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THE MARITIME ACTIVITIES OF THE NORTH WEST COMPANY, 1813 TO 1821

As captains of industry the North West Company of Canada controlled the fur trade of the unknown wilderness reaching outward toward the Pacific and Arctic Oceans. Forests and plains, rivers and lakes were traversed by the indomitable men of the North. Yet these Bedouins of the western world looked even beyond toward Cathay,—“That vast shore washed by the farthest sea”—to China, which was the Mecca of the merchants of the nineteenth century.

The story of the sea-faring of the Nor' Westers is a chapter in the history of that trans-Pacific trade which, in pre-treaty days, centered in Canton, the “City of the Rams.”¹ Life there for the Fan-Qwae,² or “foreign devils,” was confined to the “Thirteen Factories” without the city wall.³ In the largest of these the Honorable East India Company had established itself with a degree of magnificence not attained by the Americans nor even by any other of the European traders. Together these commercial pioneers tapped the vast reservoir of wealth in China. Toward this Viking settlement of treasure hunters the North West Company made its way that it might add to its own golden hoard. In 1813 the great adventure began.

At the annual meeting of the Company held at Fort William⁴ in the summer of 1812 it was determined to establish a fur post at the mouth of the Columbia River. This was the strategic position for the control of the interior trade, and it afforded the base for a trans-Pacific fur trade. The immense distance from Montreal to the Pacific Coast made the land transportation of trade goods to

¹ An ancient name for the city of Canton. Gideon Nye, *The Morning of My Life in China* (Canton, 1873), 4.

² This signifies literally “barbarian wanderer” or “outlandish demon.” C. T. Downing, *The Fan-Qui in China in 1836-7* (London, 1838), I, 5.

³ The foreign hongcs, or “Thirteen Factories,” were owned by the hong merchants and rented to the traders from overseas, foreigners not being allowed to own land at Canton. Collectively they were known as hongcs; each one contained separate residences including counting rooms, one behind the other with small open courts between them.

⁴ The partners of the North West Company met every summer at Fort William, on the northern shore of Lake Superior, to discuss the affairs of the Company and to make the arrangements for the following year. At this meeting in 1812 they planned to acquire Astoria, the fur post established at the mouth of the Columbia River by John Jacob Astor of New York.

the remote posts on the western side of the Rocky Mountains unprofitable, hence they were to be routed by sea to the Northwest Coast. A ship from London was to carry the English merchandise to the Columbia, whence, with the furs collected from the far western posts, it would sail for China. The timely purchase of Astoria from the Pacific Fur Company removed the formidable opposition trade of the Americans.

A vigorous and expansive program of trade was planned. It was to be a smooth golden round. The ocean highways were to be followed to those outposts of civilization where furs could be obtained or disposed of. Goods from England to the Pacific Coast, rich furs from the interior posts, sea-otter from the remote northern fjords and the harbors of California, fragrant sandalwood from the Sandwich Islands—all these were to be given in exchange for the Gold of Ophir.

A difficulty lay in the stranglehold on the China trade by the commercial octopus, the English East India Company. British ships could trade in the Far East only under the license of that company. This excluded British merchants from the barter trade engaged in by the American merchants, and, while they had the protection of the Company, they were required to exchange their cargoes, not for Chinese teas, silks, and other rich merchandise of the Orient which could be taken to England and the Continent, but for specie which must be deposited with the East India Company. For this specie the Company would issue bills on London at twelve months, sight.⁵ The restrictions of this monopoly practically eliminated the British traders from competition with the Americans.

The activities of the North West Company in the China trade extended over the years 1813 to 1821. They fall into two groups: (1) The attempts to trade direct with China in spite of the regulations of the East India Company. (2) The arrangements with an American firm for the ocean shipments of goods, and the conduct of trade in China and home markets to evade that monopoly.

During the years 1813 to 1815 the North West Company sent at least three vessels from London to the Columbia, and thence to China. All these vessels belonged to the London agents of the Company, by whom they were fitted out for the trade.

To get the benefit of freight both ways, and the advantage of sale by barter, the Canadians in 1815 made an arrangement with the Boston firm of J. and T. H. Perkins by which the supplies of

⁵ Tyler Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia* (New York, 1922), 38.

British manufactures required for the fur posts on the Columbia were sent from England to Boston,⁶ whence an annual ship was sent by the American firm to convey them to the Columbia, and to take the furs to the Canton market. The proceeds of their sale were to be invested in teas and other produce of China, and consigned to the Perkins firm of Boston, by whom they were to be disposed of, the consignees to retain one-fourth of the proceeds as their share of the voyage. This arrangement proving extremely profitable to both the Canadians and the Americans, it was continued until the union of the North West and the Hudson's Bay Companies in 1821.

With the exception of the transfer of the deep-sea shipments to the American merchants, the activities of the North West Company remained essentially the same all these years. Supplies for the interior posts, and the trade returns (furs) were still routed through the Columbia department; and the coast and island trade was conducted in the Company's schooners with somewhat variable success. World commerce and the Canton market remained the Company's goal; only the intermediaries of that trade altered. With the beginnings of this commerce when the men of the North were adventuring in strange places we are more immediately concerned.

The China voyages afforded a vastly interesting aspect to the fur trade. Here was a far-flung enterprise that led these fur folk over the blue waters of the world to the ends of the earth. Clearing from Portsmouth in the autumn, in order to pass the high latitudes during the Antarctic summer, the ships generally arrived on the Northwest Coast by spring, whence they sailed for China with a cargo of furs. To obtain fresh provisions and prevent scurvy the Nor' Westers broke the voyage at least twice; sometimes at the Falklands, where they refitted for the always tempestuous seas around the Horn; usually at Juan Fernandez; and they often stopped at the Galápagos Islands⁷ to secure a giant tortoise; but on their way to China they invariably made Hawaii, for these were

⁶ William Sturgis, "The Northwest Fur Trade," *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XIV, 538.

⁷ These wonder islands were a port of call for all ships in West-Pacific waters. Squarely under the equatorial sun their climate was made delightful by the Humboldt Current flowing from the icy waters of the Antarctic. Water, fresh meat, and safe coves for refitting ships, attracted successively pirates, sealers, and whalers (the distinction between these sea-rovers is not always clear). Delano has described the islands and says the giant tortoise found there furnished delicious meat for the crews of ships. An average tortoise weighed from fifty to a hundred pounds, but some went up to four hundred. On one of his visits to the Galapagos Islands, Captain Porter stowed away fourteen tons of live ones on board the *Essex*, and he tells us, "They require no provisions or water for a year, nor is any farther attention to them necessary, than that their shells should be preserved unbroken." *A Voyage in the South Seas in the Years 1812, 1813, and 1814*. By Captain David Porter of the American Frigate, The *Essex*. (London, 1823), 66. Amasa Delano, *A Narrative of Voyages and Travels* (Boston, 1817), 369 *et seq.*

leisurely days in seafaring, and the palm-fringed lagoons and the languorous air of the enchanted islands possessed a lure for these world wanderers.

With favoring winds a few weeks' sail from Hawaii brought the mariners to the old Portuguese city of Macao,⁸ at the mouth of the Canton River. Here alone might the Fan-Qwae reside permanently. At Macao a licensed pilot was taken on board, and an official permit was secured which allowed the ship to go to Whampoa, the anchorage for all foreign merchantmen. There the Hoppo⁹ came on board to measure the ship for her duties. Not only did he extend the official hand of imperial China, but he received sizeable gifts for himself. Before trade could be opened the ship had to be secured by one of the Chinese merchants, who guaranteed its right conduct and the payment of its duties, and through whom, in return, its trade was usually conducted.

