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U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey.
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DESCRIPTIVE REPORT

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COOS BAY, OREGON,

To Accompany Topographical Sheets Nos. 1 and 2,

Register Nos. 1970 and 1971,

Surveyed by Party of E. F. Dickins,

Assistant C. & G. Survey.

1889.

COOS BAY, OREGON.

Descriptive Report to Accompany Topographical Sheets Nos. 1 and 2, Surveyed 1889, by Party of E. F. Dickins, Assistant Coast and Geodetic Survey.

The North side of Coos Bay entrance is a low, narrow sand spit, with a sand beach extending up the coast in a nearly straight line to the mouth of the Umpquah River, about twenty-two miles, this beach varies very much in character; in calm weather it is generally broad, hard and smooth, but during a heavy sea it washes out badly and becomes steep, rough and soft. About one hundred yards back of the ordinary high water mark, and running parallel with it, is a low ridge of sand, varying from ten to twenty feet in height; this is formed by the drift wood and logs cast up during the heavy winter gales, around which the sand collects forming the ridge. Back of this beach is a sand belt of loose, drifting sand dunes of all shapes and sizes which are continually changing, the general drift being from Northwest to Southeast. On the South side of the entrance the shore line is bold, the cliffs rising from forty to eighty feet in height and backed

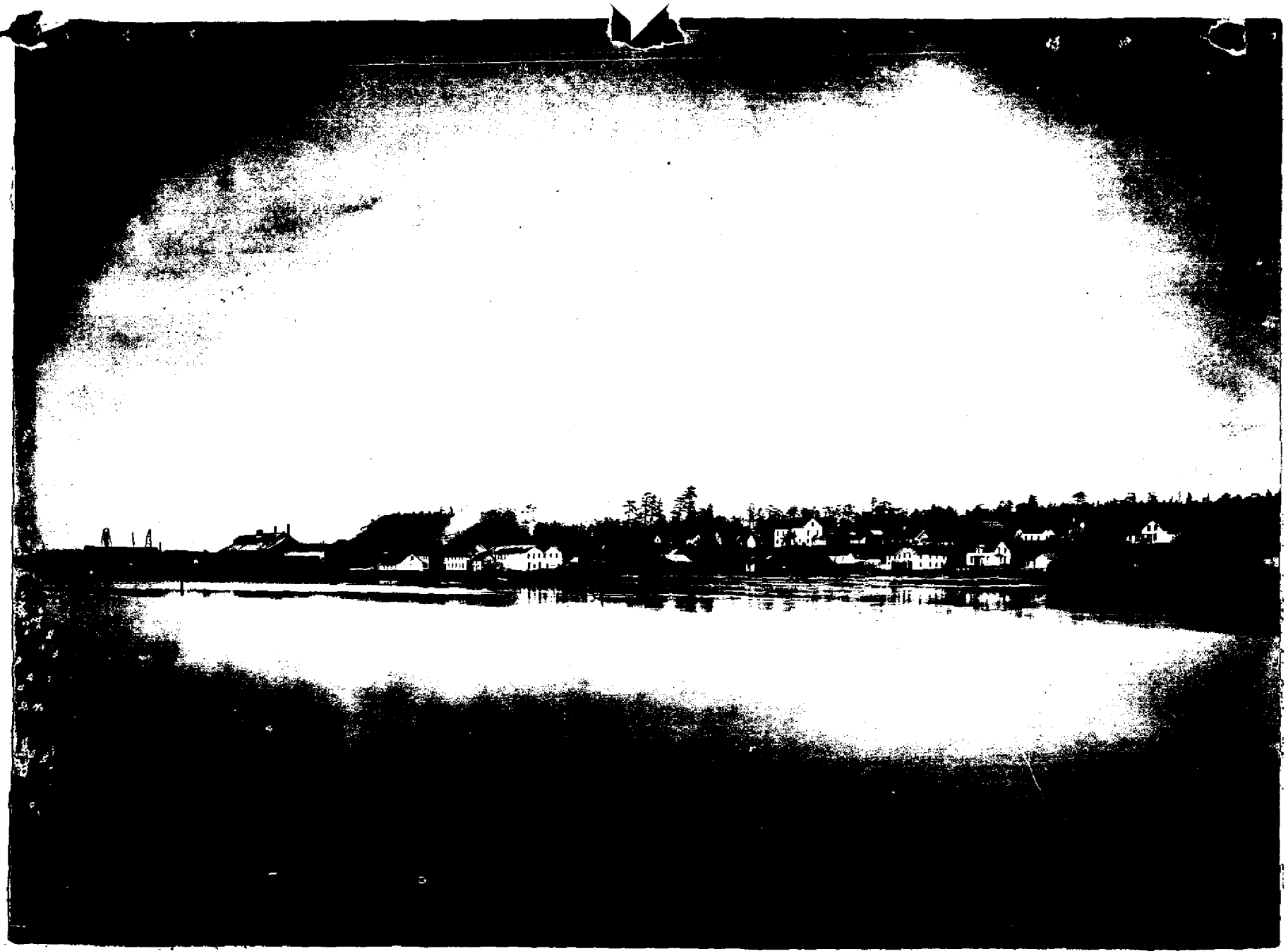
Empire City, Coos Bay, Oregon

by densely timbered ridges.

South Slough, is a broad, shallow arm of the bay, just inside the entrance, and extending to the Southward for five or six miles; the shores are heavily timbered, and a good deal of match wood and saw logs are being cut along its banks; there are some few settlers along this slough. Directly opposite the entrance is a low, rocky point, known as Fossil or Rocky Point, from the extremity of which the Engineer Corps is building a submerged jetty for the improvement of the channel; it now extends some four hundred yards beyond high water mark, the work shops and dwellings of the workmen are located in the timber just back of the point.

