

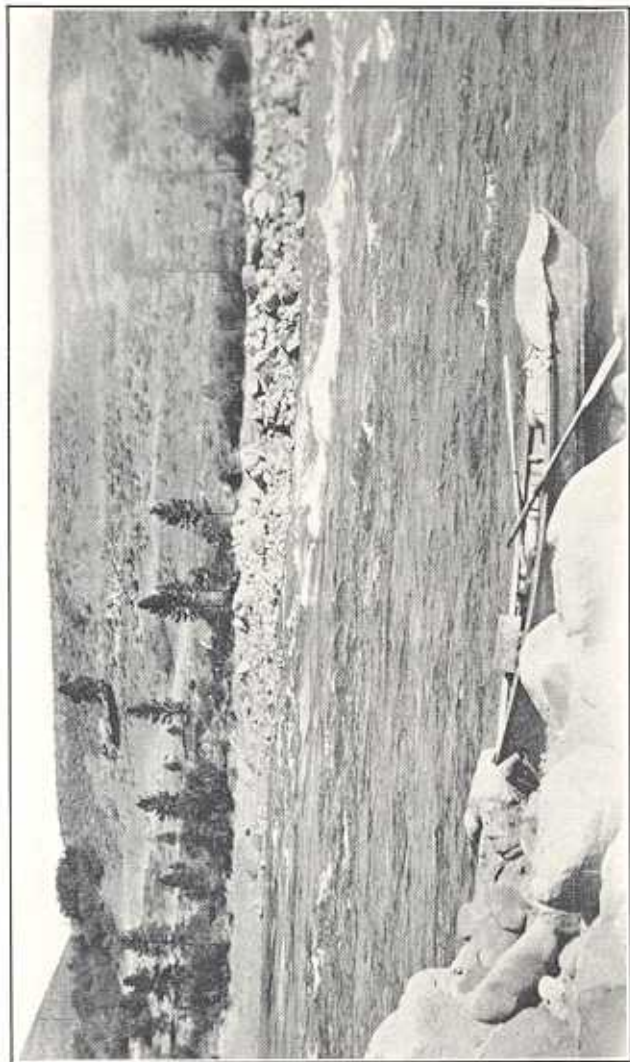
CHAPTER XX

FROM GEROME TO WENATCHEE

There were still 59 rapids for me to pass through before reaching the Lower Cascades, and tidewater, but as I ran them all, except a short distance at Spokane Rapids, and made no more portages, I will give the minor places but brief mention, and will only describe such as have exceptional features.

I left the cabin on the high bench on the morning of September 30, and skirted the left-hand shore, which is here the west boundary of the Spokane Indian Reservation, a small reserve of 150,000 acres, bordered by the Spokane River on the south, and extending eastward from the Columbia River, in a narrow strip, for about 40 miles. The headquarters are in the interior, at Wellpinit, north of the Spokane River. The Reserve is in charge of Mr. Omar L. Babcock, Superintendent, under Government supervision, having jurisdiction over 673 Indians.

A mile above the mouth of the Spokane River I reached Spokane Rapids—a place demanding investigation before running. The River is somewhat contracted here, the rapids about a mile long, and straight, and the shores are covered with great blocks of basalt, many as large as a small cottage. The agitated current starts at the right-hand shore, runs diagonally to the middle of the River, where



SPokane Rapids

the breakers become high and tempestuous. Between the line of great breakers and the right-hand shore the water is agitated, but devoid of obstructing rocks, and the waves but moderate. My inspection convinced me that the way to run Spokane Rapids was to cut quickly through the streak of rough water at its beginning, get into the milder waves below, and hug the right-hand shore. I might have done this by rowing, but as there was a possibility that the current would draw the boat into dangerous water before I could cross it, and as 200 feet of easy lining assured absolute safety I adopted that method (my last bit of lining), and having nothing to contend with but choppy waves, soon reached and passed the mouth of Spokane River. There is a settlement there called Lincoln, but I did not take the time to visit it.

Four miles below the mouth of Spokane River I reached Hawk Creek, at the head of the Great Bend, where the Columbia, which had been flowing southerly, turns abruptly to the northwest. A few miles farther along I passed a great, sugar-loaf-shaped, white rock, at the water edge of the left shore—one of the prominent landmarks of the River. Not far below White Rock I landed and made camp among the pine timber, on a boulder-encumbered, sandy beach, on the right-hand shore. There were a couple of empty cabins, well back from my landing place, but too far away for me to use, and I spread my bed in the sand under the shelter of a large pine tree.

