

EARLY FOLLOWERS OF CAPTAIN GRAY

I bring you greetings from the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, and I am especially directed by our Chairman to offer the congratulations of the Board on this occasion, and, if I may, to express our pleasure at the success of this and the preceding expedition.

Engaged as our Board is in a small way in a similar work, we feel that the marking of historic sites and the erection of monuments to those whose names are written large in the record is the surest way of stimulating an interest in local history. We feel, further, that the interest in local history is the solid foundation of interest in general history; and that interest in general history is an essential part of that rational pride of country which is so great a factor in the formation of true nationality.

The story of the Northwest Coast is one and indivisible. It cannot be divided into watertight compartments along existing boundary lines. It is the heritage of your nation and my nation, both nations are co-heirs in the story and the glory. Take, for example, Captain Gray whose name and whose fame we commemorate today; the greater part of his work during his two voyages was done on the Canadian coast. There it was that he built the *Adventure*, the second vessel constructed on the Northwest Coast. So too, with regard to John Jacob Astor, whose grant pioneer effort is so fittingly remembered today; the loss of the *Tonquin*, which was the first disaster in the venture and a great factor in the ill-fortune of Astoria, occurred on the Canadian coast.

In the story of the discovery of the middle and farther west the material impulse was given by two animals, now almost extinct,—the beaver and the sea-otter. Some day we may, perhaps, erect a monument to these two animals which stand side by side as incentives of discovery. The stream of beaver influence flowed in the interior; that of the sea-otter along the coast. The search for the sea-otter brought Captain Gray into this river; the search for the sea-otter brought the first lengthened visits. These two streams of search—beaver and sea-otter, first united here on the Columbia in the Astoria venture, which in its inception was to have been a combination of the two.

Now that we have heard very graphically told the great exploit of Captain Gray's discovery of this river I wish to say something of those who, following closely in his footsteps, made more lengthened visits. The maritime traders had, for the first five or six years, wintered at the Sandwich Islands, but from 1891 onwards they began to remain on the coast. The Columbia river soon became a place of resort for trade and a regular wintering spot.

It is always dangerous to speak of the first unless it is the first; but subject to correction and further research we may say that the first vessel to winter in the Columbia was the brig *Phoenix* of Bengal, Captain Moore. She is a sort of "mystery ship" of which we only catch a glimpse now and again. She made her second voyage to the Northwest Coast in 1794, but not having had a good season she remained and wintered in the Columbia. She left the river early in May 1795 and seems to have spent that summer trading at Queen Charlotte Islands. In September she was at Nootka preparing to sail for China and Boit reports her presence late in that month at the Sandwich Islands.

But the two vessels of which I wish particularly to speak are the *Jenny* and the *Ruby*, both owned by Mr. Sidenham Teast, a wealthy ship owner of Bristol, England.

Readers of Vancouver's *Voyage* are familiar with the *Jenny* as a small three-master schooner of 78 tons burthen which arrived at Nootka on 7th October, 1792, and from which Vancouver received two young women of the Sandwich Island for transport to their homes at Oneehow and Atool. (Vancouver's *Voyage*, Vol. 2, p. 287; *Washington Historical Quarterly*, Vol. VI., p. 88.) W. H. Gray is in error when he speaks of her in his *History of Oregon* as the "*Janet*" of Bristol, Rhode Island. The *Jenny* was on the Coast in 1791. In that year she entered Gray's Murderer's Harbor, which in ignorance of its prior discovery Captain Baker's her commander, called "Port Sidenham." She went in safe over the bar at Murderer's Harbour and stayed ten or twelve days, but procured few sea-otter skins. The Indians appeared of a savage disposition and expert with bow and arrow. They made signs which were understood to mean that if the crew came ashore they would kill and eat them. Broughton records her as being in November, 1792, in Baker's bay (named after her commander) and Vancouver tells us that she had been in the river

