

NATHANIAL JARVIS WYETH*

His First Expedition

Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth was born January 29, 1802 at Cambridge, Massachusetts. His ancestors were pioneers of Cambridge, one of them settling there in 1645, and the family has been located there for over two centuries. Nathaniel's grandfather, Ebenezer, purchased in 1751 an estate which extended to Fresh Pond, a small fresh water lake near Mount Auburn, and his father, Jacob (1764-1856), built near this lake a summer resort known as Fresh Pond Hotel.

Nathaniel was educated for Harvard College where his father had graduated, but decided not to attend and entered into the management of his father's resort.¹

His mother, Elizabeth Jarvis Wyeth, was a member of the famous Jarvis family² of Harvard athletes. In 1824 Nathaniel married his cousin, Elizabeth Jarvis Stone, and shortly afterward entered the employ of Frederick Tudor,³ an ice merchant.

Some time in the year 1829 Wyeth, having heard of H. J. Kelley's projected Oregon colonization scheme, approached Kelley "for the loan of my books and the documents concerning the Far West, and the programme of the expedition in which he would enlist, and he enrolled his name among the names of several hundred others in the emigrants book."⁴ From this time on Wyeth was to be a slave to Kelley's writings until he satisfied his craving to see the West. His cousin, John B. Wyeth,⁵ says in this connection, "Mr. Hall J. Kelley's writings operated like a match applied to the combustible matter accumulated in the mind of the energetic Nathaniel J. Wyeth, which reflected and multiplied the flattering glass held up to view by the ingenious and well disposed schoolmaster."⁶

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¹ John B. Wyeth, "Thwaites Early Western Travels," (1905) page 23, Editor's note.

² H. M. Chittenden, *American Fur Trade of the Far West*, (1902) page 436, note by Mrs. Mary J. Fish, a niece of Wyeth.

³ *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, New York (1896). Frederick Tudor was born in Boston September 4, 1783. In 1805 he originated the ice trade with the West Indies. By him and his associates, notably the late Nathaniel J. Wyeth, were developed the marvellous processes of harvesting, handling, and storing of ice which are in use wherever ice is obtained on a large scale. In 1835 the ice trade was extended to India. Mr. Tudor was also a successful horticulturist. He died at Boston February 6, 1864. See also: *The Oregonian*, July 15, 1904. Article on F. Tudor.

⁴ *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 18: 44. Hall J. Kelley was born in New Hampshire 1798, educated and graduated from Harvard, was a school master in Boston and formed the first Sunday School in America.

⁵ Thwaites *op. cit.*, 25.

⁶ John B. Wyeth, *A Short History of a Long Journey*. J. B. Wyeth started on this trip while still in his teens and has written a racy and somewhat sarcastic account of N. J. Wyeth's first trip.

Wyeth had tremendous confidence in himself and his ability to wrest a fortune from the West through fur trading, colonizing, and later, salmon packing, as is shown when he writes, "I cannot divest myself of the opinion that I shall compete better with my fellow men in new and untried paths than in those to pursue which requires only patience and attention."⁷

Wyeth at first enlisted partially under Hall J. Kelley's Boston Colonization Society but this did not prevent him from going ahead and organizing his affairs and promoting a company in which he was to be the leading figure. He enlisted the aid of his brother, Jacob, a Harvard man and a Doctor to go on his enterprise as surgeon for the expedition.⁸

Before the close of the year 1831 Wyeth had concluded to go to Oregon with or without Hall J. Kelley, as he soon realized that Kelley was a visionary and did not have the practical judgment to head an expedition of that nature.⁹ Also Wyeth's expedition was formulated primarily as a commercial venture in contrast to Kelley's which was to be for colonization purposes. In October 1831 he wrote to his brother, Charles: "My plan is to go out there and carry with me what property I can spare,—and do what I can with it. It will perhaps not much more than get me there, and after finding what can be done in the fur trade or other business, write to friends, whom I shall prepare beforehand, to send me the means of doing business, of these friends I mean you to be one, Leonard another, and the third here. More I can have if wanted but would rather confine myself to these, and what money I can make for myself or those in whom I have an interest."¹⁰

A month later he wrote Charles to obtain information relative to the raising of tobacco to be used in trade beyond the Rocky Mountains.¹¹ Nathaniel raised the capital for his venture principally by liquidating his own resources and by borrowing from his brothers Charles, Jacob and Leonard.¹² His company was formed as a joint stock concern and of it Wyeth wrote. "Our compact is to last 5 years. The profits are to be divided in such a manner that if the number concerned was 50 and the whole net proffits were

⁷ *Sources of Oregon History*, page XVII.

⁸ *Op. cit.* pages 5, 11.

⁹ *Ibid*—5; page 6. Wyeth to brother Leonard, November 14, 1831. "If the Colonization Society (Kelley's) go through with their project, I shall go out in their service, if not I shall get up a Joint Stock Trading Concern (if I can) and go on with a similar plan but on a smaller scale." See also letter N. J. W. to brother Jacob, Dec. 8, 1831, page 11, *Sources of Oregon History*. Also page 6, letter to brother Charles December 4, 1831.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.* page 2, N. J. W. to Charles.

¹¹ *Ibid*, page 3.

¹² *Ibid*, page 6, page 8.

divided into that number of parts, I should get 8, the surgeon 2, and the remaining 40 parts would be divided among the remaining 48 persons. The 8 parts which I take is consideration for my services as head of the concern and furnishing the requisite capital and credit for the business."¹³ It was his plan to establish posts and have vessels supply them with articles of trade, thus cutting down the cost of the expensive overland trip as well as give him closer communication with the eastern market. Fur trading was to be his chief business, but salmon packing and agriculture were also to be carried on.

Kelley's several postponements of his contemplated starting had caused Wyeth to lose all faith in his Colonization scheme and in February 1832 he wrote to a prospective adventurer: "What you say of Mr. Kelley I think will prove true. As yet he has no means of moving a step in the business and in my opinion never will move."¹⁴

On February 13, 1832, he wrote to Kelley and told him of his intended departure the next month. He concludes with, "I wish you well in your undertaking but regret that you could not have moved at the time and in the manner first proposed. When you adopted the plan of taking across the continent in the 1st expedition women and children, I gave up all hopes that you would go at all and all intention of going with you if you did.

The delays inseparable from a convoy of this kind are so great that you could not keep the mass together and if you could the delay would ruin my projects."¹⁵

Wyeth interested certain Boston merchants in his plans and early in 1832 the brig *Sultana* was sent around Cape Horn to meet Wyeth at the mouth of the Columbia River.¹⁶

Wyeth had interested some twenty-two persons in his adventure and on March 1, 1832 took his band to Cambridge Camp, Long Island, in Boston harbor where the band spent some ten days "by way of inuring ourselves to the tented field,"¹⁷ and then the band sailed via the brig, *Ida*, to Baltimore. They took with them three half-boat, half-wagon contrivances that the Cambridge wags had

¹³ *Sources of Oregon History*, page 20. Wyeth raised some \$5,000 which he put into the enterprise. Each member of the expedition paid \$40 at the time of joining.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.* page 30, Wyeth to S. Whiting.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, page 39.