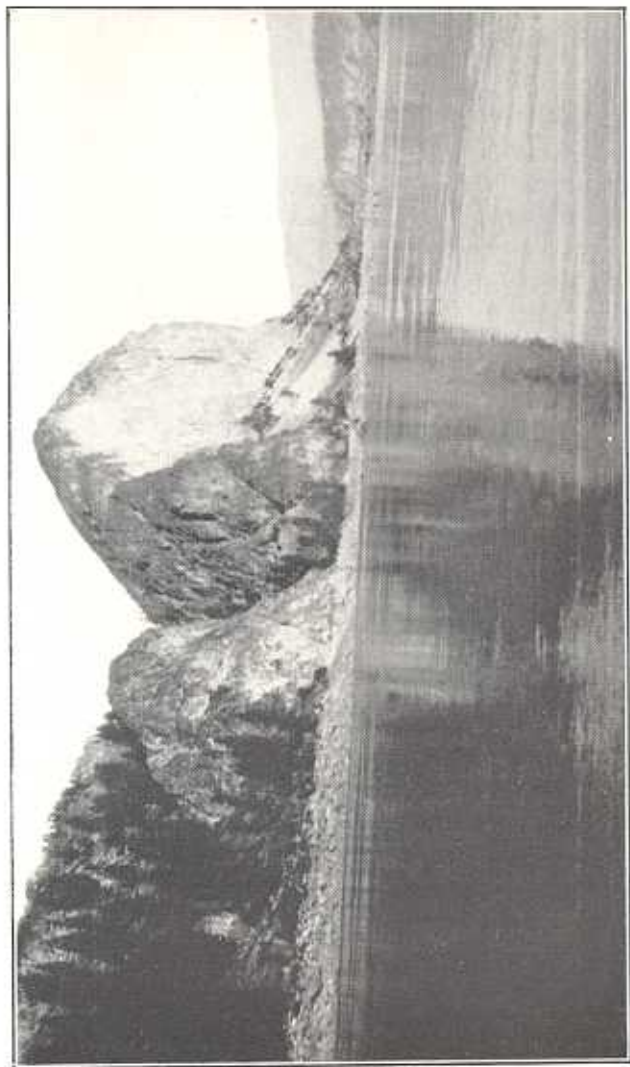
I had set up the stove and was preparing supper when I heard the put-put, put-put, of a motor boat

coming upriver. It was not long before she came in sight around a point. She contained two men. I waved to them to come ashore, which they did immediately. After I explained to them who I was, and what I was doing, they introduced themselves. The engineer was Earl Houston, and the name of the other was Fitzgerald. They were returning from a place below called Barry, to which point they had towed a raft from Gerome for a man named Ike Emerson. As I came through Northport I purchased a copy of the *Sunset Magazine*, which contained Lewis R. Freeman's narrative of his experience with the section of the Columbia from Spokane Rapids to Chelan. Freeman had met Emerson at Gerome and engaged passage for himself and photographer on a raft that Emerson was about to take downriver. Mr. Houston is the Earl of Freeman's story who was the engineer of the motor boat that towed the raft, on that spectacular trip.

Before leaving, Houston told me that about three-fourths of a mile upriver, on the same side I was on, he had a cabin—his half-way stopping place—where there was a garden with fruit going to waste, and he asked me to go up there after finishing the evening meal and we could have a talk, and he would give me some watermelon. I had had plenty of other fresh fruit to eat after leaving British Columbia, but no watermelon. The opportunity of getting some was too good to be overlooked, and a short time later found me on my way up the trail to Houston's place. The evening was spent with the two men talking over my own trip down the Colum-

bia and Freeman's experiences as related in the *Sunset Magazine*, which I had brought with me for them to read. I had all the watermelon I could eat, and when I started back to my camp, Earl asked me to come up again in the morning, saying he would have a lot of different kinds of fruit ready for me, and would take me back to camp in the motor boat. In the morning, after breaking camp and loading the boat, I again hiked up the trail to the cabin, got the fruit, made the little motor boat trip, and then resumed my journey, leaving the two men standing on the shore, watching until a bend hid me from view.