From this point along the South side of the bay to Empire City, about three miles, the shores are low and densely timbered to the waters' edge, the ridges rise gradually inland to the height of several hundred feet, the wagon road between the two places is along the beach at low water.

Empire City, located on the South side of the bay, about four miles from the entrance, is the county seat of Coos County, and claims about five hundred inhabitants. It has three general merchandise stores, four hotels, livery stable, a salmon cannery, church, school, blacksmith shop, express and telegraph office &c. The Southern Oregon Company has a large saw mill at this place, with a daily cutting capacity of one hundred and fifty thousand feet, they were only running one



Empire Mill

Empire City, Coos Bay, Oregon

side of the mill during the past summer, cutting an average of seventy five thousand feet of lumber per day, employing about sixty men, and loading from five to seven schooners per month. There is a daily mail and stage to Roseburg, (about eighty miles) on the California and Oregon Railroad; a tri-weekly mail and stage up the coast to the Umpquah and Suislaw Rivers, and a steamer at least once a week to San Francisco. Between this place and Pony Slough, about two and one-fourth miles, there is quite a bluff along the shore, ranging from forty to one hundred and thirty feet in height, backed by heavily timbered ridges. The North shore of the bay is low and sandy most of the way from the entrance to the mouth of the North Slough, with some timbered ridges at intervals.

North Slough, is an arm of the bay making into the Northward about seven miles above the entrance, it is very shoal and can only be navigated by small boats at high water; there are a number of settlers along the upper part of the slough.

Hayne's Slough, makes in on the East side of the mouth of North Slough and is very similar in character, but is more settled along its banks.

