

JUN 13 - SIGHTSEEING IN ASTORIA, OR

I like the times when we have more than one day in any locale. We had discussed going to Cannon Beach (again) but I suggested that we should explore Astoria - something we have not done in our past visits to Oregon. Were we in for some pleasant surprises!

Our first stop was the Astoria Column: *a tower overlooking the mouth of the Columbia River on Coxcomb Hill. Built in 1926, the concrete and steel structure is part of a 30-acre (12 ha) city park. The 125-foot (38 m)-tall column has a 164-step spiral staircase ascending to an observation deck at the top* (Wikipedia).

There is only one thing that you are allowed to throw from the top of the tower.

For a buck I couldn't resist. The wind was coming in off the water so I went to the back side of the tower and let 'er rip. After a couple of loops and attempted self-annihilation, the flight leveled out. Into the trees, I thought destruction was inevitable. Wow, there it is... still flying...another turn and back into the trees. Oh no, a crash is certain. Nope, there it is again heading the other direction! I estimate the flight lasted close to a minute. I finally lost sight of the little plane because of the trees and the distance. What fun!



I know I'm getting old(er) 'cause at the top of the column, only 125' high, I couldn't resist the temptation to hang onto the railing. Now there was a time.....nah, I've never been really comfortable with heights. I read this morning about a Russian young person who likes nothing more than climbing buildings, then shinnying up the mast on top to take a picture. Don't know whether he's one of these people.





Lewis and Clark came this way over 200 years ago.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

In 1804, Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led about 40 soldiers and boatmen on an epic journey. President Thomas Jefferson commissioned this "Corps of Discovery" to find route to the Pacific Ocean through the newly acquired Louisiana territory. Along the way, they mapped the land, recorded its resources, and contacted its native inhabitants.

The landscape has changed since Lewis and Clark explored it: rivers have been dammed, forests cut over, prairies plowed under, and roads built to the horizon. Although remnants of wilderness still exist, imagine this land as Lewis and Clark first saw it two centuries ago.

The United States purchased the Louisiana territory—more than 82,000 square miles—from France in 1803. President Jefferson selected Meriwether Lewis (far left) to lead an expedition there.

With Jefferson's permission, Lewis asked his friend and former commanding officer, William Clark (left) to be co-leader. Although opposite in temperament, they worked harmoniously throughout the two-year journey.

Route of the Expedition

Legend:

- Expedition preparation sites (1800)
- Outbound events (1804-05)
- Return events (1805-06)
- Outbound route (1804-05)
- Return route (1805-06)
- Present-day state boundaries

Key events on the map include: Arrived at mouth of Columbia River (November 7, 1805); Built Fort Clatsop (July 3, 1805); Reached Fort Vancouver (August 26, 1805); Capt. Lewis explored the mouth of the Missouri (June 14, 1805); Lewis and Clark returned (August 12, 1806); Clark joined Lewis in Louisville, Kentucky (October 14, 1800); and Lewis left Washington, D.C. (July 5, 1803).

Next stop was the Maritime Museum on the Columbia riverfront. We'd seen an advert for their 3D movie: Hurricane.



The Riverfront Trolley stops in front of the museum.

