

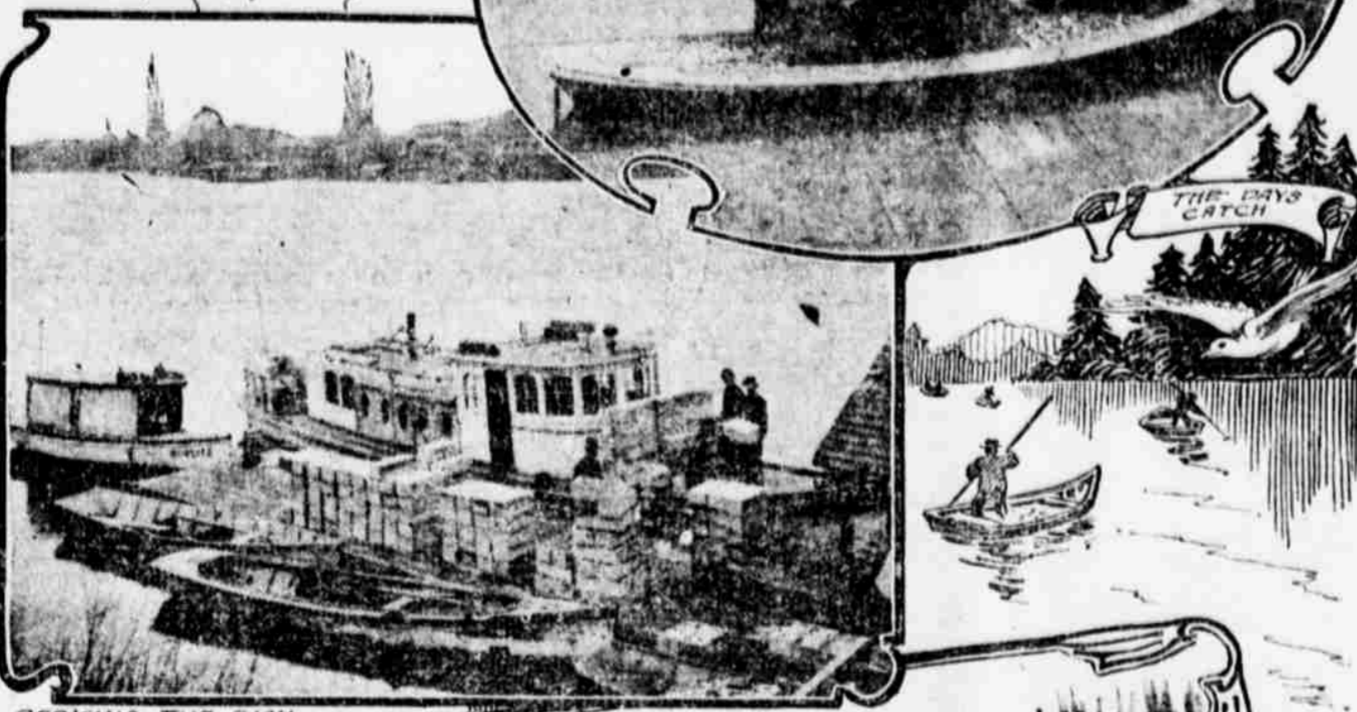
CATCHING the OULACHAN

By JOHN BRAND

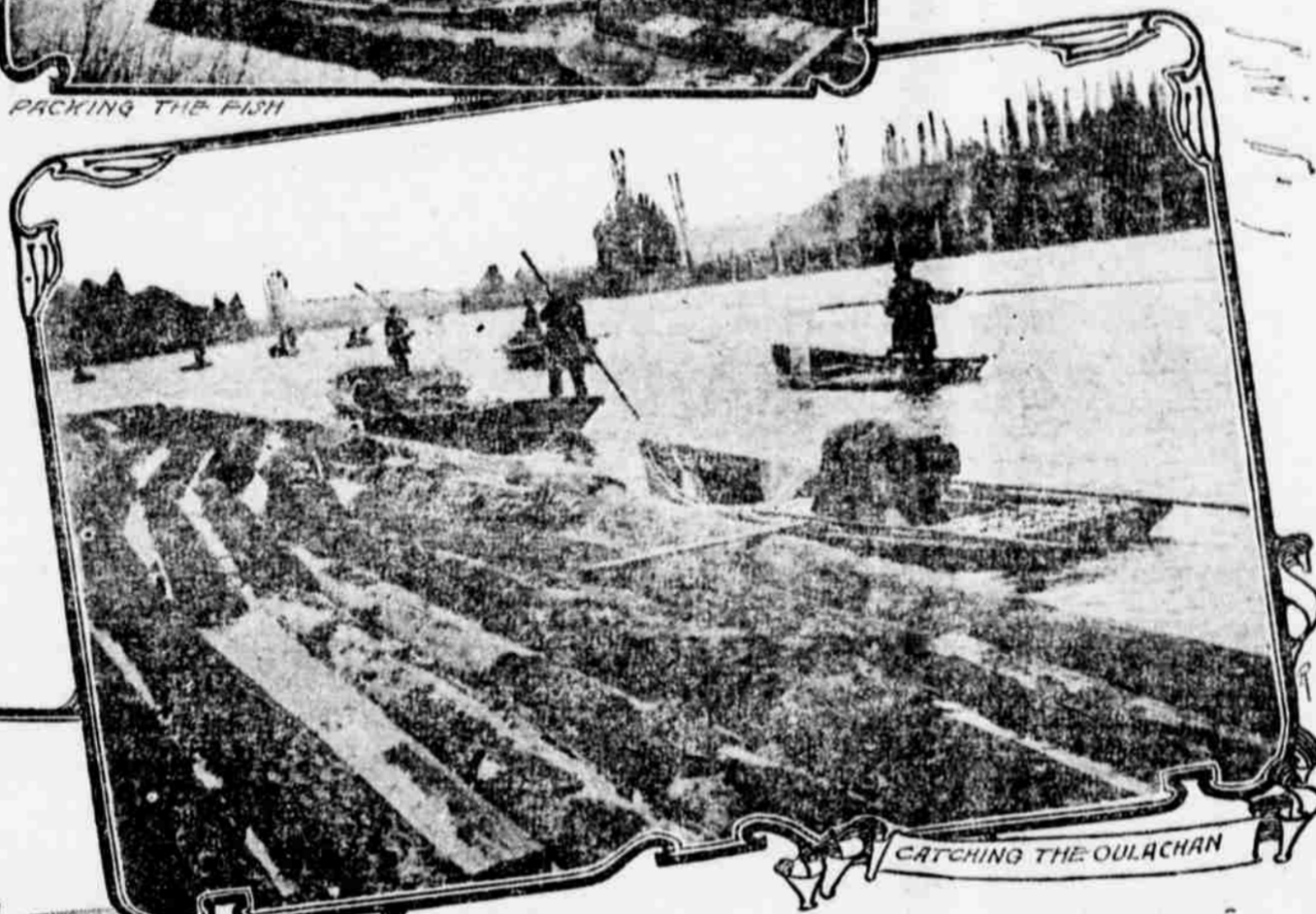
OULACHAN!" The old Indian turned his face from the camp fire and fixed his bead-black eyes on mine.

"Oulachan," I repeated. "Why do men call you Oulachan?" He turned his wrinkled face to the fire again and we sat a while in silence. Then, in the deep gutturals and short, broken words of his native tongue, he told me.