earlier in the year. Her cargo was ill-assorted and unfit for the trade. In consequence she made but a poor voyage and returned direct to England with only 350 skins. Mr. Teast, however, was not daunted by his ill success. He altered her from a schooner to a ship, and, having learned by experience, sent her again in September, 1793, with a better assortment of trading goods. We know as yet but little of her movements on the second voyage. She was in the Columbia in 1794 and appears to have done considerable trade. In July, 1794, she was at Queen Charlotte Islands—the richest sea-otter hunting ground on the Northwest Coast—where during that summer she collected 2,000 skins. Vancouver met her on the 29th of September, 1794, at Nootka Sound. She was then on the eve of sailing to China to dispose of her furs and return to England with a cargo for the East India Company. She reached Bristol on July 25, 1795.

But the vessel in which we are especially interested today is the other ship belonging to Mr. Sidenham Teast—the *Ruby*—which was on the coast in 1795. This vessel is one that entirely escaped the painstaking researches of Hubert Howe Bancroft and his writers. Nor can a single word about her, not even her name, be found in any history of the Northwest Coast. Fortunately, however, the manuscript account of the *Ruby's* voyage, written by Charles Bishop, her commander, is in existence. It is among the most treasured possessions of the Archives of British Columbia. It is the intention of the archivist to publish it in the near future, but I have his kind permission to forestall him to a certain extent. And it is fitting that on this occasion publicity should be given to the hitherto unknown voyage, at least so far as relates to this vicinity.

The *Ruby* was a ship of 101 tons burthen. She was provisioned for three years, equipped with a varied supply of trading goods, armed with eight three pound carriage guns, six half pound swivels and the usual small arms, and carrying a captain and crew of seventeen men, including a surgeon. Leaving Bristol on October 16, 1794, she arrived in the Columbia River on May 22nd, 1795, and anchored inside of Cape Disappointment.

The Chinooks at the cape came out to the ship and a gun was fired to attract the attention of those farther up the river. They soon arrived, bringing furs to trade. Sometimes as many as two hundred were alongside and on deck. It was Captain Bishop's first acquaintance with our Indians. He was grievously

disappointed when, after producing his most attractive wares, tea kettles, sheet copper, and a variety of fine clothes, they, merely grunting their disapproval, left without trading a single sea-otter skin. They returned the next day, however, and the usual huckstering began; for, as Marchand says, "The Modern Hebrew could teach the Indians nothing in the art of bargaining." However, knowing that he should stay for at least a week, the captain let them depart a second time. The following day they returned once more; prices were fixed; and in the remaining eight days Bishop received one hundred and eleven good sea-otter skins and a variety of furs of land animals; fox, marten, lynx, wildcat and beaver. He states that while sea-otter skins were not plentiful on the Columbia they were of excellent quality and of large size. The Indians also brought a large moose and three fallow deer which lasted the ship's company nine days. These with salmon caught with the seine were the first fresh food they had tasted for many weeks.

During the stay the ship was ballasted, the hold restowed, and wood and water for three months put on board. As he had it in mind to winter in the Columbia, the crew, in the intervals of trade, cleared a patch of ground on a small island and planted peas, beans, potatoes and several peach stones, and sowed radishes, mustard, cress, and celery. So far as I know this was the first attempt at horticulture at the mouth of the Columbia.

On June 7, 1795, the *Ruby* sailed out of the river and made her way northward, where during the summer she traded principally along the mainland shore and the northern end of Queen Charlotte Islands. In his Journal, Captain Bishop gives an exact and itemized statement of his trade; and as I know of no other so full and complete, I offer it, somewhat condensed. He obtained in that season 864 whole sea-otter skins, 47 large sea-otter cloaks (usually called cutsarks and consisting of three skins each), 483 sea-otter tails (These were frequently sold separately, being so perfectly furred), 169 pieces of sea-otter skin, 104 beaver skins and pieces, 25 silver gray foxes, 38 marten, 20 raccoon, 1 lynx, 20 river otter, 4 wolves, 12 black foxes, 14 deer, and 150 marmot skins. His account shows the diversity of articles used in the trade; a maritime trading ship may have been the original of the modern department store. Powder, muskets, pistols, flints, sheets of copper, brass rings, copper and brass tea kettles, pewter jugs, tankards and basins, hangers, bars of iron, iron pots, pie pans and covers, rum, shot and ball, shoes, cloth, baize, blankets, stone jars,

