

DOCUMENTS

DIARY OF WILKES IN THE NORTHWEST
[Continued from Volume XVII., Page 144]
[August, 1841.]

2nd August

This day light breezes and calms. The moon was eclipsed last Evg. it had slipped my memory and the consequent fatigue of 2 nights watching the navigation of the ships in an exposed Strait subject to strong currents I was unable to attend to the observations it was very distinct & clear by the report of those who saw it.

At noon of this day I anchored in Port Scarborough¹⁷⁵ named after the master of [Ms. P. 107] of a Sch^r. in the employ of the H.B.C. service who had been greatly desirous of affording me the information that lay in his power.

We have had many Indians on board of the Classet tribe who are quite numerous and inhabit the country about Cape Flattery They seem much disposed to trade and barter and are greatly surprised that so large a ship should want no furs, and it is difficult to make them understand the use of a Man of War George the chief of the Tatouche tribe was on board all day he speaks a few words of English and after taking his likeness he was very communicative. On remarking on [illegible]¹⁷⁶ on his nose he said it was the custom of all those who had struck or taken whales so to mark themselves it is immediately on the bridge of the nose. All this tribe wear noselets of the this [drawing] just about as large as a 10 cent piece. They are generally naked except their blankets or skins and wear the conical hat of Nootka Sound [drawing] wove very tight that makes it impervious to water These they readily sell for tobacco.

This and *paulalee* (powder) are the articles in general request. They maintain themselves by fishing and take many whales which is done by using sealskin buoys attached to their harpoons—and are said to be very dexterous in taking them. They are the most numerous tribe we have met with and appear far more intelligent than others seen before of the Clallams & Nisqually. [Ms.

¹⁷⁵ See note 165 above.

¹⁷⁶ In the *Narrative* Volume IV., page 486, he speaks of this distinguishing mark as a scar.

P. 108] They are now all at peace and I should think this a good place for Missionary operations They appear quite ignorant of any religious forms. In the afternoon sent all the boats surveying & went myself to take alt^{de}. and angles & a pull round Port Scarborough.

Using 3 mi. south of Meridian Altitude it places it in the Island of Neah

	48°. 24 41" N.
Longitude by chro ^r .	124. 36. 46.
Variation for August	21. 08. 18. Easterly.

3rd August.

Finished the Survey of Port Scarborough it being calm got off about 1500 galls of water The water is here good and sufficient for a supply for any vessel there is some little difficulty in getting it The brook is small and enters the Bay on a sandy beach which is shallow with our water bags however we found no difficulty in procuring as much as we could take in during the morning a vessel watering with casks would find more difficulty and it would occupy more time but a supply could always be depended on¹⁷⁷ I observed the Latitude here again to day & it put it (The Point of Neah Island) in 48°. 24' 40". which agrees with that of Cape Flattery by Vancouver The anchorage is very good shelter with a S.E. or S.W. wind but from the N.W. the sea in a gale would roll in heavy. To anchor here stand into the Bay until you see the *Sail Rock*¹⁷⁸ between Neah Island¹⁷⁹ & the main. You will then have 10½ to 11 fath^s. sandy bottom and a smooth birth. I anchored rather nearer to [Ms. P. 107a]¹⁸⁰ the Cape Flattery Point (Point Kilcome)¹⁸¹ of the chart; in a N.W. Wind I would advise anchoring to the Eastward of the Neah Island as it protects you from the sea of that Quarter 10 to 12 fath^s. of the sandy beach is good about ½ mile or rather less from the Shore. The ebb & flood set here regularly close in — On rounding Tatoouche Island¹⁸² (off the Cape) (there is a small Rock called Duncans Rock it is not seen until nearly up with it, the passage is

177 The Makah Indians at Neah Bay in 1905 had put a sign over Neah Creek: "No washing above this sign." Indian women were busily washing clothes in the creek between the sign and the bay.

178 Two miles east of Waaddah Island and so called by Wilkes for its shape and color.

179 Now known as Waaddah Island. Captain Kellett in 1847 charted it "Wyadda" from which has evolved the present spelling.

180 Another twist in page numbering.

181 Probably Koitlah Point. In the atlas Wilkes spelled it "Hilcome" although in the diary it is clearly "Kilcome." No similar name appears in the muster-roll so he was apparently not here trying to honor one of his expedition.