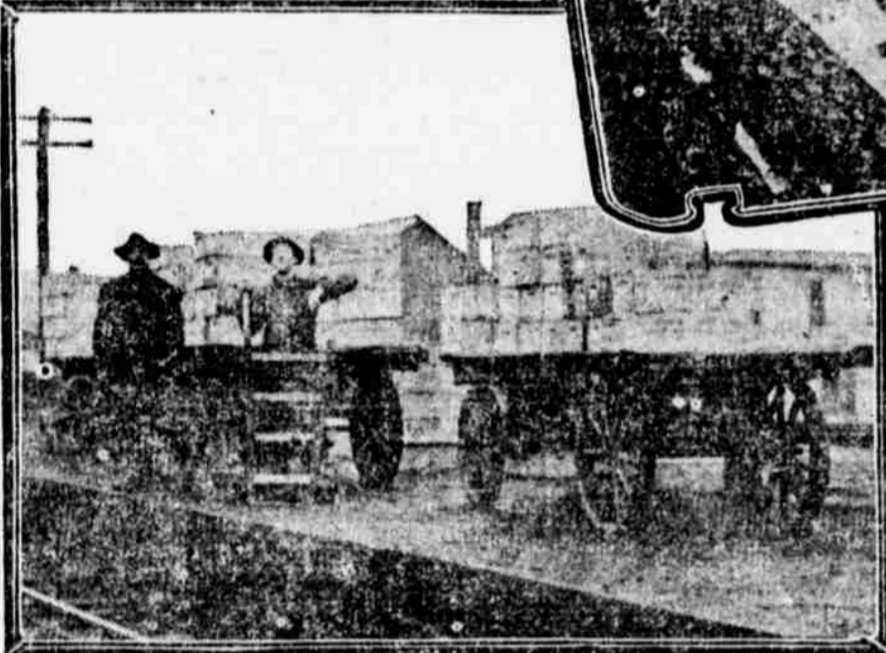
"Many summers ago," he said, "the teepees of my father's tribe stood where we sit tonight. The white man was not here then—he pointed up the river toward Kelo—the woods and the open were the Indian's. The Indian hunted and fished and was happy. But white men came up the big river in canoes and they brought with them the black death. Warriors, klootchmen, papposes, all alike sickened. Many died. When the rain and the winter came, no deer meat, no fish hung beside the teepees. For when the frost drove the black death away, the hunters were weak. They could not go to the woods for deer, and the salmon had passed on up the little river. The Indian was very hungry. The klootchmen and the papposes cried for meat. And when the Indian was ready to fold his blanket around him and lie down to the long sleep, the Great Spirit saw and sent food. From the north it came, from under the frozen water. Swimming together. A long rope—big—many suns long. Many little fish swimming at the bottom of the big water—the Pacific—along the bottom of the big river—the Columbia. They came here to the mouth of the little river—he pointed to the Cowlitz flowing past us in the darkness to the Columbia—and here they came to the top of the water. My father saw



PACKING THE FISH



CATCHING THE OULACHAN



READY FOR SHIPMENT

them and shouted, 'Oulachan.' Hunters and klootchmen went into the water and caught the oulachan with their hands. 'Oulachan,' they shouted. They made pottach and were filled. In that hour was I born. My name is Oulachan."

The oulachan still runs in the Cowlitz and every year there is a feast, but it is a feast for white men; the Indian tribes have vanished from the river. During the early months of winter Portland and all the cities and towns within reach of the fishing grounds look forward to the feast. In the old days when Portland was the only market fishermen scrambled for the first of the run. A wild race of the deep-laden boats up the Columbia followed, and the first boatload to reach the market sold, smelt for silver, weight for weight. But since railroads and refrigerator cars have put smelt fishing on the basis of a practical industry, the first run of the oulachan does not bring more than 20 cents the pound in the northwestern retail markets, though the very first to arrive are eagerly sought at prices somewhat higher.

Known commercially as the Columbia river smelt, the king of pan fish has several names. Ichthyologists classify it as thaleichthys pacificus, of the smelt family. The Indians of the Columbia river region knew it as oulachan and the pioneer fishermen called it the Eskimo candle fish. In shape it resembles the smelt of the eastern states and Europe, but its rich yet delicate and sweet flavor places it far above them in the estimation of the epicures. Indeed, enthusiasts insist that as a pan fish it is superior to trout of any kind.

