

CHAPTER XXVI

FROM VANCOUVER TO ASTORIA

Rain and a thick fog delayed my departure from Vancouver until 11 o'clock in the morning of November 3. Following the Washington shore, passing under the two bridges, the idle shipyard, a prominent object on the waterfront, was soon passed. Five miles below Vancouver brought me to the mouth of the Willamette River, a little over a quarter-mile wide. Twelve miles up the Willamette is the City of Portland.

At the confluence of the two rivers five snow-capped, sentinel peaks of the Cascade Range are visible. In the far northeast is Mount Tacoma-Ranier; also to the northeast, but much nearer, is Mount St. Helens; almost east of Mount St. Helens, is Mount Adams; slightly south of east is Mount Hood; and well to the southeast is Mount Jefferson.

The Government steamer *George H. Mondell* was anchored to the Washington shore directly across from the mouth of the Willamette, when I reached there. I had found the rise of the tide at Vancouver to be considerable—apparently about three feet. The experienced navigator takes into consideration the fluctuations of the tides, not only because they effect his progress but because the security of his boat when at anchor necessitates that she be placed far enough offshore to allow for low tide,

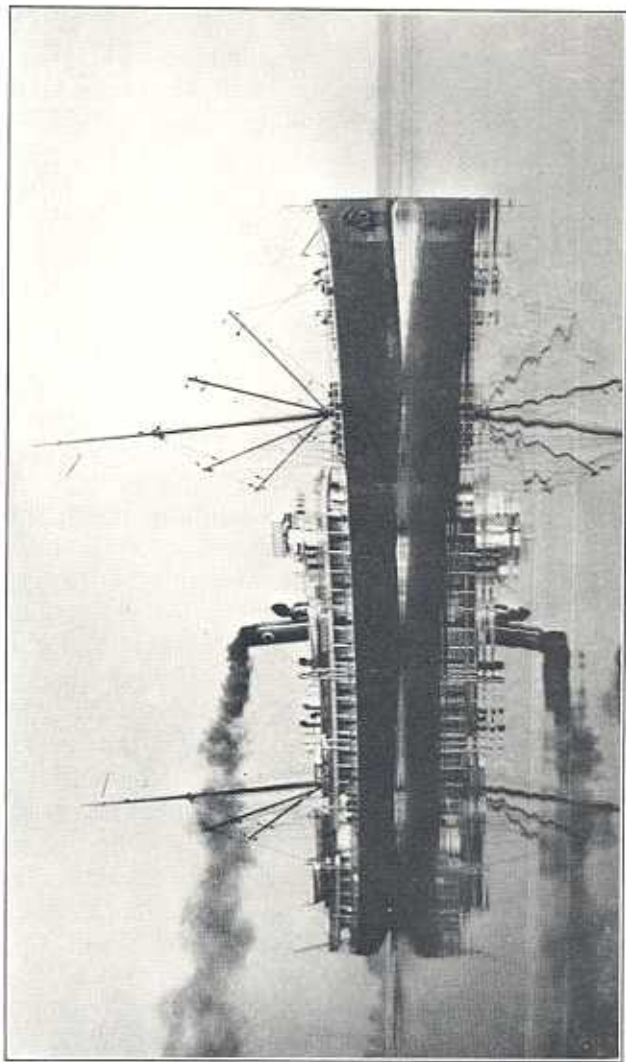
and that she be secured with long enough line to float safely at high tide. I was anxious to get information about tidal conditions and therefore rowed alongside the Mondell and hailing a man aboard asked about the tides. The man was not posted and called the cook, who was no better equipped. Soon the whole crew was at the steamer's rail, much interested in my outfit. Eventually the captain was called who, in response to my inquiries, went to his cabin and got a tidebook and presented it to me. After that I had at my command the heights and hours of occurrence of high and low tides, at different places, to the end of my journey. That evening I reached, and made camp, on the Washington side at the mouth of Lake River.