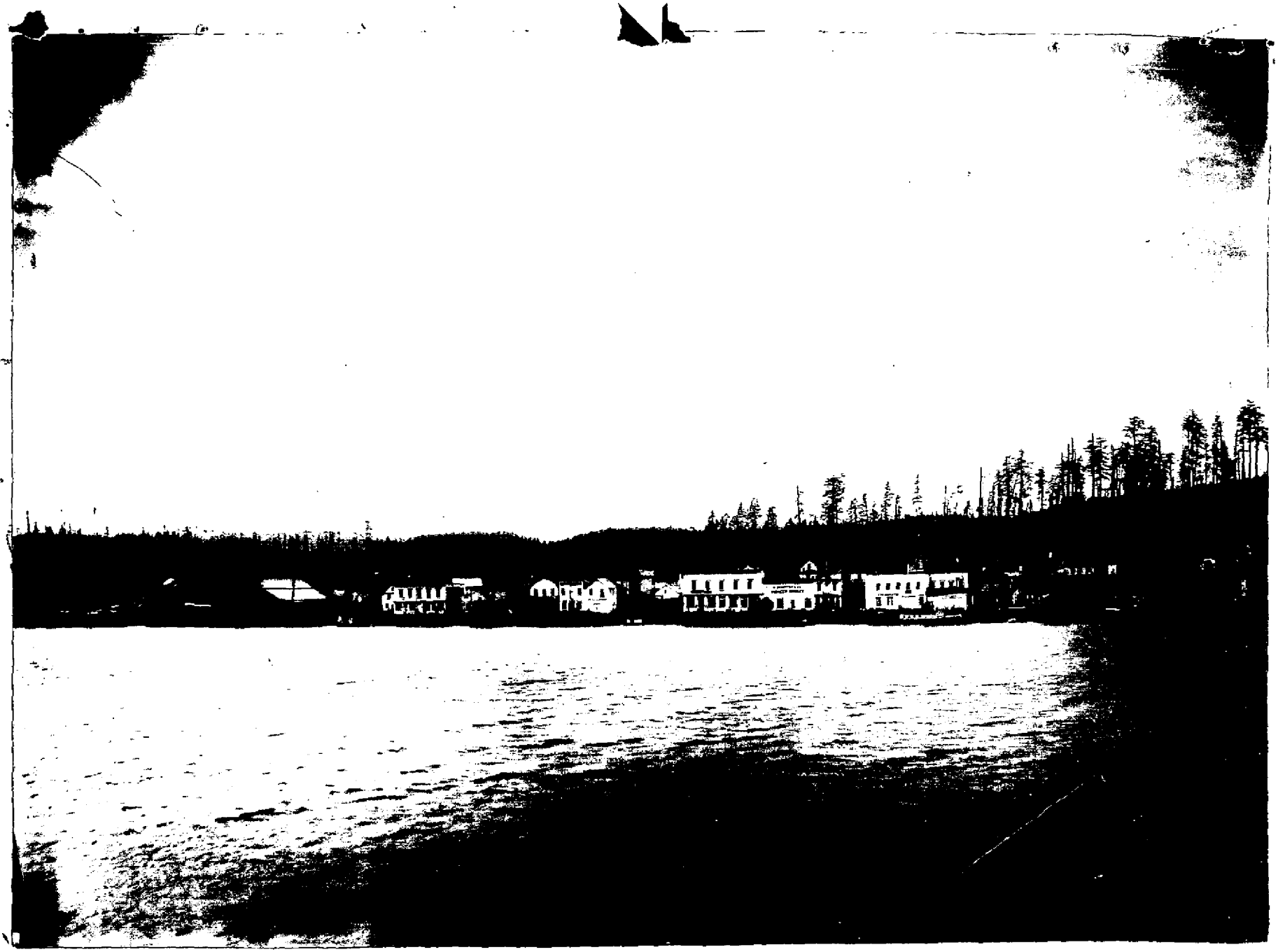
Pony Slough, makes in on the South side of the bay, directly opposite North Slough, it is also very shoal, and only navigable for small boats at high water; considerable logging has been done along this slough, but the camps are now abandoned. It has been dyked just above the bridge and the marsh

land used as pasture for cattle.

North Bend, is situated on the South side of the bay, about eight miles above the entrance and just around the big bend, here are located the two saw mills, belonging to Simpson Bro's. of San Francisco. The new mill has a cutting capacity of fifty thousand feet of lumber per day, and the old mill thirty thousand feet per day. During the present year they were only running the new mill, and on three-fourths time, employing about thirty-five men and loading from four to five schooners per month. There is also a well equipped ship yard at this place, where have been built from thirty to forty vessels, ranging from small schooners to full rigged ships.