¹⁶ Tucker, Williams, and Hall were the interested merchants. H. H. Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast.* Vol. II, page 560. Also *Sources of Oregon History*, page 56. (Brig *Sultana* owned by Joseph Baker and Son.)

¹⁷ J. B. Wyeth, *Oregon*—In "Thwaites Early Western Travels", Vol. 21, page 34.

dubbed the "Nat-wye-thium."¹⁸ These were sold in St. Louis on the advice of the fur traders there.

From Baltimore the troop took boat via the Monongahela to Pittsburgh then a point of departure for the West. The band must have made a curious sight with their "coarse woolen jackets and pantaloons, a striped cotton shirt, and cowhide boots; every man had a musket, most of them rifles, all of them bayonets in a broad belt, together with a large clasped knife for eating and common purposes."¹⁹ The company also carried a bugler for signaling.

From Pittsburgh the company sailed down the Ohio to St. Louis where after a few disagreeable experiences they landed on April 18, 1832. There were twenty-four men in the party, three of whom soon deserted. The party took the steamboat, Otter, and soon arrived at Independence, Missouri, the port of departure for western travellers. Here the green, inexperienced easterners began to ask themselves serious questions about exploring the unknown west and three more deserted. Fortunately at this time William Sublette and his band arrived and Wyeth was glad to join company with that experienced trader. Sublette advised Wyeth to purchase oxen and sheep for the journey, and for food. Although Wyeth's company had come for the purpose of trading furs and thereby establishing themselves as a rival to Sublette, Sublette realized that he had little to fear from these inexperienced easterners and proved to be of invaluable assistance to them in initiating the greenhorns to the methods of traveling in the West.²⁰

The combined parties left Independence on May 12 and crossed the plains without much excitement until they reached the rendezvous of the traders in Pierres Hole²¹ July 8. Here the band rested and observed the fur traders engaged in plying their trade with the Indians. Wyeth's notes in his Journal that there were about "120 lodges of the Nez Perces and about 80 of the Flatheads, a company of trappers of about 90 under Mr. Dripps on the firm of Dripps and Fontenelle connected with the American Fur Company. Many independent hunters and about 100 men of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company under Messrs. Milton Sublette and Frapp."²²

Some of Wyeth's party were dissatisfied and a meeting was

18 *Ibid*, page 33.

19 *Ibid*, page 33.

20 *Op. cit.* page 48.

21 This was a famous rendezvous and is located in Teton Basin in Eastern Idaho just across the Wyoming border. See Thwaites, Vol. 21, page 63. The rendezvous was first instituted in 1824 by General Ashley of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

22 *Sources of Oregon History*, page 159. This is from Wyeth's Journal. Milton Sublette was a brother of William.

called to discuss matters. The clerk called the roll and as each answered he was asked if he would "go on".²³ Seven deserted the expedition here and concluded to retrace their steps under Captain William Sublette. Among those who left Nathaniel at this point were his brother, Dr. Jacob Wyeth, who was ill, and John B. Wyeth, a cousin. Eleven men were left out of Wyeth's original company of twenty-four. Wyeth's only comment on this situation was to say that "I remained at this encampment until the 17th during which time all my men but 11 left me to these I gave such articles as I could spare from the necessities of my own party and let them go."²⁴

Wyeth attached himself and party to Milton Sublette who with his party was going westward to trap. On the 18th occurred the spectacular battle of Pierres Hole between the trappers, Flatheads, and Nez Perces on one side, and the Blackfeet on the other.²⁵

On the 24th the Wyeth and Sublette parties again set out and travelled westward. On August 13 they arrived at American Falls on the Snake River. Wyeth and his party did some trapping but were only moderately successful as he notes that some of this territory had been trapped out by the Hudson Bay Company some years before. On August 29 Wyeth notes "this day we parted from Mr. Sublette's party with feeling of regret for this party have treated us with great kindness which I shall long remember."²⁶

For the next month Wyeth's party struggled across Idaho, sometimes short of food, which situation was at times relieved by trading for salmon with the Indians. On September 28 his party met Fraeb and Sublette whom they had parted from a month before. Wyeth, however, did not get to see them as he was on a little exploration trip by himself. After wandering through the bad lands, crossing the Blue Mountains, and killing horses for food,²⁷ Wyeth's party landed at Fort Walla Walla on October 18, 1832, Wyeth having set out by himself and arrived there four days earlier.^(a) He was received very hospitably by Mr. Pambrun, the agent for the Post, who fitted him with a decent change of clothes.

²³ Thwaites, page 65.

²⁴ *Sources of Oregon History*, page 159.

²⁵ W. H. Ellison, in *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 1, page 82. Also Thwaites, J. B. Wyeth's account, page 69. This was one of the most famous of the Indian-Trapper battles.

²⁶ *Sources of Oregon History*, page 165.

²⁷ *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 3. Across the continent 70 years ago. Extracts from the Journal of John Ball, page 96.

A Fort Walla Walla was built by the Northwest Company in 1818, and was located on the left bank of the Columbia at the mouth of the Walla Walla River, five miles below the mouth of the Snake River. It was rebuilt in 1841. In 1865 the Hudson's Bay Company claimed indemnity for this fort.

On the 19th he started down the Columbia for Fort Vancouver where he arrived on the 29th. "Here I was received with the utmost kindness and hospitality by Dr. McLoughlin, the acting Governor of the place—I find him a fine old gentlemen truly philanthropic in his ideas."²⁸

Careful observer that he is, Wyeth notes the agrarian products raised at the Fort and the power of the Hudson Bay Company in this region. The close attention to his surroundings and his ability to pick up and use the methods of the West were characteristic of the man and were to stand him in good stead in his later journeys. It was at this time that Wyeth started his friendship with Dr. McLoughlin that was to last the rest of his life.²⁹

The little company rested at Fort Vancouver until November 6 when they started down the river. Wyeth "with a view to the salmon business" and Ball to see the Pacific for which he had endured so much.³⁰ On their trip to the mouth of the Columbia the party stopped at Fort George where Wyeth notes the "very kind gentlemanly conduct of Mr. Joseph Bernie, superintendent" who gave him much desired information. On their return to Fort Vancouver November 16, all of Wyeth's men who had shown signs of dissatisfaction before, asked for a release from their engagement "with a view of returning home as soon as possible."³¹

Wyeth obeyed their request and was thus left without any of his original company. It was at this time that Wyeth learned of the wreck of the Sultana on a reef at the Society Islands and that he would have no water transportation for his proposed salmon catch the next spring.³²

On November 29, Wyeth, Abbot, and Woodman went up the "Wallamet or Multonmah River" for a ten-day trip. He notes "the

²⁸ *Sources of Oregon History*, page 176.