182 Present charts give the spelling Tatoosh.

clear between these I ran through with the Wind but I would advise going outside of it as the eddy is strong at times & failing the wind an accident might happen. it is about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile off) you will see Neah Island it [illegible] like a point — [Ms. P. 108a] and has some ragged trees and bare rocks visible and just within it there is a conical shaped hill back of it, you may haul in for the Bay as soon as you please no dangers exist but what are visible your 1st cast will be 25 fathoms on reaching bottom — & it then shoals gradually to 10 & 8 when you may [drawing of anchor]¹⁸³ and await the tide or Wind altho I consider the Straits safe yet it is as well to avoid passing the night if possible in them. The wind generally draws up or down, and light winds for the most part prevail. New Dungeness is the next [drawing of anchor] about [blank] miles distant and may be easily known by its long tongue of sand on the Point of which there is an old stump which has the appearance of a beacon and maybe seen several miles the course up the strait is [blank]

If you wish to [drawing of anchor] in New Dungeness give the Point a birth of $\frac{1}{2}$ mile where you will have 7 fathoms and round into the Bay where you will soon have 11 & 10 fathoms good holding ground. Water is to be obtained here in abundance near the Point of woods from which the long Sandy Point runs in a small river there is a large village of Clallams here they are not to be trusted altho we found them honest being well armed — on the south of this Bay is sandy beach and there is an entrance into one of the most remarkable basins I have ever seen $4\frac{1}{2}$ & 5 fath^s. may be carried with it when it expands to a large Port capable of containing a large fleet as if it were in a Wet cloth. The clear, fresh water is to be had here also in abundance.¹⁸⁴ [Ms. P. 109]

3rd Augst. cont^{ed}.

At 2 P.M. got underweigh Porpoise in Compy. and stood out with a light N.W. wind and having the Ebb. I succeeded in reaching an offing before the fog set in, these fogs are very thick and are annoying in navigating this coast. They generally last throughout the night and little wind from the westward accompanies them and if a vessel is caught close in to the coast, it would be well if on bottom to drop a small [drawing of an anchor] and thus prevent being carried one knows not where by the current.

¹⁸³ After this he uses frequently the drawing of an anchor in place of writing the word.

¹⁸⁴ At the end of this entry, in another handwriting appears the words "Budds Harbor." See note 13 above.

At 9 wind light I tacked to the N^d. & W^d. as I could not head better than South and preferred to hove off rather than be sucked in on the coast near the Flattery Rocks. There is bottom all along this part, but if possible I would avoid [drawing of anchor] S. Ends thick fog and light wind from W.S.W.

4th Augt.

Much foggy weather and light winds with a smooth sea all this 24 hours wind from W.S.W. little to be done advancing south^d. about 2 miles the hour and by way of doing something useful sounding every hour general in 80 to 90 fath^s. sounding varying from gravel rock & sand to mention sand of a dark bluish color. Latitude by an indifference observations 48°. 10' North No Longitude obtained. cold and chilly with light drizzling rain. Lost sight of the Porpoise due to fog — employed during the day on the Charts &c. &c. [Ms. P. 110]

5th August.

This 24 hours the weather has been somewhat clear, and the atmosphere somewhat more mild and genial to our feelings — light winds continue from the W.N.W. to W.S.W. with a smooth seas heavy hanging clouds all around the horizon. The Porpoise was discovered at daylight astern of us, and joined company this relieved my mind a little as I was afraid that losing her might occasion delays which I am particularly desirous of avoiding off the River we continued sounding every hour through the night, and day getting bottom at times in 95 to 80 fathoms and again losing it at 200 to 250 — our course is direct for this River — being in Lat^e. 47°. 20' 59" at noon & Longitude 125°06' — which places me about 25 to 30 miles from the coast. it is extremely satisfactory in navigating this coast to be enabled to get Sounding by which our distance may with some certainty be ascertained from it during the prevalence of fogs &c. &c. & when it might be imprudent to venture to run in for the land, the soundings vary from rocky bottom to a sandy loam — and have been preserved for reference.

The day has been employed in bringing up our plotting of the survey of the Inlets & Sound and connecting them together & arranging the materials for future reference.

Few sick and those who were burnt by Gunpowder are fast recovering from their wounds (see page (117) for continuation] [Ms. P. 117]

6th. August.

Weather moderate. Cape Disappointment in Sight at day light stood in for it Brig in Company at 10:30 made a sail-ship which proved to be whale ship Orozimbo crew badly effected with Scurvy sent him medical assistance. Flying fish in sight coming out, lying too off Columbia River Bar. At Meridian Capⁿ. Hudson came on board. Peacock proved a total loss they saved their lives by good management & Books, papers, charts, &c. &c. except the chro^r. books and the dip & Intensity needles — Capt. Hudson entered into a full explanation of his disaster, and the manner in which it was brought about, and the whole occurrence is detailed in his report to me which I have attentively read and considered, and must finally come to the conclusion that the Ship was lost by want of prudence and a due consideration of the nature of the place he was to enter that he endeavoured to observe his sailing directions there is no doubt of, but they were not followed is equally so, for they would as certainly have carried him in clear. I incline to think that the Peacock's local attraction had something to do with it, & was and indeed I am well aware has had too much [illegible] for a vessel on this Service, but the idea I have of the Bar, and I am well aware he had from repeated conversations with him at Oaho a year before accident on this subject ought to have made him sufficiently cautious not to have ventured with his ship when he had the services of the flying fish quainted with the proper channel, and have avoided any disaster — in another point of view I think he acted injudiciously which was after he found the Breakers [Ms. P. 117a] making across the channel, and having hauled off he should again have kept away, which if he had been on the correct bearings before must have taken him counter to them. When he kept away the 2nd time, to run through the apparently Smooth place, and I feel satisfied he acted without due consideration when he did so — I am fully persuaded, that he had not made himself fully master of the information he had, and by which he intended to guide himself — and the only thing in my mind that can excuse him from great blame is the noble manner in which he behaved after his ship struck, in endeavoring to extricate her from her situation, which becoming impossible, he finally succeeded in saving about all that was valuable as to the results of his last cruize, and the lives of all hands —