Below White Rock the Columbia is quite crooked, the hillsides are steep and as each bend is approached the impression is given that a cañon is ahead, but as the turn is made, the illusion is dispelled and there is no real closing in of the River's shores until Hell Gate is reached, fifteen and a half miles below Hawk Creek. Hell Gate has not only an ominous name, but an unsavory reputation. I knew little about it except from the usual highly-embellished reports, and the description given by one writer, who likened its zigzag current to a streak of lightning. From Earl Houston I not only tried to find out something about Hell Gate but other alleged bad places in the Columbia below where I met him, but although Earl is a cool-headed and competent white-water man he is of the conservative type, and his consistent advice to me was to always go ashore and investigate before deciding what to do with a piece of bad water.



WHITE ROCK

It was on the morning of October 1 when I reached Hell Gate, put ashore on the left, in the usual eddy, climbed the steep sides of a rough bench, and made an examination of its full length of about a half-mile. It had none of the repelling features of the Little Dalles, and to say I was agreeably surprised is to put it mildly. It is a contracted gorge with perpendicular walls of considerable height, and at the entrance is a large, protruding rock dividing a swift current agitated, below the rock, into fair-sized breakers which dissolve into a quiet eddy within the enclosing walls. At the head of the gorge there are two channels, formed by the rock just mentioned; then a single channel; then three channels—two great, upstanding rocks causing the separation. The middle channel of the three is straight-away, but terminates in vicious, foaming cascades. The right-hand channel turns abruptly to the right, is narrow, and even rougher than the middle one. The left-hand channel leaves the eddy almost at right angles with a swift, choppy current, devoid of breakers, and in a hundred yards impinges directly against the face of a low, vertical cliff which deflects it sharply to the right, makes a "hairpin" turn, and in a quarter-mile unites with the currents of the other two channels. There is still another channel, dry when I saw it, which is at the extreme left, at the beginning of the gorge, and unites with the upper leg of the hairpin channel—it must carry water when the River is high.

The appearance of the gorge was in no way alarming to me. The left-hand channel at the entrance

was not navigable, my route was by way of the right-hand channel, and the only element of real danger was the gateway rock and the trailing breakers below it. I would be less than human not to be somewhat influenced by Hell Gate's evil name and reputation, and while my examination convinced me the place was safe, I confess to a slight feeling of uneasiness, to the extent that to prepare to swim in case of an upset, I removed my boots and outer clothing, and rowed through Hell Gate in underwear only. However, no sooner had I pushed the COLUMBIA from the shore and grasped the oars than all uneasiness fled, and mind and body was alert and active.

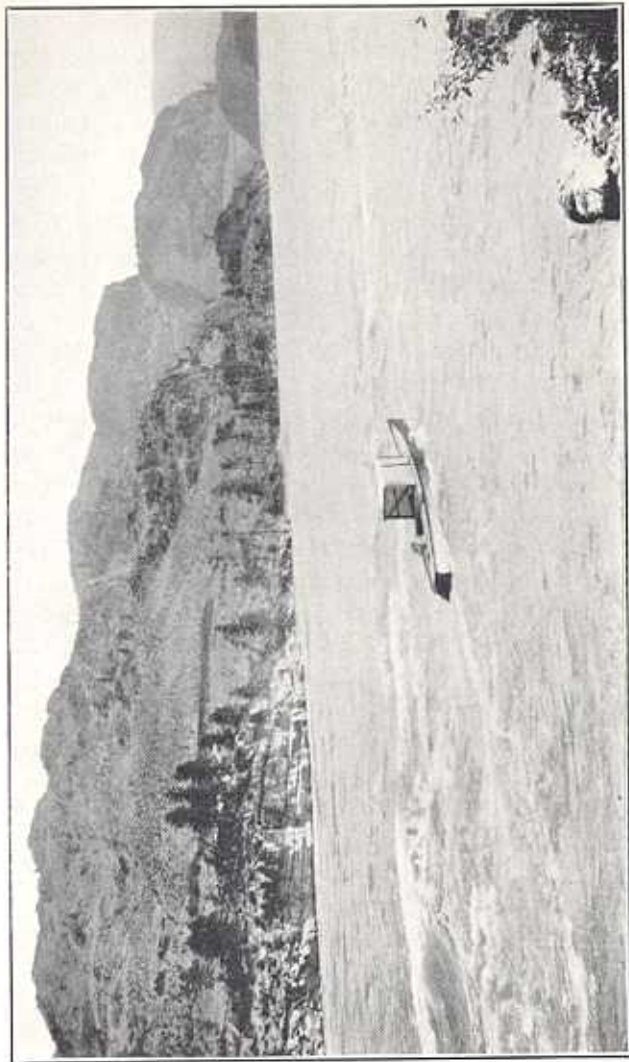
I know no better how to describe the mental state of a boatman when running whitewater than to repeat the words of the Reverend Samuel Parker, who ran the Cascades in 1836:

"The sensations excited in descending the Cascades are of that peculiar character which are best understood by experience. The sensation of fear is no sooner awakened than it subsides before the power and magnificence of the rolling surges, the circling vortices, and the roaring breakers. Let those whose energies, either of body or mind, need arousing, try the navigation of the Columbia in high water and their powers will be invigorated for almost any future enterprise."

Having left the landing place in the eddy I pulled directly across, above the entrance, to the right-hand shore, and entering the gateway easily evaded the obstructing rock and its trailing plume of white-water, leaving them on the left, and sliding into the eddy below. I had shot through the gateway stern

first but the swirl of the eddy was too strong to make headway backing water through it and I was compelled to turn and row bow forward to make downstream progress. The eddy was harmless and the head of the left-hand channel, which is the only runnable one, was soon reached. Here, the position of the boat was again reversed, and stern first I shot down the swift current directly toward the perpendicular cliff, not to dash against it, for that was not the intention. When a hundred feet away I turned to the left, and ran diagonally, and quickly, across to the lower leg of the hairpin, reaching it bow first, and then again reversing the boat dashed down that leg, but pulled to the left out of the influence of the current before reaching the agitated, dangerous junction of the three channels. As the hairpin channel is only a clear-running chute of swift water, and as dashing against the cliff, as well as the breakers at the gateway, had been avoided, no waves had come aboard the COLUMBIA. In fact, except for an occasional dash of spray, which fell on the canvas at the stern and immediately ran off on the outside, no water was shipped in any of the rapids after leaving Grand Rapids.

The above description of the method of negotiating Hell Gate may be interesting only to rivermen, and not to those who want something thrilling. But to a person standing on the cañon walls and watching the performance it might partake of the spectacular; and no doubt the changes of position and evolutions gone through, accentuated by obstructing rocks and foaming, crested currents, would have



—Photo, by Houston.

EARL HOUSTON'S MOTOR BOAT IN RAPIDS BELOW HELL GATE

made an interesting moving picture. But to the man at the oars the only thoughts are of the necessity of a cool head and hand, and the exertion of a little muscle—the making of no misplays, either mental or physical.

Below Hell Gate there are thirty miles of unobstructed river, and by noon of October 2, I reached Barry, a little hamlet on the left side and about a half-mile distant from the shore, and landed alongside of Ike Emerson's raft. Ike was up to his thighs in the water, breaking up the raft, and having the logs hauled up on the bench by a team of horses. I stayed at Barry long enough to mail some letters and get a lunch; and before leaving handed Emerson the *Sunset Magazine* containing Freeman's Columbia River story. He had indulged in some levity about Ike, who did not seem to be impressed with the tale, for, as the book was handed back to me, he remarked, "Yes, I made it as hard as I could for Freeman so he would have something to write about."

The next place in the River at which I expected to find trouble was at Box Cañon, where Houston's only advice was to land and investigate. Thinking Ike Emerson would tell me something more definite, and telling him I had run Hell Gate without trouble, I asked if it was safe to go through Box Cañon. Ike is of a different type from Earl, and in his blunt fashion said, "When you see it, you'll run it." And he was right—I did.