²⁹ *Oregon Pioneer Association*, 1880. Copy of a document found among the private papers of the late Dr. John McLoughlin: "and in justice to Mr. Wyeth, I have great pleasure in being able to state that as a rival in trade, I always found him open, manly, frank, fair, and in short, in all his contacts a perfect gentleman and an honest man". Page 50.

³⁰ *Oregon Historical Society*, Vol. 3, page 99. "I urged the men to go with me, but all declined. So I went alone to look on the broad Pacific with nothing between me and Japan. Standing on the brink of the great Pacific, with the waves washing my feet, was the happiest hour of my long journey. There I watched until the sun sank beneath the water. Then by the light of the moon, I returned to camp, feeling I had not crossed the continent in vain."

³¹ These were John Ball, Woodman, Sinclair, Breck, Abbot, Tibbets, and another of the company, Trumbul, died on November 7 of the cholera. See "Journal of John Ball," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 3, page 99—also, *Sources of Oregon History*, page 178. John Ball was hired by Dr. McLoughlin to teach school at Ft. Vancouver. "One day he (McLoughlin) said, "Ball, anyway, you will have the reputation of teaching the first school in Oregon." *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 3, page 100. Ball sailed for New York on the brig, Dryad, via San Francisco and the Sandwich Islands.

³² Chittenden, page 444. See Bancroft, Vol. 28, page 566. See *Sources of Oregon History*, page 125, letter of N. J. W. to brother Jacob in which he tells of having received intelligence of the wreck of the Sultana, while at Vancouver, and that "this was a signal for the rest to desert." Also *Sources*, page 61.

Hudson Bay Company are erecting a saw mill at the Falls" and that the "situation for mill privileges is beyond anything I have ever seen," also the fertility and beauty of the valley which, "I doubt not will one day sustain a large population." He spent two nights with Mr. Jervais³³ and went up the river as far as Old Wallis House. The purpose of his trip was to look over the possibilities for a trading establishment and to survey the agrarian possibilities of the Willamette Valley. After his return to Fort Vancouver, winter having set in and the Columbia frozen over, he stayed with Dr. McLoughlin until February 3 when he started his homeward trip and left in company with Mr. Ermatinger, of the Hudson Bay Company, "who had charge of some twenty-one men and had formed a party to go to Walla Walla." During the trip up the river one Indian was drowned near The Dalles, and he notes the decimation of the Indians from disease. Near the John Day River he makes the following observation. "One thing I observed in this part of the river is that the savages are civil and as much as one in ten has lost an eye as I suppose from the effects of the fine sand of the river being blown about or the violent wind for which this part of the river is noted."³⁵

On the 14th the party arrived at Fort Walla Walla where they "were again hospitably received by Mr. P. C. Panbrum." On February 19 Wyeth started northeast and on the 25th was at Spokane House,³⁶ and after a short trip to Fort Colville, went eastward to the Flathead country, arriving at the company's post there, kept by Mr. Rivi, on April 7. He started from the Flathead Post on the 21st, having spent the intervening time hunting his lost horses, all of which he finally found³⁷ and went in a southeasterly direction into the Flathead country. On the 28th he discharged Woodman³⁸

33 Joseph Gervais came to Oregon in 1812 with the Hunt party of the Pacific Fur Company. This party came overland to meet Astor's other party which came by sea and reached Astoria March 1811. Gervais later became a farmer on French Prairie. See H. W. Scott, *History of the Oregon Country* (1924). Also H. S. Lyman, *History of Oregon*.

34 *Sources of Oregon History*, page 181. "I parted with feelings of sorrow from the gentlemen of Fort Vancouver their unremitting kindness to me while there much endeared them to me more so than it would seem possible during so short a time. Doc. McLoughlin, the Governor of the place is a man distinguished as much for his kindness and humanity as his good sense and information and to whom I am so much indebted as that he will never be forgotten by me." Wyeth later proved his friendship for McLoughlin as will be related.

35 *Ibid.*, page 183.

36 David Thompson built this Fort in 1810-11. Built on the east bank of the Spokane River about 10 miles northwest of the present City of Spokane, Washington. It was abandoned in 1826 for a new fort at Kettle Falls. Fort Colville which was built in 1825 on the Colville River about one mile from its junction with the Columbia. Colville was a wooden fort enclosed with stockades and bastions. It was next in importance to Fort Vancouver of the Hudson's Bay Company fort in Oregon. They claimed indemnity from the United States for this fort.

37 He had 47 horses at this time.

38 H. M. Chittenden, *American Fur Trade of the Far West*. Page 444. Note: "Wyeth left Boston with twenty men besides himself. He secured four more at

leaving only Abbot of his original band with him. On the 29th he came into the main camp of the Flatheads containing "upward of 1000 souls with all which I had to shake hands." On May 5 he made the following observation. "Sunday, according to our reconing, there is a new great man no(w) getting up in the camp and like the rest of the w(o)rld (he) covers his designs under the great cloak, religion. His followers are now dancing to their own vocal music in the plain, perhaps $\frac{1}{5}$ of the camp follow him when he gets enough followers, he will branch off and be an independent chief—he is getting up some new form of religion among the Indians more simple than himself—like others of his class he works with the fools, women, and children first. While he is doing this the men of sense thinking it too foolish to do harm stand by and laugh, but they will soon find that women, fools, and children form so large a majority that with a bad grace they will have to yield. These things make me think of the new lights and revivals of New England."³⁹

On April 30, still travelling eastward, he met Mr. Hodgkiss, Bonneville's clerk, and through him wrote to Bonneville making a proposition of "a mutual hunt in the country south of the Columbia River which I visited last autumn and winter."⁴⁰ Bonneville accepted and it was arranged that Wyeth should lead the party.⁴¹ On July 3 Wyeth met Bonneville and they camped together for five days.

It was Wyeth's original intention to pick up the furs that his party had cached on the journey west the previous year,⁴² but he does not seem to have been very successful in this, as he only mentions picking them up in one instance, and as his eastward route was slightly different from that travelled the year before he did not find them.

On July 4, while still in camp with Bonneville, Wyeth wrote at least eight letters to various friends and relatives.⁴³ In these he mentions that he expects to hunt the following year, "southward as far as the vicinity of St. Francisco in New Calafornia," his projected hunt with Bonneville. He realizes the power and financial

Baltimore. Before he left Independence six deserted. At Pierre's Hole seven turned back. Wyeth and eleven men went on. At Vancouver two died, five went home by sea, two remained in the country and two started back east with Wyeth in the spring of 1833. Of these two, one was discharged in the Flathead country and the other apparently completed the journey home."

³⁹ *Sources of Oregon History*, pages 103-104. This note is of interest because it may reflect Wyeth's views of religion and because it shows the evolution of Chieftains among the Flatheads.

⁴⁰ *Sources of Oregon History*, page 58. He may be referring to the Willamette Valley; see notes 32 and 33. See also page 78 in *Sources of Oregon History*.

⁴¹ Chittenden, H. M., *American Fur Trade of the Far West*, page 445.