From Whampoa the cargo was lightered in chop boats¹⁰ twelve miles up stream to old Canton, landed at Jackass Point, and stored in a hong belonging to a security merchant. Only the supercargo and the ship's officers were allowed to stay at the Canton factories; the sailors remained on their vessel at Whampoa, enjoying an occasional "liberty day" at Canton.¹¹

The foreign trade was confined to a suburb of Canton called the "Thirteen Factories." The many storied hong (foreign factories), with their huge go-downs or warehouses, were built outside the ancient wall of the city.¹² In front of the factories was the Square, with Jackass Point.¹³ This was the landing place for ship's boats from Whampoa. No one but the Fan-Qwae, or "foreign devils," could take the air and exercise on the famous Square, known the world over wherever ships sailed.

Before the Square flowed the river. Innumerable boats floated on its waters. Stately mandarin boats, painted the blue of the sky, expressed Chinese imperial authority. They were propelled by double banks of silvery-white oars; over the highly polished deck of hard wood was raised a light shelter, its sides covered with vermilion and gold leaf; curiously shaped paper lanterns bore the

⁸ Macao was the old Portuguese colony established in the sixteenth century. Every foreign vessel had to approach Canton through Macao. As residence was permitted at the Canton factories only during the trading season, foreigners who wished to live in China had their homes at Macao.

⁹ The Hoppo was the superintendent of customs.

¹⁰ The chop was a large boat with one great mat sail; its office was merely that of a lighter, hence no ornament was thrown away on it. Downing, *The Fan-Quy in China*, I, 100.

¹¹ William C. Hunter, *Bits of Old China* (London, 1885), 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 195. The city of Canton was first walled in during the year 1067 A.D.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 13. For eighty years the foreigners had the exclusive use of the Square. The origin of the singular name of the Point was unknown; it was probably because it had come to be a resort for gossip over the topics of the day.

name and the title of the officer on board, and from everywhere floated gay silk pennants of exquisite colors. Great tea-deckers, with red lacquered sides, each carrying an enormous square sail of brown matting, brought the teas from up the river. Anchored along the river banks were the gorgeously decorated flower boats; their balconies of intricately carved wood fretted with green and gold, were surmounted with roofs covered with pots of the gayest flowers in full bloom. Lacquered barges, festooned with crimson silk and edged with gilded carving, bore important mandarins and hoppers to and fro; and amid all the multitudinous river traffic, great and small, hundreds of little sampans darted in and out bearing the humble tradesmen of the river city.¹⁴

In these early days foreign commerce was compelled to fit into the Canton commercial system. Free from all treaty restrictions¹⁵ and diplomatic interference, a curious business organization was formed. The central institution was the "co-hong,"¹⁶ a loose monopoly established by the imperial government expressly for the control of foreign commerce. All trade was conducted by the co-hong, and through it the government communicated with foreigners. It was composed of a varying number of hong merchants, supposedly thirteen but usually fewer. Each merchant did business independently of the others. They acted together merely for the control of foreigners and the enforcement of trade regulations. They were given the complete control of all foreigners, their persons, their property, and their trade; likewise they were held responsible for their actions.¹⁷ It was a very effective way of handling foreign affairs while they were limited to the port of Canton. It came to an end when treaties were signed with the foreign powers.¹⁸

14 For vivid pictures of the colorful boat life on the Canton River see, Hunter, *Bits of Old China*, 17-19; and Downing, *The Fan-Quy in China*, I, *passim*. Written by contemporaries, these books describe the life in China in pre-treaty days; they have been widely used by modern writers.

15 Of all the European powers Russia alone had a treaty with China before 1842. The Treaty of Nerchinsk, 1689, limited the trade relations between Russia and China to a single point—Kyakhta on the Siberian-Mongolian border. In 1806 the Russians sent two ships to open up the sea trade with Canton. They obtained cargoes, but the only result was that the Chinese prohibited all trade to nations not already established in the Canton factories. H. B. Morse, *The Trade and Administration of China* (New York, 1913), 278.

16 "Co-hong" was the pidgin-English corruption for the Chinese name *Yeung Hong Sheung* meaning the "Foreign Associated Merchants." K. S. Latourette, "The History of Early Relations between The United States and China 1784-1844." *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 22, p. 20.

Williams says the Chinese word "hong" means a row or series, and is applied to warehouses because these consist of a succession of rooms. The foreign factories were built in this manner, therefore the Chinese called each block a hong; the security merchants were called hong merchants, because they lived in such establishments. S. E. Williams, *The Middle Kingdom* (New York, 1883), 167.

17 K. S. Latourette, *Early Relations Between the United States and China*, 20-21.

18 S. E. Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1921), 279. The Treaty of Nanking, 1842, between China and England, ended forever the old Canton methods of trade and opened up four new ports to European commerce.

The Isaac Todd

The pioneer fur ship of the North West Company in the China trade¹⁹ was the *Isaac Todd*; she left England in the spring of 1813. This ship was sent to the Columbia River with the intention of forming a settlement there, probably taking over Astoria. Donald McTavish was in charge of the expedition and was accompanied by John McDonald of Garth. They were partners in the Company and both were Highland Scotchmen. An overland party, under the leadership of J. G. McTavish and Alexander Henry, was to proceed from Fort William to meet the ship on the Northwest Coast.

In August the Montreal agents wrote to the London members of the firm telling them of the plans for the trans-Pacific trade, and that the *Isaac Todd* would be sent to England to be fitted out for this round-the-world adventure. During the autumn the London agents were instructed to apply to the Admiralty for a sloop of war to convoy their ship, and to clear the coast of hostile vessels.²⁰ In accordance with these plans the *Isaac Todd* was fitted out for the Northwest Coast by the London firm, Fraser, McGillivrays and Company, and in March, 1813, she sailed from Portsmouth under command of Captain Fraser Smith. The *Phoebe*, a frigate of thirty-six guns, commanded by Captain Hillyar, accompanied her as convoy under sealed orders to be opened after leaving Rio de Janeiro.²¹

The fur magnates, Messrs. McTavish and McDonald, were passengers for the Columbia River. They were accompanied by Dr. Swan, who was to be the resident physician at the new establishment, and four clerks, all Scotch, Alexander McTavish and James Chisholm McTavish, Alexander Fraser, and Alexander McKenzie.²² To insure a safe entrance of the difficult channel of the Columbia River a Sandwich Islander, who was familiar with

19 Furs belonging to the North West Company had been sent to China at various times, and through various channels. Mackenzie says that a considerable number of beaver, otter, and kit fox skins were sent through the United States to China in 1798. Advantage was probably taken of Jay's Treaty, which removed the restrictions on direct trade from Canada to the United States. Why the trade was diverted from the London market, Mackenzie explains as follows: An adventure in the China trade was undertaken by "a respectable house in London, half concerned with the North West Company, in the year 1792." Selected furs were sent to the annual value of £40,000 in the years 1792-1795 inclusive. In 1796 the furs were sold in the London market, and in 1797 the experiment was concluded. The North West Company lost £40,000 on their half interest. This loss was principally due to the difficulty of getting home from China the merchandise obtained for the furs, together with the high duties, and the restrictions of the East India Company on the China trade. Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal . . . Through the Continent of North America . . . In the Years 1789 and 1793* (London, 1801), xxvi.

20 G. C. Davidson, *The North West Company* (Berkeley, 1918), 136.

21 "The orders given to Captain James Hillyar of the *Phoebe* to convoy the *Isaac Todd*, annihilate any American settlements in the region of the Columbia, etc., are in Admiralty 2, vol. 1380, pp. 367-379." G. C. Davidson, *The North West Company*, p. 137, n. 68.