looking glasses, knives, mugs, war dresses, trunks, files, combs, buttons, scissors, tin and leather powder flasks, shot belts, adzes, hatchets, copper rods, buckets and spoons—to the total value of L. 658 12 and 4d.

The season ended, the *Ruby* sailed southward calling at Nootka Sound where she met the brig *Mercury* of Providence, Rhode Island, Captain Barnett, and had news of the sloop *Union* of Boston, Captain Boit. There Captain Bishop gathered up many boards from the deserted Spanish village to be used in housing the *Ruby* during the winter. Resuming his journey, he, on October 18, 1795, reached the Columbia. As he enters, Bishop notes that the breakers extend from shore to shore, but there there is a very good channel which at $\frac{3}{4}$ flood has at least four fathoms, but soon deepens to five and increases gradually to ten fathoms near Cape Disappointment.

It came on to blow soon after he had reached his anchorage inside of Cape Disappointment and he expresses his pleasure at his safe position, albeit a little exposed. He, however, soon shifted the *Ruby* into a small land-locked cove in front of the present Life Saving Station, only open from E by S to S E by E and moored her with three anchors. In this position the ship lay about one hundred yards from the beach and about two hundred yards from the bluff of Cape Disappointment in three and a half fathoms at low water.

A week was spent in unrigging the *Ruby*, unbending the sails, and laying her up in ordinary. He visited his garden on----- Island and found a good crop of potatoes, fine and rich and large and floury. He complains that they had a sweetish taste which he attributes to their being planted in a warm spot. He found also a few beans, but the radishes had gone to seed. There were no peas, cress nor celery. The absence of the peas he ascribes to the seed having been kiln-dried; he charged the failure of the cress and celery to the army of small birds.

When the Chinooks came to trade they brought two things still obtained on this river; salmon and cranberries. Here too, he made the acquaintance of the wapato, the native potato, which was such a staple food for Lewis and Clark. He describes it as about the size of a pigeon's egg, growing in the swampy ground, on the surface, like an onion or a turnip. Bishop remarked the great number of pelicans and is witness to the edible quality of their flesh. He observed that their winds had a spread of eight or nine feet, and he noticed that they seemed to come to Baker's

Bay and fish for two or three days and then disappear for a similar period—he concluded that their supply had lasted for that interval.

Near the ship in the marsh back of McKenzie's Head he found many snipe; but about three miles to the northward between the mouth of the Woolquot, or James River and the small river by the natives called Ellemeecks and today known as the Chinook, he discovered another marsh covered with snipe and wild geese. One of his men, he says, killed seventy snipe there at one shot. Perhaps some of them were scared to death.

His Journal speaks of a steady rain from 27th October till 1st November—six days; but nowhere does he mention such a continuous downpour as that which drenched Lewis and Clark in December, 1805. Another long stretch of rainy and boisterous weather the Indians charged to him and his officers who had been seen to point at the new moon and had thereby, according to native belief, enraged the moon goddess. Mayhap, like Juno, she has been angry ever since! Bishop noticed that with a wind from north of east the weather was clear and frosty; but as it veered to the southward came the rain and continued until the wind reached southwest when the skies cleared and the fine weather returned. Throughout the whole winter there was no snow on the ground at Baker's Bay, though it could be seen on the Cascade Mountains, higher up the Chinook river, as he called the Columbia. On the whole, he found the climate not so cold as the southern part of England.

He notes that the ship's company was living well on fresh meat, game and cranberry pudding. Nevertheless as his bread was becoming quite indifferent he determined that he would visit the Sandwich Islands before returning to the northern coast.

