

Thorn and the Scotch partners, the *Tonquin* reached the Columbia on the twenty-second of March, 1811, and after much difficulty and the loss of part of the crew, crossed in and came to anchor. A fort was erected on the south side of the stream, and was called "Astoria," in honor of the founder of the enterprise. This was the first settlement of any kind on the Columbia* River, and with the exception of Fort Henry, on Snake River, and Fraser's post, on Fraser Lake, the first west of the summit of the Rocky Mountains, except by Spaniards in California and Russians in Alaska.

While the fort was being erected, Thorn and McKay, the only partner who had possessed the good sense to refrain from wrangling with the irascible captain, sailed up the coast on a trading voyage. A few days later the vessel was destroyed and all the crew murdered, by the natives on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The only survivor was the Indian interpreter, who escaped to tell the sad fate of the *Tonquin's* crew to their companions at Astoria. On the fifteenth of June, the people of Astoria were surprised to see a canoe with nine white men in it, descending the river. They proved to be a party sent out by the Northwest Company, headed by David Thompson. He had been dispatched overland from Montreal the year before, for the purpose of reaching and occupying the mouth of the Columbia in advance of the Astor party, but had been so much delayed by difficulties and desertion, that he arrived too late to accomplish his purpose. The Northwest Company held a warm place in the heart of McDougal, who was in charge at Astoria, and though Thompson was, at best, a spy upon his hosts, McDougal entertained him hospitably, and gave him a bountiful supply of provisions and other necessary supplies for his return journey.

A party of sixty crossed the continent on foot, headed by Wilson Price Hunt, the managing partner, and after almost incredible hardships, reached Astoria in straggling parties early in the spring of 1812. On the ninth of the following May the ship *Beaver* arrived with reinforcements and supplies, and the Pacific Fur Company was now in a condition to enter upon a vigorous prosecution of its business. Hunt took the *Beaver* on a coasting voyage similar to that upon which the ill-fated *Tonquin* had been engaged. Other parties penetrated many miles inland, and founded posts on the Columbia, near the mouth of the Okinagon, on the Spokane, and among the Nez Percés. The various parties returned to Astoria in the spring of 1813, having been, for the most part, very successful, and having well-established themselves among the Indians. They then learned that war was raging between Great Britain and the United States, and were greeted by the unwelcome sight of a small party of Northwest Company men, un-

der J. G. McTavish. The war interfered with the arrival of expected supplies, and after much consultation the partners decided to abandon the country the next year and return overland, provided more encouraging news be not received by that time. They sold Fort Spokane to McTavish for \$848.00, and he took possession of it in the name of the Northwest Company. In October he returned to Astoria with a party of seventy men, and informed the partners that he was waiting for the arrival of a vessel of war that had been sent to capture Astoria. With this threat, and a promise of a partnership in the Northwest Company for McDougal, who was in charge during the absence of Mr. Hunt, he purchased the entire stock of furs and supplies, worth fully \$100,000.00, for \$40,000.00. Two months later the *Raccoon* arrived, and Astoria was formally surrendered to her commander, who raised the British ensign in the place of the Stars and Stripes, and re-christened the place "Fort George." A few weeks later Mr. Hunt returned, and was filled with indignation to learn that the interests of Mr. Astor and his loyal associates had been sold out by the treacherous McDougal, who was enjoying the fruits of his duplicity as resident partner of the Northwest Company, in charge of Fort George. He sailed away again in disgust. The other partners, with eighty-five of the employés, returned to the States, overland, while the remainder of the men continued in the employ of the Northwest Company, whose servants the majority of them had been previous to their engagement by Mr. Astor. When the war ended, after much negotiation between the two governments, Fort George was formally surrendered to the United States, but it still remained in the actual possession of the agents of the Northwest Company, subjects of Great Britain. Mr. Astor never received any compensation from the Government for his losses in this enterprise, nor any encouragement to again attempt the role of pioneer of American interests on the Pacific Coast.

Upon securing possession of Astoria from the treacherous McDougal, the Northwest Company had undisputed possession of the Columbia, though it was engaged in a struggle with the old Hudson's Bay Company for supremacy in the region east of the Rocky Mountains. These two companies had grown too large to be tolerant of each other, and one must go to the wall. When the Northwest Company was first organized, the old company, enjoying charter privileges and supreme monopoly of a vast region, scouted the idea that a few independent traders could so combine as to become dangerous rivals; but in a few years the aspect of affairs was changed. The new company began operations upon a new and thorough system, which soon rendered it a most powerful organization. In the height of its power it gave employment to two thousand voyageurs, and its agents penetrated the wilderness in all directions in search of furs. Being interested partners, these agents worked diligently for the company's interests. It established a general base of operations on the northern

* In 1830, Nathan Winship, of Boston, ascended the Columbia in the *Albatross* and began the construction of a post at Oak Point, a point on the south bank, forty miles up the stream, and nearly opposite the present Oak Point of Washington Territory. High water and hostility of the Indians caused him to abandon the effort until the next year, before which time the arrival of the Astor party so changed the aspect of affairs that the project was given up.