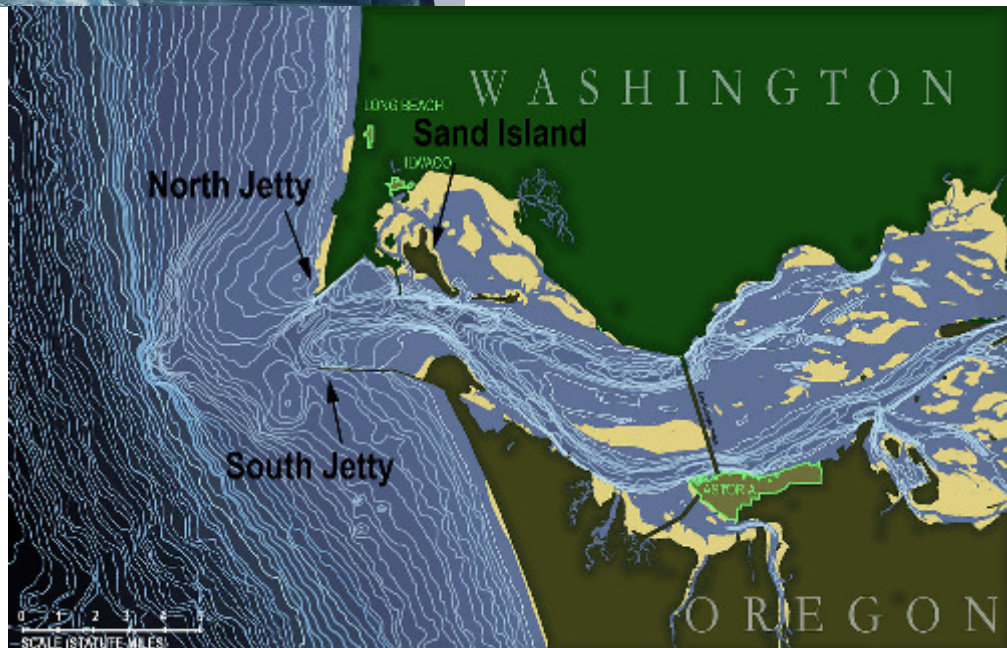
You can see the trolley pole on the roof, but because there are no overhead wires, a power car is required.

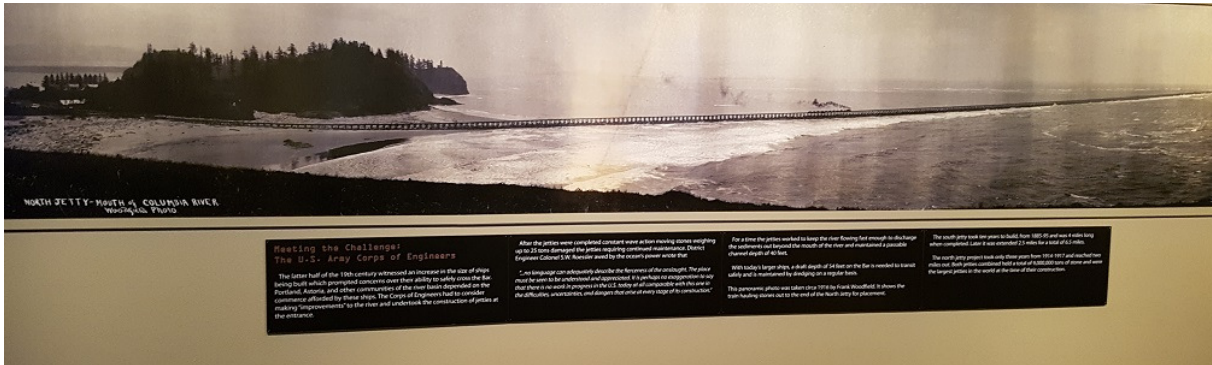
The 3D movie was really well done. The hurricanes we experienced in our 5+ years in Nova Scotia were pussies compared to the hurricanes in the movie. I don't know how people do it - living in fear of a major hurricane.

The museum was extremely interesting. The Columbia Bar - where the Columbia River meets the Pacific Ocean can be treacherous. Mariners from around the world come here to train: *The nearby United States Coast Guard Station Cape Disappointment, Washington, is renowned for operating in some of the roughest sea conditions in the world, and is home to the National Motor Lifeboat School. It is the only school for rough weather and surf rescue operation in the US, and is respected internationally as a center of excellence for heavy boat operations* [Wikipedia].



In the picture below you can see the North and South Jetties.





This panoramic photo was taken circa 1916 by Frank Woodfield. It shows the train hauling stones out to the end of the North Jetty for placement.

The text below this panoramic picture reads:

The latter half of the 19th century witnessed an increase in the size of the ships being built which prompted concerns over their ability to safely cross the Bar. Portland, Astoria, and other communities of the river basin depended on the commerce afforded by these ships. The Corps of Engineers had to consider making "improvements" to the river and undertook the construction of jetties at the entrance.