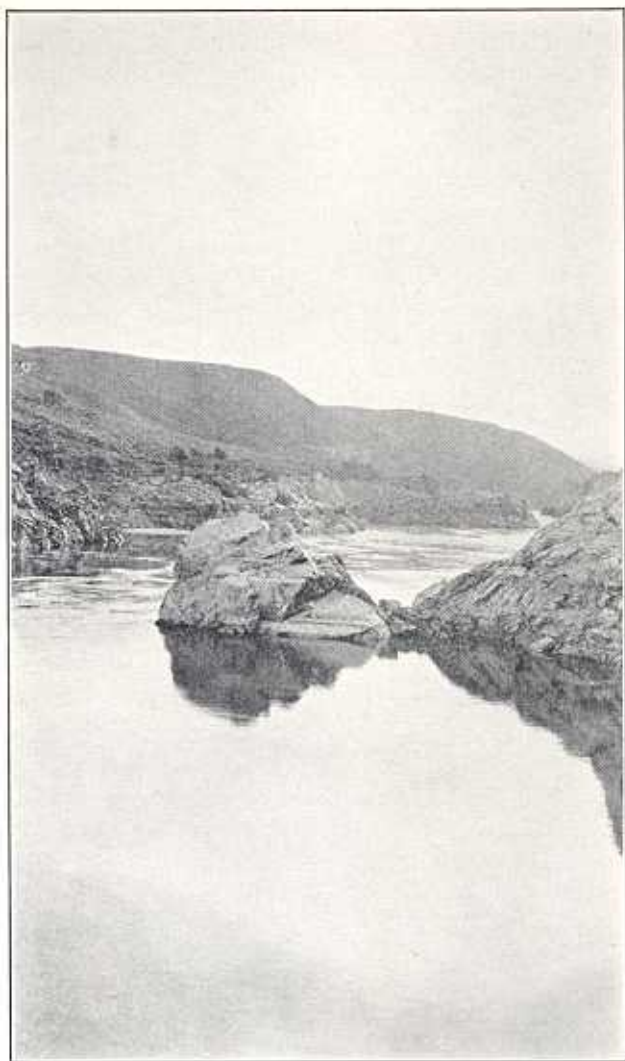
A short distance below Barry as I was running a rather rough but not dangerous rapid, known as Monaghan, or Brickley, I noticed two horsemen who

had stopped at the foot of the rapid and were watching me. As I was in some doubt in regard to the correct name I rowed to the shore and asked the older horseman what the place was called. His answer set me straight, but he supplemented it by saying, "I could not be hired to run that rough water the way you do." I assured him that, compared with many other rapids I had gone safely through on my way down the River, they were not alarming. Two miles and a half farther brought me to Equilibrium, another fairly stiff rapid, which was gone through the same as Monaghan. By nightfall the Nespelem River was reached and I went into camp on the Indian Reserve in a clump of willows below an abandoned warehouse on the bench above. Here the River makes a sharp turn to the right and then to the left around a large gravel bar possibly twelve feet high, but which must be submerged during high water. There was a blind channel to the left of the bar with its lower end closed.

On the morning of October 3, I reached Mahkin Rapids and the head of Nespelem Cañon, an eroded gorge twenty-four miles long, with walls of no great height. The Mahkin are considered among the great rapids of the Columbia, but I ran them with nothing more than a little rough going; and then through Parsons and three small, unnamed rapids, and reached the head of Long Rapids, and there made camp on the left-hand shore. The timber had been gradually getting scarcer with the descent of the River and I spread my bed among the rocks under the shelter of a lone, stunted pine tree.

Long Rapids have an exceedingly swift current and a length of about a mile, terminating at the head of Box Cañon in an eddy. As the channel is free of rocks, there are no dashing breakers to be feared, only the fairly smooth, swiftly gliding current. In the morning, to be sure, there would be a place to land before entering Box Cañon, and knowing that the descent of Long Rapids would be like shooting a toboggan, I walked down the shore to where the eddy could be "sized up," selected a safe landing place, and returning, launched the COLUMBIA without hesitation, and in a flash was at the foot of the current and safely secured to the left-hand shore.