After leaving the vicinity of Vancouver the River's shores are flat and low on both sides. On the Oregon side, extending from the Willamette River to the town of St. Helens, is Sauvie Island, seventeen miles long and five wide in the widest place. It is cut up by many sloughs and filled with numerous large lakes, the largest of which is Sturgeon Lake, fully four and a half-miles long and about two miles wide. Sauvie Island is formed by Multnomah Channel, which, leaving the Willamette below Portland, follows closely the eastern base of the Coast Range and joins the Columbia at St. Helens. On the Washington side a slough and lake condition exists similar to that on the opposite side except that there is no island. Three miles northwest of Vancouver is Vancouver Lake, about three miles long and two and a half miles wide. Adjoin-

ing it, separated by a low, narrow strip about a quarter-mile wide, and about half the area of the other, is Shillapoo Lake. These lakes are drained by Lake River at the mouth of which I camped. The low bottom land on the Washington side continues to just beyond Lewis River, which heading at Mount Adams flows westerly, past Mount St. Helens, joins the Columbia a quarter-mile below Lake River. The eastern base of the Coast Range, in Oregon, is at St. Helens, but in Washington is at Martin Bluff, several miles farther downstream. Low, flat shores occur in many places below St. Helens and Martin Bluff but they lack the lake feature which has been described, and their area is more limited than the bottom lands in the vicinity of Willamette River.

Above the mouth of the Willamette the only water craft I encountered were a few stern-wheel steamboats and an occasional ferry boat and row-boat. Below the Willamette a constant stream of vessels were plying both up and down the River—little motor boats, steamboats, Government transports, coastwise ships, and giant ocean steamers from foreign ports. There was everything but sailing ships. One steamboat was passed towing a great, cigar-shaped raft; the towing being done with a steel cable attached at one end to a tall mast on the deck of the steamboat and at the other end to the front of the raft.

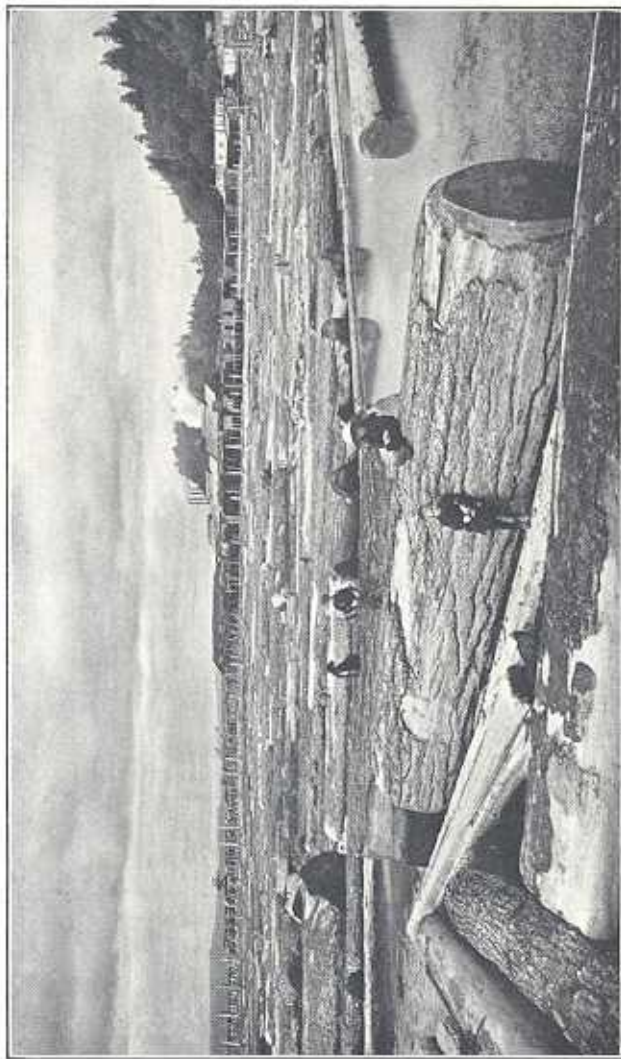
Rain again held me over a day, and while waiting for fair weather I became acquainted with Captain J. W. West, Master of the tugboat Mildred "H,"



