

(Continued.)
HISTORICAL ADVENTURES ON THE
PACIFIC COAST.*

CAPT. COOK'S VOYAGE TO THE NORTHWEST
COAST.

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The period between 1774 and 1788 is an important one in the history of the Northwest Coast, as it embraces not only the final decline of Spanish power on the North Pacific, but also the temporary supremacy of Great Britain, and the advent of American vessels in these waters.

The following is a list of the vessels known to have visited the waters contiguous to the territory subsequently claimed by the United States, from the time of Heceta's discovery of the entrance of the Columbia, to the first appearance of American vessels north of California:

The *Resolution*, Capt. James Cook, from Plymouth, England, on a voyage of discovery, 1778.

The *Discovery*, Capt. Charles Clarke, from the same port, on the same errand, 1778.

A French exploring expedition, La Perouse, commander, 1786.

An English vessel, James Hanna, master, trading from Nootka Sound to Macao in China, under the Portuguese flag, 1785-'86.

Two English vessels, Lowrie and Guise, masters, trading from Nootka Sound to Macao, China, under the East India Company's flag, 1786.

Two English vessels, Mears and Lipping, masters, in the same trade, under the same flag, 1786.

Ship *Imperial Eagle*, from the port of Ostend, Berkely, master, trading from the Northwest Coast to Canton in China, under the flag of the Austrian East India Company, 1787.

Ship *Felice*, John Mears, master, trading from Nootka Sound to Macao, under the Portuguese flag, 1788.

Ship *Iphigenia*, Wm. Douglas, master, trading from Nootka Sound to Macao, under the Portuguese flag, 1788.

Ship *Columbia*, John Kendrick, master, from the port of Boston, Massachusetts, trading from the Northwest Coast to Canton in China, under the American flag, 1788.

Sloop *Washington*, Robert Gray, master, from the same port, in the same trade, 1788.

It will be necessary to the understanding of what follows, and of the reasons that led to the sudden swooping down of different nationalities upon the far-off Northwest Coast of America, that some account should here be given of the voyages and missions of these vessels. The expedition of Capt. Cook having been the chief promoter of all the rest, deserves special attention.

It has been remarked in another place that the power of Spain and the fame of her navigators had been declining almost from the beginning of the 17th century. At the time when Heceta, in doubt of his discovery of the Columbia river, gave it the name of Bay or River in his report to the Spanish government, Spain ranked lowest of any of the great maritime nations of Europe. Never much renowned for literature of science, she was then far behind England, France or Holland in those scientific discoveries which gave greatly increased effectiveness, speed and security to the vessels of those nations. For thirteen years after the peace of 1763, Great Britain had annually sent well appointed ships to cruise in the South Pacific; not without alarming Spain, as we have seen. Meanwhile many expeditions were made on

the North Atlantic side of the American continent, and many journeys inland undertaken with the object of ascertaining its width.

The theory of a Mediterranean Sea, or navigable channel across the continent, had not yet been explored. While Spain had been looking for the Strait of Anian on the west side, England had been equally diligent on the east. The "Fretum Anian in the South Sea, through the northwest passage of Meta Incognita," continued to be the illusion in which kings and sea-captains delighted. It was with the avowed intention of encouraging the search for a northern passage to the Pacific that Charles the Second, made in 1666, his magnificent grant to the Hudson's Bay Company. At that time the Company, so famous in the early settlement of Oregon, was styled "The Company of Adventurers of England, trading into Hudson's Bay." King Charles hoped that the explorations of the Company, which would naturally take place, would lead to the desired discovery of water communication across the northern portion of the American continent.

These expectations made no allowance for that part of the continent lying north of California, and the general belief was that the Pacific ocean was almost immediately west of Canada, but as one expedition after another penetrated farther and farther west, the continent continued to broaden out, marvelously; yet as late as 1745 a reward was offered by the English Parliament, of twenty thousand pounds, for the discovery of a northwest passage through Hudson's Bay, by ships belonging to His Majesty's subjects. And still later in 1776, parliament offered a similar reward to the owners of any ship belonging to His Majesty's service, or to the commander and crew of any ship belonging to His Majesty, which should find out any such passage, and sail through it, between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, in any direction, or under any parallel north of the 52d. At the same time that these offers of reward testified to the ignorance of the navigators of that day, they stimulated them to great exertions, and led at last to the more perfect and scientific explorations of Capt. James Cook, as his reports did to all the other expeditions immediately following.