⁴² *Sources of Oregon History*, page 54. See letter from N.J.W. to brother, Leonard.

⁴³ *Ibid*, pages 60-68. The words "Not Sent" are written across the face of six of the letters.

security of the Hudson Bay Company, and speaks of the salmon industry that he hopes to found on the Columbia River. He mentions that he has the "blue Devils" but says that his "perseverence (or obstinacy as you please to term it) is not worn out, and if things go bad the determination to make them go better is not the less."⁴⁴

On the 5th something happened to Wyeth that caused him to change his plans completely, for in a letter sent by Mr. Ermatinger to Dr. McLoughlin at Vancouver, he says, "I am here in a direct train for the States, and cannot without some extraordinary accident fail of reaching home in October next."⁴⁵ Maybe the "blue Devils" got him and a wave of homesickness that was not to be denied, swept over him. More probable though, was the clear realization that to compete with the powerful Hudson Bay Company on terms that might presage success, would require fresh capital to finance the undertaking. So he joined Bonneville's company and passing within a few miles of the "battle grounds of last year with the Gros Ventres"⁴⁶ landed at Bonneville's fort on the Green River July 15. Here he found the rendezvous for 1833 gathered, comprised of "about 250 whites" and "a Snake village is here with us." Dripps and Fontenelle Fur Company and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company made up most of the rendezvous, but besides these were Bonneville's company, some free trappers, a party of sportsmen, which included Dr. Benjamin Harrison, son of Gen. Wm. Henry Harrison, under Captain Stuart, an English officer, and Mr. R. Cambell who had come from St. Louis.⁴⁷

It was here that Wyeth received letters from home. In a letter written at this time to F. Ermatinger, he says, "A party under Bridger and Frapp also lost their horses by Aricarrees, also Harris party lost theirs by the same Indians who have taken a permanent residence on the Platte and left the Missouri which is the reason I go by the last named river." On July 24 the rendezvous broke up and Wyeth, in company with Cambell, Fitzpatrick, M. Sublette, and Captain Stuart⁴⁸ pushed eastward toward the Bighorn River, which was in the center of the buffalo country.⁴⁹ By the 31st they were at

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, page 63. Letter N. J. W. to F. Tudor.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, page 68, letter Wyeth to McLoughlin, Jul. 5, 1833.

⁴⁶ This was near Pierres Hole or Teton Basin. See note 25.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, page 89. Wyeth writes Mr. F. Ermatinger about the rendezvous: I shall have been proud of my countrymen if you could have seen the American Fur Company or the party of Mr. S. Campbell. For efficiency of good men, animals, and arms. I do not believe the fur business has afforded a better example or discipline." See also H. M. Chittenden—*American Fur Trade of the Far West*, page 300; note about Stuart and Harrison. Wyeth when in Cincinnati October 17, 1833 wrote General Harrison, telling him his son was in good health and forwarded some mail to the General.

⁴⁸ Chittenden, page 301. Sources of Oregon History, page 206.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 206.

the junction of the Great Porpoise and Wind Rivers and on August 1, Wyeth found Bonneville. He crossed the Grey Bull, the Stinking, and the Cannon Ball Rivers and on the 12th was on the banks of the Bighorn.⁵⁰ Here he shot buffalo for skins to make a bull boat which was completed by the 15th. On the previous day he made a contract with Fitzpatrick and Milton Sublette, on behalf of the Rocky Mountain Fur Co. giving a bond for his guarantee of performance, to bring out next year before a certain time, some three thousand dollars value of merchandise.⁵¹ The party evidently celebrated Wyeth's departure, for the next day he notes in his journal, "too much liquor to proceed therefore stopped."⁵²

Wyeth and his party floated down the Big Horn into the Yellowstone and arrived at Ft. Cass on the 17th.⁵³ On their way down the last named river, the hunters of the party were unable to obtain meat, and Wyeth characterizes them as "more conceited than good which I have generally found to be the case with hunters in this country." He finally went out and hunted for the party and obtained the needed meat.⁵⁴ They were passing through dangerous Indian country but luckily met none who were on the warpath.⁵⁵ At Fort Union where they landed the 24th, Wyeth found the same powder flask that belonged to More who was killed by the Blackfeet the year before.⁵⁶ It had evidently been traded in by the Indians. Wyeth left the fort on August 27 with Milton Sublette and after a few hours travelling they met William L. Sublette who was trading in opposition to the American Fur Company. Milton joined his brother and Wyeth and party were left without anyone who had descended the Missouri.⁵⁷

On the 1st of September he passed Sublette's⁵⁸ men building an opposition fort to the American Fur Company and the 2nd passed the latter's fort, the Mandan, on the 3rd they passed, unseen, a band

⁵⁰ *Sources of Oregon History*, pages 206-209.

⁵¹ Chittenden, pages 301, 447. The next years rendezvous was to be on Green River. *Sources of Oregon History*, page 83. Letter of N.J.W. to Mr. Henry Hall and Messrs. Tucker and Williams.

⁵² Drinking bouts were very common among trappers; they were an expression of fellowship and good will. *Ibid*, letter Wyeth to M. G. Sublette, page 95. "Besides I am desirous of a spree with an old mountaineer these folks won't do."

⁵³ Ft. Cass was a Fur Trading Post of the American Fur Company. See Chittenden chapter 19 through 23. Ft. Cass was erected in the fall of 1832.

⁵⁴ *Sources of Oregon History*, page 211. "Our hunters as usual having failed, went myself and killed a cow (buffalo)". See also: *Works of Washington Irving*, Vol. 3, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A.*, pages 353-55.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 212. "All the Indians we meet here we expect to fight."

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 213. "It was More's flask, who was killed in Little Jackson Hole last year on his return after the rendezvous." Ft. Union belonged to the American Fur Company and was situated on the Missouri River about 6 miles above the junction of the Yellowstone, which Wyeth and party had just come down. It was built in August 1828 and first named Fort Floyd.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 213. "But I can go down stream." This is a good illustration of his fortitude.

⁵⁸ William L. Sublette.

of Aricarey who "would have scalped us" and on the 8th, Fort Pierre,⁵⁹ Leavenworth on the 27th, and Liberty, Missouri, the next day. Wyeth here dispatched some letters, one to a Mr. E. M. Samuel, directing him to open some arrangements for the purchase of an outfit that he will need the next spring "as it is my present intention to return across the mountains to the Columbia."⁶⁰

On October 4 he was at Steam Boat, Missouri where he wrote Messrs. Tucker, Williams, and Henry Hall, telling them he would see them in Boston on the 10th of next month (November) and would confer on matters of business.⁶¹ On the 9th he was in St. Louis where he wrote M. G. Sublette telling him, "you may depend on the contract or the bond, and you will hear from me within 9 weeks stating positively which."⁶²

On the 21st he was in Baltimore, where he wrote to Governor George Simpson, of the Hudson Bay Company, asking about a proposition which he had made them in March while at Fort Colville.⁶³

He arrived home at Cambridge November 7, 1833 after an absence of some twenty-one months.^(b)

His expedition was quite a failure; he had lost all his men⁶⁴ and as the Joint Stock Company had no assets, it went out of business. Wyeth says that the trip cost him quite a good deal⁶⁵ so the expedition went into the red column financially. Wyeth, as his journal and letters show, was a close observer of his surroundings and contacts and in this trip he gained an accurate knowledge of the country, its people, resources and the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1839 he wrote a clear concise report of the country which was printed by order of the House of Representatives.⁶⁶

With the knowledge gained on his first trip and with the contract with Fitzpatrick and Sublette as a financial lever, Wyeth set about making plans and enlisting capital and men for his second expedition.