The Indians, who visited the *Ruby*, constantly indulged in pilfering anything and everything possible. A close watch was kept and all moveable articles put out of sight. When the thefts occurred the stolen goods were usually returned upon complaint to the head chief, Taucum. This man would seem to be the person called Stock-home by Lewis and Clark. On one occasion the tables were turned; a sailor stole an arrow from an Indian. The theft being discovered the culprit was triced up and flogged. This equality left a feeling of fair dealing which aided greatly in maintaining good relations. The Chinooks informed him that there were three captains of trading vessels with whom they had

old scores to settle; but, unfortunately, he does not record their names.

According to Bishop, Concomly, the one-eyed potentate of the Columbia was in reality a sub-chief under Taucum, who was, so to speak, the Lord Paramount. This corresponds with Lewis and Clark's statement that the first chief was Stock-home; the second chief was Com-com-me-ley; and the third chief was Shil-lar-la-wit. Perhaps the latter may be identical with the chief who occupied a similar position but whom he calls Shelathwell. Concomly, he describes as a small one-eyed man who had so endeared himself to all on board that he was frequently allowed to sleep on the ship. To win him completely, Captain Bishop fitted him out in jacket, trousers, hat and shoes in European style. After trying them on, Concomly brought his favorite wife and, having garbed himself in his new raiment, strutted about on the quarter deck much to her delight and to the great amusement of the ship's company.

One of the articles of trade then obtained on the Columbia was leather war dresses, made of moose or elk skin. We know from Lewis and Clark how very plentiful elk were here in 1805. These dresses were large, thick and well-cured, and, when doubled, were complete defense against spear and arrow and were almost impervious to pistol shot. Mr. Teast, his employer, had learned of them, probably from the first voyage of the *Jenny*, and had instructed him, while in the Columbia, to procure them for subsequent trade at Queen Charlotte Islands. During the winter Bishop collected one hundred and ninety-two of these war dresses. As this is the first detailed record of trade at the Columbia river mouth it may be interesting to note the articles bartered therefor; 10 pounds of powder; 4 muskets; 304 copper rods, 73 tea kettles, 16 pounds of sheet copper, 26 sheets of sheathing copper, 3 quart copper cups, 6 copper sauce pans, 1 pewter jug, 18 silver-hilted swords, 4 common swords, 62 bars of iron, 300 pounds of musket balls, 4 yards of cloth, 8 blankets, 16 copper buckets, 7 files, 3 tin powder flasks, 6 yards of baize, 2 brass Guinea kettles, and 30 dozen buttons—of the total value £72 12s 3d. These 192 war dresses were supposed to purchase 677 prime sea-otter skins which would mean that the latter worth twelve dollars each in China would cost but about fifty cents each. Concomly and his co-chief, Shelathwell, told Bishop that they obtained many of these dresses 200 or 300 miles up the Chinook, as he calls the Columbia River.

Their method of procuring them was unique—they stated that on reaching the village where such dresses and other skins were to be had, they began to barter, offering the proposed exchange. This being refused and the usual chaffering begun with the goods on both sides exposed to view, their men, at a given signal would discharge their fire-arms, which so surprised the others, unacquainted with those European weapons, that they fled incontinently. Concomly and his confederate then gathered up the furs and dresses which the others had abandoned in their haste, and, leaving the equivalent, departed.

Bishop mentions that the Chinooks have their heads more flattened than other tribes where that custom exists. The distortion thus effected he describes as giving their faces the appearance of being carved out of a flat plank—the thickness of the head seeming to be not more than half the width of the face. The women's skirts were more tenuous but quite as short as those of today. Over their shoulders they wore skins or a piece of cloth. Like their civilized sisters they were fond of rings, bracelets and necklaces; though they were contented with them if made of brass or copper. As in other aboriginal tribes the men bought their wives. He records the price of a chief's daughter on the Columbia one hundred and thirty-one years ago; 20 slaves, 20 sea-otter skins, a canoe and 20 war dresses. Bishop says that he jocosely enquired of Shelathwell the price of the next daughter and found it to be 50 sheets of copper, 20 fathoms of cloth and that the Chief Officer of the *Ruby* must remain as a hostage for her safety. The number of wives was limited only by the size of the purse. Taucum, the head chief, he reports had ten; and, wonderful to relate, they all lived together in peace and harmony amongst themselves. He is silent on the subject of harmony as regards the much married husband.