22 Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River* (London, 1831), I, 286.

the river, was taken along as pilot. A half dozen good Canadian voyageurs completed the personnel of the fur men.

The voyageurs caused no end of trouble. Gay and irresponsible, they were eager for the delights of shore leave. On the eve of their sailing for the Pacific they celebrated with a convivial last good time in Portsmouth. The festivities over they set out to return to their ship in a shore boat; the four clerks were also aboard, all under the convoy of Mr. McTavish. A press gang lurking in the shadowy darkness boarded their boat, and took all but Mr. McTavish and one clerk to a recruiting ship in the harbor. The lordly midshipman in charge paid no attention to the Scotch invective of McTavish—off they went to join the navy. Incensed at the loss of his men, McTavish returned to the hotel where he had left McDonald dining with two of the London agents, the Honorable Edward Ellis and Mr. McGillivray; here the influence of "big business" made itself felt. Ellis being closely related to the port admiral, an order to release the men was quickly obtained and the following morning saw them all safely aboard the *Isaac Todd*.²³

Under convoy of the *Phoebe* they left England late in March. Sailing southward, the equator was crossed in May. The long days on these summer seas were pleasantly broken by catching green turtles and occasionally harpooning fierce sharks. This deep sea fishing furnished sport for the men and very superior provisions for their eating.

Touching at Rio de Janeiro in June they found Rear Admiral Dixon's flagship and several smaller vessels in the harbor. While there Captain Hillyar learned that the United States frigate *Essex*, commanded by Captain David Porter, was in the North Pacific working havoc with the British whalers. One of them, taken as a prize, had been refitted as a sloop of war with twenty guns, and now accompanied the *Essex*. As the *Isaac Todd* was a very slow sailer the admiral was asked to send an additional force with the *Phoebe*. Accordingly the *Cherub* and the *Raccoon* were added to the convoy to secure the safety of the merchantman.

Shortly after noon on the ninth of July the *Isaac Todd* weighed anchor and under a light breeze stood down the Bay of Rio. The three war ships followed. Next day John McDonald, the Islander, and four Canadians, were transferred to the *Phoebe*. This had been arranged in London, and was intended to insure the presence

²³ L. R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Campagne du Nord-Ouest avec une Esquisse Historique et des Annotations* (Quebec, 1889-1890), II, 44-45.

of at least one of the partners of the North West Company at the taking over of any fur posts belonging to the Americans.

Winter was closing in as they entered the high latitudes and the little fleet made haste to double the Horn. The four captains agreed to rendezvous at the island of Juan Fernandez if the ships were separated on the long voyage to the Pacific. Off the Falklands storms were encountered. McDonald's logbook reads; "July 20, Heavy gale; near losing sight of the *Isaac Todd*, she having drifted to the leeward. July 29. *Cherub* only in sight, no sign of the *Isaac Todd*. July 30. Lost hopes of joining the *Isaac Todd*."²⁴ Violent storms succeeded each other; days of tumult were followed by starless nights. It was nearly six weeks before the war ships could double Cape Horn, but once in the favoring winds of the Pacific they sailed northward for their rendezvous. When still far away the island was sighted directly ahead, rising like a deep blue cloud from out the sea. Hours later at sunset the three war vessels anchored in the nearly landlocked harbor of the island. The war ships had arrived at Juan Fernandez on the eleventh of September but the *Isaac Todd* did not meet them; somewhere in that far-flung solitude she was alone.

The next day about noon the three British captains, the purser and the doctor of the frigate, and Mr. McDonald, paid a visit to the Spanish governor of the island. They landed at a wharf of stone built where once the corsairs of the South Seas had been accustomed to beach their boats. Looking seaward there was a tiny settlement; a church carried aloft the cross of the faith; nearby was a house of some pretension for the governor; its red-tiled roof, stone faced walls, and grated windows, set it apart from the primitive Robinson Crusoe-like huts of the settlement. At the wharf they were met by two rotund padres. These kindly men embraced the travelers as was the Spanish custom and escorted them to the governor's residence.

For a week they tarried. During this time Captain Hillyar examined some charts of the Columbia River and learned that the bar was too shallow to admit his frigate. Accordingly McDonald and the voyageurs were transferred to the *Raccoon* which was detailed for the Columbia,²⁵ while Captain Hillyar, with the *Phoebe* and the *Cherub*, set sail in quest of Captain Porter and the *Essex*.

²⁴ Elliott Coues, ed. *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson* (New York, 1897), II, 762-763, n. 26.

²⁵ When the *Raccoon* arrived at Astoria, the American fur post at the mouth of the Columbia River, Captain Black found the partners of the North West Company in possession. They had purchased the establishment and named it Fort George.

Meanwhile, in those lonely seas the *Isaac Todd* was driven out of her course. Through endless wintry nights she fought her way against winds and waves. No details are known of her lone calls at the island outposts of the world. Too late to meet her convoy she adventured alone in Pacific waters. She touched at Juan Fernandez, then, following the route of the whalers, she made for the old pirate stronghold, the Galápagos Islands. On these desolate shores the men feasted on the giant tortoise. With the crew rested and refreshed they continued their voyage; but their supply of water was inadequate. Alexander Henry tells us: "They were put on short allowance of water about the time they crossed the line—one pint per day to each person in that hot climate; they complain of this great hardship and say they suffered much."²⁶

To secure fresh water and provisions they anchored at Monterey, California, about the middle of January. On the twenty-first of that month Richard Swan, the surgeon of the *Isaac Todd*, certified to the Spanish authorities that there was no infectious disease on board, but three of the crew had the scurvy. On the same day Captain Fraser Smith wrote to Don José Arrillaga, governor of California, asking for wood, water, and provisions.²⁷ The Spaniards granted these necessities to the Englishmen, and they also allowed them to purchase supplies of grain, meat, tallow, and live stock for the establishment on the Columbia.

A few days before the *Isaac Todd* arrived at Monterey another British vessel had intruded into California. It was the *Raccoon*, badly damaged in crossing the bar of the Columbia on her way to the Sandwich Islands; with seven feet of water in her hold she barely made the port of San Francisco. Captain Black, of the *Raccoon*, was well treated by Luis Argüello, the comandante of the presidio. On the fifteenth of January Argüello wrote to Governor Arrillaga that the *Raccoon* had anchored in San Francisco Bay because of the accident, and to get supplies.²⁸

The opportune arrival of the *Isaac Todd* made possible the repair of the *Raccoon*. Indeed Arrillaga aided them all he could, for the quicker the vessel was made seaworthy the sooner would California be rid of her unwelcome guests.²⁹ The charm and idleness of life in California proved to be an irresistible attraction to

²⁶ Coues, *Henry Thompson Journals*, II, 900.

²⁷ California Archives, Provincial State Papers, MS, XIX, 369.

²⁸ California Archives, Provincial Records, MS, XII, 226.

