

BOOK REVIEWS

The Northwest Fur Trade and The Indians of The Oregon Country, 1788-1830. By WILLIAM STURGIS, edited by S. E. Morison, Ph.D. (Boston: The Old South Association, Old South Meeting-house, 1920. Pp. 20. Five cents.)

Old South Leaflets have earned an abiding reputation for generous and genuine service to the cause of American history. Year after year the leaflets have come, each one containing some rare and precious document with helpful and appropriate notes. Each leaflet is sold for five cents a copy or four dollars for one hundred copies. Later they were gathered into collections, twenty-five separate leaflets bound together, and sold for one dollar and a half a volume. The eight volumes now completed should be in every reference library in America. Three former leaflets related historical events in the Pacific Northwest. These were: Number 131, E. G. Porter's Account of the Discovery of the Columbia River, (1792); Number 44, Jefferson's Life of Meriwethen Lewis, (1813); Number 133, Seward's Address on Alaska, (1869.) At present the series are under the editorial supervision of Samuel Eliot Morison, Ph.D., of the Department of History, Harvard University.

This latest pamphlet is Number 219. The brief introduction explains its contents as follows:

"The Northwest Fur Trade between Boston, the Pacific Coast, and China, was an important stage in American expansion. It led to the discovery of the Columbia River, and to the annexation of two great American states. It enabled American merchants to compete successfully with other nations in the China trade, and inaugurated the friendly relations that have since existed between the United States and China.

"In this Leaflet we reprint parts of two lectures on the Northwest Fur Trade and the Indians of Oregon Country delivered in 1846 by William Sturgis, who had been actively engaged in the Northwest Fur Trade since 1798; and extracts from his journal on his first voyage, written before he was eighteen years old."

William Sturgis was not among the very first of American fur traders on the Pacific Coast but he was among the early ones and he continued in the business as long as the large profits were

possible aside from the Alaska seal exploitions of later years. His experiences add a fund of useful information to that interesting period. The pamphlet is well worth saving in collections of Northwest Americana. Mr. Sturgis was himself an attractive personality in that history. For the benefit of those who may not obtain the Leaflet, the biographical note is here reproduced:

“William Sturgis was an admirable example of the self-made American merchant. Born in 1782 at Barnstable, Massachusetts, the son of a Cape Cod shipmaster, he came to Boston at the age of fourteen, and became a clerk in the office of J. & T. H. Perkins, one of the pioneer firms in the Northwest fur trade. Young Sturgis soon decided to abandon the office stool and seek his fortune at sea. In 1798, after studying navigation for a few months, he shipped as foremast hand on the ship *Eliza*, of 136 tons, bound for the Northwest Coast and China. The Captain made him his assistant in trading with the Indians. Sturgis picked up their language quickly and won their good-will by fair dealing. While trading along the coast, the *Eliza* fell in with another Boston vessel, the *Ulysses*, whose crew had mutinied and put the Captain in irons. The *Eliza's* officers induced them to release their commander and promise to obey him in future; but the mates refused to return. Captain Lamb of the *Ulysses* then offered young Sturgis the position of first mate. He accepted with some misgivings, being only seventeen years old, but made such a success of it that on returning to Boston the owners made him first mate and supercargo (business officer) of their ship *Caroline*. When the captain of this vessel died at Hawaii, William Sturgis succeeded to the command, at the age of nineteen. Five years after he had left Boston as a common sailor, he returned ‘as master of a noble ship, with a valuable cargo on board, the fruit in great measure of his own skill and exertion.’

“After another voyage around the world in the same vessel, Captain Sturgis was given command of a larger Boston ship, the *Atahualpa*, which sailed direct for Canton with 300,000 silver dollars on board. The owner of this vessel was unwilling to arm her, as was customary in those days for all Pacific merchantmen; but luckily Captain Sturgis managed to get four cannon on board. On August 21, 1809, when at anchor off Macao, the *Atahualpa* was attacked by sixteen heavily armed Chinese junks, under the command of a noted pirate. Part of the crew were on shore, but the rest, under the lead of their intrepid Captain, succeeded in beating off the pirates, with heavy loss. Captain Sturgis had sworn off smok-

ing, but when the fight began he lit a cigar and informed the crew that he would toss it in the powder barrel rather than yield the ship to the pirates. A passenger, who was 'yellow as a sunflower' with the jaundice, was completely cured by the excitement of the battle.

"After this voyage was over, Captain Sturgis retired from the sea, and formed the firm of Bryant & Sturgis, which continued the Northwest fur trade until 1829,, when it ceased to be profitable. Bryant & Sturgis then became the leader in the California hide traffic. It was on their vessel that Richard H. Dana sailed 'Two Years before the Mast.' For thirty years off and on, William Sturgis represented Boston in the Massachusetts legislature. On one occasion a learned member of that assembly endeavored to confuse this bluff old sailor by a string of Latin and Greek quotations, to which Mr. Sturgis, who was self-educated beyond the point attained by most college graduates, replied in the Indian language of the Northwest Coast, which he said was quite as much to the point, and 'doubtless as intelligible and convincing to most of those present' as the classical quotations they had just heard. He always took a keen interest in the Oregon question, and published several articles and pamphlets in favor of the American claim. The westward extension of the forty-ninth parallel, as a compromise boundary, was suggested by him in a pamphlet of 1845, which undoubtedly had considerable influence on the result of the negotiations of 1846. Like most retired sea-captains, William Sturgis lived to a good old age, and kept his physical and intellectual vigor to the end. He died on October 21, 1863."

EDMOND S. MEANY

Essays, Verse and Letters. By JOEL M. JOHANSON. (Seattle: The Joel M. Johanson Memorial Committee, University of Washington, 1920. Pp. 204. \$3.)

The publishing committee consists of the author's colleagues on the faculty of the University of Washington—Richard F. Scholz, Harvey B. Densmore, Ralph D. Casey and Joseph B. Harrison. The dedication is to the father and mother of Joel M. Johanson.

The author was a product of the west. He was born in Wisconsin on November 30, 1879. The family moving farther west, young Johanson received his schooling in the Bellingham Bay cities. He was graduated from the University of Washington in 1904. He won the contest which gave him the distinction of being the first