



East Oregonian Round-Up Souvenir Edition Pendleton, Oregon, Thursday, September 21, 1922.

# BACK - TRAILING ON THE OLD FRONTIERS

Drawing by CHARLES M. RUSSELL



Copyright, 1922 by the Cheely-Raban Syndicate.

## How the Rich Oregon Country Came Under the Sovereignty of the United States Through the Discovery of the Columbia River by Captain Gray

By W. W. CHEELY.

CAPTAIN JAMES COOK, the British navigator who discovered the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands, was directly responsible for the discovery of the Columbia river by an American seaman and also for the organization of the Lewis and Clark overland expedition to the Pacific coast. These were two important historical happenings which helped materially to extend the sovereignty of the United States over the rich Oregon country, and make of the young republic a continental power. These incidents of international consequence, occurring within a few years of each other, at a time when Great Britain, Spain and Russia were seeking to establish a foothold on the North Pacific coast, practically put the United States in possession of Oregon and confirmed her title to the northwest.

Cook sailed from England in 1776, his purpose being to seek the northwest passage, the mythical waterway that maritime men of that day thought existed. His instructions were to land on the coast of New Albion, the ancient name for Oregon. In March, 1778, he observed the mountains of Oregon. Further north he sailed by the strait of Juan de Fuca and wrote in his log his opinion that the story of the strait was a myth. In Nootka sound he took on many furs. Sailing on, he sighted Mount St. Elias, passed through the strait separating Asia from America, named Cape Prince of Wales, and then was forced, on account of ice, to turn back, going to the Hawaiian Islands, where, a few months later, he met his death at the hands of the islanders.

In the spring of 1879, his two ships, in an attempt to complete his work, sailed north over practically the same route. On the return voyage a stop was made at Nootka, where cargoes of valuable furs were acquired for practically nothing. Skins worth over \$100 were bought for 10 cents each in goods. Cook's ships then sailed for Canton, where the furs were exchanged for valuable silks, which were marketed in England at a handsome profit.

### Luckless John Ledyard Who Brought to Boston the Tale of Northern Wealth

In this cruise of Cook and his successors was a petty officer named John Ledyard, a New Englander of some education. He was in England when the expedition was being organized and went along in the spirit of adventure. He was very much impressed with the fur wealth of the North Pacific. On his journey he kept a diary. This diary, said to be the best record of this memorable cruise, was taken from Ledyard by British naval officers on his discharge in England. Ledyard then returned to Boston, where, in an effort to raise money to equip a ship to engage in the Oregon fur trade, he wrote a

pamphlet from memory. He canvassed the financial men of Boston to this end, and while they were interested in his narrative of the easy wealth to be made in the North Pacific, declined to embark on his adventure. But the story that he told made its impression and bore fruit several years later.

The development of the Chinese silk trade, in which Boston merchants were interested, and stories told by seamen coming to Boston port, stimulated interest in the fur possibilities of the Oregon country, and in 1787 a company of Boston merchants, headed by J. Barrell, one of the men to whom Ledyard had told his story, resolved to go into the trade. They equipped two ships, the Columbia and the Lady Washington, captained by Robert Gray and John Kendrick, stocked them with trade goods and sent them on their way to Oregon. They were to take on cargoes of furs, take the furs to China, exchange them for silks and other Chinese goods, and market the Chinese goods in America, the plan involving a possibility of three profits.

### Captain Gray the First Sea Captain to Carry American Flag Around World.

The two ships left Boston on October 1, 1787, arrived on the Oregon coast on the following September, wintered at Nootka, and in the spring opened trade, securing a large quantity of the choicest furs for the merest trifles. Late in the summer Captain Gray sailed for China, sold his furs, took on his cargo of Chinese goods, and returned to Boston, arriving at his home port in August, 1790. In this voyage Captain Gray was the first American sailor to carry the stars and stripes around the world.

A month later saw Gray on his return trip to the North Pacific, where he arrived in the summer of 1891. The succeeding months of good weather were spent in trading with the Indians, with whom he had numerous skirmishes, and in exploration. With the approach of winter he established headquarters at Clayoquot, where he built the sloop Adventure. In the spring he sailed south in search of trade.