Upon the adoption by parliament of the resolutions above mentioned, Capt. Cook, who had just returned from a voyage of discovery about the south pole, offered his services to conduct such an expedition of discovery as was had in contemplation. His proposal being accepted, he was instructed to proceed, at once, by way of the Cape of Good Hope, New Zealand and Otaheite, to the coast of *New Albion*, meaning that portion of the California coast discovered by Drake, and so named; and to make the land in latitude 45 degrees, whence he was to examine the coast northward.

Capt. Cook was also instructed not to touch upon any part of the coast belonging to Spain, unless forced to do so by stress of weather or accident, in which case he was to avoid giving offence to the subjects of His Catholic Majesty. The same caution was given in respect to the Russian settlements, extending then from Behring's Straits to the 60th parallel. The limits of Russian discovery were probably unknown to parliament, as was also the more recent action of the Mexican government in sending out exploring expeditions; and Capt. Cook acted in good faith in following his instructions, which were to begin his search for *Fretum Anian* at latitude 65 degrees, though that was Russian territory, as New *Albion* was Spanish territory.

Further, Cook's instructions were very complete in regard to his treatment of the natives, whose consent he must obtain before taking possession of inhabited countries in the name of the King of Great Britain. Amongst those willing subjects of his king, he was to distribute such articles as would remain in proof of his having been there; and of uninhabited countries he was ordered to take possession by "setting up proper marks and inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors." This was decidedly much more fair and open than the course of Spain, whose monks set up crosses in "secret places" to take possession of a country already inhabited. It would have saved trouble if Capt. Cook had adhered to this part of his instructions as faithfully as he did to some others.

On the 12th of July, 1776, Cook sailed from Plymouth, in the ship *Resolution*, accompanied by the *Discovery*, Captain Charles Clarke. Both vessels were thoroughly equipped for the object in view, and their officers were as well chosen as their furnishing was perfect. There was no haste about this well appointed expedition. It sailed around the Cape of Good Hope and through the landless Southern Ocean to Van Dieman's Land, on the borders of the Pacific. A year was spent cruising about among the islands of this portion of the Pacific, from New Zealand to the Society Islands.

It was already the Spring of 1778 before the prow of the *Resolution* was turned towards Drake's *New Albion*; but once turned in this direction no time was lost. On the run over, the Sandwich Islands were discovered. Had Capt. Cook tarried as long there on this occasion as he subsequently did, there might not be anything to record concerning the English claims on the Northwest Coast; but tarry he did not, and arrived in sight of the Oregon coast March 7th, when the weather was as disagreeable as March weather in this region can be. The vessels were driven one hundred miles south of 44 degrees, Cook employing the time in taking correct longitudes, and turning back as soon as the storm abated, he had discovered Cape Flattery between 48 and 49 deg. by the 22d of the month. Singularly enough, Cook was deceived as the Spanish navigators had been before him. He looked for the Strait of Fuca between the 47th and 48th parallels, and not finding it, decided that no such passage existed as described by the Greek, and proceeded northward about one degree, where he found a small, commodious harbor which he entered and where he remained a month in total unconsciousness of the fact that he had actually named the Cape at the entrance to the looked for Straits, and equally unconscious that the *Friendly Cove* in which he was anchored was the *Port San Lorenzo* of the Spanish navigator Perez; though on discovering that the native name was *Nootka*, he changed it from *Friendly Cove* to *Nootka Sound*, which it retains to-day.

