canneries and fishermen at this point the sum of from \$4,000,000 to \$5,000,000 each year, half of it going to the fishermen for the work of catching the salmon. During the present year the price paid the fishermen for their salmon was from five to six cents a pound.

To show how the fishing grounds are practically kept in the hands of the fishermen, one has to see the workings of the Union Fishermen's Co-operative Packing Co., one of the largest institutions of the kind and probably the only one in the world. This concern has the interests of the fishermen at heart first and last. It also has the preservation of the young fish in mind all the time, while catching the larger fish.

As a model for other canneries and fishing companies to follow, it excels all others, and if the others followed suit the catch of salmon would increase greatly each year, as it allows all the small fish to go up the river to spawn each year until they are big enough to catch.

This company was incorporated in 1897 with the name of the Union Fishermen's Co-operative Packing Company and in the same year built a cannery with an inclosed space of 56,670 square feet. In 1904 cold storage was added to the plant and in 1906 an addition was built to the cold storage, increasing the area 61,800 square feet, making a total floor space of 118,475 feet. This makes it the largest cannery on the Columbia River. The business has been increasing so that it will be necessary to build a new warehouse, two stories high, 100x100 feet this year.

The company issued 300 shares at \$100 each, which are now all sold. The corporation works on the co-operative plan, so that each shareholder has only one vote, regardless of the number of shares held by him. The profits are divided amongst the fishermen according to the number of pounds of salmon delivered by each of them during a season. The stockholders do not get any profit except six per cent interest, which is paid on the stock each year. Fishermen owning shares in the company, but fishing for the company, are treated alike with reference to the division of profits.

When it first commenced, the company had 180 boats engaged in catching salmon, and it now has 315 boats, with 630 men employed in the fishing alone. With the 30 men employed in and about the cannery, the total number employed amounts to 614 men. Nearly all these men stay near the city during the entire year and keep in touch with the fishing constantly. The fact that each man is interested in the success of the firm makes them first-class citizens, and does away with the need to hire an itinerant class of men to harvest the runs.

Only the genuine Columbia River Chinook salmon is packed by this company. This kind of fishes is put up in 1-pound oval cans, half-pound ovals, 1-pound flats, 2-pound nominals, 1-pound exports, 1-pound flats, half-pound flats, each kind with the plain or key attachments. Since the erection of the cold storage plant the company has engaged extensively in pickling salmon. An important feature of the work by this model company is that the fishermen are allowed to use only the net with the large mesh, so that only the large salmon are taken. Fish are caught only with the gill net by this concern so that the pack is of an unusually fine quality.

The output of the company has figured largely in the world's fairs and at the Lewis and Clark exposition. Both at the latter and the

St. Louis world's fair, the produce of the company was awarded a number of first prizes and gold medals. Some of the brands they put up are the Gill Netters' Best, a fancy article, the Co-operators' Best, also fancy, and the Golden Anchor, a choice salmon.

Of all the fish caught on the Columbia the Chinook salmon easily takes first rank. The Steelhead salmon comes second in quality and quantity, the Silversides, third, the Bluebacks, fourth, and the Tules, or Dog salmon, fifth. The run of Chinook salmon commences about the first of April and lasts until September 30, the Silversides running about the same period. The Steelhead salmon commences to run about the beginning of the rainy season in the fall, lasting about two months.

There are plenty of other fish in the river and off its mouth. There are the sturgeon, shad, smelt, catfish, tom cod, black bass, herring, dounders, perch and carp. The total number of fish taken on an average is from a half to a million pounds yearly. Not much effort is being put forth toward the catching of these fish, however, as the salmon brings such large profits that ordinary profit is not a big drawing card along the Columbia.

The salmon canneries on the Columbia River and at Astoria are numbered by the dozen. While the Union Fishermen's Packing Company is the largest, there are numerous others almost as large and which employ thousands of men. Some of them furnish boats and gear to any fishermen desiring them in exchange for a percentage of their catch, but this is not practiced so extensively as in former years, when the fishermen only came during the salmon run and went to other sections during the rest of the year. Nowadays, the fishermen own their own outfits and when not engaged in the fishing business store their boats and engage in lumbering and farming during the closed season.

One of the grandest sights in the world is to see the fleet of several thousand fishing boats start for the mouth of the Columbia from the numerous canneries and wharves of Astoria. Nearly all the boats are constructed with one large sprit sail and it is impossible to tell one boat from another more than 100 yards distant. Hundreds upon hundreds of white sails flit to and fro ceaselessly upon the broad waters of the bay until it looks as though they would crowd each other out of the water.

The harbor at this point, however, is from seven to ten miles wide, and 15 miles long, and although the boats appear crowded together, in reality they are not. There is plenty of room for them and many more



GILL-NETTING ON THE COLUMBIA RIVER.

new arrivals. With the era of the gasoline engine the more prosperous fishermen have secured gasoline engines to propel their boats in place of the sail. This enables them to get to the fishing grounds quicker than their companions in the sail boats, and they don't have to wait for either wind or tide. New styles of fast boats are continually being constructed and deep-sea craft are beginning to show up in the fishing industry.

