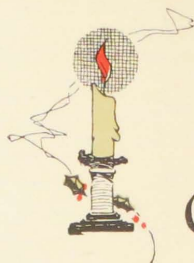




The ORIENTAL and
CAPTAIN PALMER







Christmas



Nineteen hundred and twenty four

Seventy-four years ago today, the clipper ship "Oriental" lay in London harbor, the pride of American seamen and the envy of the English. And well they might be proud for she was the foremost example of her race, the fleetest type of ship then known. It was the introduction of new methods of travel—steam navigation and the railroad—that brought about her retirement, and not the superiority of others of her kind. Captain Palmer never was out of date.

We owe it to ourselves and our times to be useful according to our talents, and to abandon old ways for new, when better ways are found. Let us so resolve.

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The
ORIENTAL
and
CAPTAIN PALMER





ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Sources from which information for this booklet were obtained:

Mrs. Richard Fanning Loper of Stonington, Connecticut, Captain Palmer's Niece.

National Geographic Magazine, March, 1912 - - - - - *Major-General A. W. Greely*

Stonington Antarctic Explorers, *Edwin S. Balch*

The Heritage of Tyre, *William Brown Meloney*

The Clipper Ship Era, *Arthur Hamilton Clark*

Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer, *John R. Spears*



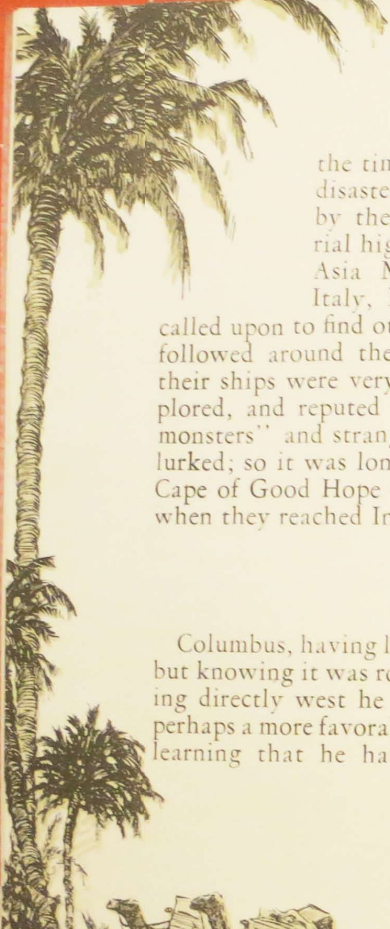
FOR centuries the rich trade goods of India—gold, ivory and rubies, spices, perfumes, silks, light as gossamer, linen and finespun

cotton cloths, the wools of Cashmere—have been sought by the eager markets of the world. Long caravans of camels plodded across the plains and deserts and through the mountain passes of Asia Minor to the peoples of the Mediterranean. And we see three mounted wise men carrying the rich tribute of the Orient to a manger in Bethlehem. As the cities of southern Europe grew, the trade with the East waxed larger and larger. It was carried on by ship and caravan through the Gulf of Persia, thence overland by Bagdad, Damascus and Constantinople.



While Christopher Columbus was a little boy in Genoa, something happened that led to revolutionary changes in the world, although at





the time (1453) it seemed a great disaster. This was the closing by the Turks of these immemorial highways of commerce across Asia Minor. The mariners of Italy, Portugal, and Spain were called upon to find other routes to India. They followed around the east coast of Africa but their ships were very small, the sea was unexplored, and reputed to be filled with "horrid monsters" and strange lands where evil spirits lurked; so it was long before they touched the Cape of Good Hope (1487) and ten years later when they reached India by that route.



Columbus, having little idea of the earth's size but knowing it was round reasoned that by sailing directly west he would find a shorter and perhaps a more favorable course; he died without learning that he had discovered a continent



which blocked the way. For the next three hundred years the dream of navigators was to find a passage north of America through the Arctic Sea to the Orient.