²⁹ D. Zavalishin, *Delo o Koloniy Ross*, Russian America, vol. V. MS Translation in Bancroft Library, pp. 4-5. In July, 1814, Kuskof, the Russian commander at Fort Ross, reported to Baranof, the Russian governor at Sitka, that Captain Black treated the Spaniards as his subordinates; that Black had hinted to him that the colony Ross was an intrusion; "that the Russians disturbed the right of great Britain as New Albion, as the name shows, is the property of the empire and not of the Spaniards."

some of the sailors, and eight of them deserted from the *Isaac Todd*. Captain Black promptly wrote to Arrillaga reporting the desertion, and that seven of the eight men were British. He requested the governor to capture the runaways and send them under escort to the *Raccoon* at San Francisco, adding that he was short of men due to sickness and other casualties.³⁰ Perhaps the Spaniards were a bit slow in apprehending the fugitive seamen for on March 29, Black again wrote to Arrillaga. He repeated the contents of his letter of March 4, and added that several of his own men intended to desert and claim the protection of the Spanish authorities as Roman Catholics; he hoped such conduct would not be upheld by either the governor or his officers.³¹ In another letter of the same date Black informed Arrillaga that the accident to the *Raccoon* had ruined his gunpowder, and requested him to supply the ship with 1400 to 1500 pounds of powder, payable with bills on the British government "That I may be enable to put the remaining part of my orders into execution."³²

The Spaniards furnished him with a 1000 pounds of powder and other needed supplies. However, both the ships delayed their departure, for on February 21, Captain Smith also wrote to the governor in regard to the deserters, and requested that they be captured and delivered to the *Raccoon* at San Francisco.³³ Finally, on April 29, Argüello sent the good news to Arrillaga that the *Raccoon* sailed on the nineteenth; and her commander said he was going to Monterey, and from there to the Sandwich Islands to pursue the Americans.³⁴

Meanwhile, the *Isaac Todd* had sailed for the Columbia River, where she arrived April 22. The differences between Captain Smith and the irascible and independent Donald McTavish had grown so intolerable, in the long voyage of thirteen months from London, that by the time they got to Fort George they were on very bad terms, and Alexander Henry relates, "One messes in the after cabin, and the other with his officers in the gun room."³⁵

In addition to the supplies for the trade the *Isaac Todd* brought from England many luxuries for the partners and clerks of the North West Company; and at Monterey McTavish had purchased provisions of all kinds, and some live stock—two young bulls, two heifers, several pigs, some cocks and hens, and even a few Spanish

30 Prov. St. Pap., MS, XIX, 368.

31 *Ibid.*, 370.

32 *Ibid.*, 370.

33 *Ibid.*, 369.

34 *Ibid.*, 368.

35 Coues, Henry *Thompson Journals*, II, 900.

cats. Captain Smith anchored the vessel opposite the fort. The goods had to be unloaded by tackle and ferried across the river. The partners wanted him to anchor under the fort, claiming the anchorage was good with a sufficient depth of water, and that much labor and expense would be spared the Company in unloading; but the captain was obdurate, and remained at the inconvenient anchorage he had chosen.

The ship was now fitted out for China. As cargo she carried the furs that had been collected by the Americans at Astoria. Angus Bethune went aboard as supercargo, and September 26, 1814, she left the river.³⁶

To secure fresh provisions, a stop was made at the Sandwich Islands. At these crossroads flowed all the channels of trade and pleasure in the mid-Pacific; life in the lovely timeless islands was idyllic. The king, Kamehameha I, was a very sagacious ruler and his boundless hospitality made him the friend of all men of the sea. Shortly before the *Isaac Todd* arrived the *Forester*, claiming to be a British ship, had put in at the island of Hawaii.³⁷ The crew mutinied and her commander, Captain John Jennings, barely escaped with his life. He was protected by Kamehameha, and when the *Isaac Todd* came into port Mr. Bethune gave Captain Jennings a passage to China.

After a voyage of several weeks from Hawaii the *Isaac Todd* anchored in Macao Roads, and Captain Smith secured the mandarin pass permitting the vessel to go up river to Whampoa, where the commercial transactions began. Once anchored at Whampoa, the hoppo came on board to measure the ship; a linguist and comprador were secured, also a security merchant to transact the business at Canton.

Although compelled to submit to the uniform port and trade regulations of the Chinese the *Isaac Todd*, being a British vessel, came under the shadow of the East India Company. Until the dissolution of the Company's monopoly in 1834 the British merchants came to Canton only by permission of that Company, and they were required to act in conformity with the Company discipline. Accordingly, when Mr. Bethune had sold the furs through the hong merchant, he secured a lading of tea which the *Isaac Todd* carried to England for the account of the East India Company.³⁸

36 Peter Corney, *Voyages in the Northern Pacific*, Reprinted from *The London Literary Gazette*, 1821, Professor W. D. Alexander, ed. (Honolulu, 1896), 31.

37 K. W. Porter, "John Jacob Astor and the Sandalwood Trade," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, May, 1930, 497. The brig *Forester*, fitted out in London early in 1813, belonged to J. J. Astor who sent it, under British colors, to carry supplies to Astoria.

38 Davidson, *The North West Company*, 164.

His business as supercargo being completed, he was to remain in China and await the next Company ship from the Columbia River, on which he would return to the Northwest Coast. Captain Jennings also remained to secure the command of an outward bound vessel.

Meanwhile the *Isaac Todd* had completed her lading of tea, secured the Grand Chop which passed her down the river, and with the East India fleet bade farewell to China. As was the custom of China, on the day of sailing the comprador of each ship gave a present to every man on board according to his rank, then, as the ship slowly moved down with the ebbing tide and the sails were successively spread to the wind, the comprador's sampan was left behind, and as a last token of good will, the kindly Chinaman raised aloft a basket of exploding fire-crackers, lighted the "ghos-papers," and with the clanging of a brazen gong implored the gods of the winds and waves to grant the ship a successful voyage.³⁹

The Columbia

In the autumn of 1813 the Company's second vessel for the trans-Pacific and coasting trade was fitted out by the London houses Inglis, Ellis and Company, and McTavish, Fraser and Company. A schooner that had once belonged to the Americans was purchased and named the *Columbia*. Her commander was Captain Anthony Robson and the first mate was Peter Corney. Officers and crew numbered twenty-five men. The ship carried ten nine-pounders, and there was a patent boarding defense all around her bulwarks. November 26, the *Columbia* sailed in company with the Brazil fleet. In February they anchored in the harbor of Rio de Janeiro; here, as usual, some of the crew deserted.

After a stay of nine days at Rio they weighed anchor and sailed southward. On the fourteenth of March they sighted land. There in the surge of the South Atlantic they saw the storm-whipped, treeless, and forbidding Falklands.⁴⁰ Following the desolate shore eastward they entered a long reach of smooth water—Berkeley Sound. On the western shore, near the head of the Sound, they saw the old French settlement, Fort St. Louis, lonely

39 Downing, *The Fan-qui in China*, I, 16-17. This ceremony is called by the Chinese "Ghos-pidgin" (God's business)—a propitiation to the gods of the waters for favoring winds and fine weather. The practice is universal in China.

40 The sea-faring French, mainly the men of St. Malo, had carried on a quiet trade with South America for more than a century. When they came to know the islands these bold Bretons called them for their own seaport—*iles Malouines*. Later, the Spanish called them *Maluinias*, or *Malvinas*, and nineteenth century American captains of whaling ships spoke of them as the Maloons. V. F. Boyson, *The Falkland Islands* (Oxford, 1924), 33; Edmund Fanning, *Voyages Round the World* (New York, 1833), 93; Delano, *Voyages*, 260.

and deserted.⁴¹ From the sea as they stood in to shore they could see great herds of cattle roaming wild; and horses, pigs, ducks and geese were plentiful. The stock brought by the early French, and later Spanish, settlers had thrived on the wild tussock-grass native to the islands. Captain Robson went ashore to shoot ducks, and the sailors were given shore leave. They explored the gardens of the derelict town and found cabbages and celery growing in spite of neglect. Clearing away the weeds they planted different seeds for the benefit of future wayfarers.⁴² Two weeks passed quickly, the crew feasting on fresh fish and vegetables; then, the men having completed the rigging of the schooner for the wild seas of Cape Horn, they sailed out of the Sound bound for the Pacific.