⁵⁹ Fort Pierre blonged to the American Fur Company.

⁶⁰ *Sources of Oregon History*, page 70. Mr. Samuel was an old acquaintance of Wyeth's and supplied him with money and all that he wanted to go East on.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 56. This tends to show that Wyeth at that time, (March, 1833,) intended to return to the Columbia, but upon meeting Bonneville's clerk, Hodgkiss, decided to take a trapping tour with Bonneville, after meeting him and talking matters over with him. He again changes his mind and decides to go ahead with his original plan, viz.—to return to the Columbia, after going East. See letter, page 72.

⁶⁴ Mr. Wiggan Abbot made the return trip with Wyeth but not as a member of his Joint Stock Company. He was hired by Wyeth to accompany him on the return trip.

⁶⁵ *Sources of Oregon History*, page 57. "I have already lost largely from a capital at first small."

⁶⁶ B. Wyeth brought two Flathead Indian boys with him.

⁶⁶ R. Greenhow, *Memoir of the Northwest Coast of North America* (1840). Wyeth's memoir was printed in Report Number 101, 25 Congress 3rd Session.

His Second Expedition and Later Life

One of the first moves Wyeth made upon returning to Cambridge was to address a letter to Mr. Henry Hall and Messrs. Tucker and Williams in which he outlined a plan for the transportation of goods to the West. He used the sum of \$3,000 for the basis of his computation and enclosed in the letter his contract with Sublette and Fitzpatrick for that amount.⁶⁷ He states in regards to it, "The contract as you will perceive will amount to little more than carrying me into the Indian country free of expense and procuring the business of a very efficient concern, in this light I hold it to be valuable."⁶⁸

He also outlined his plan of establishing a salmon cannery on the Columbia and by this means to aid his fur trading expedition, through supplying water transportation for the furs as well as providing a paying return cargo in the ship. Wyeth further planned to act as a fur buyer, buying his furs from the Rocky Mountain Fur Company and any others who would sell to him. He planned to transport them overland to the Columbia, thence by way of Cape Horn to Boston and other markets. The plan as presented was feasible and had a man behind it who had initiative, experience, and the fortitude requisite to carry it to a successful completion.⁶⁹

Wyeth was able to secure the backing of this firm, and the Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company was formed for that purpose.

Wyeth took one eighth of the stock of this company which was capitalized at \$40,000. He was to "have the full management out there and one fourth of all proffits."⁷⁰ He raised the money to carry his share principally by borrowing from his brother, Charles, his friend and former employer, Mr. Tudor, and by realizing on part of an estate that was left to him.⁷¹

⁶⁷ *Sources*, pages 73-78. This letter is full of interesting data on the fur trade at that time. He traces the rise of fur trading in the valleys west of the Mississippi and shows the gain to be made in transporting goods to the Rocky Mountain region from the West rather than from St. Louis on the East. He says, "The prominent advantages of supplying my own or the trapping parties of other concerns from the Pacific instead of St. Louis are safety of the country traversed, and consequent saving of men, shortness of distance, and low price and abundance of Horses on the Columbia. The latter circumstance alone would enable any company doing their business by that route to make a profit equal to all expenses of transporting." He estimates that horses cost \$30 in St. Louis and only \$5 on the Columbia.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 77.

⁶⁹ Irving, W. *Works* Vol. 3 *Adventures of Captain Bonneville*. Appendix, page 370. "The plan of Mr. Wyeth appears to have been well concerted."

⁷⁰ *Sources*, page 85. In this letter Wyeth writes his brother, Leonard, that the Company was capitalized at \$20,000 but on January 2nd he wrote his brother, Charles, that "The stock of our Company will amount to \$40,000 which makes even an eighth a full back load in these times." (*Ibid*, 96).

⁷¹ Charles gave him \$1,000; Mr. Tudor, \$2,500; and Jonas Wyeth, 2nd, \$1,000. See *Sources*, page 83, for account of estate money received by N. J. Wyeth.

His friend, Mr. Tudor, was anxious to have Wyeth come back to him and reenter the ice business, offering Wyeth considerably more money if he would do so; but Wyeth was determined to see the fur trading business to the bitter end or to a successful conclusion.⁷² He did, however, work for Mr. Tudor in the winter of 1833-1834 taking care of the ice business along with his other affairs.

The Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company chartered the ship, *May Dacre*, to leave that winter for the Columbia so as to meet Wyeth early in the spring, in time for the salmon season.⁷³

In addition to his carrying on negotiations, buying supplies, and attending to Mr. Tudor's business, the energetic Wyeth found time to write a number of letters refuting charges made in J. B. Wyeth's book, "A Short History of a Long Journey"⁷⁴ which had been published in 1833. He seems to have felt the criticisms of his conduct and leadership quite keenly, as he wrote many detailed letters to various people, friends, relatives, and book reviewers condemning or praising, depending on whether or not they took a favorable view of the book.⁷⁵ Also during this winter he wrote up the journal of his first trip, directed the many purchases to be made for the coming trip, corresponded with candidates for the new expedition and informed Milton Sublette that he was ready to fulfil the contract made between himself, Sublette and Fitzpatrick the previous August at the Big Horn River.⁷⁶ He wrote George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company that he would not be able to enter into an arrangement with that company as he had made other plans.⁷⁷

On December 9, 1833 Wyeth wrote a letter to the Honorable Lewis Cass, in which he asked a number of questions concerning land problems west of the Rocky Mountains in the Oregon country.

⁷² *Sources*, page 88. "I have never allowed myself to abandon any serious project that I had formed. Pursuant to this plan of life I have urged on from the beginning this western enterprise and I shall give it up only when I am convinced I am destitute (of) the means to pursue it." Also *Ibid*, page 83, "I am offered much better than when I left off by Mr. Tudor who importunes me much to stay." Also page 91, "I can take no further risk than the one eighth. I may risk my life but will not risk loosing so much as that with health and industry I can retrieve myself. I will go the whole Hogg no further than this."

⁷³ Captain Lambert, the same man who headed the ill fated brig, *Sultana*, headed this ship. The *May Dacre* sailed January 7, 1834.

⁷⁴ See note 6.