AS the outlines of the continents took form on the marine maps of the world, it was seen that, to go from the Atlantic to the Pacific, ships must round Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope. The length of the journey and the growth of commerce in the new world as well as the old led to the building of larger and faster vessels. The Santa Maria, largest of Columbus' three ships, was of about 100 tons and some 65 feet long. From that time until the Revolutionary War the size and standard of ships was not much improved; following the war, the abundance of timber superior for shipbuilding, and the opportunities

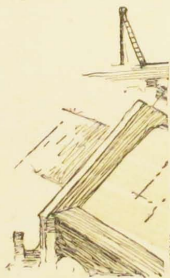


afforded by virtue of their new born independence combined to encourage the native genius of American shipbuilders. They brought out models with new lines, and fitted them with more and better sails.



OUR maritime prowess won for us the war of 1812 and that victory in turn gave further stimulus to advancing skill in naval architecture. From these influences came the clipper ships—so named because they “clipped it down the wind,” fast, like a bird in flight. The first true clippers were the *Houqua* and the *Rainbow*, launched in New York Harbor in 1844 and 1845. Hundreds of American ships following their lines were built to meet the demand for their unrivalled service.

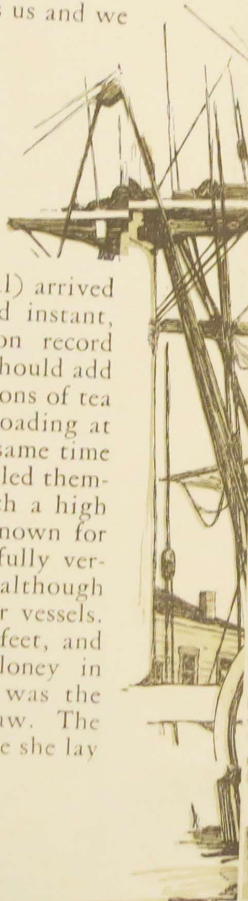
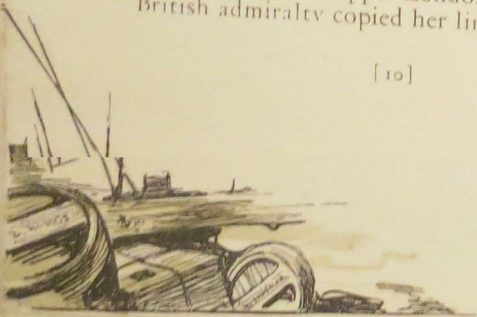
Improvements followed and in 1849, in New York, a clipper ship was built which embodied the perfection of her type. She was christened *Oriental* and was built to bear the precious trade of Asia, the oldest traffic known to commerce. Her first voyages were between New York and Hongkong, but in 1849 the East India trade with Great Britain was opened to the



ships of other nations; and as this trade was the most desirable, it went to the finest and fleetest ships. So in December, 1850, the *Oriental* brought to London the first cargo ever carried there from China in an American ship. Perhaps she had in her hold many gifts for the approaching Christmas season. The *Oriental* already had made New York from Hongkong in 81 days and returned to Hongkong in like time. Now, she made London from Hongkong in 97 days, notwithstanding adverse weather. Her arrival was a sensation. Crowds thronged to the docks to see the long slender hull of this earliest of ocean greyhounds, her lofty masts that towered like spires above the dwarfed shipping of the yard, the wealth of furled white canvas that had carried her



down the winds with such unheard of speed. To the editorial writers of the day she was a wonder, a menace, and a challenge. "We must run a race with our gigantic and unshackled rival. A fell necessity constrains us and we must not be beat." (London Times.) The London Illustrated News published a picture of the Oriental (herein reproduced) and an article part of which reads as follows: "Although many British ships have arrived at New York and Boston from China, since the alteration in the navigation laws, the first American ship (the Oriental) arrived in the West India docks on the 3rd instant, and has made the fastest voyage on record from China, by a sailing vessel. We should add that the Oriental brings about 1600 tons of tea at £6 per ton whilst all the ships loading at Whampoa (Canton's Seaport) at the same time only got £3 10s. Correspondents availed themselves of the opportunity even at such a high rate of freight, the Oriental being known for her fast sailing qualities, which she fully verified." She was of average size, although the later tendency was to build larger vessels. Her length was 185 feet, breadth 36 feet, and depth 21 feet. William Brown Meloney in "The Heritage of Tyre" says, "She was the first out and out clipper London ever saw. The British admiralty copied her lines while she lay