Cape Horn weather greeted them. The little schooner plunged madly into a tempestuous head sea which at every drive rushed over the bows and buried all the forward part of the vessel. One day the round house was carried away, the cabin flooded, and four feet of water washed into the hold. The gale carried away the foreyard and split the sails. As the storm increased in violence they were forced to scud under bare poles before the wind. Late in April they doubled Cape Horn; the Atlantic with its trials lay behind them, in their wake the sullen waters of the Horn lashed themselves against the coast of Tierra del Fuego, ahead stretched the broad Pacific and adventure. From the cold latitudes to the Columbia River they had fair winds and good sailing. The voyage was without excitement except for an abortive attempt at mutiny.

On July 7, 1814, they entered the Columbia River and anchored in Baker's Bay. The partners of the North West Company, stationed at Fort George, fearing a visit from an American war ship, kept close watch on all visiting ships. Uncertain of her

41 Bougainville led an expedition to colonize the Falklands, long known to the French as the Malouines. In February, 1764, Fort St. Louis was established on Berkeley Sound. The colony thrived; all manner of stores, seeds and plants, and cattle—the descendants of which are in the islands today—were taken to the desolate land. The governor and his staff had stone houses to live in; humbler folk to the number of 150 had dwellings with turf walls. Meanwhile, Port Egmont on West Falkland was occupied by Commodore Byron of the English navy who took possession of the group and called them Falkland Islands, in ignorance of the fact that Bougainville, the previous year (1764), had claimed them for the king of France. Spain protested against the French intrusion into her domain (there were rumors of an English colony but no one seemed to know quite where it was). Bougainville agreed to withdraw his settlers, the Spanish government in return to indemnify him for the expense incurred by the St. Malo company. The unfortunate settlers were free to remain under the flag of Spain or return to France (about 100 left the islands). The colony was formally handed over to Spain in April, 1767 (the elusive English colony still a myth).

The Spanish officials who came to govern the lonely little settlement viewed with disfavor the certain cold and probable misery of its location. The solitude, the unquiet seas, and the perpetual winds dismayed them; yet, in grim endurance, for forty years they held their lonely outpost, and named it *Isla Nuestra Señora de la Soledad*. L. A. de Bougainville, *Autour du Monde* (Paris, 1771), 44-53.

42 Corney, *Voyages*, 20-21.

identity they sent a small boat from Fort George that evening which anchored inshore to ascertain whether she were friend or foe. Next morning the *Columbia* weighed and ran up river with the tide. She anchored beside the *Isaac Todd* opposite Fort George.

Columbia society welcomed the newcomers cordially. Chief Concomly arrived in his huge war canoe, for it was his custom to be the first to greet visiting vessels. Captain Fraser Smith of the *Isaac Todd* made a morning call, and a large bark canoe brought John George McTavish from Fort George.⁴³ Indians from nearby tribes visited the ship bringing sea-otter and beaver skins for trade; but the Company would not permit the ship's people to buy, as all trading on the river had to be done through the Company's post.

Having landed the supplies of English goods for the fort the *Columbia* loaded a cargo of bar iron, powder, ball, etc., for a trading trip to the Russians on Norfolk Sound⁴⁴ James McTavish went as supercargo and McLennan as clerk. Head winds delayed them, but on September 5 they saluted the Russians with thirteen guns. Governor Baránof honored them with an equal number. Visits of courtesy were exchanged, not only with the Russians, but with the traders whose ships were in the Sound. At Sitka, all the mariners of the North Pacific foregathered. Captain Bacon, of the American ship *Packet*, had arrived with a particularly fine cargo of furs from the Northwest Coast, and mate Corney says: "The Americans were very friendly with us, often spending the evenings on board." Once Baránof and his suite dined on the vessel, and the boarding defense for keeping off hostile Indians pleased him greatly; when the *Columbia* came in 1816, he purchased it and had it put around his house. The terms of trade having been arranged between Baránof and McTavish, the cargo was landed and the furs taken on board. Late September found them southward bound for Fort George.

In November, with a cargo of furs for the Canton market and a fine assortment of goods for the Spaniards in California, the *Columbia* sailed on her first voyage to China. En route she was to stop at Monterey and trade for provisions and furs. As the North West Company hoped to establish a permanent trade between California and Fort George, it was arranged that Mr. Duncan McDougall should go to Monterey and ask permission to remain there until the vessel returned from China. Opportunity would thus be afforded to observe and become acquainted with California's affairs, both political and economic.

At dawn on the 25th of November, 1814, they anchored in Monterey Bay about a quarter of a mile from the presidio. The ship's officers went on shore to report the vessel and were received with distinguished courtesy by the Spaniards; a military force of fifty horsemen was drawn up on the beach to receive them. Somewhat doubtful of the Spaniard's reception of a gun salute, the comandante of the presidio, Don José Estudillo, was asked if a salute from the ship would be answered; receiving an affirmative reply a salute of eleven guns was fired. This was returned with the same number from the presidio. Captain Robson and Mr. McDougall then went ashore and made a formal visit to the presidio. McDougall asked the comandante for permission to remain at Monterey, to collect provisions for the Company, while the schooner went to China; he also presented a petition to the Spanish authorities to establish a permanent trade between California and the Company's establishment on the Columbia River.⁴⁵

In the interval between the death of the Spanish governor Don José Arrillaga on July 24, 1814, and the arrival at Monterey of the new governor, Don Pablo Solá, August 30, 1815, Don José Argüello, the comandante of Santa Barbara and the senior officer in California, became the acting governor. As he remained at Santa Barbara instead of coming to Monterey the capital, it was necessary to send McDougall's request to him by courier. The petition to establish trade would of course be forwarded to the viceroy in Mexico. While awaiting the reply from Governor Argüello fresh beef and vegetables were sent to the ship every day; the officers and sailors were allowed to walk and ride around the town, and the Spanish grandees and their wives were entertained on board ship.

On Friday, December 16, Argüello's reply was received. It was as follows: The question of permanent trade would be referred to the viceroy, meanwhile, they could not allow any gentlemen to remain in California; the goods brought for barter could be landed; and, the comandante was to see to the collection of provisions while the ship continued her voyage to China. As a great favor the ship's cooper was allowed to remain to superintend the curing of the beef.⁴⁶ As these were the very best terms the Spaniards would grant the supply of goods was landed. It included bale goods, iron, sugar, tobacco, rum, etc. On the next day, eight sailors deserted.

43. *Ibid.*, 27.

44. Sitka, on Baranof Island, was the headquarters of the Russian American Fur Company. North of 56° the Russians dominated the fur trade. They visited the low-lying, endless islands known as the Aleutians; on the large ones they established trading posts, and seasonal hunters visited the smaller ones.

45. Corney, *Voyages*, 33.

46. *Ibid.*, 33.

As Argüello had suggested that McDougall might stay with the Russians while awaiting the return of the ship, the *Columbia* sailed for Fort Ross December 21.⁴⁷ They probably stopped at San Francisco on the way north, for they arrived at the fort on December 24. A fleet of *bidarkas* met them off shore, bringing presents of fresh meat and vegetables. One of them acted as pilot-boat and soon the schooner was safely anchored about a mile from Fort Ross. McDougall landed and called on Governor Kuskof, the Russian commander. His request to remain until the ship returned from Canton was refused, as Kuskof would not consent without permission from Baránof at Sitka. McDougall returned on board, and at daylight on Christmas morning they weighed and sailed westward for the Sandwich Islands.