STEAMSHIP SENATOR ON WAY TO PORTLAND

who lived in a houseboat just within the mouth of Lake River. The Geological Survey maps terminate a short distance above the mouth of Lake River and I had no certain guide to the character of the Columbia below. I knew that the River became wider and the channel more open as the ocean was approached; and now that the inclement season of the year had arrived there was the likelihood that at any time a sudden squall would arise too violent to contend with in a small rowboat. Captain West was familiar with every detail of the Columbia to the sea, and when I asked him the safest way to navigate the section to Astoria he made for me a series of sketch maps, noting thereon the various islands, channels, towns, and other points of interest and control. He advised me to follow the Oregon shore back of the islands, and to, by all means, avoid the steamer channel which was plainly indicated by a line of black buoys on one side and a line of red buoys on the other.

Leaving the mouth of Lake River in the morning of November 5, I rowed across the Columbia to the town of St. Helens, which is located on a low bluff almost opposite to the mouth of Lewis River, and stopped there an hour to get an impression of the place. It is the largest town on the Columbia between Vancouver and Astoria and has a population of 2,200. Lumbering is the principal industry, and the most prominent object on the waterfront is a large sawmill. Near the town is a rock quarry. Some distance below on the shore stands an idle shipyard.



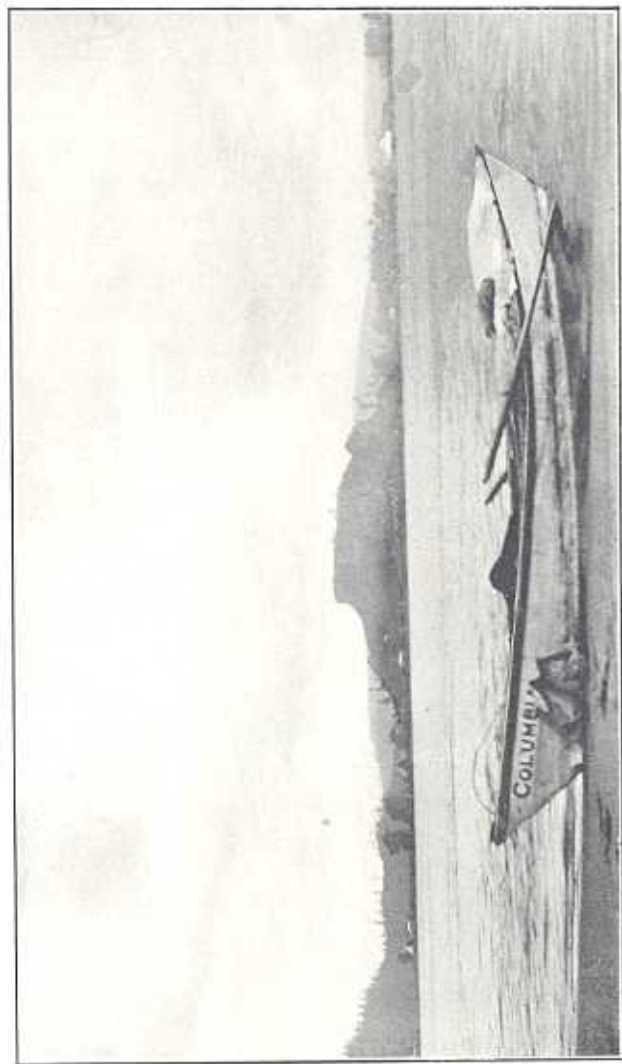
Photo, by Gifford

A WILDERNESS OF LOGS ON THE LOWER COLUMBIA

