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This dissertation evaluates the earliest phase of American engagement in the Pacific Ocean through a close examination of the fur-trading ship *Columbia* during the years 1787-93. I argue that *Columbia* established the dominant pattern of American commerce in the Pacific and, in doing so, played a significant role in the integration of disparate shores into a single Pacific World. This study also reconstructs her pioneering, yet understudied voyages in order to challenge a historiographical neglect of the eighteenth-century foundations of American empire in the Pacific. My research unfolds on three scales. First, *Columbia* reveals a series of interconnected local histories that hinge upon individuals in Boston, on the Northwest Coast of America, and in Canton. Second, her expeditions show how American merchants and sea captains leveraged transnational variations in trade to reorient the United States toward the commerce of the Pacific Ocean. Third, *Columbia* demonstrates how entrepreneurs of the Early Republic established a global trade circuit integrating the markets of the United States, the Pacific World, and China. This study also stresses the experimental nature of the *Columbia* expeditions. By reconstructing the financial outcomes of her voyages, I emphasize improvisation and adaptation as vital strategies in the development of a successful enterprise in the ocean hemisphere. *Columbia*'s success inspired a new generation of investors, imitators, and innovators to pursue similar profits in the Pacific World.

COLUMBIA AT SEA: AMERICA ENTERS THE PACIFIC, 1787-1793

by

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CHAPTER I  
THE COLUMBIA VOYAGES

In September of 1787, Joseph Barrell, a Bostonian merchant who rose to prominence during the American Revolution, penned a short but radical series of instructions to Captain John Kendrick. “Sir,” wrote Barrell, “the ship *Columbia* and the sloop *Washington* being completely equipped for a voyage to the Pacific ocean and China, we place such confidence in you as to give you the entire command of this enterprise.”<sup>1</sup> Barrell’s expression of “confidence” represented more than a pleasant turn of phrase. The Pacific was unimaginably far from Boston, and nothing like the *Columbia* voyage had ever been attempted from the thirteen colonies, now the United States. He needed experienced sailors to ensure the success of an expedition that would carry American commerce to the farthest quarters of the earth.

Barrell’s instructions outlined the challenges ahead for Kendrick and his subordinate captain, Robert Gray, both veterans of the Revolutionary War. The *Columbia* expedition aimed to trade for otter pelts on the Northwest Coast of America, traverse the

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Barrell, “Orders Given Captain John Kendrick of the Ship *Columbia* for a Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, 1787,” in *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 & 1790-1793*, ed. Frederic W. Howay, (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), 112.

Pacific, and exchange the luxurious furs for Chinese goods at the port of Canton (Guangzhou). In completing this task, *Columbia* and *Washington* would become the first United States vessels in the Pacific Ocean. Upon returning to Boston, they would complete the first American circumnavigation of the globe. If successful, *Columbia* would demonstrate the feasibility of United States commerce in the Pacific. The plan was ambitious, audacious, and hazardous. Barrell recognized that much could go wrong. The voyage would require two years, three years, or longer, and would operate in the most remote quarters of an unfamiliar ocean. Barrell warned Kendrick to expect the unexpected, stressing that “you will be on the spot, and as circumstances turn up you must improve them.”<sup>2</sup> Improvisation was crucial. There would be little communication with faraway Boston, and no assistance if tragedy were to strike. In terms of logistics, expertise, and risk, the *Columbia* expedition was the eighteenth-century equivalent of placing human beings on the moon, and then bringing them home again, safely.

*Columbia* accomplished impressive navigational and commercial feats during her two voyages to the Pacific. During her first expedition, from 1787-90, *Columbia* proved that American entrepreneurs possessed the resources and experience to launch successful missions into the Pacific. In 1788, Captain Kendrick and his crew became, in Joseph Barrell’s words, the first “Free and Independent Americans” to explore the Pacific.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, the adventurers also established the first American presence on the Northwest

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Barrell, “Orders Given Captain John Kendrick,” 112.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Coast. In 1789, following a year of fur trading among the indigenous peoples of the coast, the expedition weighed anchor for a transit of the Pacific. The Columbians, as I deem the adventurers, became the first Americans to call in the Sandwich Islands, now Hawaii, before approaching China. *Columbia's* first transaction at Canton, in 1790, was a financial failure. Nonetheless, the Columbians gained the commercial experience necessary to ensure that future fur-trading voyages would be profitable. Thereafter, *Columbia* achieved the first American circumnavigation of the globe during her return to the United States. National leaders, newspapers, and potential imitators followed the progress of her voyage and celebrated her safe return.

Meanwhile, Barrell planned a “saving voyage” to recover his investments and, in the process, prove the economic potential of the maritime fur trade.<sup>4</sup> From 1790-93, *Columbia's* second expedition, now under the command of Robert Gray, turned a significant profit and made territorial claims for the United States. In 1792, during a lucrative season of fur trading, the Columbians discovered, charted, and did business along the legendary “Great River of the West.” Captain Gray named this waterway in honor of his ship, and in reference to his country—the Columbia River. The expedition, therefore, provided the United States with its first territorial claim upon the Pacific coast of North America. Later, at Canton, the Columbians acquired a valuable cargo of teas, sugar, porcelain, and nankeens worth \$90,000. In 1793, *Columbia* completed a second

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<sup>4</sup> “Joseph Barrell to John Webb, Feby 3d 1794” Joseph Barrell Letterbook, Massachusetts Historical Society.

circumnavigation and returned to Boston, where her cargo auctioned for an estimated \$243,500. Overall, the expeditions lasted almost six years and logged more than 100,000 miles at sea—roughly half the distance to the moon.<sup>5</sup> In short, *Columbia* represented a project of great significance to the new republic.

In this dissertation, I argue that *Columbia* established the dominant pattern of American commerce in the Pacific and, in doing so, played a significant role in the integration of disparate shores into a single Pacific World. My argument unfolds on three scales—the interconnected theaters of local, transnational, and global action. In one sense, her voyages reveal a series of local histories—an examination of specific conditions and decisions on the part of investors, captains, and intermediaries in disparate ports. Individuals enabled the expedition to “plug in” to existing trade relationships, and achieve commercial success, in each location. Local experience shaped the enterprise from the beginning. During the American Revolution, Bostonian merchants and sea workers mastered the financial, logistical, and practical skills needed to wage a war for independence at sea. In peacetime, Barrell and the Columbians applied that expertise to the logistical challenges of an expedition to the Pacific. Meanwhile, *Columbia* and her

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<sup>5</sup> The Columbians kept a log of anchorages and distances during the first expedition, but not the second. In contrast, John Boit recorded navigational positions on a regular basis during the second *Columbia* voyage. The sources demonstrate that, aside from greater mileage on the Northwest Coast in 1791-92, each of the expeditions traversed a similar distance. For this reason, I estimate the overall distance by doubling the numbers that appeared in the *Columbian Centinel* in 1790. “Boston, Wednesday, Aug. 11, The Columbia.” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 11 August 1790.

cargo also exemplified the material particulars of Boston. She was constructed at Scituate, near Plymouth, and embarked with iron, copper, and woolen goods—all commodities purchased at minimal cost in Massachusetts. Local considerations also shaped her activities on the Northwest Coast. The Columbians forged relationships with indigenous rulers, who learned to thrive as middlemen between Indian trappers and American traders. Indeed, Wickaninnish, leader of the Clayoquot People, established hegemony over his neighbors through an exchange of otter skins for metals, manufactured goods, and firearms. Trade brought wealth, and wealth sustained his power. The Columbians also adapted to local trends, such as a growing demand for copper, or competition between trappers. Finally, local conditions shaped *Columbia's* activities in China. The expedition negotiated with American, British, Cantonese, and Manchu persons in the cosmopolitan port of Canton. Through the assistance of Thomas Randall, for example, the adventurers learned to navigate the rigid commercial world of the Canton System. Tradition also permitted merchants and mandarins to contend for access to prestigious items, such as sea otter skins. *Columbia's* exchange of furs for teas brought American commerce to bear upon an old market, but she accomplished this in new ways.

*Columbia's* expeditions also reveal transnational variations in trade, and the challenges of overcoming those variations, during the late eighteenth century. She sailed during a fraught period of transition from a colonial to a national economy. Prior to the Revolutionary War, shipbuilders, sawyers, farmers, ironmongers, distillers, and merchants throughout the thirteen colonies profited as suppliers to island plantations in

the British Caribbean. Following the revolution, however, Americans faced new restrictions on trade with European colonies. Joseph Barrell's interest in the development of the China Trade—a promising though experimental avenue of commerce—represented part of a national “reorientation” toward markets unregulated by Europeans.<sup>6</sup> Like other merchants, he hoped to restore national access to goods such as teas, porcelain, and silks, as well as to establish future markets for American products. Meanwhile, *Columbia* faced a different paradigm on the Northwest Coast. In economic terms, the region represented a free-market paradise. No central authority as powerful as a European king, nor even the weak Confederation Congress, existed on the Northwest Coast. As a result, indigenous groups traded with outsiders on individualized terms, specific to time and place. Indians engaged in free exchange of furs for metals, textiles, or manufactured goods, according to their immediate needs. Prices rose and fell, chiefs and commoners alternated in trade, and resources circulated—all as the unpredictable outcome of changing preferences on the coast. In contrast, *Columbia* encountered a strictly regulated system of commerce in China. Qing imperial officials supervised all economic activities involving foreigners, particularly those concerning the “sea barbarians” (*hailiao*, 海獠) or Westerners, trading at

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<sup>6</sup> James R Fichter, *So Great a Proffit: How the East Indies Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 31-55.; I borrow this language from Andre Gunder Frank, who deliberately uses the double-entendre in his discussion of the silver trade between Spanish America and China. Frank argues that the silver trade, conducted on a staggering scale for three centuries, demonstrates the central economic role of China in the early-modern world. Americans of the period recognized this fact, as indicated by their efforts to establish direct trade not only with China, but also Mauritius, India, and the East Indies. See Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 3-4.

Canton. Beijing appointed superintendents of trade to collect a complex set of tariffs, commissions, and presents from all incoming vessels, while vesting responsibility for trade in a guild of merchants known as the *Cohong*. Regulations also designated certain goods, such as sea otter furs, as prestigious commodities of interest to the imperial regime.

Finally, *Columbia* accomplished the integration of subsistence, developing, and complex economies within the framework of global trade. Boston occupied the position of a developing economy during the late eighteenth century. An important market and port, the town was neither the site of agrarian nor industrial production. Nonetheless, Boston commanded the agricultural and manufactured goods of New England and shipped both throughout the Atlantic World in its capacity as the region's principal port.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, *Columbia* represented a manifestation of the town's main advantages—the

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<sup>7</sup> Historian William Cronon elaborates on the relationship between hinterlands and central places in *Nature's Metropolis*. Here, he emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between natural resources and industrialization in the American West. The book proceeds from an assertion that "one can understand neither Chicago nor the Great West if one neglects to tell their stories together." Cronon evaluates the complex commodity markets and credit patterns surrounding Chicago in the Nineteenth Century and produces "a series of stories, each tracing the path between an urban market and the natural systems that supply it." Here, he expands upon Johann Heinrich von Thünen's "Central Place Theory," effectively arguing that a balance of profit and shipping costs determines production demographics outside market towns and cities. His method of describing Chicago's hinterland shows that the "frontier, far from being an isolated rural society, was in fact the expanding edge of the [Chicago] boosters' urban empire." In many ways, the central-place concept also describes Boston during the late eighteenth century—a port that intermediated between the local economies of New England, the Atlantic World, and, beginning with *Columbia*, the Pacific World. Boston shipped New England grain and rum, iron, and timber, as well as providing merchantmen and sea workers to the carrying trade. Northwestern furs represented another natural resource to support the economic growth of the port, albeit originating at a significant distance from the town itself. See William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991). xvii, 51, 369.



capacity to concentrate and move commodities to profitable foreign markets. Moreover, her expeditions extended those advantages into the Pacific World. In contrast, the Northwest Coast constituted a subsistence economy oriented toward the extraction of basic resources, including furs, fish, and timber. Individuals possessed roughly the same set of skills, be it hunting, gathering, or woodworking, and specialization of labor occurred only in the context of ceremonial activities, such as whaling. As such, communities of the coast sat on the threshold of globalization. *Columbia* introduced a growing supply of manufactured goods to the coast and, in doing so, prompted indigenous peoples to specialize in the trapping of marketable furs. Meanwhile, the Columbians amassed animal pelts for shipment to another market, China, whose economy was perhaps the most complex of the eighteenth century. China possessed ample natural resources, a large population, and a wide range of specialized industries. For more than four centuries, her maritime commerce had encompassed the South China Sea, East Indies, and Indian Ocean. Foreign trade featured the export of luxury and manufactured goods, including teas, sugar, silks, and porcelain. In exchange, China imported basic commodities such as rice, lead, silver, and furs. *Columbia* integrated the reciprocal economies of the Northwest Coast and China. Furthermore, she served as the vehicle by which the United States could intermediate in, and profit through, a global trade in metals, furs, and tea.

Table 1. Local, Transnational, and Global Dimensions of the *Columbia* Expeditions.

	BOSTON	NORTHWEST COAST	CHINA
LOCAL	Expertise of investors, captains, and crew; merchants provide metals, woolens	Basic producers of fur; rulers seek hegemony over neighbors	Middlemen broker teas, sugar; merchants and officials compete for prestigious items
TRANSNATIONAL	Reorientation of national economy; search for new markets to acquire teas, sugar	No central authority; free exchange and competition for foreign metals, woolens	Centralized authority; regulated trade system governs demand for and acquisition of furs
GLOBAL	Developing economy; concentration and movement of goods; regional center of trade	Subsistence economy; extraction of basic goods; emerging center of trade	Complex economy; production of luxury goods; major center of trade

The *Columbia* expeditions also introduce several historical problems significant to our understanding of the Early American Republic. First, historians often cite Commodore Matthew C. Perry’s mission to Japan, in 1852-54, as the beginning of United States engagement in the Pacific. *Columbia*, however, demonstrates that Americans were active in the ocean hemisphere decades prior—even before the ratification of the Constitution. This dissertation seeks, therefore, to demonstrate that the traditional narrative has neglected a crucial factor upon the development of the nation. Second, when *Columbia* first sailed into the Pacific, she entered an ocean hemisphere region in the midst of great change. The expeditions throw light upon a “sea of islands” during the formation of a single “Pacific World,” a process that *Columbia* in no small degree

accelerated. Finally, *Columbia* extends our understanding of globalization in Boston, on the Northwest Coast, and at Canton during the late eighteenth century. Her voyages demonstrate the interaction of the local and global on a microhistorical scale. Before heading full-sail into an analysis of the voyages, then, we must situate their broad historical significance.