Hawaii was sighted January 16, 1815. Natives visiting the ship informed them that Kamehameha was at the village of Kailua, towards which they sailed. Outrigger canoes filled with merry, laughing natives followed the ship. They offered hogs, vegetables, rope, and tapa cloth for trade. A chief woman was taken on board as pilot for the inter-island voyage. At midnight they anchored off the royal residence and saluted the king. Early the next morning, accompanied by the queens and the principal chiefs, Kamehameha visited the ship. With the notables on board, the king acting as pilot, the ship weighed and was towed close in shore by huge double canoes manned by natives. Very graciously the king gave McDougall permission to stay on the islands as long as he desired. His baggage, and that of another representative of the Company (probably McLennan) was sent on shore.⁴⁸ The king sent off supplies of hogs, fruit, vegetables, and some very good island rope, and that same night, January 18, they sailed for China.

A voyage of some seven weeks brought them to Macao. Three days were spent in threading the maze of Canton river craft, and on March 20 they anchored at Whampoa where they found Mr. Bethune and sixteen Sandwich Islanders who had been left there by

47. For nearly thirty years (1812-1840) the Russians occupied Ross, a stockaded fort built eighteen miles north of Bodega. Graneries, workshops, and huts for the Aleut fur hunters were built outside the stockade. On account of the lack of a good anchorage here, warehouses for the storage of goods were built at Bodega where the Russian ships wintered and made repairs. Cattle and farms were acquired, and articles of iron, wood, and leather were manufactured and sold to the Californians. Various trades were carried on at Fort Ross such as, tanning hides, making brick and tiles, barrels and kegs. Ship building began and four large vessels were constructed. Comfortable furniture, a piano, and even glass windows, made the place homelike as well as permanent. There were flowers in profusion and fine vegetable gardens. Khlebnikof says the vegetables were sometimes of prodigious size; one radish weighed 53 pounds, pumpkins averaged 60 pounds each, and one turnip weighed 13 pounds. N. V. Sanchez, *A Short History of California* (New York, 1929), 167-170; K. Khlebnikof, *Zapiski o America*, Russian America, vol. III, pt. 4, p. 82, MS Translation in Bancroft Library.

48. Corney, *Voyages*, 36.

the *Isaac Todd*.⁴⁹ Eight days after they arrived at Whampoa Captain Robson, who was tired of the Northwest Coast and wished to return to England, arranged with Bethune to turn over the command of the vessel to Captain John Jennings who had been a passenger on the *Isaac Todd* from Hawaii to Canton.⁵⁰ The furs were lightered up river to Canton and disposed of, and April 28 the *Columbia* weighed from Whampoa for the Columbia River, anchoring there July 1.

A second trip to California was now made by the busy little schooner. She arrived at Monterey about the middle of July, 1815.⁵¹ The eight deserters left on her first visit were recovered, also four from the *Isaac Todd*.⁵² Meanwhile, an order had come from the viceroy directing the governor of California not to allow any trade except through the government officials, and, as far as possible, to prevent any contact of the ship's people with the residents of Monterey. Obeying this order: a guard was posted on the embarcadero to prevent smuggling; the Spaniards were forbidden to visit the ship; and the crew found themselves unwelcome on shore.⁵³ However, Argüello had asked the padres of the Franciscan Missions to contribute flour and other produce for trade with the *Columbia*, and a plentiful supply of all the country afforded was brought to Monterey.⁵⁴ The supercargo, Angus Bethune, found great quantities of provisions collected by the industrious cooper, left there on the first voyage to California. He had salted beef, and secured flour, beans, corn, pease, and tallow.⁵⁵ This tallow was in great demand at Fort George. When the California cattle were slaughtered (the *matanza*, or killing time, was about July 1 to October 1), the *manteca*, or fat lying between the ribs and the hide of the bullock, was carefully tried out apart from the interior fat, or *sebo*. The *manteca* was for domestic use and was considered superior to hog's lard. The fur traders used the *sebo* for making soap and candles. Both

49. *Ibid.*, 38.

50. *Ibid.*, 38.

51. There are three letters from Estudillo, the comandante at the presidio of Monterey, to the governor, regarding the *Columbia*. In the first, Monterey, . . . 1815, he says that the *Columbia*, Captain Jennings, supercargo Angus Bethune, arrived yesterday and asked for provisions. In the second, July 18, 1815, he asks what disposition is to be made of the deserters of last year from the *Columbia* and the *Isaac Todd*; he has already returned nine men to Captain Jennings. In the third, Monterey, July 27, 1815, he assures the governor that the English captain has been informed that there must be no trading between the crew and the people of the presidio.

On July 18 Bethune wrote to the governor thanking him for the provisions furnished to the *Columbia*. Prov. St. Pap., MS, XIX, 398-399.

52. Corney, *Voyages*, 43.

53. *Ibid.*, 43.

54. *Archivo de Sta. Barbara, Papeles Miscelaneos*, MS, IX, 197-203.

55. *Archivo del Arzobispado, Cartas de los Misioneros*, MS, III, pt. 2, 62-63. The list of the provisions the missions were asked to supply for the North West Company vessel in 1816 included 45 *arrobas* of *manteca* (suet), and 456 *arrobas* of *sebo* (an edible fat). An *arroba* was twenty-five pounds.

manteca and *sebo* were packed in huge *botas* (bags) made of raw-hide, each holding from twenty to forty *arrobas*.⁵⁶

In September the traders were back at the fort where they quickly discharged the California cargo and stowed away a fresh one for the Russians. Arrived at Sitka the trade with Baránof was soon made, and October 17 they left for Fort George where they anchored eight days later. The furs were sent on shore to be carefully repacked for the Canton market, and the middle of November the *Columbia* set off on her second voyage to China.

Early in December they were at Hawaii. On the morning of their arrival Kamehameha came on board bringing with him the two gentlemen of the Company who had spent the year on the islands (McDougall and McLennan). They had been treated royally by their native hosts; new houses were built for them and servants placed at their disposal; and the king provided everything they needed.

While they were at Hawaii the crew killed and salted a great quantity of pork. Daily the royal family and principal chiefs visited the ship, remaining till evening. As it was necessary to overhaul the ship and caulk the rigging they sailed to Oahu. Crowded with natives all eager to visit Oahu the ship arrived at that delectable island on December 16. The repair work being completed they weighed for China January 4, 1816.

At Whampoa, where they arrived in February, the vessel was measured for her port charges and Corney tells us: "The grand mandarin [hoppo] came on board to measure the vessel, and made the usual present of two lean bullocks, ten jars of sour stuff misnamed wine, and ten bags of something they call flour; they were not worth the trouble of taking on board, and I sold them to the comprador for two dozen geese."⁵⁷

After nearly two months in China the *Columbia* sailed on April 30, 1816, for the Aleutians where they traded with the Russian outposts on the various islands. Thick mists, contrary winds, and violent storms were encountered. July 17 they were off the Pribyloffs.⁵⁸ These two little islands way out in the icy wastes of Bering Sea

56. *Amatansa*, and the rendering of tallow for the trade, are described in W. H. Davis, *Sixty Years in California* (San Francisco, 1889), 36-37, 46-49.