Box Cañon is another of those places on the Columbia River, that either justly or unjustly has an evil reputation. I studied it carefully, and when the River is low there is nothing to deter anyone from navigating it. It is a gorge, something like Hell Gate but straight. At its head there is a large, protruding rock in location and other features almost identical with the one at the Hell Gate entrance. Below this rock, and its breakers, the whirlpools have considerable power but not enough to form maelstroms capable of sucking a boat down in their vortices. There is no erratic current to contend with, and no whitewater except at the entrance rock; and the avoidance of this rock is the only problem. There was nothing to disquiet me about the situation, and, as like Hell Gate at the entrance, the left-hand channel was not navigable, I pulled across the eddy to the right-hand shore, easily passed the rock and was soon in the whirlpools. As I expected, these



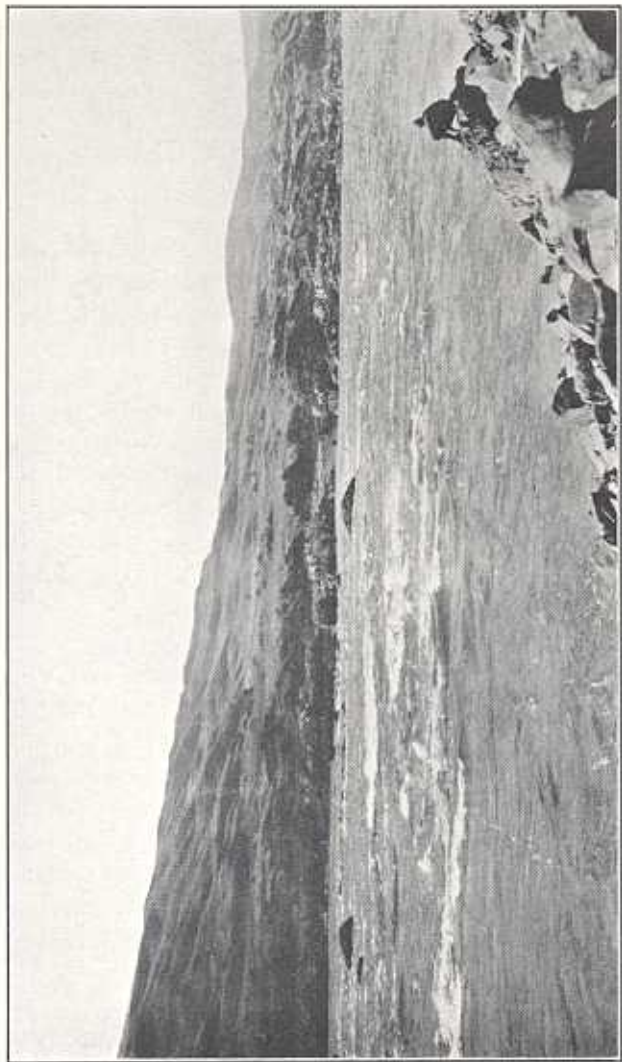
—Photo. by Furde

BOX CAÑON, LOOKING UPSTREAM

were not dangerous, and only required strong rowing to get through them. Box Cañon is short, and it was not long before I was out of its confines.

The combination of Long Rapids and Box Cañon is what is called by Lieutenant Symonds in his report, which I have already quoted, "Kalichen Falls and Whirlpool Rapids." Both the Lieutenant and myself navigated this part of the Columbia when the River was low and it must have presented substantially the same appearance to us both. But try as I may I can not square conditions at the place with Symonds' description of them. From his narrative one gets the impression that Long Rapids has dangerous rocks in the channel—which is not the case. The eddy he mentions must be the one where I landed and went ashore to reconnoitre, and the huge rock he passed must be the gateway rock I mention and which I avoided by going to the right of it. There are no such rocks and current as he describes in the gorge itself.

I have tried to vision how Symonds made his exciting run through Box Cañon. The only way I can conceive it is this: Without waiting to investigate, his crew dashed wildly into the swift current of Long Rapids, and instead of controlling the speed of the batteau they augmented it with the oars until they were flying possibly at the rate of twenty miles or so an hour. The menacing rocks that alarmed Symonds must have been along the shores of Long Rapids, not in the channel. Dashing into the eddy under full headway, without checking their speed, they turned sharply to the right, passed the gateway rock