Captain Cook records that the natives received him kindly, being very eager to trade in the skins of "wolves, foxes, bear, deer, raccoon, pole-cats, martins, and in particular, of the sea-otters which are found in the islands east of Kamtschatka." His account of the manufactures of the natives agrees with that of Friars Pena and Crisp, who accompanied Perez in 1774. He says: "Besides the skins in their native shape, they also brought garments made of the bark of a tree, or some plant like hemp, (this is the inside bark of the cedar tree); weapons, such as bows, arrows and spears; fish-hooks, and instruments of various kinds; wooden visors of many monstrous figures; a sort of wooden stuff or blanketing; bags filled with red ochre; pieces of carved wood-work, beads, and several other little ornaments of thin brass and iron, shaped like a horse-shoe, which they hung at their noses, and several chisels or pieces of iron fixed in handles."

The character which Captain Cook gave the natives was hardly so correct as his observations on the manufactures. After remarking on their general fairness in trade, he says: "They were thieves in the strictest sense of the word; for they pilfered nothing from us but what the knew could be converted to the purposes of private utility, and had a real value according to their estimation of things."

In other things he was somewhat disposed to be deceived. He calls their inhospitable selfishness in demanding pay for wood and water, "a strict notion of their exclusive right to everything which their land produces"—and adds that "they seem to be courteous, docile, and good-natured, but quick in resenting what they look upon as an injury; and, like most passionate people, soon forgetting it." We of this day know that the Indian never forgets. John Ledyard, the adventurous Connecticut traveler, who was then serving on board the *Resolution* in the humble capacity of corporal of marines, had sharper perceptions, and called them "bold, ferocious, sly and reserved, not easily moved to anger, but revengeful in the extreme;" a judgment which later events fully confirmed.

From the fact that he found some silver spoons in possession of the Nootka Indians, and from the corresponding fact, also, that they did not appear to be either alarmed or surprised at the appearance of his vessels, Capt. Cook came to the very just conclusion that other ships must have been there before him. The Indians, however, denied having had previous knowledge of white men and their vessels, and Cook felt compelled to believe them, and to forget the evidence of the spoons and other things in the interest of his King and country; such is the mutability of human opinion under pressure. The native who sported his necklace of stolen spoons, must have exaggerated himself in his bask shirt with extra satisfaction when he saw the English captain depart under the belief that his ships were the first foreign bottoms that had taken out their papers from that port!

On leaving Nootka Sound, Captain Cook proceeded along up the coast, looking for the strait which Sante pretended to have discovered, though he did not give much credit to the report, if we may believe his professions. On the second of May, he passed near to a beautiful, conical mountain, under the 57th parallel. Three years before Bodega had sailed around the base of this mountain, which he named the *San Jacinto*, and had discovered two bays in the windings of the shores, which he called *Port Remedios* and *Port Guadalupe*, respectfully. As at Nootka, Cook rediscovered and re-named these places, changing pious *San Jacinto* to secular Mount Edgewcombe, and *Port Remedios Bay of Islands*; all of which nomenclature was wasted, so far as the King's interests were concerned, as will be seen hereafter.

The voyage of Capt. Cook was protracted for some months longer on the more northern portion of the American coast; but as he did not discover a northwest passage, and as we have followed him as far north as the boundary line of any territory ever claimed by the United States under treaty, we must, to save time and space, content ourselves with considering the results of his expedition to the political and commercial world; results that have extended down to our own time.

The more perfect instruments in use on board Cook's vessels, determined the latitude and especially the longitude of coast, as it had never before been determined, and, consequently, established the great breadth of the northern portion of the continent, to the complete refutation of the absurd travelers' tales that had so long circulated, both in "camp and court" all over Europe. Cook was a man of good practical business ideas; and when he beheld the vast extent of country fit for settlement that was lying unoccupied by civilized races, and considered the profits that might arise from a trade even with the natives, and from the fisheries that might be carried on in the seas contiguous, he could not but report most favorably upon them. He had the proof of what he said on board his vessels; for his men collected from the Indians, for very trifling pay, furs that sold in Canton for more than ten thousand dollars.

Cook, himself, perished at the hands of the natives of the Sandwich Islands, in the year following his visit to this coast, and his journal, for politic reasons, was withheld from publication for a period of six years; but rumors were circulated by private individuals, that were already directing attention to the fur-trade of the Northwest, when the event took place which will be described in the following chapter.