For unnumbered years the oulachan has made the Cowlitz river its spawning ground and of course the Columbia river Indians were the first to use it for food. During the runs they caught the fish in vast quantities drying and smoking them, and dried, actually used them for light in their teepees. For so much is the oulachan in oil that, with a strip of bark run through it, the dried fish will burn with a clear flame from nose to tail.

In the early months of the northwestern winter the oulachan gather in uncountable millions at some unknown spot in Bering sea and begin their southward swim. Always close to the ocean bed, traveling in the form of a monster rope miles in length, they pass all the river and flood openings along the coast until the mouth of the Columbia is reached. Then, so closely hugging the river bottom that kill nets are all but useless, to reach them, they make for the Cowlitz. A few miles up from the mouth of that river they strike the shallower water, and come within easy reach of the waiting fishermen.

From Indian times until the great catch of last season the method of fishing has been the same. A boat or a canoe to fish from, and a dip net with a long handle for fishing tackle, are all

that is necessary. One does not even need the dip net to catch a "mess," for the river is literally alive with oulachan and children often haul them out of the water with tin cans, getting half fish and half water. Where the water is shallow enough they can even be caught with the bare hands, as their skin is not slimy when in the water.

The run is always heralded far down the Columbia by flocks of eagles, gulls and hawks, following in the wake of the living rope of fish and picking up the dead as they come to the surface. Then the fishermen gather by hundreds in their boats along the fishing grounds and feel along the bottom with the pole ends of their dip nets. When the pole strikes the small, wriggling bodies swimming along the river bottom in solid phalanx, it is simply dip and fill, empty the net into the boat, dip and fill again, until the boat can hold no more. There is not much sport about it. It is just about as exciting as clam digging and requires no more skill. Quantity caught, and quickness in dipping one's boat full to the gunwales of flapping little fish are the smelt fisherman's ideals of sport. And during the runs fishermen, fish eaters and even the eternally gobbling seagulls alike become sated. When the gulls are at all hungry the fishermen amuse themselves by tossing up smelt for the gulls to catch in the air. A seagull on the wing will grab a fish by the middle or tail, toss and reverse it in air, and gulp it down head first in the wink of an eye.

Most of the fishing is done at night. Daylight seems to scatter the fish, but even in daytime during the height of the season the fishermen keep at their work with good results. As a rule, there are two men to each boat and the craft are filled in an incredibly short time. One night last season two Kelo men filled a power launch to its capacity of 2,250 pounds in 45 minutes, or at the rate of 50 pounds a minute, and catches of 10,000 pounds in one day and night were frequent.

While the Cowlitz river is the only constant spawning ground, the oulachan has been known to run up the Lewis and the Sandy. At the time of the run up the Lewis, 14 years ago, there was only a small run of male fish in the Cowlitz, and the fishermen made their season's catch in the Lewis. About once in eight years there is a run up the Sandy, apparently independent of the Cowlitz run, as the number in that river is not lessened. At the time of the last run in the Sandy a party of Portland men went out with dip nets. One man lost his dip net but found an old, rusty, discarded bird cage. He tied it to the end of a pole and scored an equal catch with the others. During the same run farmers drove their wagons into the stream, dipped them full of fish and hauled load after load to their orchards to use as fertilizer. Pork sold in the Portland market some months later had a distinctly fishy flavor and revealed the fact that some of the thrifty agriculturists had fed smelt to their hogs.

Last season the Cowlitz river was the spawning ground of the greatest run of smelt ever known by fishermen who have been in the business over twenty years. At the season's close the river had yielded over 10,000,000 pounds, or

5,000 tons of oulachan, and as the fish average about eight to the pound 80,000,000 of them went the way of the market and the frying pan.

