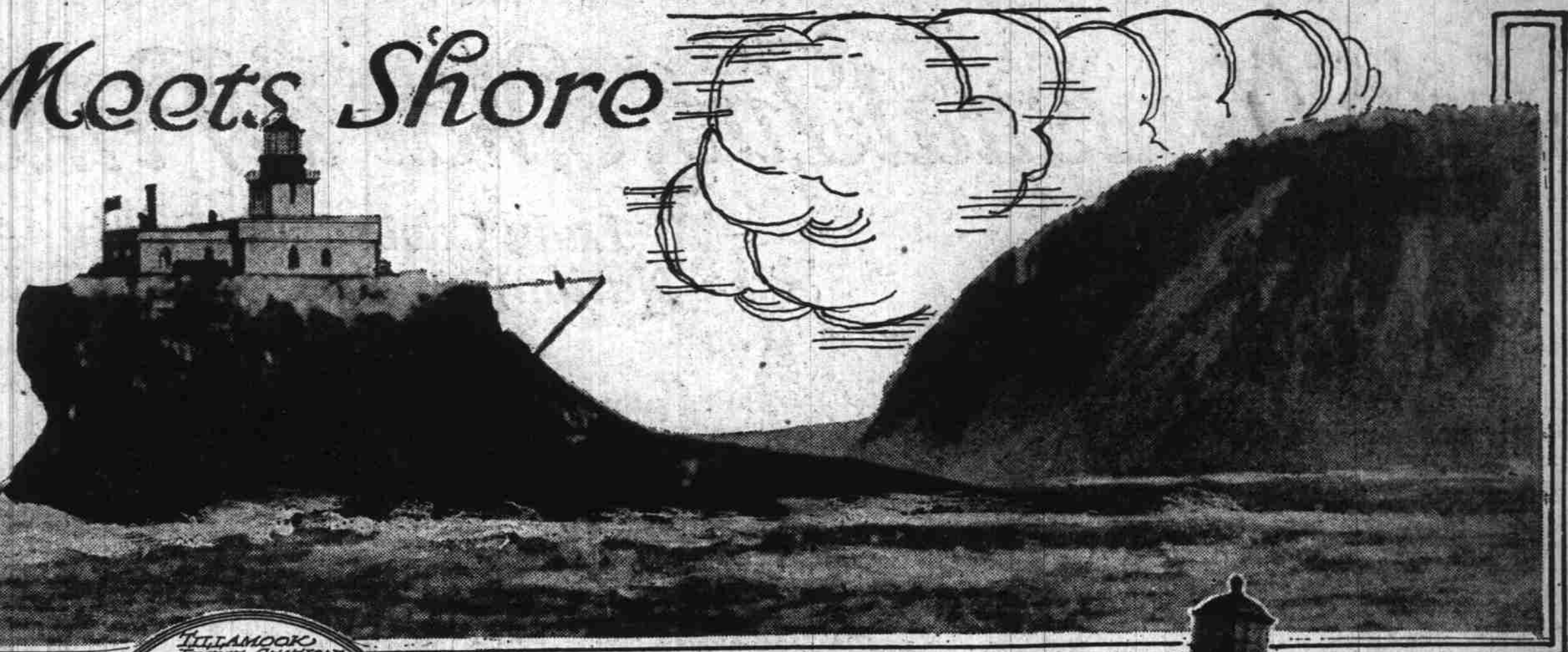


Where Sea Meets Shore

OREGON Coast Sentinels
to Guide the Modern
Mariner into Safe Sea Lanes



UMPQUA RIVER LIGHT STATION



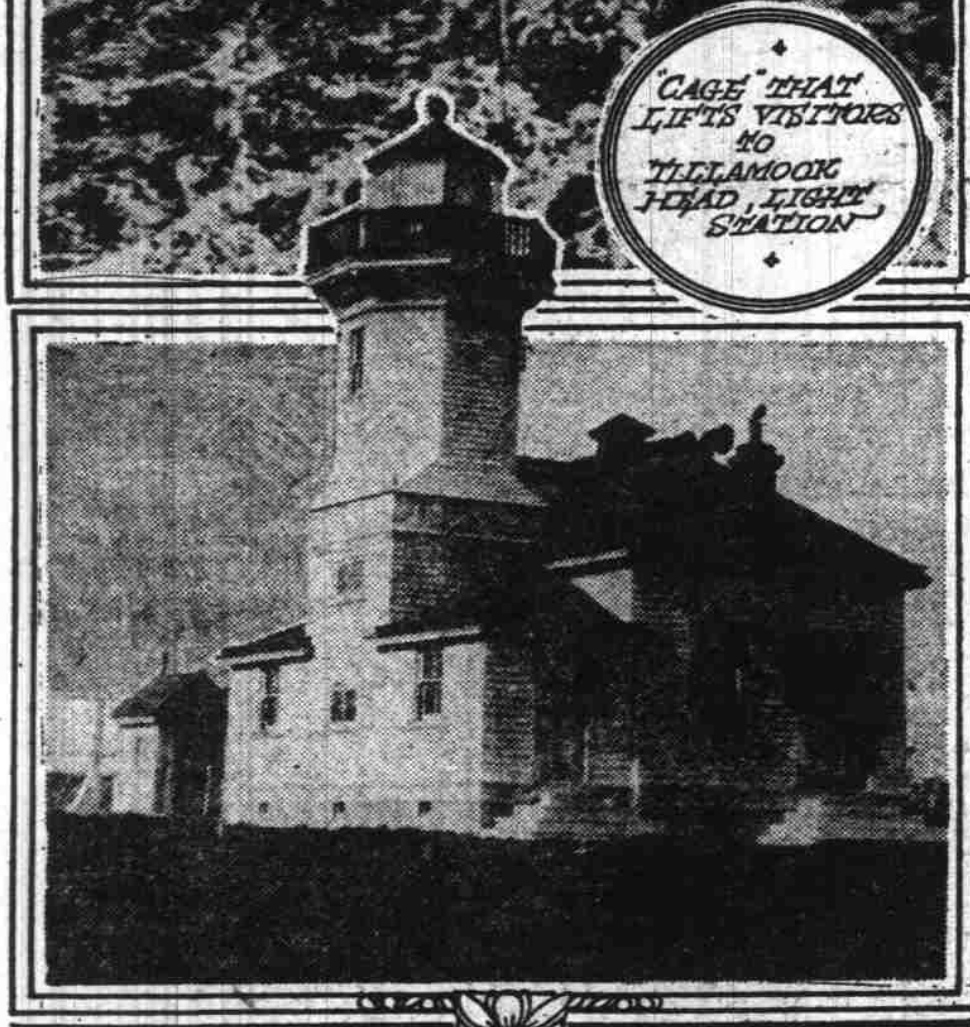
TILLAMOOK LIGHT STATION
ABOUT WHICH ROMANTIC WEAVES
SOME WONDERFUL TALES



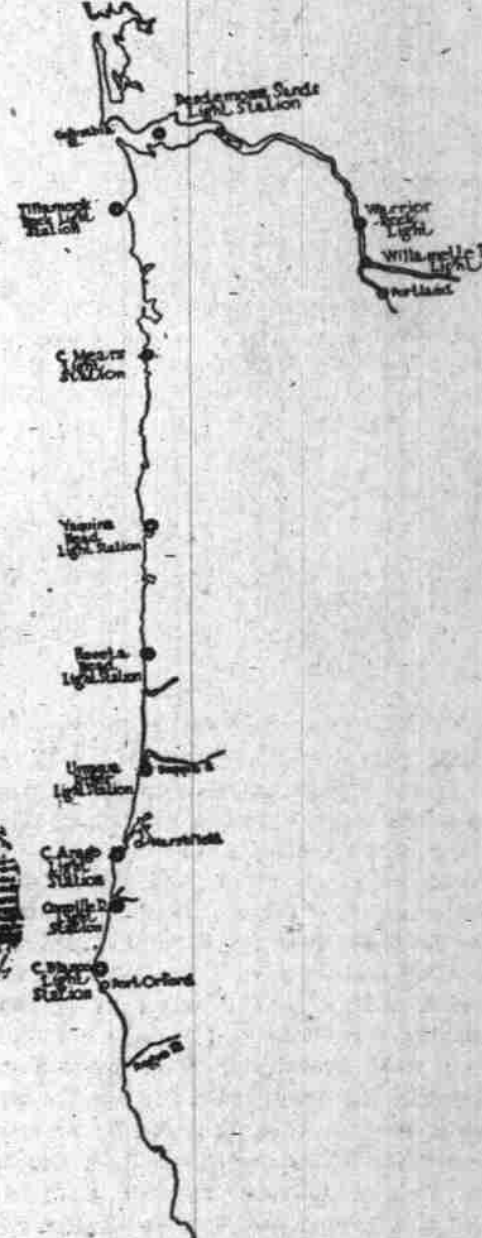
CAPE BLANCO LIGHT STATION



COQUILLE RIVER LIGHT STATION



CAPE ARAGO LIGHT STATION



By Earl C. Brownlee

FOR 46 years—never missed a night, no matter what the weather—James Langlois was the keeper of Cape Blanco light station, one of the 12 important Oregon coast beacons to the men who sail the seas.