### *Columbia: Sources and Scholarship*

The *Columbia* expeditions constitute a significant episode in the history of the United States and the Pacific World. Nonetheless, the historiography of her pioneering voyages remains thin, narrative in tone, and focused upon the Northwest Coast. The first significant assessment of the *Columbia* expeditions originated with the report of Senator Alpheus Felch, Chairman of the Committee on Public Lands, in 1852. The report, which summarized *Columbia*'s contributions to American territorial claims, also represented a "state of the field" concerning the voyages for the nineteenth century. Although the report still represents a valuable compilation of sources, it offers no conclusions about the broader significance of the expeditions.<sup>8</sup> William Sturgis and William Dane Phelps,

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<sup>8</sup> Felch prepared the report to accompany a memorial requesting federal compensation for the heirs of Joseph Barrell, John Kendrick, and Robert Gray, in recognition for their role in establishing a national claim to the Columbia River and Oregon Country. Felch synthesized log books, correspondence, contracts, foreign sources, and maps to conclude that "the government owes it to the merits of these men and their services... to make them some compensation in land, in the region where their services were performed." Nonetheless, because the report served to "prove" the nation's territorial claims, it presented few analytical conclusions and overlooked aspects unrelated to the Northwest Coast. See U.S. Congress, Senate. Committee of Public Lands. Report No. 335 (Felch Report). 32<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Reports of the Committees of the Senate of the United States*, vol. 2. (Washington: A. Boyd Hamilton Printer, 1852), 1-32.

retired fur traders, also referenced *Columbia* in their accounts of the Northwest Coast. In general, however, early commentators used the expeditions to contextualize personal narratives, illustrate continuity in the fur trade, or support American aspirations in the Pacific World.<sup>9</sup>

The early twentieth century witnessed a wave of new research concerning *Columbia*, mostly originating with Frederic W. Howay, a Canadian barrister and historian. During a long career, Howay published on unexplored aspects of the maritime fur trade, *Columbia*'s voyages, and the Pacific World. For example, his articles examined Spanish settlements at Nootka Sound, scientific navigation, lost vessels, and British ships on the Northwest Coast.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, his list of early of fur-trading vessels remains among the most comprehensive works available for students of the maritime fur trade.<sup>11</sup> Most of his publications, however, pertain to the *Columbia* expeditions. Howay performed detailed research concerning John Kendrick, Robert Gray, and Robert Haswell, as well as

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<sup>9</sup> William Dane Phelps, "Solid Men of Boston in the Northwest," in *Fur Traders from New England: The Boston Men in the North Pacific, 1787-1800*, eds. Briton C. Busch and Barry Gough (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1997), 32-36; William Sturgis, "The Northwest Fur Trade," in *Ibid.*, 90, 93.

<sup>10</sup> Frederic W. Howay, "The Spanish Settlements at Nootka," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1917): 163-171.; *Idem.*, "Early Navigation of the Straits of Fuca," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 12, no. 1 (1911): 1-32.; *Idem.*, "The Loss of the 'Tonquin'," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1922): 83-92.; *Idem.*, "An Early Account of the Loss of the Boston in 1803," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1926): 280-88.; *Idem.*, "Letters Concerning Voyages of British Vessels to the Northwest Coast of America, 1787-1809," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1938): 307-13.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem.*, *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-1825*, ed. Richard A. Pierce (Kingston, ON: The Limestone Press, 1973).

transcriptions of unpublished logs and correspondence.<sup>12</sup> Later, he made his most important contributions as editor of *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 & 1790-1793*, a compilation of letters, orders, voyage narratives, account books, and illustrations originating during the expeditions.<sup>13</sup> Despite his standing as the dean of *Columbia* studies, however, his work contributes little interpretation of the expeditions or their significance to Early America.

*Columbia* briefly became a subject of historical interest again in 1992, the bicentennial of Robert Gray's discovery of the Columbia River.<sup>14</sup> Oregon Historical Society reprinted *Voyages of the Columbia* to coincide with the bicentennial. Furthermore, the organization published John Scofield's narrative history of the expeditions and its captains, *Hail Columbia!: Robert Gray, John Kendrick, and the Pacific Fur Trade*. Meanwhile, Washington State Historical Society published J. Richard Nokes' biography of Captain Gray, *Columbia's River: The Voyages of Robert Gray, 1787-1793*.<sup>15</sup> Interest in the expeditions faded following the bicentennial, and historians

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<sup>12</sup> Idem., "John Kendrick and His Sons" *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 23, no. 4 (1922): 277-302.; Idem., "A Short Account of Robert Haswell," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1933): 83-90.; Frederic W. Howay and Albert Matthews, "Some Notes upon Captain Robert Gray," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1930): 8-12.

<sup>13</sup> Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast*.

<sup>14</sup> Note that 1992 was also the quincentennial of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World, an event that sparked intense professional and public interest in maritime voyages of discovery.

<sup>15</sup> John Scofield, *Hail Columbia!: Robert Gray, John Kendrick, and the Pacific Fur Trade* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1992).; J. Richard Nokes, *Columbia's River: The Voyages of Robert Gray, 1787-1793* (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1991).

did not reexamine the topic for almost two decades. Most recently, Scott Ridley published the biography *Morning of Fire: John Kendrick's Daring American Odyssey in the Pacific*. Both biographies treat their subjects, Captains Gray and Kendrick, with reverence and, once again, neither provides an interpretive treatment of the expeditions.<sup>16</sup> In the multimedia realm, WGBH, Boston public television, broadcast a series of short internet documentaries concerning *Columbia*. Developed for public consumption, the short films reproduce the traditional narrative for the screen.<sup>17</sup>

To date, historians have still not produced an interpretive work concerning the *Columbia* expeditions, although documents from the voyages appear as evidence in the service of related topics. For example, Warren Cook predicates his interpretation of the decline of Spain in the Pacific Northwest, *Flood Tide of Empire*, to a significant degree upon documents originating among the Columbians.<sup>18</sup> David Iglar introduces his history

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<sup>16</sup> Ridley comes close to sanctifying his subject, John Kendrick. Moreover, he attempts to compensate for a terse body of evidence by phrasing speculation as fact. In general, Ridley's sweeping conclusions about John Kendrick are not supported by the evidence. Scott Ridley, *Morning of Fire: John Kendrick's Daring American Odyssey in the Pacific* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Directed by Andrew Buckley, an independent historian, "Hit and Run History" examined the investors and commanders behind the *Columbia* expeditions. Here, Buckley undertakes historical detective work, and examines a series of primary documents, probate records, and family archives. WGBH billed the shorts as the "centerpiece" of its history offerings on the internet, but the series encountered production delays after a single season. Andrew Buckley, dir., *Hit and Run History: The Columbia Expedition* (Boston: Hit and Run History, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Cook focuses, in part, upon the chronicles and correspondence of the Columbians to assess Spanish and British claims concerning the events leading to the Nootka Crisis. Similarly, he shows the statements of Robert Gray and Joseph Ingraham to have influenced negotiations between George Vancouver and Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra. Finally, Cook exposes a map of Kendrick's circumnavigation of Vancouver Island, produced by John Meares, as a fabrication intended to support British territorial claims on the island. See Warren L. Cook, *Flood*

of the Pacific World, *The Great Ocean*, by casting John Kendrick as an individual whose life reflected larger economic, social, and cultural concerns in the region.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, in *So Great a Proffitt*, James Fichter interprets *Columbia* as a manifestation of changes in the nature of Anglo-American capitalism, particularly with regard to the China Trade.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the *Columbia* documents also inform histories of the maritime fur trade. James Gibson's account of the trade, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*, incorporates evidence from multiple expeditions and stands as the most comprehensive account of the trade. Gibson presents the Columbians as examples of pioneering, albeit brutal, traders on the Northwest Coast. I dispute his interpretation as grossly misrepresentative of events.<sup>21</sup>

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*Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 356-62, 219.

<sup>19</sup> Igler concludes that "John Kendrick's venture in the Pacific *could* symbolize and presage the United States' ultimate desire for oceanic power... [but] in all likelihood, curiosity and personal greed guided his actions more than any geopolitical ambition." In this respect, he contradicts Ridley's view of Kendrick as a forgotten hero. See David Igler, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) 3-5, 11, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Fichter is correct in the broad strokes of his argument, namely, in stating that *Columbia* served as a demonstration that Americans could do business in the Pacific World. He is incorrect, however, in his understanding of some details. For example, as this dissertation argues, *Columbia* was not a financial failure—rather, her first voyage was a failure, while her second expedition turned an exceptional profit. Additionally, he erroneously claims that "Barrell managed to wedge the frame of the *Lady Washington* into the *Columbia*'s hold, to be brought out and assembled on the [Northwest] coast." In fact, Fichter has confused *Lady Washington* with *Adventure*. Furthermore, he incorrectly presents the sloop-construction as a feature of the first expedition. See Fichter, *So Great a Proffitt*, 47-55.

<sup>21</sup> Gibson's broad conclusions about the maritime fur trade are correct, but his characterization of the Columbians as brutal capitalists is wrongheaded. For example, he presents John Kendrick and Robert Gray as "two of the most egregious culprits" of violence on the Northwest Coast. Moreover, he singles out Gray as an "uninformed shipmaster" who extracted furs by force. In contrast, instances of violence between the Columbians and Indians occurred infrequently, and Gibson cites those occasions out of context. For example, Kendrick's confrontation with Coya, a Haida chief, occurred when Indians attempted to board and capture *Lady Washington*. Gray

Barry Gough adopts a more neutral perspective toward the expeditions in *Fortune's a River*. Instead, he argues that the Columbians intended to establish a permanent American presence on the Northwest Coast. Once again, I challenge this interpretation as overstating the significance of John Kendrick's land contracts.<sup>22</sup>

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undertook the destruction of Opitsat, a Clayoquot town, after receiving reports of a similar plot against *Columbia*. Gibson also errs in accepting Spanish accounts of Indian complaints— hearsay—as evidence of Gray's misdeeds. Indeed, John Boit witnessed the events at Esparanza Bay, and his account contradicts the version reported to the Spanish. In all cases, Gibson neglects the larger context in which violence occurred—cultural misunderstandings, accidental encroachment upon native concepts of sovereignty, and the language barrier. In reality, I argue that the *Columbia* expeditions are remarkable for how *little* violence occurred between Americans and peoples of the Northwest Coast. See James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), 30, 163-64.; Dionisio Alcalá-Galiano, Cayetano Valdés Flores Bazán y Peón, Josef Espinosa y Tello, and José Cardero, *A Spanish Voyage to Vancouver and the Northwest Coast of America: Being the Narrative of the Voyage Made in the Year 1792 by the Schooners Sutil and Mexicana to explore the Strait of Fuca*, ed. and trans. Lionel Cecil Jane (New York: AMS Press, 1971), 22.; John Boit, "Remarks on the Ship *Columbia's* voyage from Boston, (on a voyage, round the Globe)," in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 400-402.

<sup>22</sup> My quarrel with Gough is based on two arguments. First, John Kendrick made his purchases after breaking with the Columbians, and written accounts of the expeditions contain nothing to suggest that Robert Gray pursued a similar agenda. In his instructions to Kendrick, in 1787, Joseph Barrell encouraged Kendrick to purchase lands "in the name of the owners." Kendrick later notified Barrell that "in my last Voyage I purchased of the natives five tracts of land and copies of the deeds which was signed shall be sent you the first opportunity." Gray and the Columbians made no such purchases, despite having sufficient material assets to do so, especially during the second expedition. Second, I am unconvinced that Kendrick intended to make "purchases" in the traditional sense of "real estate." Curiously, the agreements granted access to "all the produce of both sea and land" as well as "free passage through all the rivers"—provisions that are redundant in a normal real estate transaction. Furthermore, the deeds affirmed that Maquinna could "live and fish on the said territory as usual," a recognition that the Mowachaht People would continue to reside on the tract. The subtleties of language, when assessed against the practice of land tenure on the Northwest Coast, suggest that Kendrick's "purchases" are better understood as private easements. The concept of private easement, based in the Anglo-Saxon legal tradition, holds that one individual is permitted use of real estate possessed by another person, group, corporation, or other entity. See Barry Gough, *Fortune's a River: The Collision of Empires in Northwest America* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbor Publishing, 2007), 132-52.; Joseph Barrell, "Orders Given Captain John Kendrick," 111.; "John Kendrick to Thomas Jefferson, 1



Current scholarship concerning the *Columbia* expeditions suffers from significant gaps in research, all of which this dissertation seeks to correct. Narrative treatments approach *Columbia* without close examination of the investors, circumstances, and preparations that informed her voyages. Joseph Barrell, in particular, represents something of a historical question mark. His name appears, here and there, throughout scholarship that assesses business leaders of the Early Republic, yet no biographical work contends with his life and legacy. Similarly, historians have neglected to investigate the views of early-national leaders on the Pacific World, even when discussing their views on overland expansion of the United States toward the Pacific. *Columbia*'s significance to the Northwest Coast is well-attested, but the historiography of her voyages falls silent about her activities in Canton. This shortcoming is understandable considering the terse, opaque, and scant sources concerning her time in China. Likewise, historians have avoided an assessment of the outcomes of the *Columbia* voyages, either because of the mathematical challenges involved or because of the speculative nature of any conclusions. Finally, we face a bizarre contradiction in the historiography of the expeditions—historians recognize her significance to the maritime fur trade, but the discipline neglects her role in the creation of a Pacific World. Indeed, *Columbia*'s signal accomplishment was in bringing localities, individuals, and goods together under an innovative system of global trade.