Porter, is on the West side of the bay about one and one-half miles above North Bend; here is the saw mill of the California Lumber Company, with a capacity of seventy five thousand feet per day, during the present year it was running on three-fourths time, employing fifty-six men and loading from four to five schooners per month. This place was named afther Mr. Porter of San Francisco, one of the principal stockholders in the company. About one-fourth of a mile to the South of the mill is the slaughter house, which supplies the markets of Empire City and Marshfield.

The Stave Mill, is also located on the West side of the bay, about a mile South of the Porter Mill, it belongs to the Oakland Box and Barrel Company, and can cut twenty thousand

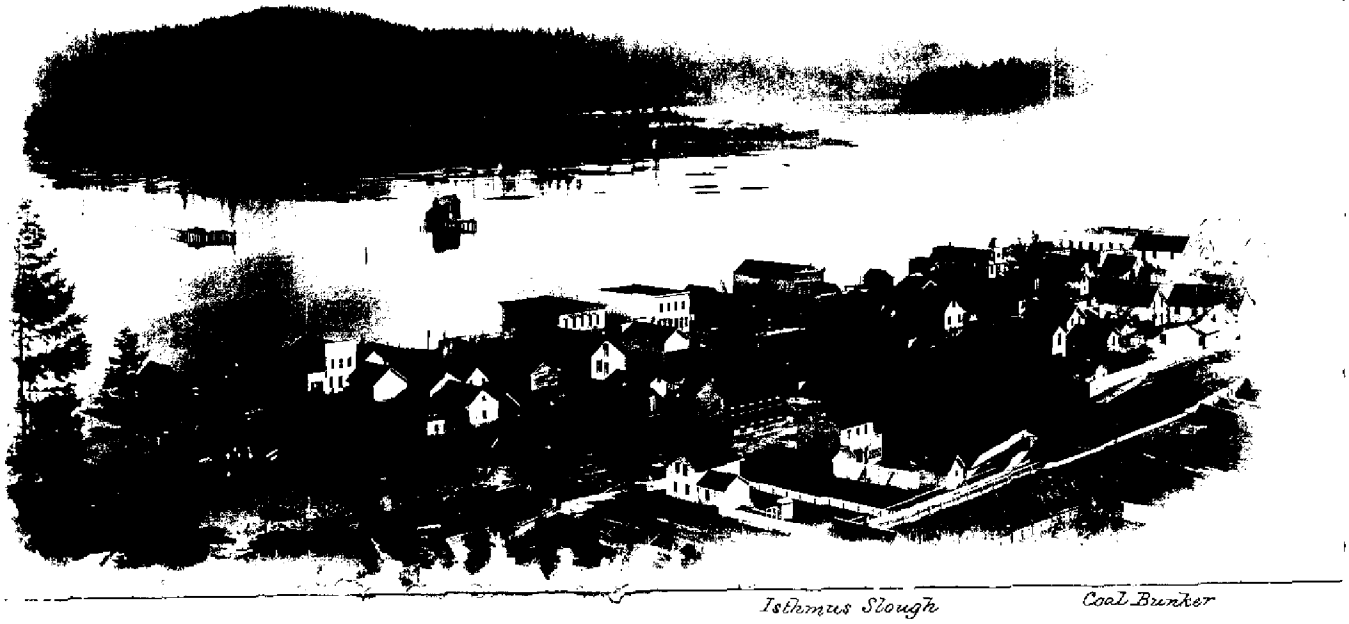


Marshfield, Coos Bay, Oregon

feet of lumber, or one thousand boxes, one thousand staves and three thousand barrel heads per day. They employ about thirty men and load from one to two schooners per month, besides making shipments per steamer; a few hundred yards above this mill is a tannery which tans about one thousand hides per annum.