⁷⁵ *Sources*, 85, 90 91, and 104.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 97, 99, letter and contract with Wiggin Abbot who had accompanied him on his first expedition. He hired Abbot as a free hunter, salary \$300 per year. Page 103, letter to Thomas Nuttall. Busy as he was Wyeth learned to make computations for longitude and latitude at this time. *Sources*, 101.

⁷⁷ Wyeth evidently wanted to join the Hudson's Bay Company as a sort of free lancer. He had too much love of liberty to tie himself to them but he realized the advantages that would accrue to his benefit if he could make some sort of a working agreement whereby he could buy and sell from and to the Hudson's Bay Company. Wyeth shrewdly based his approach to the proposed agreement on the fact that as an American citizen he possessed advantages, such as, "I can visit parts of the country from which an Englishman is excluded." See *Sources of Oregon History*, page 56, letter to George Simpson for text of the proposal.

He says, "There are west of the mountains many gentlemen and servants of the Hudson Bay Company who have Indian wives and families who are desirous of retiring from active life but they can not well mingle in society as it is constituted in Great Britain or the United States. They wish to locate themselves on the Wallamet or Multnomah River, a river coming from the south into the Columbia." This letter would seem to indicate that Wyeth was sincerely interested in seeing that the United States obtained possession of the Oregon country.⁷⁸

Wyeth had arranged with his friend, Mr. Samuel, of Liberty, Missouri to have his firm purchase mules, saddles, horses, cattle, and other necessary equipment, and to have it assembled in time for his party to leave as early in the spring as was practicable.⁷⁹ He had a twofold purpose in this move, in-as-much as he wanted to deliver his goods to Sublette and Fitzpatrick before any other trader might, and to push to the Columbia as soon as possible in order to get settled for the winter in suitable quarters.

With the finances arranged, the goods purchased, and the ship sent to meet him at the Columbia, Wyeth hurried his preparations for the coming trip. While on the Lewis River, the previous year Wyeth had sent some plants he had collected to Mr. Thomas Nuttall, professor of natural history at Harvard University.⁸⁰ Mr. Nuttall and Mr. J. K. Townsend⁸¹ joined his second expedition at Independence, Missouri, after having seen Wyeth in St. Louis in March.

The Reverend Jason Lee and his nephew Daniel Lee,⁸² Mr. Cyrus Shepard, Mr. C. M. Walker, and Mr. P. L. Edwards formed a missionary party which attached itself to Wyeth's party on this trip. They were going to Oregon to do missionary work among the Indians. They met Wyeth in St. Louis on March 31, 1834,⁸³ but on April 17 Wyeth wrote, "There are none of the Dignitaries with me as yet and if they "preach" much longer in the States they will loose their passage for I will not wait a minute for them."⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Sources, 92. See also, *Dictionary of American Biography*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York (1929), page 563. Lewis Cass was Secretary of War in President Jackson's Cabinet at this time.

⁷⁹ If parties started too early, the grass was not green enough to feed their horses and cattle; if they started too late, winter might set in while they were still in the mountains. The usual time for starting in the spring was in April or May.

⁸⁰ Sources, 67. *Dictionary of National Biography*, New York (1909). Thomas Nuttall was born in Yorkshire, England, educated at Blockburn. He soon took up botany which he made his life work. See Thwaites, pages 14-16. Vol. 21.

⁸¹ John K. Townsend was a Philadelphia physician and naturalist (ornithologist) and a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences at Philadelphia. Chittenden, Vol. II, page 636.

⁸² D. Lee and J. H. Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, New York (1844) page 110. The Rev. Jason Lee was to become one of Oregon's most important men.

⁸³ Sources, 128.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 130.

Wyeth and Mr. Samuel had been gathering men and equipment; Wyeth along the route to Independence, and Samuel at Liberty a few miles from there. Wyeth, in a letter to his partners, complains of the high prices he has to pay for horses and concludes with, "It is like keeping a bag of fleas together to keep the men in this whisky country."

Finally on April 28 the band started on its way to Oregon, it numbered about 120, with 70 of this number in Wyeth's band proper.⁸⁵ Wyeth rode at the head with Milton Sublette, then the two scientists, with Captain Thing (Wyeth second in command) bringing up the rear. The leader was somewhat worried as he wrote to his partners on May 2, "I am the first yet in the Indian country." His fears were not of Indians but of Traders as the fur trade in the demoralized state that it was then in, made him afraid that some trader would get ahead of him and sell his goods first. On the 8th Milton Sublette was forced to return because of an infected leg.⁸⁶ The party crossed the Kansas and struck out in a northwesterly direction. On the 12th William Sublette overtook and passed Wyeth, on his way to the rendezvous. Wyeth immediately dispatched a runner with a letter to Fitzpatrick who was near the proposed Green River rendezvous, telling him that he would arrive soon and that he would be able to supply him with goods for the following winter, "or next year on such terms as I know would suit you."

Wyeth suspicioned that William Sublette, brother of Milton, had knowledge of the place where the Green River rendezvous was to be held, and as he distrusted William he travelled as fast as he could to the meeting place.^(c) He crossed the South fork of the Platte, then the North fork, on June 1 found some of Sublette's men building a fort on the North fork, on the 9th he was at Rock Independence, three days behind his rival. Still going westward he crossed the Sweetwater, and on the 19th found Fitzpatrick on Green River about twelve miles above its forks. Here he was informed that the Rocky Mountain Fur Company would not take his goods.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Townsend's *Narrative* (Thwaites Edition), page 141.

⁸⁶ J. B. Wyeth, *Oregon*, (Thwaites Edition), page 67. Ed. Note, "Milton Sublette was a younger brother of William L. He was a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. (C) *Sources*, N.J.W. to Fitzpatrick, page 132. "I am not heavily loaded and shall travel as fast as possible and have a sufficient equipment of goods for you according to contract." Townsend's *Narrative*, page 151. "They (William Sublette and party) must have traveled very rapidly to overtake us so soon.

⁸⁷ *Sources*, 225. "and much to my astonishment the goods which I had contracted to bring up to the Rocky Mountain Fur Company were refused by those honorable gentlemen." Except for the irony at the end, Wyeth did not mention the broken faith and the financial blow he had received, but stoically went ahead to build the fort.

His worst fears were realized; Sublette⁸⁸ had persuaded Fitzpatrick to buy his goods.

Thus the first part of Wyeth's scheme failed.

It had been Wyeth's original intention to trade his goods to the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, receiving furs in exchange, then to go to the Columbia and take in the last of the salmon season. He expected to ship his newly traded furs to Boston with the salmon he had caught and salted. The rest of his party were to trap through the winter.⁸⁹ Now he had a stock of goods on hand, but the day after the contract violation, June 20, he had decided to "build a fort on Lewis River."⁹⁰ These traits of rapid decision and adaptability to new situations were characteristic of Wyeth.⁹¹ Still westward he pushed and on July 4 celebrated with the usual drinking spree with wild volleys being fired in all directions. The route then crossed Bear River and on the 8th Soda Springs was reached. On the 10th the party found Bonneville and his party and the chiefs indulged in a metheglen drinking bout. Three days later the Snake River was reached and on the 15th Wyeth put his men to work building a fort, but running short of supplies he sent twelve of them out as a hunting party, under Richardson, the chief hunter.