—Photo, by Forde

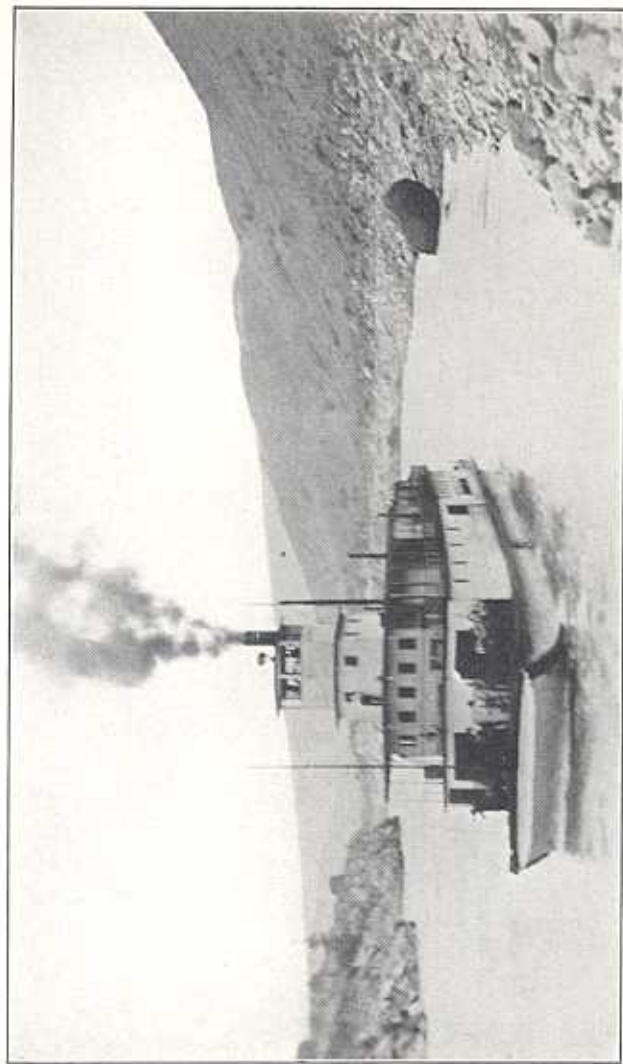
FOSTER CREEK RAPIDS

and sung a pæan of thanksgiving. Although Symonds calls Box Cañon "Whirlpool Rapids," nothing is said about the whirlpools within the gorge and only the comparatively innocent eddy is mentioned. There are no falls, unless the steep descent of Long Rapids can be called such.

I have no doubt that both Hell Gate and Box Cañon are dangerous for small watercraft when the Columbia is at flood stage, but at low water they are much easier and safer to "tackle" than most of the great rapids, especially those in British Columbia.

Below Box Cañon are four small rapids, easily run; the next is Foster Creek, one of the major rapids of the Columbia. They are about three-fourths of a mile long, with large breakers, but I ran them easily by avoiding the roughest water. All the way from the head of Nespelem Cañon the River is contracted, rarely over a few hundred feet in width, and hemmed in by steep, but broken, walls 200 feet, and less, in height. At Foster Creek this condition ceases, and except for the invariable benches, there is a more expanded valley, the River gradually widens and before the mouth of the Okanogan River is reached, has a width of a half mile.

Two miles below Foster Creek the town of Bridgeport is located on the left side of the Columbia, across from the Colville Indian Reservation. There is a steamboat landing there and a long, inclined road leading to the top of the bench. I stopped long enough to visit the place—an attractive country town, humming with activity at the time, the streets being filled with many teams.