Marshfield, situated at the head of the bay, is the principal town, and claims about one thousand five hundred inhabitants; it is quite a busy place, being the supply depot for the settlers on all the sloughs emptying into the upper part of the bay. It has several hotels, a number of good stores of all descriptions, blacksmith shops, livery stables, schools, churches &c.; there is also a saw mill, belonging to E. B. Dean & Co. of San Francisco, which has a cutting capacity of forty five thousand feet per day; this mill was not running during the past year. There is a daily mail and stage from Marshfield to Roseburg on the California and Oregon Railroad, and also to Coquille City. A steam ferry twice a day to Empire City and up Isthmus Slough; also small steamers daily up both forks of Coos River and Catching Slough. There are good summer roads to Empire, Newport, Coquille and Roseburg, but during the winter they are impassible, except on horseback.

About three-fourths of a mile above Marshfield, at the junction of Isthmus and Coal Bank Sloughs, is the Coal Bunker



Marshfield, Coos Bay, Oregon

of the Oregon Coal and Navigation Company, where their colliers load; during the past year they have kept three steam colliers busy transporting their coal to San Francisco. The bunkers are connected with the mines at Newport by a railroad 3½ miles in length, they employ about two hundred men and take out about ten thousand tons of coal per month. Their miners are comfortably housed and cared for at Newport, which is a very pretty little village, with a good store and school house.

Coal Bank Slough, is navigable for small vessels as far as Eastport, about one and one fourth miles from its mouth, and for boats and scows some distance further.

Eastport, is the location of the bunkers of the Eastport Coal Mine, and is connected with the mine by a railroad about a mile in length; this mine has not been worked for several years, and the railroad, bunkers, wharf and other buildings are rapidly going to decay.

Isthmus Slough, is the largest slough emptying into the bay, the Bay City Mill, belonging to E. B. Dean & Co. of San Francisco, is located on its East bank about a mile above its mouth; the mill has a capacity of cutting about sixty thousand feet per day, employing about forty-five men and loading four to five schooners per month. This slough is the main channel of communication between Coos Bay and the Coquille River, a small steamboat makes two trips daily between Marsh-

field and Utter City, (about seven miles) to connect with the Coquille City stage. A railroad has been surveyed and located across the Isthmus from Utter City to the Coquille River, and it is the intention to build during the coming summer. Opposite Utter City is a good coal mine, and ocean steamers formerly went there to load, but the mine has not been worked for several years.

Catching Slough, is navigable for small steamboats for about six miles, or to within a mile of the town of Sumner. The Southern Oregon Company, whose mill is at Empire City, has its logging camps in this vicinity, and brings the logs by railroad to the slough, where they are made up into large rafts and towed by steamboat to the mill. There are a number of settlers along the banks of the slough and its tributaries.

Coos River, is the main tributary of the bay, and drains a large area of country; about four miles above its mouth it divides into two branches, known as the North and South Forks, both these streams are navigable by small steamboats for about ten or twelve miles. There are some fine farms along the banks, and above tide water are several logging camps, belonging to the Bay City and Porter Mills. The Government quarry, from which rock is obtained for the jetty at the mouth of the bay, is situated on the North Fork, several miles above its mouth. The rock is loaded on large barges, which are towed

down to the jetty, and is dumped overboard. Just below the mouth of the river, on the East side of the bay, is a large salmon cannery, which is run during the fishing season.

Willanch Slough, is a small, shallow slough, and is barely navigable for small boats at high tide. There are a number of settlers along the slough, and the marsh land is being reclaimed and cultivated.

Kentuck Slough, is also very shallow, but can be navigated by small boats at high water for about a mile. There are a number of settlers along its banks, and the marsh land is being dyked and reclaimed. At the North side of the entrance to the slough is the wharf of the Hardy Coal Mine, the mine is about a mile back in the hills and was connected with the wharf by railroad, but as it has not been worked for a number of years the road, wharf and buildings at the mine are rapidly going to ruin.

Timber; the whole country surrounding the bay is covered with timber: fir, spruce and cedar are the principal varieties; there is also considerable myrtle along the rivers and sloughs, which is very valuable for fine finishing and furniture. On account of the number of rivers and sloughs emptying into the bay, the timber is easily reached and brought down to the mills in rafts.