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March 1793," *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 25, 1 January–10 May 1793, ed. John Catanzariti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 307.

*Columbia*'s influence upon the integration of disparate shores into a single Pacific World is the subject of this dissertation. In Chapter 2, "Adventure to the Pacific," I demonstrate that the experience of the American Revolutionary War shaped a national vision of new opportunities for the United States in the Pacific. Joseph Barrell, the Bostonian merchant most responsible for launching the *Columbia* expeditions, came of age during the Revolutionary Era. The war for independence—with its manifold challenges for entrepreneurs—taught him essential lessons in risk-taking, innovation, resilience, and vision. During the conflict, he invested in numerous privateering ventures and moonlighted as a supplier to the French Fleet at Boston, activities that shaped his enthusiasm for new commercial opportunities in the Pacific. The chapter also examines how Barrell's perspective on the Pacific Ocean, a distant theater for American commerce, aligned with the views of three national leaders during the Early Republic. Thomas Jefferson, a skilled geographer, perceived the exploration of the Pacific as one element of a national impulse for westward expansion. Benjamin Franklin, thinking as a businessman, valued the region as a springboard into the profitable China Trade. John Adams, a strategist at heart, understood the Pacific Ocean as a theater whose vast resources offered new opportunities for the United States to compete with Europe. The *Columbia* expeditions, therefore, represented the first expression of a national fascination with the Pacific. Finally, the chapter assesses the human, financial, and material resources needed to launch *Columbia*. Joseph Barrell recruited partners, such as Samuel Brown and Crowell Hatch, whose navigational expertise and capital investments made possible an ambitious fur-trading voyage. In turn, the partners appointed captains—one a privateer

commander, the other a merchant mariner—whose experience complemented one another, and positioned the expedition to face commercial uncertainties in the Pacific. Moreover, the vessels *Columbia Rediviva* and *Lady Washington* represented another solution to the vagaries of trade, enabling simultaneous reconnaissance and exploitation of multiple fur ports.

Chapter 3, “Iron Bound Coast,” argues that *Columbia* galvanized the maritime fur trade by integrating the indigenous markets of the Northwest Coast into a commercial network spanning the United States, the Pacific Ocean, and Asia. Following an improvisational approach to trade, the expedition adapted to commercial variation across the Indian communities of the coast, and, in several cases, cultivated ongoing relationships with local rulers. *Columbia* tapped into indigenous networks of exchange, such the trade in metals, that extended both along the Northwest Coast and into the continental interior of North America. In doing so, the expedition intensified local trade and concentrated stocks of “furry gold” in harbors such as Nootka Sound, Clayoquot Sound, and Masset River. Similarly, the Columbians adapted to market conditions such as the proliferation of iron goods and a commensurate growth in the demand for copper. The adventurers leveraged the indigenous desire for copper to maximize their own acquisition of furs. Indians regarded copper as a prestige metal, and clamored to exchange otter pelts for pieces of the auspicious material. As a supplier of metals, *Columbia* called new markets into existence and reoriented Indian communities toward the maritime fur trade. Moreover, the expedition transformed the production of furs on the Northwest Coast. Once regarded as otter “people” and hunted at subsistence levels,

like beavers before them, sea otters now assumed the mundane status of commodities to be harvested and sold. For indigenous rulers, *Columbia* represented an avenue to grow, bolster, or extend their authority. Chief Wickaninnish positioned himself as the principal middleman between suppliers of copper and fur. In doing so, he ascended to power on the waves of the maritime fur trade. The Columbians too, profited from his involvement as a reliable source of furs for a global market.

In Chapter 4, “All Things in Abundance,” I reconstruct *Columbia*’s first season at the port of Canton (1789-90) and argue that, through the experience of commercial failure, the Columbians internalized the financial, cultural, and bureaucratic lessons central to foreign trade in China. *Columbia* faced a constellation of expenses that undermined her transaction at Canton. Costs arose from the retention of contractors such as river pilots, linguists, and compradors, in addition to exorbitant port fees. The Columbians also paid commissions to Thomas Randall, an American merchant residing in Canton, who possessed the expertise necessary to negotiate a transaction with the Cantonese. Moreover, *Columbia* traded without monetary resources, such as silver dollars, or even sheet lead, that could have enhanced her commercial prospects at Canton. Instead, the expedition was forced to accept disastrous prices for her furs. *Columbia* also arrived during a transitional period in the history of furs, as commercial goods, in China. Following the Manchu conquest of China, in 1644, sumptuous furs represented the elite station and ethnic background of the conquerors. In the eighteenth century, however, animal pelts entered the mass-market as symbols of prosperity among Han Chinese. Consequently, Manchus adopted otter skins—the most luxurious furs of all—as markers

of elite status in a country awash with lesser pelts. The Columbians learned, too, that while consumer demand sustained the maritime fur trade, it also created competition between Cantonese merchants and Manchu officials for access to otters. Furthermore, a complicated range of institutional roles, personal rivalries, and financial responsibilities shaped merchant behavior in Canton. For example, a row between the *hong* merchants Poankeequa (Pan Youdu, 潘有度) and Pinqua (Yang Bingguan, 楊丙官) hindered the sale of *Columbia's* furs. In contrast to the Northwest Coast, where the Columbians negotiated simple trades on an individual basis, Canton presented an environment in which fees, regulations, and protocols governed a single, large transaction. Their failure to turn a profit is unsurprising, but also served as a critical learning experience.

Chapter 5, “The Terraqueous Globe,” demonstrates that *Columbia's* first expedition provided the popular support and practical experience necessary to a profitable second voyage, one crucial for the incubation of a global trade route. *Columbia's* return to the United States, in 1790, received substantial newspaper coverage in the northeast. Bostonian newspapers declared the new nation indebted to the expedition for opening the Pacific, and editors throughout the northeast reprinted the story. National figures, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, followed her progress with an eye toward the territorial, commercial, and strategic potential of the ocean hemisphere. Additionally, through her circumnavigation of the globe, *Columbia* proved the logistical feasibility of an ambitious adventure to the Pacific. Meanwhile, the principals internalized the lessons of Canton in order launch a second expedition to the Pacific. Barrell hired a professional furrier, John Hoskins, and struck a profit-sharing

agreement with *Columbia*'s officers. The Columbians, too, prepared to maximize profits in the Pacific. The expedition carried the materials needed to construct another fur-trading sloop, *Adventure*, at Clayoquot Sound. Upon arriving in China, they would present the ship's permits in prepared form, enhance their transaction with lead, and retain a familiar middleman. Moreover, if necessary, Captain Gray could attempt to smuggle the expedition's furs. The innovations paid dividends in 1792-93. *Columbia*'s second expedition avoided \$3,000 in expenses, and her cargo sold for \$90,000 at Canton. Furthermore, she probably realized \$243,000 upon returning to Boston. Taken together, her two expeditions broke even—and more importantly, demonstrated the potential for profitable, routine, and lasting American involvement in the Pacific. *Columbia* also secured a reputation for her owners. In her wake, Joseph Barrell completed a new mansion at Pleasant Hill, became an amateur scientist, and promoted urban renewal in Boston. Similarly, Crowell Hatch launched a career in politics and Samuel Brown embarked upon philanthropic causes. Finally, *Columbia* inspired imitators throughout the United States. Joseph Ingraham and John Boit—former Columbians—both embarked upon expeditions of their own in subsequent years. Likewise, entrepreneurs such as Thomas Handasyd Perkins, Abraham Dorr and Sons, and the Winship Brothers dispatched vessels to the Northwest Coast and China.

In Chapter 6, “Mar Columbiana,” I conclude that *Columbia* pioneered the trade routes, interpersonal networks, and local knowledge central to the development of an American commercial empire in the Pacific World. *Columbia* demonstrated the spectacular potential of the “golden round”—a business model of successive transactions,

executed on a global scale—and its multiplying effect on profits. The Columbians compounded their profits on the Northwest Coast, at Canton, and upon returning to Boston. Their accomplishment prompted others to replicate, improve, or innovate upon the *Columbia* model. From 1790-1820, the United States launched over 140 fur-trading expeditions to the Pacific—more than any other nation. British traders first demonstrated the viability of the maritime fur trade in 1785, and Russian voyages remained active in Alaskan waters, but American ships established a dominant position on the Northwest Coast after 1797. Furthermore, the maritime fur trade assumed national proportions in the United States, with vessels hailing from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. *Columbia* also inaugurated the exploitation of marine animals across the Pacific. In subsequent decades, Americans hunted sea otters, fur seals, and whales on an industrial scale, and, in the process, plunged those species into total population collapse. Meanwhile, the Columbians established an American presence in places such as the Oregon Country, the Hawaiian Islands, the Marquesas, and Japan. Similarly, *Columbia* intensified American business at Canton through her introduction of a maritime fur trade from the United States. During the nineteenth century, the United States established a formal presence—commercial, diplomatic, and military—in each location pioneered by the Columbians. Furthermore, American interests eclipsed, and then permanently displaced, Spanish involvement in the Pacific, transforming the ocean into an American Lake, or “Mar Columbiana.” Indeed, the interconnection of American activities in the ocean hemisphere accelerated its

metamorphosis from a collection of regions into a single Pacific World. Empire followed in *Columbia's* wake.

### *Boston, America's Maritime Hub*

*Columbia* embarked upon her expeditions from Boston, Massachusetts, then the principal shipping hub of the United States. In historiographic terms, her expeditions reflected, extended, and transformed that heritage. First and foremost, *Columbia* represents a manifestation of Boston's orientation toward the sea, a geographic feature that shaped the community since its founding in 1630—her expeditions extended the potential of infrastructure originally developed for shipping in the Atlantic World. Second, *Columbia* inaugurated a fourth historical period in the history of Boston. Following upon the commercial innovations of the founding, colonial, and revolutionary eras, her expeditions show that Bostonians could adapt to changing conditions of trade during the early national period. Third, *Columbia* represents a stunning demonstration of the maritime expertise of Bostonian entrepreneurs and sea workers. Investors, captains, and crew contributed a high level of professionalism to her expeditions, and, in the process, enabled Boston's commercial projection into the Pacific World. In a larger sense, then, *Columbia* provides a unique window into the transformation of a regional shipping hub—in short, Boston's reorientation toward global trade.

Boston is best understood through its connection to the sea, maritime life, and the business of shipping. From its founding, in 1630, Boston depended upon and prospered through its relationship with the ocean. Originating in East Anglia, England, a region



defined by its economic relationship to rivers, seas, and fens, the Puritan separatists of Massachusetts Bay held a cultural disposition toward seafaring.<sup>23</sup> Boston, situated on a peninsula, was surrounded by water and most accessible from the mainland by boat. In this respect, the town evolved as a location between land and sea, much like Nootka Sound or Canton.<sup>24</sup> Boston's emergence as a commercial center also depended upon the ocean. Foodstuffs, timber, and other staples traveled more easily by sea than over the unreliable roads of colonial America. Meanwhile, inland settlements depended on the port for news, print media, and manufactured goods throughout the colonial period. During the seventeenth century, the port developed a vibrant shipping industry that supplied beef, pork, wheat, wood, and rum throughout the Atlantic World. Furthermore, it emerged as the preeminent port in North America, with commercial connections to

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<sup>23</sup> For the Puritans, the Atlantic Ocean served as a gateway to religious refuge, a barrier to Anglican corruption, and a source of sustenance during their construction of a "citty upon a hill." Unsurprisingly, John Winthrop delivered his famous sermon, *A Model of Christian Charity*—in which he exhorted the separatists to construct a model society in Massachusetts—aboard a ship. See David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 31-36.; Benjamin W. Labaree, *Colonial Massachusetts: A History* (Milbrook, NY: KTO Press, 1979), 24-25, 27, 30-34, 40-41.

<sup>24</sup> Early maps demonstrate that the ocean also dominated patterns of settlement beyond Boston. William Wood's rendering of the region, in 1634, marks the location of eighteen towns on the fringe of Boston Harbor and Massachusetts Bay, none more than a few miles inland. Wood characterized the region as providing "good Harboring for Ships of any burthen" and described Boston as "the chief place for shipping and merchandize." See Walter Muir Whitehill, *Boston: A Topographical History, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Enlarged* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 1-8.; William Wood, *New-England's Prospect. A True, Lively, and Experimental Description of that Part of America, Commonly Called New England* (London: Thomas Cotes, 1634), front matter, 2, 42.

Great Britain, the Caribbean, Africa, the Azores, and Spain.<sup>25</sup> Boston's maritime industries came of age during the eighteenth century. In 1725, the town featured six ropewalks and a dozen shipyards, with dozens more located throughout New England. In total, the region constructed perhaps one-third of shipping in the British Empire, and Massachusetts alone could launch more than a hundred vessels per year.<sup>26</sup> Labor statistics also reflect the town's maritime orientation. During the 1760s, over 650 Bostonians depended directly upon the ocean for their livelihood. These individuals comprised one-quarter of workers in the town. An even larger number—more than 1,500 Bostonians, or 60 percent of workers—felt the influence of the ocean in terms of employment, retail goods, or information.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Whitehill, *Boston: A Topographical History*, 16-17, 20.; Labaree, *Colonial Massachusetts*, 52, 63, 95-97.