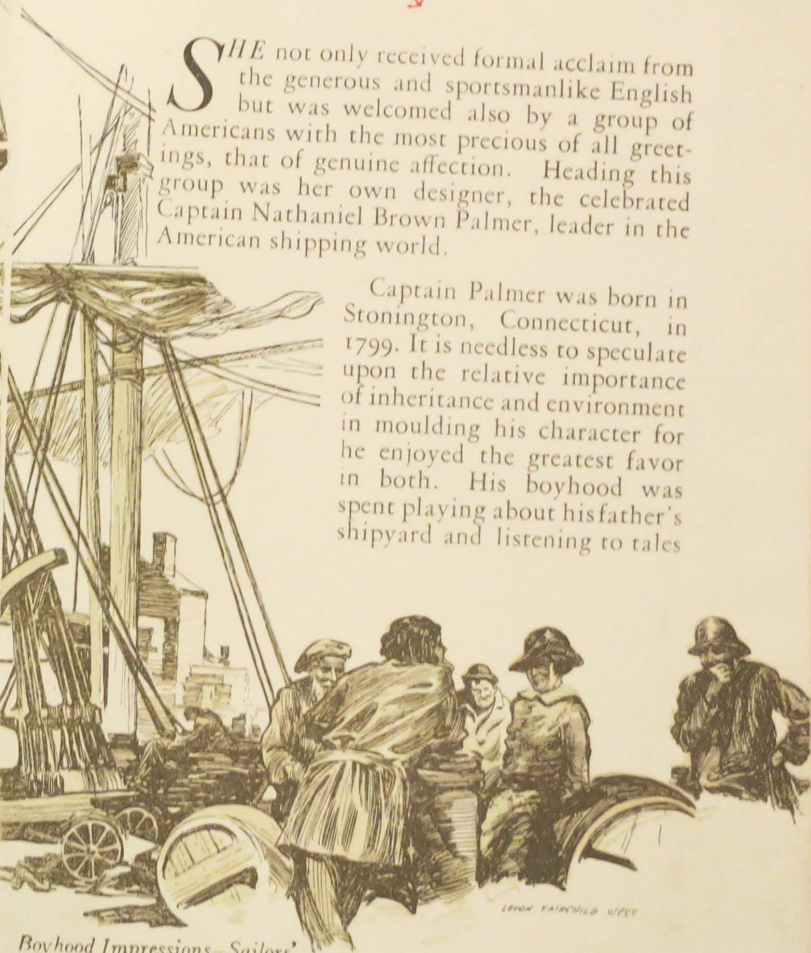


in dry dock. Afterward the lines of other Yankee flyers were taken off similarly, but the Oriental was the first inspiration of British builders."

RS

SHE not only received formal acclaim from the generous and sportsmanlike English but was welcomed also by a group of Americans with the most precious of all greetings, that of genuine affection. Heading this group was her own designer, the celebrated Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer, leader in the American shipping world.

Captain Palmer was born in Stonington, Connecticut, in 1799. It is needless to speculate upon the relative importance of inheritance and environment in moulding his character for he enjoyed the greatest favor in both. His boyhood was spent playing about his father's shipyard and listening to tales