From St. Helens to the ocean the Columbia River passes through the Coast Range, a low range of mountains having comparatively gentle slopes heavily forested with great pine, spruce, and fir trees producing the finest lumber. All the way to Astoria the River's banks are lined, on both sides, with great log booms. These booms have a different construction from those I described on the upper Columbia near Golden. They are formed by driving a single line of wide-spaced piles alongshore from which are stretched small wire cables to a continuous, connected line of boom logs located well offshore. At the upper and lower extremities the boom logs are drawn together to pointed ends, forming an approximate oval, within which the logs are confined. The log booms of this section of the Columbia river are so numerous and lengthy that they are divided into stations, and each station is numbered. Confined within the booms I saw many logs of immense size, some of them one hundred feet long and eight feet in diameter.

On the evening of the 5th, I reached a point opposite to the town of Kalama, Washington, and as the Oregon shore presented an uninviting place to camp, I crossed over to the Washington side and found a good landing and anchoring place at the lower end of the town, and a grassy flat on which to set up the tent.

After getting established and preparing supper I walked to the business section of Kalama to gather information. I learned that the town had a population of 1,200, and depended chiefly on its one saw-



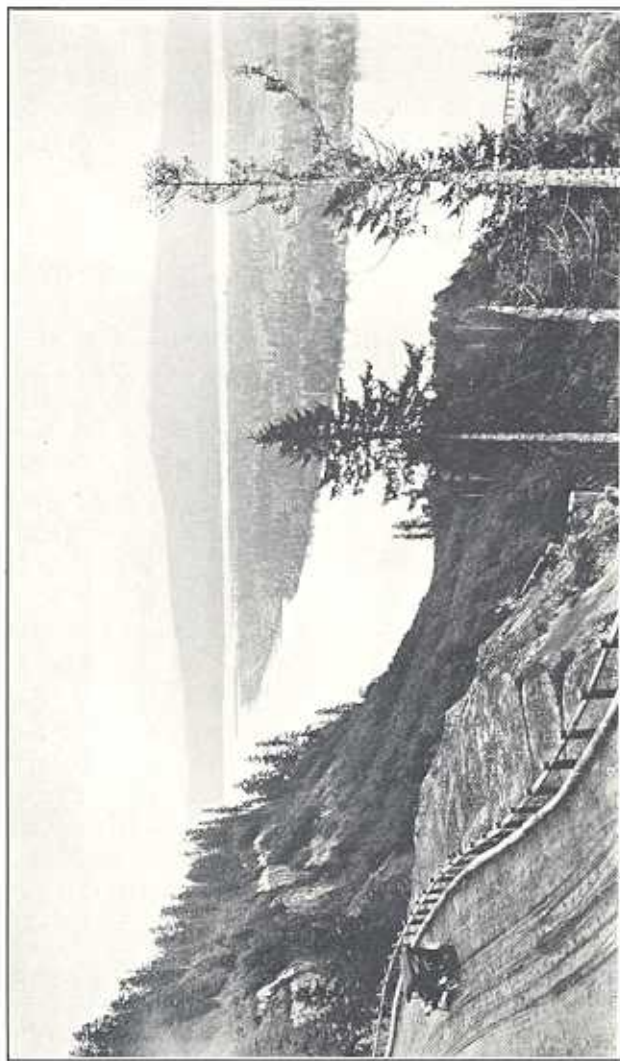
MOUNT COFFIN

mill and three shingle mills. A part of its history is the fact that in 1870 the Northern Pacific Railway began its first work of construction in its immediate vicinity. The Northern Pacific now extends from Vancouver through Kalama to the Cowlitz River and then follows that stream northward and reaches Tacoma and Seattle. Kalama has another distinction as the place where the noted pioneer and author, Ezra Meeker, first settled in what is now the State of Washington. The Kalama River, which rises at Mount St. Helens, joins the Columbia River a short distance below the town of Kalama.