<sup>26</sup> Despite a debate on the precise scale of shipbuilding, scholars have reached a consensus that Boston, and secondary ports throughout New England, commanded a prodigious share of colonial shipbuilding. Jacob Price concludes that, from 1769 to 1772, Massachusetts alone was responsible for construction of 113 topsails and 298 sloops and schooners, or 34 percent of all vessels launched in the American colonies. Furthermore, of 7,043 merchant ships registered in the British Empire in 1775, 2,246 hailed from the colonies (31.9%), and 1,026 (14.5%) of the total originated in New England. Ralph Davis observes that, in terms of tonnage, Boston and New England contributed an even higher percentage, 30.4 percent, toward British shipping. Gary Walton argues that shipping productivity grew by sixty to seventy percent during the eighteenth century, with Boston among the most productive ports. See Jacob M. Price "A Note on the Value of Colonial Exports of Shipping" *The Journal of Economic History* 36, no. 3 (1976): 704-724.; Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 66-68.; Gary M. Walton, "A Measure of Productivity Change in American Colonial Shipping," *The Economic History Review, New Series* 21, no. 2 (1968): 268-82.

<sup>27</sup> Among the categories of employment in Boston, persons listed as blockmaker (16), caulker (14), duck cloth maker (16), fisherman (37), mate (20), merchant (206), ropemaker (37), sailmaker (30), sailor (58), sea captain (114), sea cooper (16), shipwright (65), and wharfinger (24) depended directly upon the sea for employment. See Alan Kulikoff, "The Progress of



merchant houses and industries on the Town Cove. Joseph Barrell established his business headquarters in this district, known as Merchant's Row, at 80 Codman's Wharf. From here, he managed the intricate business of equipping *Columbia*, a process that involved neighboring businessmen such as Hermann Brimmer, Joseph Coolidge, and James and Thomas Lamb. State Street, the town's grandest avenue, followed a perpendicular route from the State House directly to the wharves.<sup>29</sup> In a sense, the street continued into the harbor as Long Wharf, a quarter-mile structure that became the town's "dramatic road to the sea." Long Wharf permitted the largest ships to load or unload cargo without assistance of smaller boats, and, therefore, further improved upon an excellent harbor. *Columbia* moored here, giving her convenient access to the various artisans, smiths, sailmakers, and ropers who ran businesses on the wharf.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Steady population growth, combined with the scarcity of land on peninsula, shaped the urbanization of Boston throughout the eighteenth century. See Whitehill, *Boston: A Topographical History*, 37, 41.; William Price, *New plan of ye great town of Boston in New England in America with the many additional buildings & new streets, to the year, 1769* (1769) [Massachusetts Historical Society]; Samuel Chester Clough, *Atlas of Boston Neighborhoods based on the Direct Tax Census of 1798: block 2200, block 3200, and block 3700* (1798), Samuel Chester Clough Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>30</sup> Long Wharf contributed to making Boston the most important port in British America. Neither of the other major colonial ports, Philadelphia or New York, could claim anything like it. Robert Albion has demonstrated that, prior to 1837, Boston and Philadelphia alternated as America's "largest port," with Boston predominating prior to 1800. In hydrographic terms, however, only New York Harbor could accommodate the same draught of ships as Boston, while vessels might run aground in the meandering channels leading to the ports of Baltimore, Charleston, and Philadelphia. Long Wharf extended the natural capacity of Boston, and also provided a measure of innovation that forestalled the town's decline versus competing ports. See Whitehill, *Boston: A Topographical History*, 9-11, 20-21, 23, 25.; Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *The Rise of New York Port, 1815-1860* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 1-37.

Scholars of Colonial Massachusetts have demonstrated that maritime conditions brought about three historical phases in the development of the province, and that Bostonians adapted to new commercial challenges during each phase. During the first phase, Bostonians established a vital attachment to sea resources, particularly the productive fisheries of the North Atlantic. Most maritime activities of this period, such as fishing, shipbuilding, and coastal shipping, represented either subsistence or supporting industries.<sup>31</sup> The second phase, beginning around 1689-90, witnessed the emergence of a moneyed, powerful, and urbane merchant class in Massachusetts Bay. Following the “Glorious Revolution,” merchants harnessed the natural surplus of the province, including fish, meat, grain, and timber, as export commodities bound to distant points of the Atlantic World. Furthermore, merchants financed new maritime infrastructure, such as the Long Wharf and New Market, investments that enhanced their economic and political influence in Boston.<sup>32</sup> The third phase, beginning around 1730, is best

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<sup>31</sup> Benjamin Labaree demonstrates that Massachusetts was “inexorably bound... to the territory” during its earliest decades, as two resources, timber and foodstuffs, assumed a central role in subsistence and colonial expansion. A third resource, furs, served as an export commodity. At midcentury, the colony became a surplus producer of timber and foodstuffs. Bernard Bailyn concludes that, beginning around 1660, the emerging merchant community made Boston the “exact pivot point of the primary orbit of Atlantic trade in New England.” Moreover, he contends that the commercial transition propelled New England merchants into a culture of profits, status, and external connections that distinguished them from farmers, laborers, and artisans. The construction of commercial improvements in Boston, such as the Massachusetts Province House and the Sea Wall, or “Barricado,” during the 1680s, is evidence of their growing influence in the town. See Labaree, *Colonial Massachusetts*, xv-xvi, 45, 88-95.; Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), 91-98.; Whitehill, *Boston: A Topographical History*, 18, 20.

<sup>32</sup> G.B. Warden emphasizes that legal developments in Massachusetts both promoted and recognized the economic ascendance of the merchant class. For example, merchants became voters due to reduced property qualification in the 1690s. Some even achieved election to office. Furthermore, new market regulations held economic benefits for the merchant class. Boston

understood as a period of dire economic discontinuities between London and her North American colonies. New legislation such as the Molasses Act, combined with stringent enforcement of the Navigation Acts, protected Great Britain and the West Indies at the expense of New England—and especially Massachusetts. Protection of the sugar industry encouraged the rise of smugglers. Unable to profit through legitimate business, colonial merchants increasingly smuggled contraband French, Dutch, and Portuguese sugar to the distilleries of New England.<sup>33</sup> Following the Seven Years' War, as depression struck the

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experienced “a significant realignment in town politics” in which merchants, the purveyors of basic goods, services, and credit, reached a strategic accommodation with the public. The relationship later “had a salutary effect” upon American resistance to British economic policies. Phyllis Hunter demonstrates that trade shaped the cultural preferences of the merchant class in *Purchasing Identity in the Atlantic World*. She argues that, during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, capitalism transformed the Atlantic Ocean into a commercial highway, and that merchants involved in the business of directing overseas trade experienced a parallel transformation from “Puritan” to “Yankee.” Commercial interests and participation in a transatlantic system of exchange set Massachusetts merchants apart in terms of wealth, manners, and political outlook. In turn, their sensibilities shaped the emergence of polite society, as well as the growth of maritime industries, in Boston. See G.B. Warden, *Boston, 1689-1776* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1970), 50-57.; Phyllis Whitman Hunter, *Purchasing Identity in the Atlantic World: Massachusetts Merchants, 1670-1780* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 3, 8-9, 52-54, 71-72, 77-84, 107-127.

<sup>33</sup> In his landmark work, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Eric Williams assesses the growth of discontinuities between the mercantilist economies of British empire at large and the “Thirteen Colonies” of revolutionary fame. He contends that the “West India Interest,” politicians who represented planters and metropolitan industrialists, manipulated Parliament in a manner that created a “crisis in relations between producers and processors” during the middle eighteenth century. Indeed, New England generated significant revenues through the processing of raw sugar and molasses, rather than purchasing refined sugar and rum from Caribbean producers. Meanwhile, limitations on American production of textiles and bar iron made the colonies dependent upon British manufactured goods. William Labaree elaborates on the specific conflicts arising from mercantilism. The Molasses Act (1733) placed a protective tariff upon molasses originating in the British Caribbean, and, rather than purchasing the raw material at a higher price, New England traders substituted contraband supplies originating in the French, Dutch, and Portuguese empires. The Sugar Act (1764) hindered the ability of New England to refine its own sugar, once again prompting merchants to purchase goods outside the British Empire. British attempts to enforce the Navigation Act and suppress smuggling only served to reinforce the colonial sense of powerlessness in the imperial economic system. See Eric Williams, *Capitalism*

colonies, Parliament enacted the Stamp Act and Townshend Acts, revenue legislation that undermined the financial security of laborers, artisans, and merchants throughout the seaports of British America. When grassroots organizers in Boston attempted to flaunt the Tea Act, Parliament dissolved the elected government of Massachusetts and blockaded Boston Port, events that alienated Colonial America from Britain and contributed to the outbreak of revolution in 1775.<sup>34</sup>

The *Columbia* expeditions inaugurated a fourth phase in the history of Boston and show that the town continued to adapt to macroeconomic change in the Atlantic World. Following independence, the United States faced a bewildering plague of economic maladies including debt, inflation, industrial and commercial ruin, and an ineffective Confederation government. British regulations upon trade with its erstwhile colonies, including new duties and restrictions, presented terrible challenges to seaports such as Boston. Meanwhile, France and Spain also enacted new mercantilist policies toward the

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*and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 56-59, 60-64, 75, 77, 80-81, 85-97, 105-07.; Labaree, *Colonial Massachusetts*, 197-99, 219-20, 334-39, 262-67.

<sup>34</sup> The political ramifications of the Stamp Act (1765), Townshend Revenue Acts (1767), and Coercive Acts (1774) are a standard feature in any account of the Revolutionary Era, and require little elaboration here. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the acts generated an unprecedented amount of opposition because of their deleterious effects upon colonial livelihoods. In *The Urban Crucible*, Gary Nash demonstrates how the legislation magnified an economic hardship in the colonies following the Seven Years' War. During a time of declining wages and rising unemployment, the Stamp Act and Townshend Revenue Acts imposed new administrative and material expenses upon Americans. Boston suffered more than other seaports. The Boston Port Act (1774), a component of the Coercive Acts, interrupted the town's maritime economy and threatened to bankrupt merchants, artisans, and laborers alike. See Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 155-66, 184-99, 200-09.

independent United States. Collectively, the closure of traditional markets drove American merchants to seek new business opportunities in waters beyond the influence of Europe.<sup>35</sup> Bostonian merchants, even more than others, recognized an urgent need to restore the commercial health of Massachusetts. In 1786-87, Daniel Shays, an uncompensated Revolutionary War veteran, mobilized an agrarian rebellion to resist debt litigation and high taxes in western Massachusetts.<sup>36</sup> Understood in this context,

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Albion, et.al., discuss how the macroeconomic problems of the Confederation period forced Boston to adopt innovative new strategies in *New England and the Sea*. The Confederation period witnessed debilitating economic troubles, including a staggering amount of state debt, devaluation of war bonds, decimation of fishing fleets, and commercial ruptures triggered by the departure of Loyalists. Albion explains that “the worst blow,” came “when Great Britain announced its commercial policy toward the new nation.” New regulations limited United States commerce with British colonies, imposed heavy duties, and prohibited some imports outright. In *Independence on Trial*, Frederick Marks argues that “no problem concerned more people” than the British commercial policies. Protection of trade devastated business in American seaports, but also had repercussions on commercial arrangements in the countryside. The restrictions, he observes, prompted merchants to seek new business opportunities in waters outside Britain’s influence. Mary Gallagher observes that similar restrictions imposed by France and Spain also contributed to the exploration of new markets. In “Charting a New Course for the China Trade,” she argues that East Asia represented a promising market that attracted substantial American and European investment. See Robert G Albion, William A. Baker, and Benjamin W. Labaree, *New England and the Sea*, picture ed. Marion V. Brewington (Middletown, CT: Marine Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, 1972), 54-55.; Mary Gallagher, “Charting a New Course for the China Trade: The Late Eighteenth-Century American Model,” in *The Early Republic and the Sea*, eds. William S. Dudley and Michael J. Crawford (Washington: Brassey’s Inc., 2001), 55-80.; Frederick W. Marks, *Independence on Trial: Foreign Affairs and the Making of the Constitution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 52, 56-66.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Ernst argues in “Shays’s Rebellion in the Long Perspective” that merchants contributed to agrarian revolt by insisting upon transactions in specie, a resource in short supply in during the Colonial and Confederation periods. During the Revolutionary War, Massachusetts merchants favored the control of inflationary trends through the elimination of paper money and a reversion to bonds, taxes, and hard currency. Meanwhile, the overall circulation of specie was insufficient to meet demand for taxes paid in coin, a problem that undermined the financial independence of agrarian households. In “The Public Creditor Interest in Massachusetts,” Richard Buel, Jr., explains that the Congressional requisition of 1785, triggered a sudden withdrawal of specie from circulation. In Massachusetts, the move further undermined the ability of rural debtors to meet their obligations. When creditors attempted to litigate for payment, Daniel Shays spearheaded a movement to close courthouses and arm against state intervention. In this context, merchants of



*Columbia* represents an innovative program to place Bostonian commerce upon firmer economic footing in the Pacific Ocean, a region unregulated by Europe.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, her expeditions demonstrate strong continuity with previous historical phases in which Bostonian merchants accessed new natural resources, opened new markets, and adapted to changing commercial rules. Joseph Barrell carried forward the tradition of colonial entrepreneurs who transformed the business of overseas trade, such as Thomas Hancock or Nicholas Boylston.

*Columbia* also represented an adaptation of existing, albeit much newer, practices in the American China Trade. In 1787, when she embarked for the Pacific Ocean, entrepreneurs had already launched successful expeditions from the United States to China. Indeed, investors such as Robert Morris and Elias Hasket Derby took bold risks in adapting existing patterns of the European China Trade to conditions in America. In 1784, Robert Morris, the wealthiest man in America, dispatched the *Empress of China* on

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the eastern seaports financed the recruitment of 3,000 militia, under Continental General Benjamin Lincoln, to restore order in western Massachusetts. See Joseph A. Ernst, "Shays's Rebellion in the Long Perspective: The Merchants and the 'Money Question'," in *In Debt to Shays: The Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion*, ed. Robert A. Gross (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 57-60, 68-80.; Richard Buel, Jr., "The Public Creditor Interest in Massachusetts, 1780-86," in *Ibid.*, 51-56.; David P. Szatmary, *Shays's Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 1-18, 84-89.