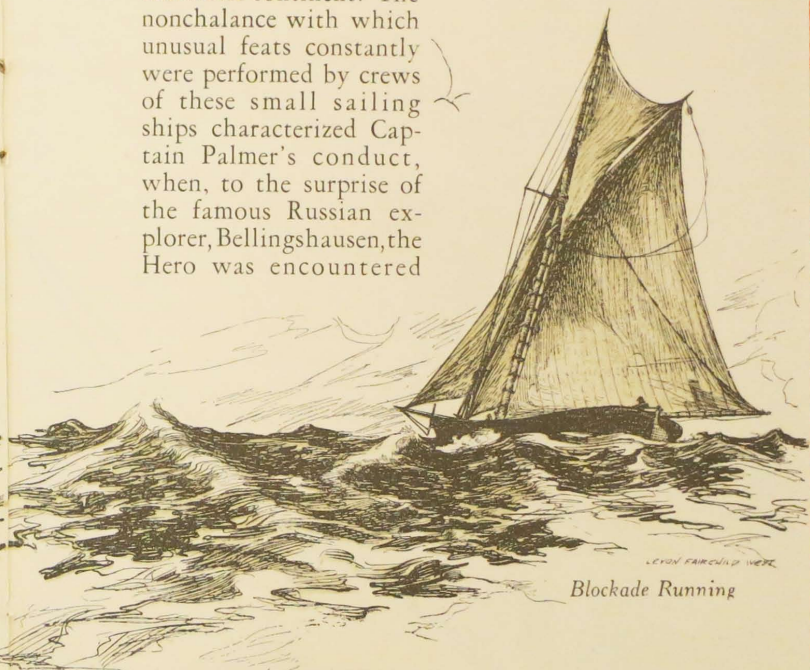
LEON FAIRCHILD WEST

*Boyhood Impressions—Sailors'
Yarns of the Sea*

of sailors whose very presence for repairs to battered hulls proved the adventure of the trips they made. Ship models were his only toys; the ambitions and dreams of seafaring men took the place of the usual fairy tales. Withal, the atmosphere of home was one of culture, for his parents came from the best New England stock and his father was established in a shipyard of highest reputation. To distinguish him from his father, for whom he was named, he was called "Nat" in his boyhood, a name which clung to him throughout his career. While Nat was growing up, the young republic was developing and expanding on sea as well as on land. Young Nat could hardly wait to answer the call of the sea, which promised so much of adventure, fame, and fortune. He did not long resist it, for at fifteen years of age we find him on a blockade runner dodging the British navy in the fogs of Long Island and New England. At the close of the war he continued in the coastwise trade. The experience thus gained in all conditions of weather with no landmarks to guide him, and his proved seamanship, won him a place in 1819 as mate of a picked crew for a sealing expedition to the South Shetland Islands. His resourcefulness and sound judgment, together with downright hard work, were rewarded in 1820 by his being made captain of the *Hero*, a fifty foot sloop used as a cruiser with a sealing fleet in the Antarctic.



WHILE thus engaged in 1821 the intrepidity of Captain Nat took him beyond the limits of charted waters, among gale driven ice floes and treacherous shoals and led to his discovery of part of the Antarctic continent. The nonchalance with which unusual feats constantly were performed by crews of these small sailing ships characterized Captain Palmer's conduct, when, to the surprise of the famous Russian explorer, Bellingshausen, the Hero was encountered



LEON FAIRCHILD WENT

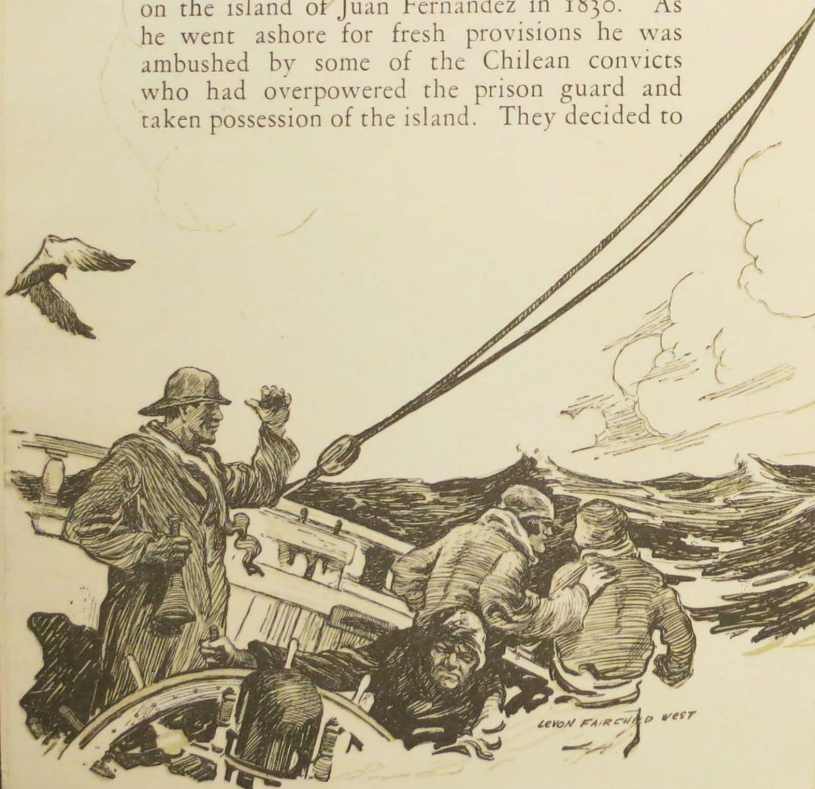
Blockade Running

along these shores. Captain Nat extended the hospitality of the region to the Russian and offered to show him about. Commander Bellingshausen was most generous with the young American although he declared himself abashed at having spent two years searching for the continent only to find that a boy in a sloop but little larger than the launch of the Russian frig-