Coal: the full extent of the Coos Bay coal fields is not yet definitely known, and it will probably be many years be-

fore it will become so. The wild nature of the country, which is everywhere covered with dense and heavy forests, renders exploration extremely slow, laborious, and expensive, but it is estimated that there are at least two hundred and fifty square miles under-laid with coal. All the coal heretofore shipped from the bay, has not worked out one square mile of territory. The character is a lignite or brown coal, and very good for domestic purposes, as it carries but little dust or soot and burns well. It is not, however, the best for steam, although used by the steamers and tugs going to and from the bay, and by the Coast Survey Steamer "Gedney", while surveying off the coast during the past season.

Fish: the bay and its tributaries abound with fish of all kinds, from the smallest mountain trout to the largest salmon. There are two salmon canneries on the bay, which are run during the salmon season, commencing in August and continuing until the end of November; besides the salmon put up at the canneries, a great many are salted and packed in barrels. Outside the bay, off Cape Arago, fine halibut and rock cod are caught in considerable quantities. The flats inside the bay are alive with clams.

Ship Building, is quite an important industry, as all the timber necessary for any part of a wooden ship can be found in this vicinity, from knees (of which large numbers are shipped to San Francisco) to largest timbers and finest finishing

lumber, such as cedar, maple, ash and myrtle. Masts and spars are also abundant, of all sizes and the best quality. Besides the ship yard already mentioned under the head of North Bend, there was also one at Marshfield, but no vessels have been built there of late years. As near as I could learn there have been about seventy vessels built on the bay, schooners, tugs, ships and steamers, with a total capacity of about twenty three thousand tons. There is also considerable work done in repairs of vessels.

Land. The general character of the country is that of a hilly region, very rough and broken, carved into a perfect labyrinth of steep and narrow gulches, and pierced in every direction by numerous sloughs, or long, narrow and crooked inlets; along these sloughs is some fine bottom land, and the marshes are being dyked and reclaimed, making good agricultural land.

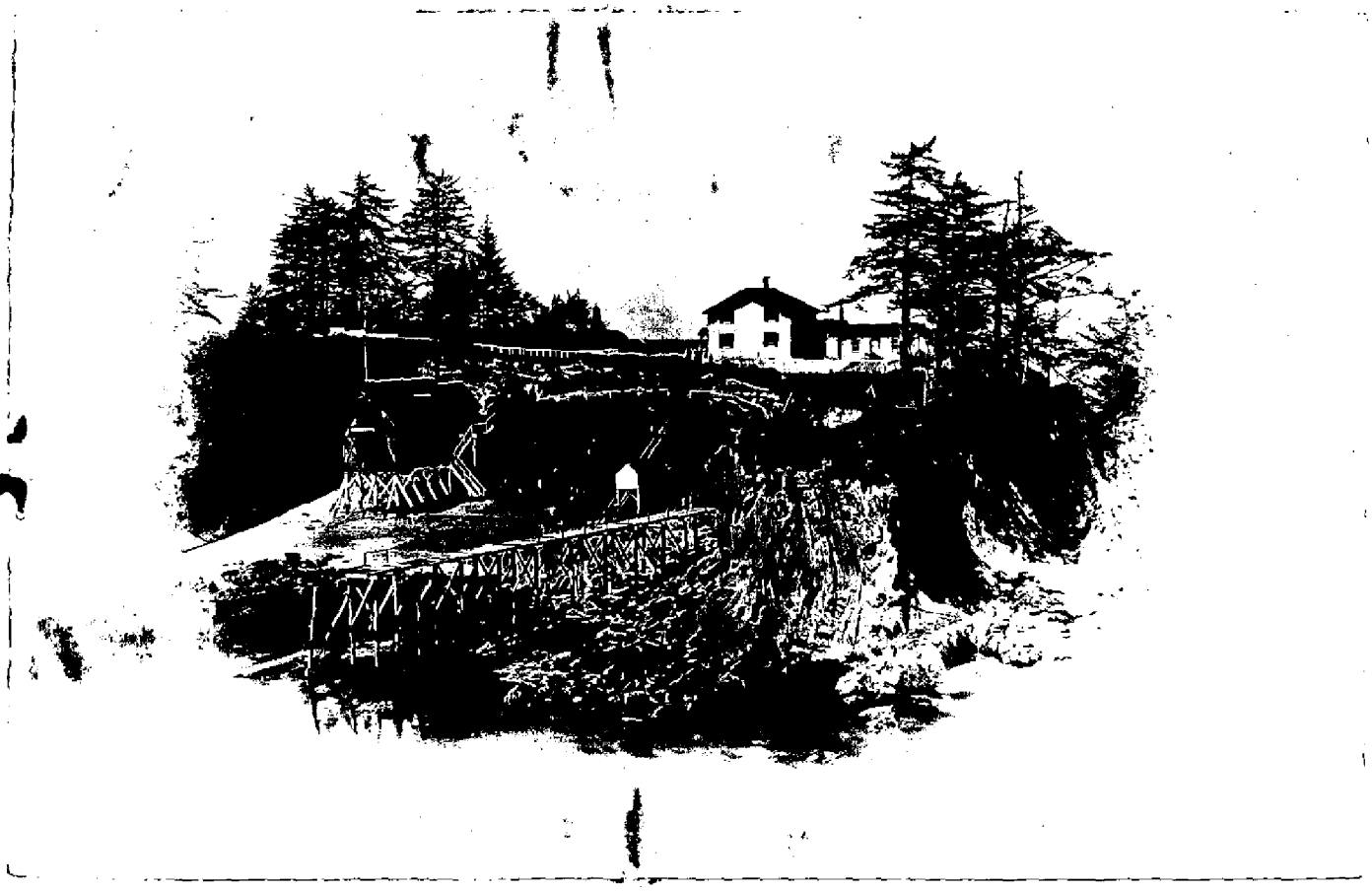
Climate, is moderate, the thermometer very seldom falls below zero, or rises above 90°; the annual rainfall is about forty inches. During the summer months fogs and strong Northwest winds prevail along the coast most of the time, but a few miles inland, out of reach of the winds, the climate is delightful.