<sup>37</sup> Although the British South Sea Company maintained a claim to the Pacific, the corporation existed principally on paper. In 1719, the notorious "South Sea Bubble" undermined its reach, economic power, and prestige. Meanwhile, the Spanish Empire maintained a more robust claim to the Pacific, albeit with difficulty, as I discuss at length below. See William J. Barger, "New Players at the Table: How Americans Came to Dominate Early Trade in the North Pacific," *Southern California Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (2008), 247-52.

a voyage from New York to Canton. The venture depended upon the accuracy of a single trade directory and set of charts, as well as rumors that American ginseng would fetch a high exchange value at Canton.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Elias Hasket Derby launched *Grand Turk* from Salem, Massachusetts, to China in 1786. The voyage experimented with the practice of transshipping to multiple locations in the Spanish Atlantic, in order to augment ginseng with silver for exchange in China. Both voyages earned spectacular profits.<sup>39</sup> *Columbia* was, therefore, neither the first United States nor New England vessel to participate in the China Trade, and her expeditions rested upon the shoulders of prior success. Nonetheless, *Columbia* represented a clear innovation—in terms of itinerary, logistics, and goods—over previous American forays into the China Trade. Both precursors followed the traditional East India route around the Cape of Good Hope, across the Indian Ocean, and through the Sunda Strait. In contrast, *Columbia* became the

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<sup>38</sup> Philip Chadwick Foster Smith, *The Empress of China* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Maritime Museum, 1984), 103-04. The Bostonian sloop *Harriet* nearly became the first American vessel to trade at Canton. In 1783, *Harriet* launched on a voyage to Canton, but, after purchasing a cargo of tea at Cape Town, returned without proceeding to China. James Fichter makes describes Cape Town as “the gateway to the Indies” and makes a reasonable claim that *Harriet* constituted the beginning of American commerce in the East Indies, if not China. Few materials survive to describe the expedition. According to Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harriet* carried a cargo of ginseng and returned with double that weight in Hyson tea. See Fichter, *So Great a Proffit*, 37-39, 304 n.22.; Samuel Eliot Morison, *Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), 44.

<sup>39</sup> Freeman Hunt, ed., *Lives of American Merchants, Vol. II*, (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1858), 48-57.; Dane A. Morrison, *True Yankees: The South Seas and the Discovery of American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 35-36.; Jonathan M. Chu, “The Origins of the China Trade and the Development of a National Investment Community,” Paper presented to the joint seminar of the Program in Early American Economy and Society at the Library Company of Philadelphia and the MacNeil Center for Early American Studies (November 2007), 27-38.

first American vessel to approach Canton via the Pacific—a route that opened new resources and opportunities to a struggling republic. Her expeditions sailed thousands of miles beyond established trade routes, ports, and assistance and remained there for years. Furthermore, she enhanced her profits through experimentation with sea otter furs, one of the untapped resources of the Pacific World. *Columbia*, then, constituted an innovative approach to the China Trade but also provided the United States with new alternatives to the restrictive system of European trade in the Atlantic.

#### *Navigating the Northwest Coast of America*

*Columbia*'s expeditions depended upon the acquisition of otter furs from the indigenous communities of the Northwest Coast of America, and, when not sailing, the Columbians lingered in harbors such as Nootka Sound, Clayoquot Sound, Cumshewa's Inlet, and Neah Bay. From a historiographic perspective, however, her voyages complicate several themes common to the interpretation of Native America. First, *Columbia* is not a traditional story of colonization, but rather, one of culture contact, mutual commercial advantage, and negotiation between trading partners. Some contemporaries attempted to establish imperial borders and outposts, but the Columbians operated as roving fur-traders and settled only for the winter. During the eighteenth century, geopolitical conditions remained too fluid for the territorial, economic, and institutional trappings of colonialism to take root on the Northwest Coast. Nonetheless, *Columbia* and similar enterprises brought about the conditions in which colonialism

could develop.<sup>40</sup> Second, the expeditions reveal that neither Native American nor Pacific Islander historiographies quite suit the culture groups of the Northwest Coast. Their reliance upon complex hunter-gathering, combined with access to a continental resource base, demonstrates strong similarities to other First Nations of America. Meanwhile, coastal peoples held a disposition toward marine cosmology, transportation, and resources that closely resembles that of Pacific Islanders. Finally, encounters between the Columbians and Indians did not constitute a “middle ground.” Trade did not occur as a survival strategy, nor in a fracture zone, but rather as routine business on the part of stable communities. *Columbia* gained access to robust networks of indigenous trade, while indigenous communities secured new manufactured goods. Later expeditions to the coast accelerated an invasive, colonial, and disruptive trend in relations between Americans and Indians of the Northwest Coast. The Columbians, however, preferred a commercial strategy of mutual advantage and accommodation.

The historiography of the Northwest Coast is, in fact, heavily indebted to the *Columbia* expeditions, as well as other contemporaneous voyages, which provided primary sources of great significance in reconstructing the history of the region’s indigenous peoples. Considered beside archaeology, linguistics, and ethnography, the documentary sources help to provide a nuanced view of Indian societies on the coast.

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<sup>40</sup> Paige Raibmon, “Unmaking Native Space: A Genealogy of Indian Policy, Settler Practice, and the Microtechniques of Dispossession,” in *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Alexandra Harmon (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 67, 70-71.

Likewise, ethnohistorians have adopted an anthropological perspective on the historical, economic, and cosmological features common to the northwestern “culture group.” For example, coastal communities held similar notions of noble sovereignty and sovereign rights to natural resources. Indigenous rulers in multiple communities, therefore, regarded *Columbia* as an exclusive resource, and bristled at competition from their neighbors.<sup>41</sup> Practices of trade and communal exchange form a significant area of continuity within the culture group, and one with strong implications for scholarship regarding the maritime fur trade. Anthropologists have often concentrated upon the potlatch, a gift-giving ritual that substantiates networks of lineage, patronage, and friendship in coastal communities. Chiefs controlled the local exchange of goods across the Northwest Coast, meaning that Columbians could exercise similar trade strategies throughout the region.<sup>42</sup> Recent scholarship characterizes the peoples of the coast as “complex hunter-gatherers” whose societies featured a differentiation of labor more often associated with agricultural

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<sup>41</sup> Alfred Kroeber performed some of the earliest work concerning the cosmology of California Indians, including inhabitants of the southern Northwest Coast. His linguistic work with Roland Dixon contributed to a recognition of similarities between Maidu, Klamath, and Columbia River languages. Furthermore, Kroeber’s photographs of indigenous communities (1901-1930) provide a visual record of continuity and change, a basis for comparison with other groups, and source material for ethnographic study. His research established the contemporary view of a single “culture group” including peoples from Cape Mendocino to Alaska. See Alfred L. Kroeber, “The Religion of the Indians of California,” *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 4, no. 6 (1907): 319-56.; Roland B. Dixon and Alfred L. Kroeber, “The Native Languages of California,” *American Anthropologist, New Series* 5, no. 1 (1903): 1-26.; Bancroft Library, “Ethnographic Photographs of California Indian and Sonora Indian Subjects by Alfred L. Kroeber, 1901-1930,” Accession 4690, (Berkeley: Bancroft Library, University of California, 1997), 2-44.

<sup>42</sup> Philip Drucker, “Rank, Wealth, and Kinship in Northwest Coast Society,” *American Anthropologist, New Series* 41, no. 1 (1939): 55-65.

societies. Put another way, peoples of the coast shared a damp, cool environment, and hunters provided animal furs for the community. The preexisting orientation toward sea otters, then, explains how local rulers managed to accelerate the production of furs as an export commodity.<sup>43</sup>

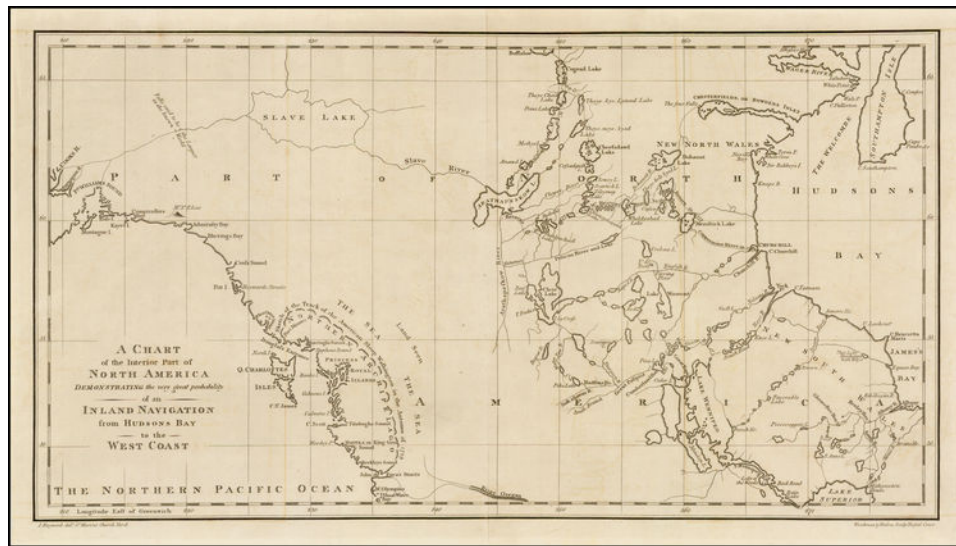


Figure 2. John Meares, *A Chart of the Interior Part of North America Demonstrating the Very Great Possibility of an Inland Navigation to the West Coast*, 1790, engraving, 45.72 x 25.4 cm., London: Logographic Press, 1790.

Contemporary scholars have reconsidered the relationship between European and American fur traders and the native peoples of the Northwest Coast, and most now emphasize indigenous agency, accommodation, and adaptation to foreign influences. For example, Charles Menzies incorporates oral histories, toponyms, and fishing practices to characterize Gitxaala adaptation to capitalism following contact with Europeans. Jeff

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<sup>43</sup> Kenneth Ames, "The Northwest Coast: Complex Hunter-Gatherers, Ecology, and Social Evolution," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994), 209-29.

Oliver uses documentary sources to evaluate ecological and cultural transformation among the Salish peoples of colonial British Columbia.<sup>44</sup> Much scholarship focuses upon interactions between European and Nuuchahnulth (Nootka) peoples. Noel Elizabeth Currie assesses imperial rhetoric in the journals of Captain James Cook, the “discoverer” of Nootka Sound, with attention to the construction of a British territorial claim to indigenous spaces. Similarly, Warren Cook evaluates Spanish, British, and American voyages to the Northwest Coast, with significant attention to the role of native peoples in shaping foreign competition for possession of Vancouver Island. Daniel Clayton uses ethnological sources to reinterpret the “imperial refashioning” of Vancouver Island by explorers and fur traders.<sup>45</sup> This historiography, which describes native political and social circumstances along the Northwest Coast, is crucial to understanding the context in which the *Columbia* did business. Moreover, it emphasizes European attempts to expand the boundaries of territorial empires at the expense of indigenous systems of land tenure, resource management, and sovereignty. Finally, it provides a baseline for measuring the scale, scope, and depth of cultural change that occurred following indigenous contact with outsiders.

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<sup>44</sup> Charles R. Menzies, *People of the Saltwater: An Ethnography of Gitlaxm'oon* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 69-84, 87-97.; Jeff Oliver, *Landscapes and Social Change on the Northwest Coast: Colonial Encounters in the Fraser Valley* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 2010), 32-37.

<sup>45</sup> Noel Elizabeth Currie, *Constructing Colonial Discourse: Captain Cook at Nootka Sound* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 3-18.; Daniel Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Refashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), xi-xxi, 3-5, 69-73, 165-167.; Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 101, 136-43, 146, 149, 160, 162, 284-86, 295, 312, 323-25, 335-40, 368-70, 375-79.

*Columbia* does not reflect the familiar history of European colonization of indigenous shores and peoples, but rather, speaks to an older commercial orientation toward shared spaces and negotiated outcomes. Indeed, the historiography of European settlement in the Pacific World is silent about *Columbia*'s significance to the Northwest Coast. Neither expedition embarked under orders to establish a permanent settlement, nor did the principals equip them to do so. Joseph Barrell, the merchant, preferred a commercial model in which fair dealing and valuable goods could unlock new markets. Barrell did instruct John Kendrick that "if you make any sort of improvement of land upon the coast, be sure you purchase the soil of the natives," and noted that "it would not be amiss if you purchased some advantageous tract of land in the name of the owners."<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, his emphasis lay upon improvement, not settlement, of land. Kendrick later purchased easements on Vancouver Island, an arrangement in accordance with indigenous notions of land use. In this regard, the *Columbia* expeditions more closely conform to the trading-post model of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as indigenous paradigms of exchange. Trading posts required neither a substantial purchase of land, nor a permanent population, nor a large administrative party. In some cases, the advantages of trade alone justified their presence. *Columbia* and *Washington* functioned as mobile trading posts, a further improvement upon the relatively unobtrusive trading-

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<sup>46</sup> Joseph Barrell, "Orders Given Captain John Kendrick," 111.



post model.<sup>47</sup> In this regard, the *Columbia* expeditions demonstrate that an alternative to territorial empire was not only possible, but profitable.

Furthermore, the *Columbia* expeditions point to historiographic problems in the analysis of indigenous cultures of the Northwest Coast, communities characterized by a liminal position between land and sea. In contrast to many other groups of American Indians, the northwestern culture group maintained an ocean orientation more common to Pacific Islanders. For example, ocean resources, transport, and cosmology defined Nuuchah-nulth communities in much the same manner as those in Polynesia. Political concerns revolved around control of islands, waterways, and rookeries to as great a degree as land territories. In this sense, *Columbia* and *Washington* represented strategic assets with the potential to dominate harbors, supply firearms, and establish regional hegemony.<sup>48</sup> Coastal peoples, therefore, did not perceive *Columbia* from the perspective

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<sup>47</sup> In describing Jamestown, Virginia, Alison Games argues that, although the post “ultimately developed as a place of English settlement, in its first few years it adhered more closely to a trade model.” Indeed, she contends that English merchants depended on “proper acquisition through purchase” to build trading posts, while trade “legitimated their access to foreign territory—theirs not through theft, but through exchange.” See Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 128.