This party returned to the new nearly completed fort on the 28th, after having obtained a large quantity of buffalo meat which they had dried in the usual strip form. The men at the fort welcomed them heartily as provisions had run low and they had been on short rations. Two days later Thomas McKay, the Lee party and Captain Stewart left for the Hudson Bay Post at Walla Walla.⁹² The fort was completed on August 6 and named Fort Hall "in honor of the oldest member of our firm." (Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company).⁹³

Leaving the new fort in charge of Mr. Evans, Wyeth and party, twenty-nine strong started their journey to Vancouver via Walla Walla and the Columbia. Wyeth's party took an unusual route, very rough and dangerous, and on the way to Walla Walla,

88 This was William L. Sublette. Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, in Reuben Gold Thwaites, "Early Western Travels," Vol. 19, page 221.

89 *Sources*, page 77, N.J.W. to Henry Hall and Messrs. Tucker & Williams.

90 *Ibid*, 134.

91 *Ibid*, 135. Wyeth was fully cognizant of the situation he was facing for he wrote June 21, "So far this business looks black. The company here not complied with their contracts with me and in consequence I am obliged to make a fort on Lewis River to dispose of the goods I have with me."

92 *Sources*, 227. Townsend's *Narrative*, 230. Lee and Frost, 121. Thomas McKay was the son of McKay of the Tonquin disaster.

93 "Fort Hall was located on the left bank of the Snake River, nine miles above the mouth of the Portneuf." Wyeth gives its location as "Latitude, 43° 14', Longitude, 113° 35'." On the Oregon Trail, it was about 1300 miles west of Independence, Missouri. In the 30's and 40's it was an important fur trading post. It was sold to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1837. See Chittenden, 479.

Wyeth while passing over some snowy cliffs had a narrow escape from death. The route crossed Godins Creek, a branch of the Malade, the Woody River, the Snake, then the Malheur, where the party split. Richardson and eight men going up the Malheur on a trapping expedition and the rest following in general a north-westerly direction.

On the 28th the party was on the Powder River, just east of the present town of Baker, Oregon. On the 31st they were at the Grand Ronde River, where they met Bonneville and learned that the Lee party had passed two days before. Passing the Utalla (Umatilla) on the first, they landed at Walla Walla on September 2, where they were well received by Mr. Pambrun. They rested at the Hudson's Bay Company post a day and then started down the Columbia for Vancouver, where they arrived after a very rough trip on September 14.⁹⁴ The next day Wyeth went down the river and met his brig, the *May Dacre*, which was just sailing up the river to meet him. She had been struck by lightning and had been at Valparaiso having repairs made.⁹⁵ The season was now so far advanced, that no salmon could be caught that year and the second part of his original plan had failed.

While at Vancouver Wyeth learned of the shipwreck of a Japanese junk, a few miles south of Cape Flattery, in March 1833.⁹⁶

Wyeth then went up the Willamette, overtaking the Lees, and searched for a location for a farm. He finally settled on a place near Duportes' and laid out a farm in a small valley near the river, about fifty miles from the mouth, to which he sent three men to work on.

He returned to the Columbia and established Fort William on Wappattoo Island,^(d) at the mouth of the Willamette River. Here he set his coopers to work making barrels for the anticipated salmon catch the next spring.

⁹⁴ *Sources*, 233. "At 12 o'clock arrived at Fort Vancouver where I found Doct. McLaughlin in charge who received us in his usual manner he has here power and uses it as a man should to make those about him and those who come in contact with him comfortable and happy."

⁹⁵ The *May Dacre* brought 20 Sandwich Islanders, 2 coopers, 2 smiths, and a clerk for Wyeth. These men were to be used in the salmon industry. *Sources*, 144. Wyeth to his wife, Oct. 5, 1834. "I am here but have had no good luck. The vessel was—detained so long that the salmon season was past." *Ibid*, 143. Letter Oct. 6, 1834. "This business looks very bad at this time. We have failed in every thing for the first year."

⁹⁶ Irving, W. *Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, page 371. Letter of Wyeth to Bonneville. Seventeen Japanese were wrecked and three saved (Wyeth says two). These were brought to Vancouver in May. Mr. Cyrus Shepard, of the Lee party, taught them in his school at Vancouver and in Oct. 1834 they were sent to England. See Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*. Pages 107, 108 and 126.

On October 14 he started up the Columbia on a trapping expedition into the Snake country and while moving up the river, sent Captain Thing with twelve Kanakas to Fort Hall.⁹⁷ Wyeth arrived at Walla Walla Nov. 10 and stayed around there for a few days searching for the runaway Kanakas, but without success. On the 18th he sent Captain Thing in charge of a party of 19 to Fort Hall to trade and trap and himself started down the Columbia on a trapping expedition. On December 1 he moved up the Deschutes River and spent the next two months trapping on that and nearby streams. The expedition was a failure so far as furs were concerned, the Hudson Bay Company having trapped out that section some years before. The terrible winter, the wilderness, and lack of comforts, combined with illness all read as a nightmare; but the struggle Wyeth made to accomplish his purpose, the energy, leadership and foresight he displayed, characterize him as one fit and able to lead.⁹⁸

In February Wyeth concluded to go back to Fort William and get everything in readiness for the coming salmon season. He arrived at Vancouver February 11 "and found there to my great astonishment Mr. Hall J. Kelley."⁹⁹ Leaving Vancouver Wyeth went up the Willamette to look after his farm, returned to Vancouver on the 23rd, went back up the banks of the Willamette on horses borrowed from Mr. Thomas McKay, to look for Taylor who had deserted after Wyeth sent Richardson to The Dalles with supplies for a trapping party Wyeth still had out. He found Taylor on the 31st

(D) *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 30, J. N. Barry, page 164, "Agriculture in the Oregon Country 1795-1844." "In addition to poultry and livestock he (Wyeth) had wheat, corn, potatoes, peas, beans, and turnips. Also he had apple trees, seedlings and grafted, besides other fruits, which included peach, pear, plum, apricot, and nectarine." Wappattoo Island was later called Sauvie's Island after J. B. Sauvie, an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, who for many years kept a dairy farm there. See Sources, page 255.

⁹⁷ *Sources*, 144. In a letter to his close friend, James Brown, dated Oct. 6, 1834 he wrote, "My place from this (Wappattoo Island) to the salmon season of next year will be from this place to Fort Hall—thence to the Great Salt Lake where I propose to build another fort and thence back to this place to be here by the 15th of May next to be ready for the salmon." *Ibid*, 235. November 10. "got news that Captain Thing's 12 Kanakas had deserted him." *Ibid*, 148. Wyeth looked for them all through the winter. See note 99.