The fishing grounds of the Cowlitz are practically the only ones where the oulachan can be caught in paying quantities. On the Columbia some few are caught by gill netters. But the river is deep and for the most part the fish swim beyond the reach of the widest net. Even when caught they have to be picked one by one out of the meshes, so putting the gill netter out of competition with the Cowlitz man and his greedy, long-handled dipper. The grounds extend but eight or ten miles in the Cowlitz. Before Kelo was on the map the best location is said to have been directly opposite where the Northern Pacific depot now stands, but the growth of the town has driven the fish farther up and the best catches are now made two miles above this point. Between the small floating docks of the town and the fishing grounds boats ply day and night during the runs, going upstream empty and returning laden with fish. Over 500 boats are employed in the industry, about 75 of them power boats.

It seems strange that the oulachan, so far superior to the eastern smelt, has never reached the eastern markets. The fish are packed in 50-pound boxes for shipment and the earlier catches sell in the wholesale market at from \$2.50 to \$5.00 the box; but in the height of the season the ordinary fisherman gets only about \$50 for 200 boxes—10,000 pounds. On the river are several men who buy at these prices from other fishermen, maintain boats of their own and ship direct to retail markets. Portland has wholesale buyers on the ground, and probably the greater part of the retail trade is supplied through them. At Kelo smelt have been shipped as far east as Wisconsin. The fishermen say that with cold storage facilities the output could be greatly increased. Canning in the form of sardines has never been tried, though in the opinion of experts the fish so treated would discount the imported sardine. The market is usually demoralized early in the five months' season by schoolboys, who go out, load up a few boats with fish and become an easy mark for buyers. Often, too, Greeks and Italians come up the river in boats, stay a day or two and sell their fish for whatever they can get, and the men regularly engaged in the trade want to make it a licensed one, on this account.

The growing output of the oulachan would seem, on the face of it, to demand a Gifford Pinchot on the fish commission. But the supply increases year after year with the demand and apparently knows no limit. Last year's run broke all records and the Cowlitz smelt fisher is looking forward in happy confidence to the coming winter, when the depths and shallows of the streams will again be filled with oulachan.

Sad Blow.

"Was she overcome by her husband's sudden death?"
"Oh, yes. She had just bought half a dozen new ball gowns."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

Soaring.

"She married an old man who is very rich."
"I went one better on that. I married a young aviator who is a millionaire."—Pele Melo.

Hard to Convince.

Little Tommy (eldest of the family, at dinner)—
"Mamma, why don't you help me before Ethel?"
"Mamma—Ladies must always come first."
"Tommy (triumphantly)—Then why was I born before Ethel?"—Tit-Bits.

MARKED A MERIDIAN

Interesting Massachusetts Monument of Sixty Years Ago.

Now but Rarely Seen and but Little Known by the Residents and General Public Who Pass That Way.

Boston—There are in New England in many places, monuments more or less artistic, erected to mark historic spots or to commemorate events of local importance. Such are generally well known and easily accessible, but the old Meridian monument in Medford is but rarely seen and but little known by the residents and general public.

It is safe to assert that of the many that pass it daily, but few have ever noticed it, owing to its peculiar location and the proximity of the hill on which it stands to the street that curves about its base. Inquiry of many residents reveals their ignorance of it, and, indeed, the writer had been a resident for over thirty years and had many times passed that way, when, by a casual upward glance at just the right instant he caught a glimpse of it. Soon after he made a visit there to and secured a view of its weather-beaten outlines and began inquiry as to its history. It is situated on the slope of the hill that rises steeply northward from Winthrop street and midway between the Medford city farm and the Whitmore brook road into Middlesex fells.

"What is it?" and "What was it built for?"

This cairn or monument is a truncated pyramid, 7 feet wide by 13 feet long at its base, tapers to about 3 and 9 at the top and is 9 feet high. It was built by bowlders with split granite blocks at its corners.

Across the top and facing southward is a single block of granite, smoothly dressed upon two sides. This



Stone Monument in Medford.

block has upon its face three circular projections, also hammer finished, the central one being less in diameter than the other two and each projecting three-quarters of an inch.