The competition among the fishermen over selecting the places where the salmon are thickest has resulted in these modern fishing boats of speed and endurance in rough weather. The surf at the mouth of the harbor has always been a dangerous spot for the small sailboats, but the salmon are so thick there that the fishermen become venturesome. Those who are able are constructing boats which will enable them to fish in the surf and they become so skilful with the small boats that it is a marvel to watch them in this dangerous spot.

The canneries all have large gasoline launches which make regular and quick trips to "picking up" stations at various points around the mouth of the Columbia and along its banks. These stations are made convenient for the fishermen to dispose of their catch without the necessity of sailing their boats to the canneries. The launches supplied by the canneries do this for them. On each launch there are scales for the weighing of the fish and the men running the boats keep track of each fisherman's catch.

The boats carry ice on board and the salmon are taken care of in the keenest manner. They are rapidly brought to the canneries where a large force of men are engaged in cutting up the fish, placing them in tins, cooking them in patent ovens, and preparing them for all parts of the world. The despatch used in taking the fish from the river until they are ready for shipment is marvelous, and has been brought down to a science of years of practice and new inventions.

The whole salmon industry of this part of the state is one of the strongest drawing cards of the west among tourists and visitors to this section. The simplicity of the operations on the river, the despatch used in catching the big fish in thousands from the waters, the canneries full of the red, fresh meat, and the carloads of canned and pickled fish being shipped to all parts of the world form an industry of amazing wealth and interest.

Salmon fishing has many classes of citizens among its advocates. Some of them are men of no education, some are fairly well educated and quite a number of them are college men. The latter spend their summers fishing in the Columbia and earn enough in a few months to put them through their courses of study at school or college. Even when they have graduated some of them return to the outdoor life with pleasure while making enough by their efforts to give them a fair start in life.

The industry has many sides to it, but there is no doubt that it is an industry which is unlike any other in the world. It belongs to the people of the west and to all who wish to enter it. There is room for everybody and every man stands the same show to make a competence by outdoor labor. It is the friend of the poor man because it requires little or no capital, and efforts are being made to keep it in the hands of the people as their heritage, and not let it pass into the hands of the corporate interests which kill competition except among those who have plenty of means, and who therefore can live without taking this great benefit from the hands of the man of small means.

The commanding element of this great business is the Columbia River Packers' Association, a group of 11 great canneries, which, working in perfect harmony, under essentially wise provisions of technique and business, set the pace for the whole Pacific Coast in the maintenance and perpetuation of this enormous industry. The association has headquarters in Astoria, and with other concerns, maintains canneries throughout the Alaskan fisheries.

Astoria has nearly half a million of money in the Alaska salmon fisheries at Nushagak, the officers, warehouses and men and ships being located here, the latter going north each season for packs that pay well and give employment to hundreds.

The Alaska Fishermen's Packing Company, with a capital of \$200,000, is of the group of three concerns engaged here, and always outfit for a pack of 60,000 cases though there are seasons when they do not get that limit. Last season they sent the American ship John Currier north with 170 white men and 134 Chinamen, and the ship was lost on the home trip, but all hands were saved and returned in safety via Seattle. W. F. McGregor, one of Astoria's leading citizens is president of the company, E. P. Noonan serving as secretary, with P. A. Berglund as superintendent of the northern plant and business. The steamer North Star, of this port, is the sea-going tender of the Nushagak plant and the steamer Nuten serves the cannery there. The men sent north are all practical fishermen, and the business is counted one of the big factors in the commerce of Astoria.

The Columbia River Packers' Association, of which A. B. Hammond is president; Samuel Elmore, vice-president, and George H. George, secretary and treasurer, stands for an investment of \$150,000 in this behalf, and despatches its own ship, the St. Nicholas, each year to the northern field, with an average return pack of 45,000 cases of salmon. L. O. Belland of this city, is the company's representative at Nushagak, and he handles, as a usual thing, 90 white men and 100 Chinamen and Japanese; these men being likewise principally of Astoria and its neighborhood. This company is among the great concerns of Astoria and is capitalized at over \$2,000,000.

The Alaska-Portland Packers' Association, with F. M. Warren as president, and his son, F. M. Warren, Jr., as secretary and general manager, has \$125,000 invested in a Nushagak plant, and annually sends 200 men there on their own ship, the Berlin, under the superintendency of G. A. Daley, and usually bring down a pack of from 50,000 to 55,000 cases.

The Alaska Red is the fish caught and packed there, and while it is an important commodity in the markets of the earth, it does not approach the Royal Chinook of the Columbia, the finest fish that ever swam.

Thus it will be seen that Astoria in her quiet way contributes largely to the commerce and general utility of mankind, and is entitled to the friendliest consideration of all men seeking a new home, another investment and the peace and welfare whereof all men are in search.



SCENE IN A SALMON CANNERY AT ASTORIA.



TONS OF SALMON READY TO BE CANNED.