ate had not only beaten him to the place but was able to guide him safely among the islands. He thereupon gave to this shore the name "Palmer Land," which it bears to this day.



These experiences were rapidly maturing Captain Palmer and preparing him for the great opportunities just beyond. The power of his presence is forcefully shown in a critical experience on the island of Juan Fernandez in 1830. As he went ashore for fresh provisions he was ambushed by some of the Chilean convicts who had overpowered the prison guard and taken possession of the island. They decided to



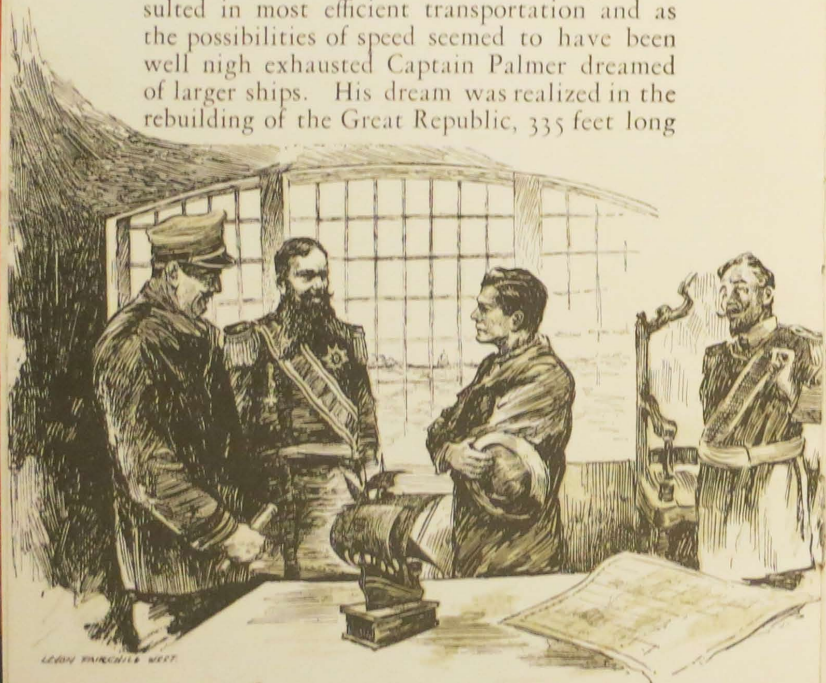
seize his ship, the Annawan, and proposed first to kill him. As they were blind-folding him for execution he persuaded them to spare him so that he might convey them to the Chilean mainland. Once aboard ship with this cut-throat mob he asserted his dominance and held them at bay during ten days of extended calm which prevented an earlier landing.

Captain Nat was now 31 years old and in the full flower of manhood. His reputation for daring seamanship and diplomacy won him command of an Atlantic packet. He shortly demonstrated his outstanding qualities and until 1840 was Commodore of the Dramatic Line fleet plying between New York and Liverpool. Now, in the ripeness of his experience, he came into his own; as designer of these fine packets, he gained a high reputation. It was his practice to make the initial journey on each of the ships when it was launched and thus he put into service the Garrick, Sheridan, Siddons and Roscius. In October, 1840, he sailed the Siddons between Liverpool and New York in fifteen days, the shortest known westbound record for sailing vessels between those ports.