Leaving Kalama early the next morning I crossed over to and followed the Oregon shore. Below Brookfield the last rocky islet in the Columbia River was passed. This is Pillar Rock which stands alone in the water about a quarter-mile from the shore. Farther downstream Mt. Coffin, a huge, bare rock, rears itself on the Washington side, and is known to be another former Indian burial place.

Among the noticeable sights in the Columbia River below St. Helens are the many jetties that have been placed to keep the steamer channel within bounds. Most of these jetties project directly out from either shore, but below Mt. Coffin, one of considerable length extends upstream from the head of Walker Island, paralleling the River's course and then bends towards another jetty reaching out from the Oregon shore. A sandbar dividing the River into two channels makes this construction necessary to confine the steamer channel to the Washington side.

After passing Walker Island a vicious squall of



THE COLUMBIA RIVER IN THE COAST RANGE

wind and rain drove me ashore just at the noon hour. I was close to land at the time and soon found friendly shelter among some trees, where with convenient wood a fire was made and a warm lunch prepared. In an hour the squall had passed and the sky had cleared.

That night I reached Mayger, Oregon, a small place, and entered a narrow slough back of an island. Finding the shores low and muddy from overflow by the tides, and unfit to camp on, I was about nonplused when Mr. M. P. Strand, an elderly Norwegian, who occupied a houseboat near where I landed, offered me a shelter for the night and the privilege of cooking on his stove—an offer which was thankfully accepted. Mr. Strand insisted that I eat breakfast with him in the morning, and then led me to an orchard about a quarter-mile away on the hillside where we gathered a sack of apples. As I pushed my boat away from the shore the kind-hearted old gentleman threw aboard a side of salted salmon, the first fish I had since leaving British Columbia.

A few miles below Mayger the Clatskanie River, coming from the southeast, enters the Columbia. Across on the Washington shore is Eagle Cliff where, in 1866, Robert Hume established the first fish-packing business, which has since grown into the vast salmon canning industry of today. The Eagle Cliff cannery is still in operation.

The Columbia River had not materially increased in width since leaving Vancouver, but now, as the Clatskanie River is approached, it expands rapidly,

and is filled with many large, low islands above Tongue Point, some of them mere tide-flats. There was nothing of particular interest in this section of the River, and following the sloughs along the Oregon shore I reached Wanna on November 7, and Knappa, thirteen miles from Astoria, on November 8.

Leaving Knappa on November 9, I reached Tongue Point, the eastern limit of Astoria, in a strong head wind, just before noon. This peculiar point is a rocky promontory, about 250 feet high, extending northward into the Columbia River, and united to the mainland by a low, narrow isthmus. Just off of Tongue Point is a large maelstrom, which is said to be dangerous at high tide. I had timed my arrival at low tide and although the maelstrom was quite fretful, by keeping close to the shore and just skirting the edge of the agitated water I was able to pass by without trouble. As I rounded the point the last thing that attracted my attention, directly over the broad River, which was visible eastward for miles, was Mount St. Helens, its white summit alone defined resting like a white cloud in the sky. After turning the point, following along an active waterfront lined with many vessels, in about three miles I reached the foot of Nineteenth Street and there set up my tent for the last time, in the railroad yard not far from the passenger depot.

I had come to the end of my rowboat journey lasting 150 days, and had fulfilled the prophecy made by Professor W. D. Lyman on page 273 of



—Photo. by Carr

THE LAST CAMP AT ASTORIA

his book entitled, *The Columbia River*, that, "It would be possible to descend almost the entire length of the River in a small boat."

The COLUMBIA, now at the goal visioned from Canal Flat was, with the aid of some railroad section men, withdrawn from the embrace of the stream she had battled so successfully, and whose name she had appropriated, and lifted over the sea-wall was safely set on timbers in front of the tent. The ten miles of River still remaining to the Pacific Ocean I expected to cover on board a southbound steamship. There was nothing to be gained by braving that section in a rowboat.