57. Corney, *Voyages*, 49.

58. The seals of the Pribyloff herds are larger, their fur finer and more downy, gray with a silver shade, than those from the California waters. The fur-seal skins were carefully cleaned and scraped, stretched on wooden frames in pairs the fur sides together, and stored in drying rooms which were heated by stones. The prepared skins were packed in bales, fifty together. These, if not traded, were shipped from Sitka the following year and taken to Okhotsk, from there they were forwarded to Kyakhta, the frontier station of the caravan trade to China. Khlebnikof, *Zapiski*, MS, vol III, pt. 4, 180-181.

were the summer resort of the immensely valuable fur-seal herds. All winter long their black rocks were deserted, stark and cold, but early spring brought the great herds to their summer rookeries. On each of the Pribyloffs the Russians had twelve men. Off the rock bound coast of St. George Island the *Columbia* dropped anchor. The surf pounded in tremendous breakers on the rocks; on the beaches were the vast rookeries where thousands of seals congregated. Here they secured 313 bales of the fur-seal skins.⁵⁹ Gull's eggs, salted ducks, and young sea-lions were traded for as food.

They were now homeward bound but bad weather forced them to remain several days in the fine harbor at Unalaska. Captain Jennings, Bethune, McDougall, and McLennan went on shore taking some rum as a present for the Russians. July 29 they left for the Columbia River.

As the vessel was to be overhauled and refitted the officers and men lived in tents on shore for several months during the repair work. Early in January, 1817, they set off for Hawaii. Pork was to be cured and as many of the Islanders were to be brought to Fort George as the vessel would accommodate. They touched at Kailua where the king was in residence and, as usual, the court visited the ship. The king promised them "all they wished for, that the islands afforded or he could command."

April 14 they took on board sixty natives for work on the Columbia River⁶⁰ and, with a huge supply of provisions, sailed for Sitka. In addition to the furs traded for with Baránof they secured some sea-otter skins that were smuggled on board by natives who eluded the vigilance of the Russians and visited the ship at night. Delayed by head winds and storms they arrived at the fort on June 12.

One month later the *Columbia* sailed on a coasting voyage to trade with the Indians of New Albion. This was a new venture in that region and did not prove a success.⁶¹ Storms drove them southward, and the heavy surf prevented the canoes coming off shore to the ship. The furs were scarce and the Indians were distinctly hostile.

The bowsprit of the *Columbia* being sprung they ran down to Bodega Bay for repairs. Captain Jennings spent two days at Ross hoping to dispose of the cargo to the Russians but they refused to

59. Corney, *Voyages*, 50. If each of the 313 bales had the usual Russian pack of fifty skins the trade at St. George Island alone was 15,650 prime seal skins. This is interesting if true.

60. Corney, *Voyages*, 73.

61. *Ibid.*, 77 et seq.

buy, although sending daily presents of fresh vegetables to the ship. The repairs being completed they set sail for the Farallones.⁶² On one of the larger islands they found about thirty Russians and Kodiacks. From the Farallones they sailed for Drake's Bay. Finding few Indians and no furs they continued northward. No Indians came off shore to trade although many villages were seen. From some Indians near Point St. George they secured several good sea-otter skins, trading one axe for each skin. Beating against the wind, with varying fortunes of calms and fogs, they arrived at Fort George in early October. It had been a fruitless quest for a new fur field.

After a sojourn of about a month on the Columbia River they again sailed for the Sandwich Islands, this time to sell the *Columbia*. If they were not successful at the Islands they were to go to Sitka and sell to the Russians. Six long twelve-pounders were added to the vessel's equipment to make her more desirable to Kamehameha. They arrived at Hawaii during a religious festival. Captain Jennings went on shore to see the king about selling the ship and was told to wait at Oahu until the festival was over, then the sale would be made.

December 24, 1817, the king's prime minister Kalaimoku (known as Pitt), accompanied by John Young and all the chiefs, came on board to inspect the vessel. They were impressed by the size of the big guns in the battery, and when several rounds of shot were fired they were elated by the great noise. The vessel was inspected and measured with the greatest care and found to be suitable to their needs.

The price agreed upon with Kalaimoku was: twice the full of the vessel in sandalwood, to be delivered in six months; possession of the vessel not to be given to the king until all the wood was delivered; meanwhile, the ship's people were to be furnished with provisions while they remained on the islands. The day following the sale was Christmas and Captain Jennings entertained all the chiefs and "respectable" white men on the island with a very grand dinner on shore.⁶³

While waiting for their fragrant cargo of sandalwood the vessel made several inter-island voyages to collect the King's taxes, and

62. From 1812 to 1840 the Russians maintained a small establishment at the Farallones for the purpose of securing fur-seals. These seals were smaller, and their fur coarser and blacker therefore less valuable, than those of the Pribyloff Islands. No trees grew on the Farallones nor was there any driftwood, and no water except occasional pools of rainwater in the winter. The hunters lived in earth huts, and five or six times a year *bidarkas* were sent from Fort Ross to carry wood and water to them, though they saved fuel by using oil-soaked bones for cooking. Khlebnikov, *Zapiski*, MS, vol. III, pt. 3, 233-234.

63. Corney, *Voyages*, 84.

invariably it was crowded with men, women, and children. At Hawaii the king came on board; at his approach all the natives jumped overboard and left the decks clear. Captain Jennings commenced firing a salute, but Kamehameha called out in a pleasant voice to stop. The powder was now his and he wanted it for other purposes (a charge was four pounds of powder)!

In March orders came to sail to Kauai for a cargo of sandalwood. More than five hundred canoes were employed in bringing the wood from the shore to the ship. With a full lading they returned to Oahu. A second cargo was secured from the western side of Oahu in April. By the end of that month payment in full of two ship loads of sandalwood had been made and the wood stored at Honolulu for shipment to China.

On the second day of May in 1818 they hauled down the English colors and hoisted the Island flag, saluting it with seven guns. The ship was then formally given to Kalaimoku for the king. It was journey's end for the fur ship *Columbia*.

The Colonel Allan

In early June, 1816, the *Colonel Allan* arrived at Fort George with the stores from London for the Indian trade. A veil of mystery surrounds this ship. Alexander Ross, who was staff clerk at Fort George in 1816,⁶⁴ says she arrived at the fort a few days after the spring brigade came from the interior (June 7, 1816), and that shortly after her came another vessel from the same port, both heavily laden with trading goods. After a short stay at Fort George the *Colonel Allan* sailed for South America and California on a trading voyage and returned with a quantity of specie and other valuable commodities consigned to some of the London merchants. During the summer the commander of the vessel, Captain McLellan, assisted by Ross, spent about three weeks making a new survey of the bar and entrance of the river, and in August the *Colonel Allan* sailed for China with the Columbia furs and specie on board.⁶⁵

Uncertainties as well as inaccuracies appear in Ross's account. The unnamed vessel "from the same port [London]," may have been the first annual ship, due to arrive in 1816, sent from Boston under the agreement between the North West Company and the Perkins firm of Boston.

Davidson says that the *Colonel Allan* returned from Fort George to England, and later states "Some furs, presumably the

64. Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, II, 76.

65. Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West* (London, 1855), I, 79.

property of the North West Company, were imported from the Columbia River to London in 1817. This is the only separate item of imports from the Columbia River during the existence of the North West Company."⁶⁶ The name of the vessel is not given. Was she the *Colonel Allan*?

Furthermore, concerning Ross's statements, it was not possible to make a trading trip to California and South America, and a three weeks survey of the river, between June 7 and an August sailing for China. However, as the Spanish records show that the *Colonel Allan* was at Monterey October 12, her departure from Fort George was probably in November.