<sup>48</sup> Eugene Y. Arima, “Notes on Nootkan Sea Mammal Hunting,” *Arctic Anthropology* 25, no. 1 (1988): 16-27.; Gary Coupland, “Maritime Adaptation and Evolution of the Developed Northwest Coast Pattern on the Central Northwest Coast,” *Arctic Anthropology* 35, no. 1, North Pacific and Bering Sea Maritime Societies: The Archaeology of Prehistoric and Early Historic Coastal Peoples (1998): 36-56.; Michael Harkin, “Whales, Chiefs, and Giants: An Exploration into Nuuchah-Nulth Political Thought,” *Ethnology* 37, no. 4 (1998): 317-332.; Gregory G. Monks, Alan D. McMillan, and Denis E. St. Clair, “Nuuchah-Nulth Whaling: Archaeological Insights into Antiquity, Species Preference, and Cultural Importance,” *Arctic Anthropology* 38, no. 1 (2001): 60-81.

of “Indians” resisting “White” encroachment upon native lands. Instead, they understood Americans as a commercial windfall borne upon the ocean, another perspective they shared with Pacific Islanders. Local rulers competed to monopolize prestigious trade goods such as textiles, iron, and copper, and to establish positions of influence with the Columbians.<sup>49</sup> Certainly, the introduction of foreign goods, ideas, and biota threatened to undermine the cultural integrity of coastal communities, but, as in Polynesia, European colonialism developed later in the nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup> In other ways, however, the indigenous communities of the Northwest Coast experienced the *Columbia* expeditions in a manner different from encounters in Polynesia. First, violence—or the threat of violence—represents a significant theme in the historiography of American territorial conquests across the Pacific World. In contrast, the Columbians attempted to avoid confrontations with their indigenous trading partners. Where violence did occasionally erupt, as at Tillamook Bay or Opitsat, it occurred because of cultural misunderstandings rather than as a manifestation of coercive force.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, China Goods*, 115-27. Nicholas Thomas emphasizes that Pacific Islanders “were not merely victims but actors who resisted colonizers’ impositions or creatively accommodated them.” The description also suits Indians of the Northwest Coast. See Nicholas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 2-3.

<sup>50</sup> David Igler, “Diseased Goods: Global Exchanges in the Eastern Pacific Basin, 1770-1850,” *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 3 (2004): 693-719.; Oliver, *Landscapes and Social Change on the Northwest Coast*, 79-110.

<sup>51</sup> Jeffrey Geiger contends that the “the specter of violence, of violent penetration” constitutes a “central theme” in accounts of American territorial and sexual conquests in Polynesia. Again, I contest the claim that the *Columbia* expeditions leveraged violence as a conscious tool of economic exploitation. Geiger also argues that “scientific” constructions of difference helped substantiate the European views of “race as essential character” and “race as denigration.”

Finally, *Columbia* contributes to a more nuanced historiography of the Northwest Coast, particularly with respect to the way Indians negotiated a new “world of goods” that became available in the late eighteenth century. Richard White’s influential concept of the “middle ground,” which described mutual accommodation between Indians and Europeans in central North America, does not accurately depict the Northwest Coast of 1787-93. Unlike the communities born during the chaotic Beaver Wars of the seventeenth century, the maritime fur trade assumed the form of intentional, temporary encounters between traders and indigenous communities. Furthermore, Americans and Pacific Indians inhabited stable communities, and although maritime commerce enriched their societies, neither required the fur trade to maintain cultural continuity.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, trade required the participation of indigenous trappers, who hunted furbearing animals in exchange for exotic goods. Likewise, the introduction of metal, glass, textiles, and

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Certainly, scientific navigation contributed to the European construction of racial categories. The Columbians, however, often perceived and articulated race in a more instrumental manner. In most cases, their observations on the question of race had little to do with “essentials,” as Geiger suggests, and rather advanced the commercial goals of the expeditions. For example, Robert Haswell assembled an elaborate “Vocabulary of Nootka Sound,” including numbers, verbs, and common nouns, as a tool for exchange. Similarly, John Hoskins approached the Clayoquot Indians as an amateur ethnographer, recording a wealth of information about local resources, subsistence, customs, ceremonies, and beliefs. Meanwhile, John Boit befriended a number of Indians, including influential nobles such as Wickaninnish and Tootiscosettle. Indeed, despite occasional conflict, the Columbians exhibited little “denigration” of the peoples of the Northwest Coast. See Jeffrey Geiger, *Facing the Pacific: Polynesia and the U.S. Imperial Imagination* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 20-28, 28-38.; Robert Haswell, “Vocabulary of Nootka Sound,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 102-07.; John Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” in *Ibid.*, 258-65, 79-89. ; John Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage from Boston (on a Voyage, round the Globe),” in *Ibid.*, 386-87.

<sup>52</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991), x-xi.

firearms transformed Indian modes of subsistence and political economy. Indians incorporated their new trading partners into preexisting networks of trade, and leveraged personal connections with Westerners to enhance group prestige.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, the Columbians depended upon the generosity of indigenous peoples—largely on indigenous terms—for their livelihood and survival, in much the same manner as in remote locations across the South Pacific. *Columbia* succeeded on the Northwest Coast in no small part because Indians supported their guests with food, timber, anchorages, and friendship. Meanwhile, Indians selected between foreign goods with an eye for rare, magical, or otherwise superior items, and especially those that could be modified to suit indigenous purposes.<sup>54</sup> In the end, the Columbians favored a negotiated exchange that satisfied both parties, and that exchange made possible the development of a commercial circuit between Boston, the Northwest Coast, and China.

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<sup>53</sup> William Cronon frames this in concise terms, stating that “the fur trade could not have existed without Indians.” William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 91-94.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Richter contends that goods “derived their significance from Native contexts, rather than from the European economic and social environment for which the goods had originally been designed,” so that a copper kettle might be disassembled into smaller copper ornaments. Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 42-46.

### *Canton, China's Window on the World*

Upon arriving at Canton, *Columbia* became merely the newest participant in a bustling commercial system.<sup>55</sup> In this regard, her activities in China reflected those on the Northwest Coast of America. Unlike Nootka or Clayoquot Sounds, however, Canton constituted a window on the world whose international traffic made it a port of global significance.<sup>56</sup> During the eighteenth century, merchant ships navigated between Canton and almost all the important ports of Europe and Asia: Nagasaki, Manila, Batavia, Malacca, Madras, Hormuz, Lisbon, L'Orient, London, Amsterdam, Stockholm, and Petersburg. Beginning in 1784, Americans established new trade connections between Canton and the ports of New York, Boston, and Salem. *Columbia* intensified that commercial orientation by establishing new trade routes to Vancouver Island and Boston. In assessing the *Columbia*, then, we must also consider the broad context of Chinese engagement with outsiders via Canton, as well as European and American commerce with China.

In recent decades, scholars increasingly “reoriented” their view of China, once absent from the historiography of global commerce and capitalism, to recognize the

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<sup>55</sup> Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, “Born with a ‘Silver Spoon’: The Origin of World Trade in 1571,” *Journal of World History* 6, no. 2 (1995): 205.

<sup>56</sup> Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 5-18.

Middle Kingdom as a crucial agent in the development of a modern world system.<sup>57</sup>

Recent scholarship emphasizes the enduring influence of China in global trade. For example, Janet Abu-Lughod stresses that, to understand the world economic system since 1500, historians must look backward to a period before European hegemony. Beginning in the thirteenth century, she explains, Europe and China established contact through middlemen in the Indian Ocean. The principal Eurasian trade circuits became interconnected for the first time, permitting the movement of spices, silks, and porcelain along routes connecting Quinsay (Hangzhou) to the Champaign Fairs.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, John Hobson emphasizes that, since the sixth century, a constellation of technological and commercial developments propelled East Asia—and particularly China—to a central

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<sup>57</sup> Historiographic interest in early-modern Chinese trade developed in parallel with three geopolitical trends. First, Deng Xiaoping's program of "Reform and Opening Up" (*Gaige Kaifang*, 改革開放) encouraged historians to investigate the antecedents for commercial engagement between China and the West. Second, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, in 1989-91, helped to depoliticize a historical study of China that had, for nearly 40 years, been understood through the ideological lens of the Western "Cold War Consensus." Third, contemporary interest in globalization prompts scholars to seek the roots of modern commerce, culture, and cosmopolitanism in earlier eras. Today, as China asserts its influence in the Pacific, historians are breaking new interpretive ground in China's early modern relationship with Europe and the United States. As previously mentioned, I borrow the language of "reorientation" from Andre Gunder Frank. See Huaiyin Li, "From Revolution to Modernization: the Paradigmatic Transition in Chinese Historiography in the Reform Era," *History and Theory* 49, no. 3 (2010): 336-360.; Arif Dirlik, "Reversals, Ironies, Hegemonies: Notes on the Contemporary Historiography of Modern China," *Modern China* 22, no. 3 (1996): 243-284.; Maxine Berg, "From Globalization to Global History," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 64 (2007): 335-340.; Albert Feuerwerker, "Presidential Address: Questions About China's Early Modern Economy History That I Wish I could Answer," *Journal of Asian Studies* 51, no. 4 (1992): 757-769.; Frank, *ReOrient*, 3-4.

<sup>58</sup> Abu-Lughod characterizes the period as a "remarkable moment in world history... by which time China and Europe had established direct, if decidedly limited, contact with each other." See Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System, A.D. 1250-1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3-14, 18-24.

position in the world economic system. Following this trend, Hobson argues, many of the advancements of early modern Europe must be understood as responses to, or innovations upon, prior developments in the Far East.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Kenneth Pomeranz demonstrates that, prior to 1800, Chinese standards of living were equal to—and in many cases exceeded—those of their European counterparts. Pomeranz shows that consumption of consumables, durable goods, and “everyday luxuries,” remained higher in China than in Europe. Finally, he concludes that the “Rise of the West” is attributable to colonization in the Americas, a development that enabled Europe to artificially escape the resource, labor, and ecological constraints that affected China. Conversely, Peer Vries credits the development of Europe, and Great Britain in particular, to the scientific revolution and the role of state intervention in creating opportunities for economic growth. In this regard, the *Columbia* expeditions contribute to our understanding of the

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<sup>59</sup> Hobson explains that “the East actively pioneered its own substantial economic development after 500,” a position that works against the traditional story of triumphant European capitalism. He asserts that “by 1100 the leading edge of global intensive power had shifted across to China and remained there until the nineteenth century.” One implication is that agricultural, navigational, and monetary innovations that originated in East Asia came to shape the economic expansion of Europe during the Renaissance. Nonetheless, the historian must exercise some care concerning Hobson’s conclusions—his argument has been described as “provocative” and “a polemic... [that] sees almost everything in black and white and has no patience for shades of gray.” See John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-6, 50, 294-322.; Kenneth Pomeranz, review of *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*, by John M. Hobson, *The International History Review* 28, no. 2 (June 2006): 350-352.; J.R. McNeill, review of *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*, by John M. Hobson, *The Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 3 (September 2006), 695-697.

transitional period between 1780 and 1820, when European and American societies experienced a “Great Divergence” from older economic and technological paradigms.<sup>60</sup>

*Columbia* is best understood as a continuation of, and innovation upon, preexisting patterns of Western commercial engagement with China. It becomes, therefore, necessary to situate her voyages within a broad framework of European trade at Canton. William Lytle Schurz, writing in the early twentieth century, emphasized the influence of the Manila Galleons in shaping a commercial connection between Colonial America and China. The galleons, each transporting millions of pesos in American silver, navigated in an annual circuit between New Spain and the Philippines, where bullion purchased goods from mainland China.<sup>61</sup> Recent works emphasize the significance of the silver trade in prompting the modern phase of globalization and funding Europe’s “Great Divergence.” Dennis Flynn and Arturo Giráldez argue that silver, a durable commodity that traded throughout the Old World and New World, enabled disparate markets to participate in a single economic system.<sup>62</sup> Spanish silver, mined in the Americas,

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<sup>60</sup> Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 114-165, 264-297.; Peer Vries, *Via Peking back to Manchester: Britain, the Industrial Revolution, and China* (Leiden: Leiden University, 2003), 7-9, 31-34, 39-42, 59-63.

<sup>61</sup> William Schurtz Lytle, “Acapulco and the Manila Galleon,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1918), 18-37.; *Ibid.*, “Mexico, Peru, and the Manila Galleon,” *The American Historical Review* 1, no. 4 (1918), 389-402.

<sup>62</sup> Specifically, Flynn and Giráldez contend that globalization *required* a reserve commodity, such as silver, in large enough quantities to trade in all markets. Spanish production of silver, originating in Mexico and Peru, met these requirements. They explain that “for our purposes, global trade emerged when all important populated continents began to exchange products



facilitated the imperial expansion of Europe. Andre Gunder Frank emphasizes, in contrast to conventional wisdom, that silver had its greatest impact in the context of the Pacific World. Frank argues that the transpacific galleon trade, linking Spanish America and China, enabled Europeans to purchase the exotic, rare, and luxurious goods of Asia. In short, he contends that the transfer of bullion financed Europe's dramatic technological and economic growth after 1500.<sup>63</sup> Silver sustained transpacific trade until the eighteenth century, when British and American vessels such as *Columbia* pioneered the maritime fur trade. Meanwhile, silver suffered from a "breakdown" in value during the 1780s. Alejandra Irigoin attributes the collapse to expanding production and declining minting standards in New Spain, as well as market saturation in China.<sup>64</sup> Not coincidentally, then, European and American merchants began looking for other exchange commodities as silver fell from grace. *Columbia* shows that, just as Spain had financed a golden age by

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continuously... [and] the singular product most responsible for the birth of world trade was silver." See Flynn and Giráldez, "Born with a 'Silver Spoon'," 201-221.