I was rough in appearance, and thin but rugged, when my exertions on the Columbia River ceased. My normal weight is 165 pounds—none of it due to fat. When I stepped on the scales at Astoria, a loss of 30 pounds was registered. Little of this was due to rowing, which does not fatigue me. I ascribe the great loss of weight to two reasons. The first was the constant, but unconscious, mental strain one is under when running rapids. The second, and greater reason, was the extreme efforts made in carrying heavy loads, at camping places, up and down the rocky, or crumbling, steep sides of the almost constant high benches for hundreds of miles. Many of these benches were one hundred, and sometimes two hundred, feet in height. At any rate the carrying of loads, especially up the inclines, was the most tiring work that I did.

The day following my arrival at Astoria I met an old acquaintance, J. P. Morse, a civil engineer I had

known at San Francisco, California. Mr. Morse introduced me to James Bremner, the Mayor; E. L. Carlson, Chief of Police; R. A. McClanahan, City Engineer; Wm. Gratke, Secretary Chamber of Commerce; and many other prominent citizens. Mr. Bremner promised to come to my camp and be photographed welcoming me to Astoria; but heavy rain clouds had gathered, and after that it rained incessantly during my stay of several days, and the picture was never taken.

As we already know, the City of Astoria is located at the site of Astor's old fur-trading post, long since demolished, but a replica of which now stands in the City Park. It extends westward from Tongue Point, with a water frontage of over seven and one-half miles to Young's Bay, into which flows northwardly from the Coast Range the waters of Young's, and Lewis and Clark rivers, the latter so named because the Lewis and Clark expedition wintered on its banks.

The business section of the city is mainly parallel to and near the waterfront, both streets and buildings being supported on underpinnings of piling, or on ground filled in to a level of but a few feet above the tides which have a mean average rise of 8 feet 5 inches. The choice residence section is on the sides and crest of the hills to the south. A belt line street railway serves the long, narrow strip below the base of the hills. The whole waterfront is lined with a multiplicity of docks, piers, grain elevators, canneries, mills and other industrial plants.

Astoria is the oldest and largest town on the



THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER, AND COLUMBIA HARBOR

Columbia River and has a population of 15,000. It claims to have the largest fresh water harbor in the world, and ships of all nations land at its docks. Besides water transportation, the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway and the Columbia State Highway reach it from Portland. It is the center of the greatest fishing and canning industry in the world. During the height of the fishing season, from the first of May to the latter part of August, from 3,000 to 4,000 men are engaged in catching fish, and 1,500 are employed in the canneries. The yearly value of the pack is estimated to be \$7,500,000.

Astoria is also the distributing point of a great lumber business. Its tributary territory produces a daily output of 1,100,000 feet of lumber, the Hammond Lumber Company, located at Astoria, alone producing 450,000 feet. During the late war in Europe the Air Production Board had six Spruce Divisions operating in Clatsop County, of which Astoria is the county seat, and approximately 100,000,000 feet of spruce were reduced to lumber for the manufacture of airplanes. Three shipyards are located on Young's Bay; and there also are the Astoria Marine Iron Works, a great industrial plant.