What stories of the stormy deep that man could tell!

At the very threshold of his rockbound home have been dashed to their doom the lives of hundreds of men in the battered, shattered hulks of scores of sturdy craft that essayed the conquest of the great ocean.

It is to Langlois and his kind that the world owes much of its progress—they're the men who have lighted the ocean pathways to fame, fortune and romance; the men who have guarded the gateways of the world's commerce. It is of such men as these that fictionists weave their most entrancing tales and most thrilling narratives.

Langlois retired a year ago with nearly a half century of splendid service as keeper of Cape Blanco light station to his credit. And, while the marks of the harness of his lifetime wear away in pursuits perhaps more pleasant, yet far less exacting, there is being built by other men the histories of other careers almost as notable.

At Tillamook rock light station—desolate, dismal and grim—Robert Gerlof has spent 19 years of his life. Those 19 years have seen enacted many bits of the world's drama that have fairly awed civilization's structure—yet Tillamook rock, a dreary old barrier of nature, set up that the ocean's wild waves might test themselves, is today as it was then, a bleak, black bulk.

About that hoary mound of stone the sea has crashed out its rime unflinchingly through the years—and just as unflinchingly the brilliant lights thereon have steadied the hands of unnumbered mariners. Lives have come and gone, wars have been fought and won, nations have been built and fallen, but Tillamook rock and the keepers of its beacon lights, all too oblivious of the world's transformation, have silently, inactively looked on.

That very inactivity has helped mightily in the transformation, withal.

Roaring over Tillamook rock through the gloom of an icy night nearly 26 years ago, a reign of terror spread its murky mantle. In the history of that scene of solitude there is written a chapter under the date of December 9, 1894.

It was on that date that the sea, its fathoms of water swept by a fierce wind, broke over the rock and the United States government light station on its barren crest.

The station was inundated by storm tossed waters whose fury levelled every work of man. Great

vessels on that awful night were playthings in Neptune's grasp.

A giant wave flooded over the rock and made tinder of the solid roof of the light station; another dislodged loose stone in its anger and hurled its missiles into the frame of the buildings, ripping them as a great explosion might.

Smashing the heavy glass in the light station tower, breaking to pieces the dwelling that sheltered the men who kept the light, destroying the fog signal that had warned many brave seamen of the dangers of contact with the ocean's barriers—the storm took its toll.

Grasping for life's sake at any solid handhold, only to be torn away by a wall of frigid water, men grimly awaited death in the sea they had slaved to make safe for others, and silently offered prayer for freedom from such fate.

God is a personality on the high seas. Who, better than the mariner or the keeper of a light, can know his powers and see his works? The mariner and his mate—they who have seen his work and felt his presence—are ever devout souls. So it is with the keeper of the light.

The Oregon coast, rugged, rocky frontier, is guarded by 12 lights of the "station" classification. Three of them are within the Columbia river and another, classed as a "station," is the lighthouse off the mouth of the Columbia.

Of these stations Tillamook light, mounted on a hardy old rock six miles off shore, 18 miles south of the mouth of the Columbia river, is the most famed of all and the most isolated of the Oregon coast beacons.

Tillamook rock station is most vulnerable to weather of any of the lights and in its isolated, desolate position, where a less solid foundation would be like paper in the wind, it is surrounded, perhaps, by a greater wealth of fancy than any other light on the Pacific.

The station tops the lonesome rock, where, always in the path of the gale, men found no small task in erecting timber to defy the seas and their torments. For years Tillamook rock station was the main light for entrance to the Columbia river. Its importance as a guide to that particular channel was only slightly lessened by the establishment a few years ago of the Columbia river light vessel a mile offshore at the mouth of the river. The Tillamook station is especially important to mariners coming from Southern waters.

Light stations on the Oregon coast and in the wide Columbia are a unit in the seventeenth lighthouse district, of which Robert Warrack, solid little Scot, is inspector. Warrack has been at the executive helm of Oregon lights for 20 years and he knows their histories and their stories like a father knows his son.

Twelve men warrant title as

"keeper of the light," although there are actually employed in Oregon light stations 28 men, of whom 24 are in the stations along the ocean coast.

The 12 stations are: Cape Blanco, Coquille river, Cape Arago, Umpqua river, Hecla head, Yaquina head, Cape Meares, Tillamook rock, the lighthouse and inside the Columbia river—Desdemona sands, Warrior rock and Willamette river light station. Each has at least one man "on the job," while such a station as Tillamook rock keeps five persons employed.

Keepers of the light stations in the order named above are: James S. Hughes, Oscar Wren, Joseph Dunson, A. P. C. Hald, Olaf L. Hansen, William Smith, Mort Galvin, Robert Gerlof, Captain David Ingram, Michael Ludescher, Thomas E. Stanfield and H. G. Halkett.