On May 7 he entered a harbor in latitude 46 degrees, 58 minutes, which was christened in his name. Four days later he steered his ships across a bar where a mighty river met the sea. On each side of the mouth were towering cliffs. Believing that he had found the "Great River of the West," of nautical legend, he took his observations and found that he was in latitude 46 degrees, 10 minutes. He sailed up the river for 10 miles, anchored, and a great multitude of Indians visited the ship to trade. He re-

mained at this anchorage for 10 days, and then sailed about 15 miles further up the river, went ashore and took possession of the land in the name of the United States of America, most appropriately christening the river "Columbia."

### Captain Vancouver Missed Opportunity to Claim Oregon Country for England.

A short time before Gray's discovery Captain Vancouver, a noted British sea captain, had arrived in the North Pacific waters. He was sent out by the British admiralty to map the coast of North America from 30 to 60 degrees, which comprised the coast line of the Oregon country, and to endeavor to find a passage to the Atlantic. On April 27, only a few days before Gray's discovery, Captain Vancouver passed the mouth of the Columbia river, which he noted in his log as an inlet or small river, not accessible for vessels of our burthen," and sailed on north. A few weeks later when Vancouver was told of Gray's important discovery, he realized that he had missed the opportunity of establishing Great Britain's claim to the Oregon country. He sent Lieutenant Broughton to make a survey of the river. Broughton sailed up the river for 100 miles, and afterwards united with Vancouver in an effort to discredit Gray, claiming that the American captain had not seen the river proper. But this effort went down before the weight of evidence that was presented in the international debate of a generation later, when America's claim was acknowledged by the British.

To return to the luckless Ledyard. After American financiers failed him he went to London, where he had no better success. Then he journeyed to Paris, where he met Captain John Paul Jones, the famous American naval commander. The adventure that Ledyard proposed appealed to Jones, who introduced him to Thomas Jefferson, then minister for the United States to France. Jefferson, a student of conditions in the northwest, kept him for days narrating his stories of the fur wealth of the North Pacific coast, and the information he received from Ledyard is said to have impressed this far-sighted statesman with the idea that if the United States could establish a claim to the Oregon country, there was a possibility of developing the young republic into a continental power. And when he became president of the United States a few years later he brought about the organization of the Lewis and Clark expedition which made the long overland jour-

ney across the continent, and established discovery rights, which, together with Gray's discovery, brought the Oregon country under the rule of the Republic.

Ledyard had served his country well, but ill-luck pursued him to the end of his days. When he saw that he could do nothing in France, John Paul Jones' enthusiasm having cooled, he went back to London, where this time he found backing, and finally sailed. But his ship was only a few hours out of port when it was recalled by the British admiralty. The expedition was suppressed and no explanation was forthcoming. Then, financed by the same backers who had placed the ship at his disposal, he resolved to lead an expedition overland through Siberia to the Behring strait, purposing to travel down the western North American coast. He went to Petrograd and had outfitted and was about ready to start, when, at the instance of the imperial Russian government, he was arrested and deported to Poland, the Russian officials insisting that the trip was impossible and that he was risking the lives of those who proposed to go with him. He finally made his way back to London, led an expedition of exploration into Africa, where he perished.

### When Russia Was Casting Covetous Eyes on Oregon Country and California.

About this time Russian officials in Alaska were looking with covetous eyes on the Oregon country and California. In an official report to his government, the Imperial Inspector Rezanof urged upon Russia the importance of founding Russian trading posts on the Columbia river with a view to gaining control of the fur trade. He advised the sending of an armed force to the Columbia to drive the Bostonians away. "This accomplished," the report reads, "we would gradually advance towards the south to the port of San Francisco, attract population from various localities, and in ten years would be strong enough to make use of any turn of European politics to include the coast of California in the Russian possessions." But after the success of the Lewis and Clark expedition, the fame of which went around the world, no more was heard of Russian ambitions in this direction.

America's claim to the Oregon country was further strengthened internationally by the founding of Astoria and other trading posts on the Columbia river in 1811 and the years that followed.