Bishop mentions one of the rare instances of insanity amongst the coast Indians, before the advent of civilization. Chinini, a sub-chief, had become insane, and while in that state had given away his house, canoes, skins, bows and arrows and, last but not least, his wives. On his recovery at the end of two months, those who had received the gifts returned them all including, we may presume, the wives. The recovery was probably permanent, for Lewis and Clark, while mentioning this man, Chinini, by name, say nothing of his insanity. The only other case of insanity that I can recall, given in the annals of the maritime trade, is that of Tatoosch recorded by Jewitt.

While the *Ruby* lay in the Columbia there arrived a canoe from Queenhythe. Bishop thus had an opportunity to learn something about the murder in 1787 of the boat's crew of the *Imperial Eagle*, Captain Berkley. The Chief of those Indians falsely claimed that it had occurred at Queen-unuett, a village to the northward of Queenhythe. He said that Mr. Miller and his men had been invited to land and that after the trading had commenced the Indians fell upon them suddenly and killed them. According to the natives the bodies of the slain were divided and with their clothing sent to neighboring tribes. Bishop imprisoned the chief and threatened to take him back to England for punishment by Mr. Miller's father but learning that he had come on a marriage negotiation for one of Chief Selathwell's daughters, he, at the latter's solicitation, released him. Before the wife bargain could be struck, however, the suitor was killed by the accidental explosion of some gunpowder he was drying.

About the middle of January, Concomly, while wrestling with one of the officers, received an accidental blow on the face. One evening a little later a musket ball passed perilously close to some of the crew. Bishop linked the two events as cause and effect; though Concomly asseverated that he had fired at a duck and its being nearly dark had not realized that the *Ruby* lay in the line of fire. Bishop's suspicions were strengthened by the fact that one of Concomly's wives was very insistent that he should visit Concomly at his house. The invitation was declined and, instead, Bishop warped the *Ruby* out into the bay beyond the reach of any more ill-directed shots.

By January 22, 1796, the rigging had all been removed, the sails rebent, and the *Ruby* was ready for sea. Before he sailed Bishop re-planted the ground on the island, which he called "Tree Island Possession," where he had sowed the vegetables in the spring. The soil, he says, was rich and good. This time he planted Indian corn, radishes, mustard, beans, celery, cabbage and turnips, against his subsequent return; but, owing to the disaster which overtook the *Ruby*, she never again visited the Columbia.

On the eve of his departure the Chief, Shelathwell, presented him with three bushels of wapatoes, and Concomly brought, as his parting gift, fifteen brace of woodcocks and some salmon.

The next day, January 23, 1796, with every expression of friendship and of sorrow at his departure, accompanied with further presents of fish and wapatoes, the anchors were weighed, the

sails spread to a strong northeast wind, and in fifteen minutes the breakers on the bar were in sight. So sailed the *Ruby*—for the Sandwich Islands, never to return.

This, in rough outline, is the first record we have of a lengthened visit of the white man to the mouth of the Columbia—the earliest detailed account of life and events on the Columbia River—that was one hundred and thirty-one years ago.

“Over the roofs of the pioneers
Gathers the moss of a hundred years,
On man and his works has passed the change
That needs must be in a century’s range.
Now the land lies open and warm in the sun,
Anvils clamour and mill-wheels run,
There are flocks in the mountains and herds on the plain,
And the wilderness gladdens with fruit and grain.”

F. W. HOWAY.