James Langlois, the veteran of Oregon light station keepers, retired to a pretty little home at Bandon a year ago on a three-quarters pay pension that will see him safely and comfortably through the years that remain.

Not all the stations are so entirely isolated as is Tillamook rock. Several of the shore stations are inhabited by the keepers and their families and are surrounded by prolific little gardens and the other comforts of normal existence. But on Tillamook rock there is no sign of woman's hand. It is no place for the wife and children—it's a dreary place at best for the sturdy man.

Cape Blanco light station guides the mariner, if he is careful, around the most westerly point on the Pacific coast of America except one. Cape Flattery protrudes farther, somewhat, than Cape Blanco. It is one of the most important on the coast and even when it functions perfectly, Cape Blanco reef is a dangerous bit of rock against which many ships have been pounded to splinters.

The three stations in the Columbia river are important within their scope. Desdemona sands station is opposite Fort Stevens and is the more important of the river trio. Warrior rock is above St. Helens and the Willamette river station is at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers.

Cape Arago light station, originally constructed in 1866, is the oldest beacon on the Oregon coast. Several years later, after the ocean had encroached upon its rocky foundation, the light was reconstructed about a quarter mile closer to shore. The end of the peninsula upon which the light is situated was crumbling away before the sea's advances when the light was reconstructed. The new station has a much more powerful light and a fog signal has been added to its equipment.

When Cape Arago station was built there wasn't much to Oregon, and her ports, only two of them in the least way important, were then more visions than facts.

The light in Arago's tower is

170,000 candlepower and is, incidentally, the only lens of English make on the Oregon coast. All other beacons, practically, are manufactured in France.

Lighthouses are expensive propositions, as Inspector Warrack can testify. Umpqua light station, built between 1892 and 1894, is perhaps representative of those on the Oregon coast. The tower of Umpqua light cost, at that time, \$12,000 and the dwellings and other buildings, including the keeper's home, cost \$25,270, while the illuminating apparatus cost some \$100,000 additional. Considering the advance of prices in the meantime, the present cost of the same structures would be far greater.

The lenses of the illuminating apparatus are the expensive part of the lighthouse outfit, although there is incidental equipment that cost the government neat sums. For example, there is telephonic communication between Tillamook rock and the mainland. To lay a heavy cable from the mainland to the rock, connecting the bleak light station practically with all parts of the world, was no trifling expense. Tillamook rock, too, is not to be ascended on a stormy day by the average human. Therefore, an ingenious cage, swung on wire rope, lifts visitors from their boats to the summit of the rock in a rather thrilling and certainly novel fashion.

Something more than mere money induces a lighthouse keeper

to practically separate himself from his fellow beings for a life of seeming isolation at a United States government light station. It's the romance, maybe; or, perhaps, it's that odd quality in the natures of men that prompts them to do the unusual, that permits them to be happy and contented far from the centers of population and the scene of the world's activities.

Stations maintained by the government are of several classifications. At a station of the first order the base wage is \$75 a month. When the cost of living started on its upward climb, though, it didn't miss the sometimes forlorn light stations. As a matter of fact, it struck in such places with added force, and congress was constrained to relieve the situation. Therefore, lightkeepers receive a bonus of \$20 a month in stations of the first order and subsistence allowance that averages about \$13.50 a month, bringing the total wage for such stations to \$108.50 a month.

Tillamook rock, where life is so nearly devoid of its interest, the keeper gets \$133.50, including subsistence.

At 70, keepers are automatically retired from service on pension. The pension is computed on the

basis of three quarters pay and length of service. After at least 30 years in service a man at 70 is retired on exactly three quarters pay. He may retire voluntarily with the same pension, however, at 65 years if he has served 30 years or more.

Light stations are not the only sentinels on the Oregon coast, for there are many light buoys, whistling buoys and other devices for the guidance of seafarers. Such beacons do not require the service of individual keepers, as do the light stations, where someone must be always present and where every day in every year at sunset the lights that mark the great sea lanes are turned on and where at sunrise the same lights are extinguished.

Except for a space of a very few safe miles of voyage, the mariner off the Oregon coast is never out of range of a light station. And in between the stations are the buoys to mark the channel even more definitely.

Those same apparently simple tasks of the lighthouse keeper are what make the most faithful of men welcome their brief annual vacation to mingle in the affairs of the world and leave their sometimes dreary existence with a touch of variety that is not always afforded by the occasional visits of the seacoast missionary or the school teacher sent to lonely stations to guide to a more broad vision the children of these splendid people.