While at Monterey the *Colonel Allan* traded with the Franciscan Missions. The California Archives record the arrival at Monterey on August 29, 1816, of the "*Allan*, Captain Mr. Daniels, supercargo D. Dunc McDougall," and her departure on October 12.⁶⁷ Although the viceroy had refused to allow the trade between California and the North West Company,⁶⁸ the splendid cargo and McDougall's persuasion, together with the destitution that pressed upon the troops and their families, led Governor Solá to permit trade in this instance. He requested the missions⁶⁹ to furnish flour and other produce and these supplies were bartered to the extent of \$6,796.⁷⁰ This sum does not necessarily represent the amount of trade with the vessel; as commerce with foreigners was prohibited the records would show only that for which the governor was responsible, and which was intended to supply the needs of the soldiers and their families.

The padres themselves were quite willing to evade regulations and engage in contraband business. They always spent freely from their ample stores of beaver and otter skins which they accumulated from the Californians and the Indians. Frequently they fitted out the boats and paid the hunters, or bought the skins from men not in their employ. The goods they secured from the vessels were not for their personal use, but most of them were sold to the rancheros and the proceeds devoted to the benefit of the missions. As the padres were superior traders, the missions fared extremely well.

The meagre facts gleaned from the accounts of the North West Company ships for 1816 suggest, but leave unanswered, the following questions: What vessel was sent by the Perkins firm of Boston

66. Davidson, *North West Company*, 166-167.

67. Prov. Rec. MS, IX, 144-150; *ibid.* XI, 40.

68. Prov. St. Pap., MS, XIX, 387-389.

69. *Archivo del Arzobispado*, MS, III, pt. 1, 62-63.

70. Prov. Rec. MS, IX, 149.

to bring the trading goods to Fort George for the year 1816? Did the *Colonel Allan* return to London from Fort George with a cargo of furs? How was the separate importation of furs from the Columbia River in 1817 (if they belonged to the North West Company) conveyed to England.

Possible answers to these questions are suggested as follows: The unnamed vessel, mentioned by Ross as arriving at Fort George in 1816, was the first annual ship sent by the Perkins firm to carry the furs of that year to Canton. The Chinese merchandise, for which these furs were bartered, was shipped to Boston and there disposed of by the Boston firm. The *Colonel Allan* secured specie in California, and "valuable commodities consigned to the London merchants." These commodities were probably furs for the Company, and hides and tallow for English houses connected with that commerce; with this lading she might sail for London. The furs of this mixed cargo may have been the separate item of imports from the Columbia River in 1817.

The Boston Ships

In 1815 the North West Company made a change in the conduct of the deep-sea shipments, and the fur sales in China. The commercial restrictions upon their trade in the Far East made the voyages expensive and unproductive. These regulations were of two kinds: first, the East India Company refused to permit the North West Company's ships to carry away tea and other Chinese produce in return for the furs sold at Canton; this deprived them of a return freight for the European markets, while the American ships, free to trade where they pleased, had the benefit of trade both ways, and by barter at Canton were able to get about twenty per cent more for their furs than the British could secure in specie;⁷¹ second, the duties and port charges in China were often heavy and were for the most part uncertain and determined by custom. They included import duties paid by the foreigners, and export duties paid by the co-hong merchants. Also there were measurement duties varying with the size of the ship, a cumshaw-tax which was the sum of a number of extra-legal fees and percentages given to various officials, and pilot's, linguist's, and comprador's fees.

To evade the restrictions of the East India Company, to lessen the expenses of the trade, and to secure the advantages of barter and a double turnover, the North West Company in 1815 entered into

71. Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia*, 38.

an agreement with the Boston firm of J. and T. H. Perkins. By this agreement the supplies of British manufactures required for the fur posts west of the Rocky Mountains were sent from England to Boston,⁷² whence the American firm dispatched an annual ship to convey them to the Columbia River, and to take the furs to Canton.

The American firm received for this service in lieu of freight, a joint and undivided interest of one-fourth part in the furs so shipped. These furs, thus owned by the Perkins firm and the North West Company, were to be sold in the Canton market and the proceeds remitted in Chinese merchandise which was to be sold for the joint account of themselves and the Canadian company, three-fourths of the net proceeds subsequently to be remitted to their foreign co-partners.⁷³

The sales, purchases, and shipments at Canton were to be transacted for a commission by another commercial house established there under the name of Perkins and Company⁷⁴ the membership of which was the same J. and T. H. Perkins of Boston and J. P. Cushing who resided at Canton for the purpose of conducting the affairs of the Canton house.

Thus in 1815 the circuitous trade—England—Boston—Northwest Coast—Canton—Boston was established.

- 1816 The name of the first annual ship sent by the Perkins house in 1815, and due to arrive at Fort George in 1816, has not been traced. The unnamed vessel mentioned by Ross as coming soon after the *Colonel Allan* in 1816 may have been theirs.
- 1817 In the summer of 1817 the brig *Alexander* brought the English goods to the fort, and thence carried the furs to Canton.⁷⁵ She ran out of the Columbia River July 12, 1817. The *Columbia*, bound for New Albion on a coastal trading voyage, crossed the bar in her company.
- 1818 The *Levant*, commanded by Captain Cary, was the annual supply ship from Boston arriving at Fort George in 1818, and proceeding thence to Canton with the furs.⁷⁶ She touched at Honolulu August 23, and carried the information to Captain Jennings of the *Columbia* that the Company's establish-

72. Sturgis, "The North West Fur Trade," *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XIV, 538.

73. U.S. Senate Documents (247), 24 Congress, 2 Session, Document 54. The Report of the Committee on Commerce on the Petition of J. and T. H. Perkins. pp. 1-15, *passim*.

74. The strange laws and customs of the Chinese led to the establishment of Boston mercantile houses at Canton in order to ease the way for American traders.

75. Corney, *Voyages*, 76.

76. *Ibid.*, 119.

ment Fort George was to be given to the Americans. September 20 the *Levant* left Honolulu for Canton.⁷⁷

- 1819 No record has been found of the annual ship for this year.
- 1820 The *Levant* from Boston brought the annual supplies to Fort George. From there she left for Canton on May 25, 1820. She carried "13,414 Beaver, 860 Otter, 266 Beaver Coating, 6770 Muskrats, 259 Minks, 104 Foxes, 116 Fishers, and 37 Sea-otters."⁷⁸
- 1821 The *Alexander*, last of the annual Boston ships, brought the supplies to the Columbia in 1821 and thence carried the furs to Canton. This cargo of furs was sold by Perkins and Company of Canton and the proceeds reinvested in silks, teas, and nankeens to the amount of more than \$70,000 which were shipped for Boston in January, 1822, on board the ship *Mentor*. The *Mentor* arrived at the port of Boston in May, 1822, and the import duties paid to the United States government by J. and T. H. Perkins on this consignment of Chinese goods were over \$33,000.⁷⁹

The adventurous range of these fur ships in the interest of the North West Company was around both of the great southern capes, along the whole Pacific Coast of North America, among the endless Aleutian Islands of Bering Sea, to the Hawaiian Islands in the mid-Pacific, and to the greatest of world ports—Canton. The furs were agents in extending trade and navigation in all parts of the world. With the union of the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies in 1821 the direct fur trade with China ceased and all the furs were brought to England in British ships. The great adventure that had covered the period 1813 to 1821 had ended.

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77. James Hunniwell, "Arrivals and Departures at Honolulu, December 1, 1817, to September 20, 1818." *Hawaiian Historical Society Papers*, No. 8, 17-18.

78. Davidson, *The North West Company*, Appendix O, 304.

79. *Sen. Docs. (297)*, 24 Cong. 2 Sess. Doc. 54, *passim*.