Commerce. The following statistics were obtained from the Custom House at Empire City, for the year ending June 30th, 1889:

Cape Arago, Oregon

Number of steam vessels arrived, 149; tonnage, 46,162.
Number of sailing vessels arrived, 122; tonnage, 25,292.
Number of steam vessels sailed, 147; tonnage, 46,147.
Number of sailing vessels sailed, 126; tonnage, 25,262.
The principal exports were lumber, lathes, piles, barrel-staves, match-wood, ship knees, coal, salmon (canned and salted) potatoes, apples, butter, cheese and hides.
The principal imports were general merchandise, farm implements, machinery and railroad iron. The commercial relations of this place are chiefly with San Francisco, steamers carrying passengers and freight run at least once a week, besides sailing vessels almost every day.
In 1885, number of vessels arriving was 152, tonnage, 49,090.
In 1889, number of vessels arriving was 271, tonnage, 71,454.
showing how rapidly commerce is increasing. There is also telegraphic communication with all parts of the country.

Before the submerged jetty was commenced at the entrance of the bay, the channel over the bar was difficult and tortuous, always changing, and vessels were often bar bound for several weeks at a time, but of late years the channel has been nearly straight and changes very little in position; during the past summer the average depth on the bar was from fifteen to eighteen feet at high water, and vessels are now seldom bar bound.



Lifesaving Stn and Lightkeepers Dwelling
Cape Arago, Oregon

The Cape Arago Light House, is on a small, narrow and rocky island at the Western extremity of Cape Arago, about seventy-five feet above the sea level. It is a fixed white light, varied by a white flash every two minutes, and is visible for about fourteen miles.

The whistling buoy, lettered "K" and painted with black and white perpendicular stripes, bears North three-fourths West, distant about two miles from the light house, and about a mile outside the bar.

Two steam tugs are kept on the bay for towing vessels in or out, and no sailing vessel should attempt to cross the bar without a tug.

Respectfully submitted,

E. F. Dickins,

Assistant U. S. C. & G. Survey.

To-

Professor T. C. Mendenhall,

Superintendent U. S. C. & G. Survey,

Washington, D. C.