<sup>63</sup> Andre Gunder Frank states that the earliest "globe encircling pattern of world trade" traveled upon "wheels oiled by the worldwide flow of silver... across the Pacific." He contends that, during the early modern period, Western states were relative newcomers to the world economic system. He emphasizes that Asian trade goods, originating predominantly in China, circulated outward to enter peripheral markets such as Europe and Africa. Frank argues that Europe was simply too resource-poor to produce goods of value to East Asian consumers, too impoverished to purchase Eastern manufactures, and too politically divided to compete effectively against large Chinese and Indian states. He argues that mineral exploitation of the Americas released Europe from its economic doldrums. The prodigious supply of silver permitted Europe, in his memorable language, to purchase "a seat, and then a whole railway car, on the Asian train." See Frank, *ReOrient*, 53-56, 148, 275-76.

<sup>64</sup> Alejandra Irigoin, "The End of a Silver Era: The Consequences of the Breakdown of the Spanish Peso Standard in China and the United States, 1780s-1850s," *Journal of World History* 20, no. 2 (2009): 207-243.

shipping American Silver to China, merchants in the United States could help to restore the new nation's fortunes by trading furs in Canton.



Figure 3. Johannes Vingboons, *View of the City of Canton, with Mountains in the Background*, watercolor on paper, 44 x 65.5 cm., 1665. Nationaal Archief, The Hague.

*Columbia* became the first American ship to approach China from the Pacific, but it represented a second variation in the burgeoning trade between America and the Far East.<sup>65</sup> American vessels first approached China from the Cape of Good Hope, Indian Ocean, and Sunda Strait. Katherine Griffin and Peter Drummey have demonstrated that

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<sup>65</sup> Caroline Frank argues that “even before the eighteenth century, colonial Americans has broad awareness of the lucrative East Indies trade, an interest in competing in that arena, and a local market for Chinese commodities.” Nonetheless, their experiment in this branch of commerce lasted a mere nine years, 1690-99, and the American China Trade did not resume until 1784. See Caroline Frank, *Objectifying China, Imagining America: Chinese Commodities in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 23-57.

merchants from Salem frequented this route—in which they dominated the spice trade—even after Bostonians pivoted to the Pacific.<sup>66</sup> Phyllis Hunter observes that the financiers of the *Empress of China*, including Robert Morris and other established merchants, took great risks in mounting the first United States expedition to China. Nevertheless, they preferred the documented challenges of the Indian Ocean to the unpredictable hazards of the Pacific.<sup>67</sup> According to Mary Gallagher, the owners of the *Empress* initially planned to dispatch a simultaneous fur-trading voyage into the Pacific but reverted to the East Indies route when financing for multiple ships fell through.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, Joseph Barrell shipped a trial cargo aboard the *Empress of China*, but her success convinced him to experiment more deeply in the Pacific.<sup>69</sup>

From the Chinese perspective, the European “Sea Barbarians” who traded at Canton were all of one kind, and newcomers from the “Flowery Flag Country” (*huaqiguo*, 花旗國), the United States, should hold identical rights, responsibilities, and

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<sup>66</sup> Katherine H. Griffin and Peter Drummey, “Manuscripts of the American China Trade at the Massachusetts Historical Society” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Volume C, 1988 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1989), 128-139.

<sup>67</sup> Phyllis Whitman Hunter, *Sailing East: the Empress of China and the New Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>68</sup> Robert Morris and his partners purchased several other vessels, including a frigate also named *Columbia*. Originally intended for the Continental Navy, *Columbia*’s construction stalled for lack of funding and she remained unfinished upon the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. While it is tempting to wonder whether this vessel did, in fact, become *Columbia Rediviva* (her name suggests the possibility), there is no evidence to connect the frigate with Joseph Barrell. See Gallagher, “Charting a New Course for the China Trade,” 61-63.

<sup>69</sup> Smith, *The Empress of China*, 275-76, 288.

regulations in China.<sup>70</sup> In this regard, too, *Columbia* merely instituted an innovative route to an established port, and should, likewise, be considered against the historiography of Western merchants in Canton. Writing in the 1950s, John King Fairbank emphasized the continuity between European and American commerce on the China Coast. Moreover, Fairbank sought to explain modern Sino-American relations in terms of Imperial China's response to Western influences such as capitalism, nationalism, and Christianity.<sup>71</sup> Later historians, such as William Skinner, preferred a "China-centered history" that interpreted the Middle Kingdom by the standard of own historical development, without comparison to Europe and the United States.<sup>72</sup> *Columbia* fits these historiographies imperfectly. Although her expeditions innovated upon standing patterns of foreign trade at Canton, she occasioned no special consideration from local merchants, compradors, and

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<sup>70</sup> In 1848, Xu Jiyu, the governor of Fujian province, explained that the Cantonese deemed the United States "the Flowery Flag Country" (*huaqiguo*, 花旗國) because ships hailing from America "fly a flag with flowers [i.e., stars]." Chen Lanbin, the Chinese minister to Washington, D.C., used the same terminology as late as 1878. "Flowery Flag Country" differs from the modern name for the United States, *Meiguo* ("beautiful country," 美國). See Xu Jiyu, "Yinghuan zhilüe (Short account of the oceans around us)" in *Land Without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of American from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present*, eds. R. David Arkush and Leo O. Lee (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 19-23.; Chen Lanbin, "Travel in the Interior," in *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>71</sup> Fairbank produced a wealth of foundational work concerning Sino-American relations. Although his interpretation of China's "response to the West" is now considered dated, it served as an important point of departure for later scholars. See John King Fairbank, *The United States and China, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Enlarged* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 143-163.

<sup>72</sup> G. William Skinner, "Presidential Address: The Structure of Chinese History," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (1985): 287-290

mandarins. Nevertheless, the expedition did contribute to a massive expansion of the fur trade, a development that cannot be understood from a strictly Chinese perspective.

Paul Van Dyke, a historian of maritime China, provides the most comprehensive framework for interpreting the *Columbia* expeditions in China. His dissertation, “Port Canton and the Pearl River Delta, 1690-1845,” assessed the characteristics of the commercial system, from its inception as an *ad hoc* accommodation, to the period of imperial regulation in the eighteenth century, and through its termination in 1842. Van Dyke concludes that Western merchants valued the consistency and predictability of the Canton System, despite its drawbacks as an inflexible regulatory regime.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, his monographs explore the system from both Western and Chinese perspectives. For example, he explains that foreign merchants needed to master a byzantine structure of port fees, relationships, and customs in order to turn a profit. Conversely, he demonstrates that foreigners misjudged the “monopolistic” structure of the *Cohong* (*Gongxing*, 公行), or merchant guild, when, in fact, the institution existed to preserve

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<sup>73</sup> Van Dyke argues that the Canton trade expanded because its structure met the distinctive needs of all parties. Crucially, it provided foreign merchants with a reliable and profitable trading environment, but still permitted Qing imperial officials to control the movement of foreigners in China. Moreover, the Canton System benefitted from its emphasis upon consistent application of regulations, extension of credit, and emphasis upon interpersonal relationships. Nonetheless, Van Dyke contends that “in the long-term, the strengths were overshadowed by the weaknesses.” In his estimation, the Canton System suffered from inflexible administration, local corruption, and unchecked smuggling. See Paul A. Van Dyke, “Port Canton and the Pearl River Delta, 1690-1845, Volume 1” (PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 2002), 1-4, 570-75.

competition between merchants.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, his examination of customs procedures serves as a manual for estimating costs, reconstructing cargoes, and assessing the outcomes of *Columbia's* transactions in China. Moreover, my findings affirm his conclusions. The Columbians collaborated with local middlemen, adapted to commercial changes, and learned to innovate within the structure of the Canton System.

Meanwhile, the *Columbia* expeditions placed significant emphasis upon the cultivation of local business relationships in Canton. In this respect, the expeditions represent an alternative to the elaborate protocols of “guest ritual,” in which trade-as-tribute served to legitimize diplomatic relations emanating from Beijing.<sup>75</sup> In contrast,

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<sup>74</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 19-34.; Paul A. Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Politics and Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 1-4, 49-66.

<sup>75</sup> The Chinese tribute system combined aspects of diplomacy and trade in order to establish, affirm, and advance relationships between the middle kingdom and foreign nations. Scholars disagree over various aspects of the tribute system, as well as its overall purpose and meaning. John King Fairbank framed the system as the dominant institution in Imperial Chinese foreign relations, while downplaying the role of law, bureaucrats, and realism in shaping perceptions of the outside world. Fairbank argued that the ceremonial forms of the tribute system, especially the requirement that foreigners bow (*koutou*, 叩頭) to the emperor, served principally to legitimize the imperial worldview of China as the “central state” (*zhongguo*, 中國, the Chinese name for China) in the international system. Conversely, John Wills contends that the tribute system functioned best in the context of China’s immediate neighbors (Korea, Vietnam, Liuqiu), smaller states that shared the sinocentric view and benefitted from the patronage of China. By comparison, he emphasizes that the tribute system did accommodate the foreign-relations traditions of Europe. Furthermore, Wills stresses the differences between the Qing tribute system and its antecedents. Indeed, Qing foreign relations often incorporated the principles of political realism, a dimension that also undermines the perception of the tribute system as a monolithic institution. More recently, David Kang approached the tribute system from the perspective of international-relations theory. Kang argues that China wielded the “key institutions” of investiture and embassies to orchestrate “external relations among political actors in early modern East Asia.” Investiture enabled China to legitimize its regional hegemony, while embassies reinforced communication and diplomatic relations between states. Furthermore, he contends that the tribute system contributed to a regional order in which “China’s relations... with the Sinicized states were characterized by peace and stability.” Ji-Young Lee affirms that “the tribute system was

*Columbia* carried a commercial cargo and the Columbians held no diplomatic standing as representatives of the United States. As private traders, with no institutional backing from either a government or a chartered company, they established relationships among the merchants of Macao and Canton. Recent historiography reflects the negotiated character of commercial relations at Canton. William Rowe stresses that the Canton System represented, at its core, a pragmatic accommodation between Chinese and Western merchants.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, Americans enjoyed commercial advantages over their European competitors in China. Americans traders were no longer subject to state monopolies such as the East India Company, offered a wider range of goods, and remained willing to trade with less reputable merchant houses.<sup>77</sup> Paul Van Dyke emphasizes the local dimensions of exchange that enabled Americans to compete successfully at Canton. For example,

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about the use of Chinese Confucian culture for strategic purposes.” Nonetheless, he contests Kang’s view that China behaved as a “benign hegemon” toward its neighbors. Instead, Lee observes that “imperial China did act more opportunistically and coercively, and exploited the less powerful in East Asia.” The tribute system, then, provided China with “symbolic domination” of a dual nature—it legitimized the regime on a domestic level, while underscoring the regional primacy of the state. See John King Fairbank, ed. *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China’s Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 1-19, 135.; John E. Wills, Jr., “State Ceremony in Late Imperial China: Notes for a Framework for Discussion,” *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions*, 7 (1979): 46-57.; John E. Wills, Jr., “Tribute, Defensiveness, and Dependency: Uses and Limits of Some Basic Ideas about Mid-Ch’ing Foreign Relations,” *Annals of the Southeast Conference of the Association for Asian Studies* 8 (1986): 84-90.; David Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 1-4, 10-11, 54-56 81.; Ji-Young Lee, *China’s Hegemony: Four Hundred Years of East Asian Domination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 5-8, 11-15, 35.

<sup>76</sup> Rowe demonstrates that the Canton System maintained this character even after the imposition of Qing regulation in the middle eighteenth century. See William T. Rowe, *China’s Last Empire: The Great Qing* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 127-148.

<sup>77</sup> Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*, 84-109.

Americans had greater latitude in attracting a Cantonese merchant than their European competitors, whose companies tended to do business with longstanding partners. American furs, which substituted for silver in a manner that European manufactured goods could not, also provided new options. Finally, where legitimate business failed, unregulated exchange with Cantonese smugglers helped to maximize profits.<sup>78</sup> The historiography of local conditions, personal relationships, and commercial adaptation provides the framework for my assessment of the *Columbia* in China.

### *Sailing on the Spanish Lake*

*Columbia* accomplished more than forging human and commercial connections between Boston, the Northwest Coast, and Canton—she established the patterns of trade that brought disparate shores together as a single Pacific World. In 1788, however, she intruded upon an ocean hemisphere best characterized as a “Spanish Lake.” For three centuries, Spanish officials visualized the Pacific as a *mare clausum*, or “closed sea,” under the sole jurisdiction of the imperial metropolis, or, in some cases, its colonial possessions in America.<sup>79</sup> One aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate how *Columbia*

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<sup>78</sup> Financial incentives, such as commissions and “connivance fees” enabled Europeans to move trade goods of lesser value, either in collaboration with smugglers or the Portuguese authorities in Macao. Van Dyke concludes that “as long as the proper payments were put into the proper hands, there were ways of marketing almost anything in China.” See Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 67, 129.

<sup>79</sup> William Lytle Schurz popularized the terminology of the “Spanish Lake” in 1922. Considering the empire’s claim to a *mare clausum*, however, Schurz recognized that Spanish territorial aspirations in the Pacific fell short of its actual colonial presence. He demonstrates that while Spain could claim “the whole eastern shore of the Pacific from the region of Cape Mendocino to that of Cape Horn,” its possessions in the west consisted principally of the Philippines and



charted a course for the United States to assume a dominant role in the Pacific and transform the Spanish Lake into an American Sea, or “Mar Columbiana.”

*Columbia* contributes to an expanded historiography of Early America by reorienting our focus from the Atlantic to the Pacific World—a division that began during the Spanish conquest of the Americas. Spain dominated the exploration and exploitation of the Pacific Ocean for more than two centuries. Its earliest engagement in the ocean hemisphere, however, resulted from the geographic misconceptions and geopolitical considerations of the fifteenth century. Spanish merchants, eager to circumvent Arab and Portuguese domination of the Indian Ocean, found great appeal in the possibility of a western passage to Asia. In October 1492, Columbus made his famous “discovery” of the Americas when those continents blocked his westward voyage to the Indies. From the perspective of the Pacific, his voyages are significant for two reasons. First, Columbus revealed a continental division of the Ocean Sea into two distinct bodies of water, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Second, his voyages set in motion the Castilian, and later Spanish, colonization of lands with beachfront on the Pacific.<sup>80</sup>

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Caroline Islands. Furthermore, Schurz observes that Spain attempted to prohibit foreigners from intruding upon its notional “empire” in the Pacific. The demands of patrolling the ocean hemisphere (one-third of the earth’s surface!), however, remained beyond the capacity of Madrid or México. In contrast, Schurz explains that the most significant factors in Spain’s domination of the region were “the very remoteness of the sea” and “the hardships of an unbroken voyage into the Pacific.” See William Lytle Schurtz, “The Spanish Lake,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 5, no. 2 (1922): 181-194.