As the masonry of the cairn is not continued up behind this block there may have been a similar stone there and removed either by accident or design. This conjecture seems reasonable, as within the center of the cairn is imbedded a substantial stick of native red cedar several inches in diameter and fractured at the upper end. Evidently this was a flagstaff or signal pole; and its breaking may have caused the loosening or fall of a similar capstone at the reverse of the one described.

As seen by the illustration, this capstone is dressed squarely. This leads to another conjecture, which, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, seems reasonable, namely, that the granite block was formerly in use as a lintel in some large building, its position reversed, as shown by its hammered faces.

No inscription of any sort is to be found about or upon it; and nothing save the broken cedar stick gives any clue to its identity or the purpose of its erection; while the loosened mortar and discolored and time-worn stones clearly indicate that its builders have passed on.

Inquiry at the Cambridge observatory elicits the information that a stone monument was erected in Medford at about 1850 as a meridian mark for the adjustment of the old transit circle in the east wing of the observatory. The eldest member of the staff gives the information that "it supported a simple board spiked to the masonry, on which was a mark that could be seen from the observatory."

The old transit circle was replaced by another in 1870, and the use of the cairn as a meridian mark was discontinued.

Keeps House at 102.

Saratoga, N. Y.—At the age of one hundred and two Mrs. Margaret Van Rensselaer lives alone, cooks her own meals and does all her own housework in her little home here. She was born in Montreal, remembers going barefooted over the snow-covered ground at the age of ten, has always worked hard, never had a doctor but once and that was for an injury to her finger when she was ninety-seven. She never went to school and cannot read. Her father died at one hundred and one and her mother at ninety-nine. She attributes her long life to simple food and to living out of doors as much as possible.

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WHERE HE SAVED MONEY.



"You say it costs less to run this automobile than that trotting horse you owned?"
"Yes; I used to bet on the trotting horse."

Opportunity of Suffragist.

Baroness Aletta Korff tells in one of the magazines how the women of Finland came to vote. The fact is that women had to show that they could meet an emergency before the vote came to them. They have not had many opportunities to take the initiative in the world's history and they have not always responded when the opportunity came, but when a crisis, such as that in 1904, when the strike and the revolutionary outbreak in Russia took place at the same time, occurred, they proved they could make peace by doing it. Not until England and the United States find the women helping them to bear some great trouble will they give them the right to vote.

Try to Come Back.

Not long ago Lord Kinnaird, who is always actively interested in religious work, paid a surprise visit to a mission school in the east end of London and told a class of boys the story of Samson. Introducing his narrative, his lordship added:

"He was strong, became weak, and then regained his strength, enabling him to destroy his enemies. Now, boys, if I had an enemy, what would you advise me to do?"

A little boy, after meditating on the secret of that great giant's strength, shot up his hand and exclaimed: "Get a bottle of 'air restorer.'"

Very, Very Easy.

Patience—You can't do anything without money?
Patrice—Oh, yes, you can. You can run in debt.

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Sometimes a good, healthy commercial traveler suffers from poorly selected food and is lucky if he learns that Grape-Nuts food will put him right.

A Cincinnati traveler says: "About a year ago my stomach got in a bad way. I had a headache most of the time and suffered misery. For several months I ran down until I lost about 40 pounds in weight and finally had to give up a good position and go home. Any food that I might use seemed to nauseate me."

"My wife, hardly knowing what to do, one day brought home a package of Grape-Nuts food and coaxed me to try it. I told her it was no use but finally to humor her I tried a little, and they just struck my taste. It was the first food I had eaten in nearly a year that did not cause any suffering."

"Well, to make a long story short, I began to improve and stuck to Grape-Nuts. I went up from 135 pounds in December to 194 pounds the following October."

"My brain is clear, blood all right and appetite too much for any man's pocketbook. In fact, I am thoroughly made over, and owe it all to Grape-Nuts. I talk so much about what Grape-Nuts will do that some of the men on the road have nicknamed me 'Grape-Nuts,' but I stand today a healthy, rosy-cheeked man—a pretty good example of what the right kind of food will do."

"You can publish this if you want to. It is a true statement without any frills."

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.