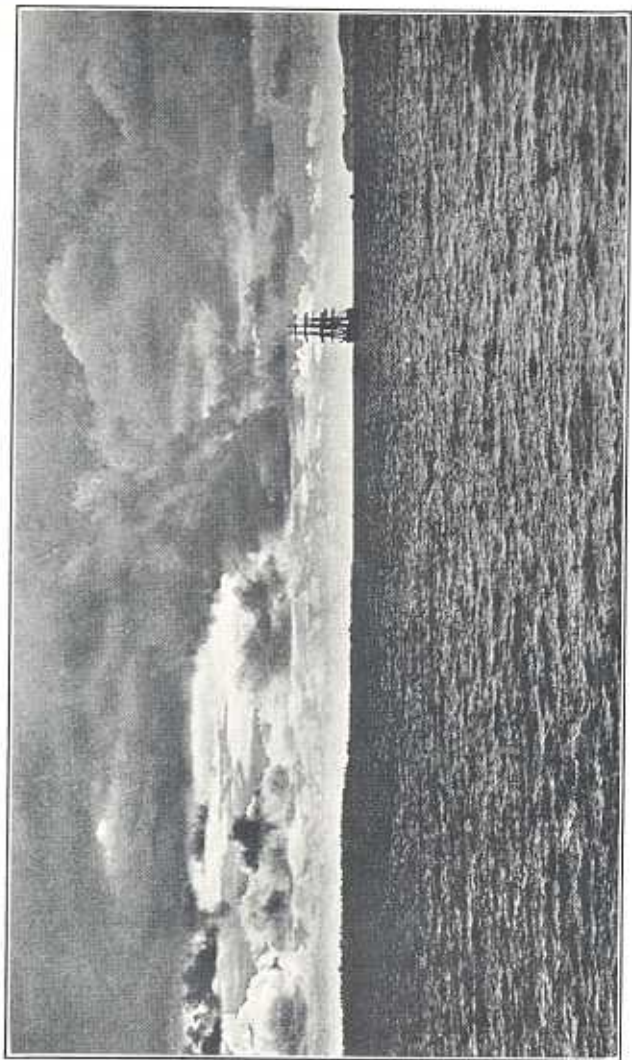
Astoria is the natural center of distribution for the farming districts of Clatsop County, fruit raising, truck gardening and dairying being the principal farming operations. That part of the State of Washington directly across the Columbia River is also a factor in the business and social life of Astoria.

Southwest of the city are the oceanside resorts

at Clatsop Beach located at Gearhart and Seaside, about twelve and eighteen miles away and reached by rail or highway.

As had been planned, I made the ten mile trip to the mouth of the Columbia River on the ocean-going steamer *Senator*, which took me to Wilmington, the seaport of Los Angeles, California. At the mouth of the River, where the dangerous bar existed that was a menace to navigation, the National Government now maintains two channels, each a half-mile wide, the entrance to the harbor having a depth of water, at mean low tide, of 42 feet. Two jetties now extend into the ocean from the shore, the shorter one from Cape Disappointment on the north is about three miles long; and the longer, from Point Adams on the south, has a length of seven miles. Several millions of dollars have already been expended on new work, renewals, and dredging—the latter expense being constant to keep an open channel. Three forts guard the entrance. On the Oregon side is Fort Stevens at Point Adams; on the Washington side are Forts Canby and Columbia, the first being at Cape Disappointment, and the other controlling the Narrows a few miles above and more nearly opposite to Fort Stevens.

Below Tongue Point and above the jetties is known as Columbia Harbor, and several small towns have been established on its borders. On the Oregon side is Warrenton, across Young's Bay from Astoria; on the Washington side are Knappton, Megler, McGowan, and Ilwasco—also the U. S. Quarantine Reservation. On account of its prox-



ENTRANCE TO COLUMBIA RIVER

imity to the ocean in Columbia Harbor the level of the River is not affected by freshets from upstream, and the only variation that has to be recognized is the bi-diurnal rise and fall of the tides.

NOTE: The business section of Astoria, which I knew so well in November, 1921, will be seen in the same aspect no more. On December 7, 1922, a disastrous fire broke out, which, eating its way into the piling supporting the streets and buildings, became uncontrollable and practically wiped out the major part of the choicest business district, entailing an estimated loss of \$15,000,000. Occurring as it did in the inclement winter season, the disaster is especially deplorable. However, I hope to see Astoria, like San Francisco—where I lived during the earthquake and fire of 1906 and the reconstruction which followed them—rise phoenix-like, better and grander than ever.