In my report I have in part justified him, for I deemed it my

duty under the circumstances, & placed as he is with me and I have endeavored to give it that turn, as will make it in the eyes of the many, a circumstance naturally to be looked for on this service —¹⁸⁵

Before quitting this subject I owe it to myself to place it once on record, that few or none can be aware of the difficulties I have had to labour under in the absence of officers to comprehend the nature of the service we are upon, and the mode & manner of acting under orders given them, I have endeavored to be always distinct, and clear, & have in conversation drawn them to my views of the duty, but they go counter to the spirit, though perhaps in their constructions of it (the letter) they exceed so far my intention as to make it operative, (by the waste of time) on other & more [Ms. P. 118] important duties they had to perform. One case in point Capⁿ. Hudson was ordered with the P. & F. F.¹⁸⁶ to proceed on a cruise in search of low Islands. On his way the Samoan Group thence to the Ellice, Kingsmill & as far as Ascension & Strongs Island & the Pescadores—in looking for an Island near that of Washington, he spends a fortnight, and does not arrive at Upolu until a month after the designated time by which he is overtaken by the bad seasons & is detained in his whole progress, and finally gets off the Pescadores, & is unable from want of provisions & the lateness of the season.

8th May (The time at latest for him to have been at the Columbia & so expressed in his orders) & determines it is necessary for him to return to Oaho with his ship & Flying Fish for provisions whereby continuing to the N. West coast he would have much sooner reached them, and where he well knew I had made arrangements to send them, this detains him at least another month, so that he does not arrive at the Columbia until nearly 3 months after the expiration of his time appointed, and besides all this the most important part of his cruize is left untouched, and throwing out Upolu the rest of little consequence, in short my orders were carried out, but so far different that if I had been informed, or could for one moment have supposed, such a waste of force, time, and object, I would not have believed it but I am at the same time far

¹⁸⁵ It is true he does justify Captain Hudson in the published *Narrative*, Volume IV, pages 489-495, where the account of the accident reflects great credit on the officers and men. James Dwight Dana, mineralogist, one of the scientific corps on the *Peacock*, in one of the editions of his later book *Corals and Coral Islands* gave a graphic account of that wreck. In 1907 the present editor had the pleasure of interviewing the widow of the missionary J. H. Frost who with her husband helped the survivors of that wreck in 1841. See "Last Survivor of the Oregon Mission of 1840," in *Washington Historical Quarterly*, Volume II., Number 1 (October, 1907) pages 12-23. See also notes 59 and 60 above.

¹⁸⁶ *Peacock* and *Flying Fish*.

from imputing delays to Cap^t. Hudson I am fully persuaded there is no one who would exert himself more to carry my wishes into execution & who is always on the alert to do so, but it is from want of knowledge or information required for this service. I have given this instance relative to Cap^t. H. but it might be supposed I indulged prejudices towards others, to all knowing that I even could think so of him¹⁸⁷

187 The diary was his confidential friend and he gave it his innermost thoughts. He did not allow any of these thoughts detrimental to Captain Hudson to obtrude in the published *Narrative* where he gives the *Peacock's* cruise in Volume VI., pages 3-110. On page 44 he records the fact that he named Hudson Island, in the South Sea after the Captain.

Our photostat copy of the original diary ends with the wreck of the *Peacock* and Commander Wilkes' own comments on the causes. The published *Narrative*, Volume IV., pages 495-496, says he shifted his pennant to the *Porpoise* in which he proposed to survey the lower Columbia, using also the *Flying Fish* and the saved boats of the *Peacock*. He transferred Lieutenant-Commandant Ringgold to the *Vincennes* and ordered him to sail to San Francisco Bay. He sent a party under Lieutenant George F. Emmons on a surveying trip by land from the Columbia to San Francisco. His accounts of that trip, of his own surveys of the Columbia and of Midshipman Eld's trip down the Chehalis to Gray's Harbor and along the Coast to the Columbia are in the *Narrative*, Volume V., pages 111-148. Near the end of that chapter he prints his letter of gratitude to Chief Factors McLoughlin and Douglass for kindness received from officers of the Hudson's Bay Company.