After the jetties were completed constant wave action moving stones weighing up to 25 tons damaged the jetties requiring continued maintenance. District Engineer Colonel S.W. Roessler awed by the ocean's power wrote that "... no language can adequately describe the fierceness of the onslaught. The place must be seen to be understood and appreciated. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that there is no work in progress in the U.S. today at all comparable with this one in the difficulties, uncertainties, and dangers that arise at every stage of its construction."

The south jetty took ten years to build from 1885-95 and was 4 miles long when completed. Later it was extended 2.5 miles for a total of 6.5 miles.


The north jetty project took only three years from 1914-1917 and reached two miles out. Both jetties combined held a total of 9,000,000 tons of stone and were the largest jetties in the world at the time of their construction.

For a time the jetties worked to keep the river flowing fast enough to discharge the sediments out beyond the mouth of the river and maintained a passable channel depth of 40 feet.

With today's larger ships, a draft depth of 54 feet on the Bar is needed to transit safely and is maintained by dredging on a regular basis.

Of course, Captain George Vancouver also frequented these waters.

GEORGE VANCOUVER
1757-1798
Britain's Meticulous Explorer



Though Vancouver failed to spot the mouth of the Columbia River, his dedication to precise and accurate surveying helped dispel the notion of a Northwest Passage.

George Vancouver was born in 1757 at King's Lynn, an English seaport. The son of a successful customs official, it may have been his father's connections that secured Vancouver a position aboard the second and third expeditions of Captain James Cook. In 1791 he was given command of the *Discovery* for an expedition to chart the Pacific Coast, taking up where Cook left off.

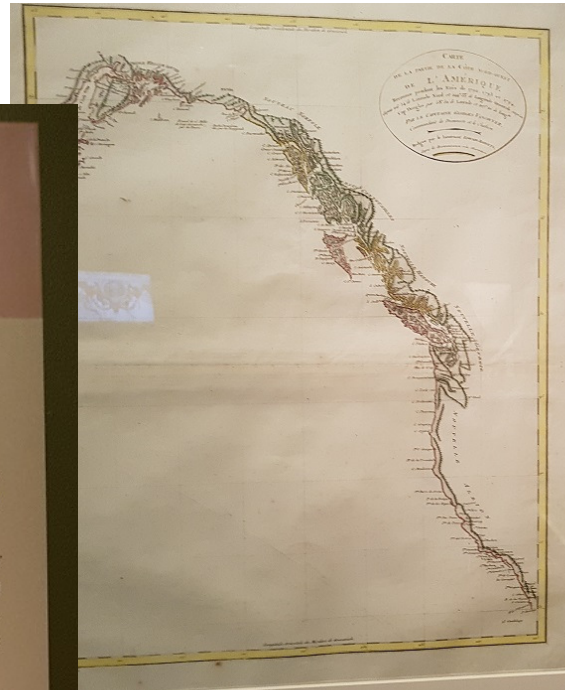
Vancouver's monumental survey is famous for being exhaustive amidst a coastline of great complexity. His technique involved the constant use of small boats. Typically, his two ships, *Discovery* and *Chatham*, would drop anchor and two or three small boats would maneuver into an inlet or onto shore, led by officers or by Vancouver himself. One party might take measurements on land while the other boats would pick their way through the jagged coastline for up to five days. Vancouver's commitment to precision is reflected in the eighty-five sets of lunar observations taken to accurately establish the survey's starting point.

An excerpt from Vancouver's Journal describes a typical day of surveying:

Saratoga Passage and Penn Cove, 1792—

Mr. Whiteby informed me, that . . . having advanced about four miles, they found on a low projecting point of the western shore, a village containing a numerous tribe of the natives. . . . Notwithstanding their numbers, it was important to land for the purpose of taking angles; and they had the satisfaction of being received on shore with every mark of cordial friendship . . . having finished the business for which he had landed, he instantly embarked, and continued his route up the inlet until the evening, when he landed for the night about nine miles within its entrance.

IMAGE: CAPTAIN GEORGE VANCOUVER. URL TEST UNKNOWN/BNP
WWW.HISTORICVINE.ORG



We could have spent a lot more time exploring the museum, but we had to call it a day. If you are ever in Astoria, you should visit the museum.

Tomorrow we head into Washington State. Where we'll stop, we're not sure right now.