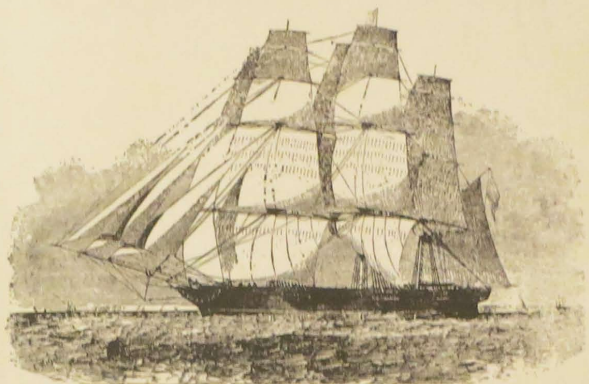
The Discovery of Palmer Land

BUT merchant sailing vessels had not been perfected. The need of larger and faster ships led to the development of the clippers which differed from former models in that they were longer in proportion to their breadth and carried greater spread of canvas. The opening of four Chinese ports in 1843 spurred the building. Captain Nat's answer to the call was the launching of the Houqua in 1844, earliest of all the clipper ships. The perfection of the clipper type was attained in the Oriental; then followed other notable examples of Captain Palmer's skill, the N. B. Palmer, Samuel Russel, Golden State, David Brown and Contest. As the combination of capacity with speed resulted in most efficient transportation and as the possibilities of speed seemed to have been well nigh exhausted Captain Palmer dreamed of larger ships. His dream was realized in the rebuilding of the Great Republic, 335 feet long



LEON VANDERBILT WEST

Commander Bellingshausen's Cabin



USS JOHN HANCOCK, OF NEW YORK.

with capacity of six thousand tons, the largest sailing vessel ever built of wood. This ship, originally built by Donald McKay in 1853, burned in New York Harbor without making a voyage. She was purchased and rebuilt by Captain Palmer, but commerce was not ready for so large a ship and she was sold to the French Government for a transport in the Crimean War. This ended the most active period in Captain Palmer's life. Slowly but surely the steamship was replacing the sailing vessel.



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Captain Palmer in his later years designed and sailed many of New York's most beautiful yachts. His interest

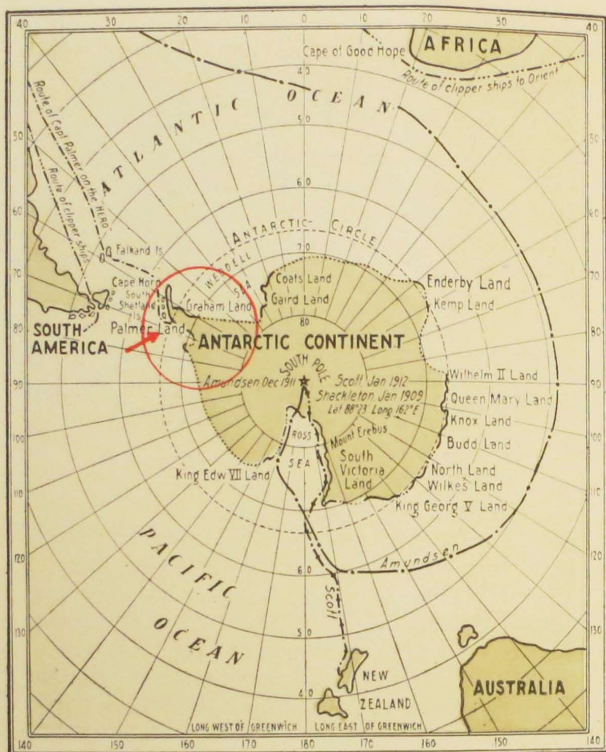


Chart of South Polar Regions

in shipping was kept alive in his association with the New York Yacht Club of which he was one of the founders.

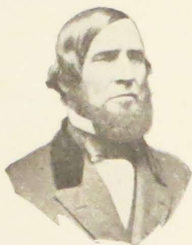
He died in 1877—one of America's great men of action. The list is long and its names are the mileposts of our progress. They are men whose

imagination encompasses the present and foresees the future need and whose vigor of mind creates the means to fill that need.

James J. Hill was such a man. Nathaniel Brown Palmer devised the fastest ships to go around the continent and Mr. Hill built the shortest route across it. But back of Captain Palmer's ships and Mr. Hill's locomotives was the unerring intuition that pointed to rapid and effectual transportation as the very keystone in the great modern arch of human advancement.

FINIS.





CAPTAIN PALMER
Hitherto unpublished