⁹⁸ *Sources* 243, Jan. 11, 1835. "The thoughts that have run through my brain while I have been lying here in the snow would fill a volume and of such matter as was never put into one, my infancy, my youth, and its friends and faults, my manhood's troubled stream, its vagaries, its aloes mixed with the gall of bitterness and its results viz. under a blanket hundreds perhaps thousands of miles from a friend the Blast howling about, and smothered in snow, poor in debt, doing nothing to get out of it, despised for a visionary, nearly naked, but there is one good thing—plenty to eat—health and heart." See Townsend's *Narrative*, 318.

⁹⁹ *Sources*, 250. "he came in co. with Mr. Young from Monte El Roy and it is said stole between them a bunch of horses. Kelley is not received at the Fort on this account as a gentleman, a house is given him and good food sent him from Gov. Table but he is not suffered to mess here. I also found 7 of my runaway Kanakas (the rest had either been killed by the Indians, frozen to death in the mountains or drowned in the Columbia River)." F. F. Victor in an article, entitled, "Hall J. Kelley" in *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 2, says that the conduct of Wyeth in regards to Kelley was cowardly. See also *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 23, page 367. Letter of McLoughlin to Edward Ermatinger, Feb. 1, 1835.

and set him to work "getting out coopers stuff and timber for a house boat which I intend to build."¹⁰⁰

Wyeth worked hard to get ready for the coming salmon season, but the run of salmon that year (1835) was very light and not more than half a cargo was secured. Added to this misfortune, seventeen of his party were drowned or killed,¹⁰¹ and to cap the situation, Captain Thing and party were attacked and robbed by the Blackfeet while in the Snake country.¹⁰² Ill luck and misfortune contributed greatly to the downfall of the second expedition. The debacle was complete and Wyeth wrote Sept. 6, 1835. "This business has not been successful in any of its branches. Therefore it will terminate soon."¹⁰³

In conclusion, to enumerate the causes of failure of this expedition would be in a great measure to exonerate its leader of any charges of incompetency or inefficiency.

The expedition was headed by an energetic, courageous, efficient, and thoughtful leader who was versed in the arts of fur trading.¹⁰⁴ The plan, as previously outlined,¹⁰⁵ was feasible and well constructed. The reasons the expedition did not succeed were probably three or four in number. First, the lack of capital and the type of men who supplied it.¹⁰⁶ Second, the underestimation of the strength, power, and hold over the Indians that the Hudson Bay Company possessed, coupled with the very keen competition that they put up.¹⁰⁷ Third, the non support of the United States Government, who might well have supplied Wyeth to build American Forts in the Oregon Country for them, and lastly, the incredible amount of misfortune that Wyeth encountered.

100 *Sources*, 251. Wyeth set his party to making 8,000 hoop poles and a canoe 60 feet long and wide enough to chamber barrels. The canoe was made from a tree 242 feet long, "and this by no means the largest tree on Wappatoo Island." The last entry in Wyeth's Journal is for April 13, 1835. The rest of this story is written from either Wyeth's letters or from Journals of others who were present at the time.

101 Eight men were drowned in the Columbia August 9, 1835 when a canoe capsized. Abbot, one of Wyeth's trappers, was murdered by the Banneck Indians. (See note 64).

102 Townsend's *Narrative*, 328. "Captain Thing lost every thing he had with him, all his clothing, papers, journals, etc."

103 In a letter to his cousin, Leonard Jarvis, Sept. 20, 1835 Wyeth wrote, "I am surrounded with difficulties beyond any former period of my life and without the health and spirit requisite to support them."

104 Townsend's *Narrative*, 137. "I am very much pleased with the manner in which Captain W (yeth) manages his men." *Ibid*, 325. An estimate of Wyeth's leadership and endeavor. Farnham, T. J. "Travels in the Great Western Prairies" In Thwaites' "Early Western Travels," Vol. 28, page 307. "From what I saw and heard of Wyeth's management in Oregon, I was impressed with the belief that he was beyond comparison, the most talented business man from the States that ever established himself in the Territory."

105 See this article above.

106 The company was only capitalized at \$40,000. Wyeth wrote of his associates, Sept. 6, 1835, "The business I am in must be closed—because those who are now engaged in it are not the men to make it so." *Sources*, 150.

107 Fort Boise was built in 1834 by Thomas McKay to offset Fort Hall. Farnham's *Travels*, 321. "From it (Fort Boise) the Hudson Bay Company sent their trading parties over the country south in advance and rear and around every movement of Wyeth."

Late in September, 1835, Wyeth went to Fort Hall, returned to Fort William the following spring, giving power of attorney to C. M. Walker, whom he had left in charge of Fort William the winter of 1835-36. Wyeth returned to Fort Hall June 18 and left for the east by way of the Taos and Arkansas Rivers; reaching home in the fall of 1836. Walker sold Fort Hall to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1837.¹⁰⁸

Wyeth reentered the ice business with Mr. Tudor upon his arrival in Cambridge. He was a hard, energetic worker, and made many discoveries relative to, and inventions for, the ice business.

Four years after having reentered the ice traffic Mr. Tudor made Wyeth head of the concern.

In December 1847, Wyeth, motivated probably by the acquisition of the Oregon Territory in June of the previous year, sent in a claim to Congress for land and land titles in the Oregon Territory.¹⁰⁹

In November and December 1850 Wyeth wrote to S. R. Thurston, Oregon's Territorial Delegate to Congress in response to a letter from him in which Thurston had characterized McLoughlin as "rendering his name odious among the people of Oregon, by his endeavours to prevent the settlement of the country, and to cripple its growth."

In his reply Wyeth pays tribute to the generosity and kindness of McLoughlin, in regards to his own parties and to the Methodist Missionaries.¹¹⁰

During the remaining years of his life Wyeth accumulated a modest competence, and occupied an esteemed position among his contemporaries. He died August 31, 1856 on the family estate which had been his life-long home.

The value of Nathaniel J. Wyeth's endeavors is to be found in the fact that he was one of the earliest American pioneers in the Oregon Country and that some members of his parties became permanent settlers in that country; that he was one of the early trail

¹⁰⁸ Walker had instructions to lease Fort Williams for fifteen years if he could, and Wyeth not having heard from him for some years sent a request to John McLoughlin, to have the island entered in his name at the land office established by the Provisional Government. The Hudson's Bay Company never made an offer for Fort Williams. In their claim against the United States Government, the Hudson's Bay Company valued Fort Hall at one million dollars. The writer, however, has been unable to find out the amount they actually paid Wyeth.

¹⁰⁹ *Sources* 253. On the preceeding April he had sent in claims for his friend John McLoughlin.

¹¹⁰ *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 1, pages 105-109. Wyeth also took it upon himself to write Senator R. C. Winthrop in McLoughlin's behalf, and to turn all of this correspondence over to McLoughlin. Loyalty to his friends seems to have been another one of Wyeth's traits.

blazers and erected an American Fort which was later to be an important point on the Oregon Trail. His hardihood, fortitude and leadership justly characterize him as a real pioneer.

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