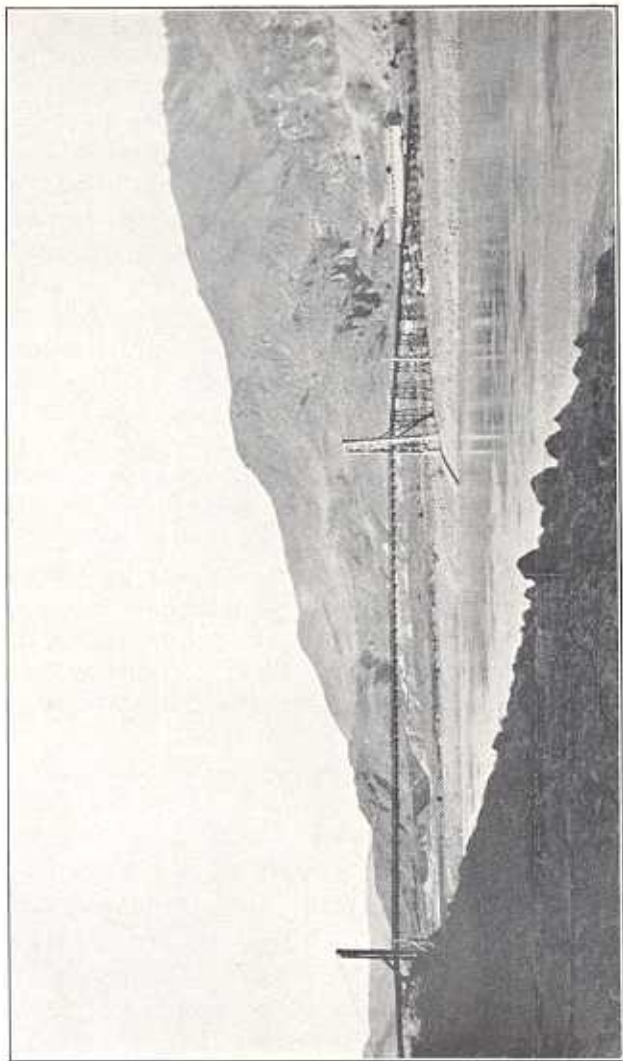
—Photo. by Ray Brent

STEAMER BRIDGEPORT IN NISPELEÑ CAÑON

A short distance below Bridgeport I passed the little square-nosed steamboat *Bridgeport* plowing her way upstream against the current. She is the only steamboat on the Columbia River between the Arrow Lakes and The Dalles City. Captain Fred McDermott is her master; and as there are no railroads along this section of the River he is able to do a fair transportation business between Bridgeport and Pateros.

I passed through two small rapids after leaving Bridgeport and in ten miles reached the mouth of the Okanogan River, and a little later Brewster, the first town on the right-hand side of the Columbia after leaving Trail, B. C. The Okanogan River enters the Columbia two miles above Brewster in a valley about two miles wide at its mouth. Its source is in Okanogan Lake, a body of water seventy miles long, generally three miles wide, but tapering to a mile and a half at the upper end. It is in British Columbia, over the Gold Range almost west of Lower Arrow Lake, and has an elevation above sea level of 1,132 feet. The Okanogan River leaves its southern end after passing through several small lakes, crosses the Border and, flowing almost due south for about a hundred miles, mingles with the Columbia after descending 340 feet. The Okanogan Valley is a noted agricultural section and under irrigation produces fine crops, especially fruits of various kinds.

I camped on the beach at Brewster. It is a small town just outside of the Colville Indian Reservation. It is on the Great Northern Railway, which reaches



SUSPENSION BRIDGE AT CHELAN

it from Wenatchee and continues northward, up the Okanogan River, and across the Border into British Columbia. Opposite to Brewster the Columbia is over a mile wide but is filled with several large, low sandbars. At this point, the River meets an obstruction to the westward course it has been following—the Buckhorn Mountains—and begins its southward trend around the Great Bend. As a result of the change of direction a ninety-degree elbow has been formed, and in this elbow the joint action of the Columbia and Okanogan has deposited the sandbars.

Leaving Brewster the morning of October 5, in a couple of hours Pateros, a small railroad town at the mouth of Methow River, was reached. Just below the mouth of that river are the small Methow Rapids, and after running these, although the Columbia contracts to a width of a quarter-mile in places, there is no turbulent water, and before nightfall I encamped in an apple orchard at a pumping plant on the left side of the River, two miles above the bridge at Chelan.

The town of Chelan is not on the Columbia River, but is four miles away, to the west where the Chelan River leaves Chelan Lake. Chelan Lake is a narrow, crooked body of water about fifty miles long, having a southeasterly trend. It is mountain-locked, and said to have, in places, vertical walls rising 6,000 feet above the water. A depth of 1,700 feet has been found, and as the surface elevation is 1,079, that would mean that the bottom is 621 feet below sea level. The lake is drained through a deep,

eroded gorge, with perpendicular walls, by the Chelan River, which falls 380 feet in the distance it flows to the Columbia River.

Leaving the apple orchard on October 6, a short run brought me to the suspension bridge crossing the River to Chelan. A large water flume clings to the mountain side just above the bridge, on the east, and crosses on it to the west side. I stopped long enough to photograph the bridge and the town of Chelan, in the distance, and then continuing on my way, passed the town of Entiat and through six small rapids and by noon, October 7, arrived at Wenatchee.