<sup>80</sup> Medieval geographers often represented the globe in theological terms. Isidore of Seville drafted O-T, or *orbis terrae* (“circle of lands”) maps, that arranged the known continents and seas around Jerusalem, the spiritual center of Christendom. Meanwhile, a vast and unbroken expanse of water, the *mare oceanum* (“Ocean Sea”), encompassed the known world. In contrast,

Spanish colonies in the Americas translated, gradually, into geographical knowledge about and territorial claims upon the Pacific Ocean. In 1493, seeking to prevent conflict between Spain and Portugal, Pope Alexander VI partitioned the world into two hemispheres, each under the exclusive control of one maritime power. The Spanish hemisphere included the majority of the Americas and extended westward into the Pacific, then unknown to Europeans.<sup>81</sup> In 1513, Vasco Núñez de Balboa, a Spanish conquistador, began an expedition from Santa María, in modern Panamá, in order to investigate tales of a rich Indian kingdom. During his overland crossing of the isthmus, Balboa became the first European to behold the Pacific Ocean. Noting that it stretched away to the southward, he deemed it the “South Seas.”<sup>82</sup> Nonetheless, the narrow isthmus presented a formidable barrier to navigation between Europe and the Indies. In 1520, Ferdinand Magellan traversed the straits that now bear his name, between mainland

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Renaissance geographers began to visualize the earth as a sphere. In 1489, Henricus Martellus represented the *mare oceanum* as extending west from the Pillars of Hercules toward East Asia. The new geographic paradigm suggested a western trade route to Asia. The influence of this idea upon Columbus requires no elaboration here. See Wesley M. Stevens, “The Figure of the Earth in Isidore’s ‘De natura rerum’,” *Isis* 71, no. 2 (1980): 268-77.; David Woodward, “Reality, Symbolism, Time, and Space in Medieval World Maps,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 75, no. 4 (1985): 510-21.; Arthur Davies, “Behaim, Martellus, and Columbus,” *The Geographical Journal* 143, no. 3 (1977): 451-59.

<sup>81</sup> Spain and Portugal formalized the agreement through the instrument of the Treaty of Tordesillas, a document that specified a line of demarcation 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde islands. See O.H.K. Spate, *The Spanish Lake* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 27-29.; Edward Heawood, “The World Map before and after Magellan’s Voyage,” *The Geographical Journal* 57, no. 6 (1921), 432-33.

<sup>82</sup> The name “South Seas” remained in common use through the eighteenth century, and colloquially, to the present. See Spate, *The Spanish Lake*, 29-34.

South America and Tierra del Fuego, and sailed west into the peaceful ocean he named “Pacífico.” His accomplishment provided Spain with a maritime route to East Asia.<sup>83</sup>

Taken together, Balboa and Magellan bolstered Spain’s geographical claim to the Pacific, including kingdoms in faraway places such as the Caroline Islands and the Philippines.<sup>84</sup>

The *Columbia* expeditions demonstrated that the United States could challenge the territorial legacies of Columbus, Balboa, and Magellan. In 1788, she proved that Americans possessed the technical expertise needed to overcome geographic constraints and navigate in the remote, dangerous waters of the Pacific Ocean. Furthermore, she produced firsthand American knowledge about the Pacific, and therefore, helped to substantiate later claims by the United States to peripheral regions of the Spanish Empire, namely California and the Oregon Country.

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<sup>83</sup> In 1517, Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese navigator spurned by his own king, made an audacious pitch to King Carlos of Spain. Citing rumors of a southern passage through the Americas, Magellan proposed to sail westward to the “spice islands,” or Moluccas. Carlos authorized the navigator to command a squadron of five vessels on a search for the straits. Magellan proceeded southward along the coast of South America until, in late 1520, he located the fabled straits between the continent and Tierra del Fuego. In 1521, he completed the first reconnaissance and transit of the Pacific Ocean, although he died in combat on the island of Mactán, in the modern Philippines. The remnants of Magellan’s crew, under the command of Basque navigator Juan Sebastian Delcano, completed the first circumnavigation of the globe upon returning to Spain in 1522. Sea Heawood, “The World Map before and after Magellan’s Voyage,” 434-40.; Laurence Bergreen, *Over the Edge of the World: Magellan’s Terrifying Circumnavigation of the Globe* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), 29-39, 175-203.

<sup>84</sup> In subsequent decades, Spain conquered indigenous empires in Mexico and the Andes, established ports such as Acapulco and San Blas, and began charting the western coastline of America. Meanwhile, the transpacific expeditions of Alvaro de Saavedra and López de Villalobos, both launching from Acapulco, reinforced the empire’s claim to the Pacific Ocean. See Engel Sluiter, “The Fortification of Acapulco, 1615-1616,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 29, no. 1 (1949), 69-80.; Glyndwr Williams, *The Great South Sea: English Voyages and encounters, 1570-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 2-5.

The Columbians did not engage in colonization, however, but rather, introduced new economic forces that challenged Spanish domination of the Pacific Ocean. Indeed, the Spanish Empire depended upon the resources and trade potential of the Pacific. Silver, mined in the Americas, became the lifeblood of commerce between the Spanish Empire and the Far East. New Spain and Perú produced approximately 129,000 tons of silver from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Modern scholars estimate that 79,000 tons, or fifty-seven percent, of Spanish silver eventually circulated in China.<sup>85</sup> In 1565, Miguel López de Legazpi inaugurated the transpacific silver trade between Acapulco and the Far East.<sup>86</sup> The “Manila Gallons,” as the annual voyages were known after 1571, shipped silver specie to the Chinese merchants of Manila. In exchange, the merchants traded spices, porcelain, silk, and decorative arts imported from Canton in

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<sup>85</sup> The government of New Spain assumed control of its first silver mine, at Tamaçula, in 1525. Additional mines opened throughout the following decades, including the great mines of Zacatecas, which contributed a large percentage of imperial revenues over the next three centuries. Similarly, the discovery of silver at Potosí, in 1545, triggered a mining boom in the Spanish Andes. Potosí produced perhaps sixty percent of the world’s silver during the latter sixteenth century. See Henry R. Wagner, “Early Silver Mining in New Spain,” *Revista de Historia de América* 14 (1942): 49-71.; D.A. Brading and Harry E. Cross, “Colonial Silver Mining: Mexico and Peru,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 52, no. 4 (1972): 545-79.; Flynn and Giráldez, “Born with a ‘Silver Spoon’,” 209.; Frank, *ReOrient*, 148.

<sup>86</sup> In 1564, Legazpi established Spanish settlements in the Philippines and conquered the Kingdom of Maynila. The earliest galleon trade connected Acapulco and Cebu from 1565 until 1571, when the commercial terminus relocated to the colonial capital at Manila. From 1565-1815, the Manila Galleon shipped 31,000 tons, or twenty-four percent of all silver originating in Spanish America, to East Asia. See Carmencita T. Aguilar, “The Muslims in Manila Prior to Colonial Control,” *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 2, no. 1 (1987): 150-58.; Nicholas P. Cushner, “Legazpi, 1564-1572,” *Philippine Studies* 13., no. 2 (1965): 163-206.; Junald Dawa Ango, “The Cebu-Acapulco Galleon Trade,” *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 38, no. 2 (2010), 149-56.; Schurz, “Acapulco and the Manila Galleon”: 18-37.; Frank, *ReOrient*, 148.

China.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the influx of silver attracted ships hailing from Brunei, Japan, Java, Malacca, and Siam and established Manila as the foremost emporium of Southeast Asia.<sup>88</sup> Following a season of trade in the Philippines, the Manila Galleon returned to Acapulco, where merchants of New Spain gathered to purchase Chinese manufactures for retail or reshipment to Europe.<sup>89</sup> *Columbia* possessed none of the material advantages of the Manila Galleons, and she did not constitute a direct challenge to Spain's economic juggernaut in the Pacific. Instead, she harvested the secondary resources of the Pacific—sea otter furs—to compensate for her shortage of silver. In doing so, she constituted an alternative business model that appeared innocuous to Spanish officials, but one with potential to undermine Spanish domination of the Pacific. More importantly, *Columbia* charted the course for hundreds of American imitators to swarm the Spanish Lake.

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<sup>87</sup> As a consequence of the Treaty of Tordesillas, Portugal prohibited foreigners from intruding upon its half of the globe, including Africa, the Indian Ocean, and East Indies. Moreover, the Treaty of Zaragoza (1529) designated a maritime boundary between the Portuguese and Spanish zones in the Pacific. The treaty placed the boundary 297½ leagues east of the Moluccas, or along the modern 141° E meridian. Spain's colonization of the Philippines (1565-71), which lay within the Portuguese zone, represents the most significant breach of the treaties. In general, however, both powers observed the agreements. As a courtesy, Portugal permitted Spanish vessels to enter her zone in service of the Philippines. Moreover, Spanish authorities gave up direct trade between New Spain and Canton, a port within the Portuguese zone. The Manila Galleons, therefore, terminated in the Philippines, and Chinese merchants maintained the carrying trade between Canton and Manila. See Peter Gerhard, *Pirates of New Spain, 1575-1742* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 23-54.; Marcos A. Almazán, "The Manila Galleon," *Artes de México*, no. 143, EL GALEON DE MANILA (1971): 24-28.; John E. Wills, Jr., "Maritime Europe and the Ming," in *China and Maritime Europe, 1500-1800: Trade, Settlement, Diplomacy, and Missions*, ed. John E. Wills (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 51-61.

<sup>88</sup> M.N. Pearson, "Spain and the Spanish Trade in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian History* 2, no. 2 (1968): 109-112.

<sup>89</sup> Almazán, "The Manila Galleon," 24-28.

British pirates threatened the Spanish Pacific throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but *Columbia* represented a purely commercial pivot to the Pacific. The galleon trade held new social and strategic implications for the Spanish Lake. Silver promoted commerce between the colonies of New Spain, Panamá, and Perú, and merchants rose to prominence in ports such as Acapulco and Callao.<sup>90</sup> In Manila, the growth of a Chinese merchant community paralleled the that of the galleon trade.<sup>91</sup> The exchange of Spanish silver dollars throughout the Americas, Pacific, and Asia—a practice that continued until the nineteenth century—is another legacy of the silver trade.<sup>92</sup> Beginning in the sixteenth century, however, commercial riches attracted pirates who crossed from the Caribbean or, increasingly, entered the Spanish Lake via Cape

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<sup>90</sup> Benito Legarda, Jr., “Two and a Half Centuries of the Galleon Trade,” *Philippine Studies* 3, no. 4 (1955): 346-51.; L.A. Clayton, “Trade and Navigation in the Seventeenth-Century Viceroyalty of Peru,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 7, no. 1 (1975): 5-13.; Schurz, “Mexico, Peru, and the Manila Galleon,” 389-402.

<sup>91</sup> Growth in the population of Chinese merchants is evidence of the commercial pull of Manila. Chinese inhabitants numbered 10,000 in 1586, 20,000 in the 1620s, and perhaps 45,000 in 1639. Spanish-Chinese *mestizos* also prospered as artisans, professionals, and government officials of Manila. Meanwhile, Chinese sojourners immigrated to the principal towns of New Spain, where they established businesses, neighborhoods, and families. In fact, *chinos* comprised perhaps two percent of the population of the colony by 1650. See Wang Gungwu, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 53, 55-56.; Lucille Chia, “The Butcher, the Baker, and the Carpenter: Chinese Sojourners in the Spanish Philippines and Their Impact on Southern Fujian (Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries),” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 49, no. 4, Maritime Diasporas in the Indian Ocean and East and Southeast Asia (960-1775) (2006): 514-23.; Edward R. Slack, Jr. “The *Chinos* in New Spain: A Corrective Lens for a Distorted Image,” *Journal of World History* 20, no 1 (2009): 35-67.

<sup>92</sup> The Spanish Peso served as the principal currency of exchange at Canton. Western merchants trading in silver, however, preferred to describe the coins as “dollars,” and, therefore, I use this term throughout the dissertation. See Irigoien, “The End of a Silver Era”: 207-243.

Horn. Some buccaneers looted the settlements of Panamá, the richest commercial ports in America, while privateers seized the Manila Galleons. Between 1585 and 1700, English pirates took hundreds of thousands silver ingots and perhaps one million gold pesos. In addition, they murdered hundreds of inhabitants, burned scores of ships, torched several important towns, and wrought destruction valued at 4-5 million silver pesos.<sup>93</sup> *Columbia*, in contrast, avoided contact with the inhabitants, settlements, and military forces of the Spanish Empire. Her commanders under orders “not to touch at any part of the Spanish dominions,” and, upon encountering Spanish officials at Nootka, the Columbians ingratiated themselves with the Iberians.<sup>94</sup> Like Dutch merchants in the East Indies, their commercial invasion of the Spanish Lake constituted an exercise in soft power, rather than a show of force.

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<sup>93</sup> A short account of the most prominent pirates of the Pacific gives some indication of the rapacity of foreign attacks upon the Spanish Lake. From 1572-80, John Oxenham attacked the settlements of Spanish Panamá, ultimately capturing a king’s ransom of 60,000 gold pesos and 100,000 silver ingots. Francis Drake, who completed the second circumnavigation of the globe, launched an even more devastating assault on Spanish America in 1578. His capture of the galleon *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, off Ecuador, yielded “a very large amount” of precious metals and gemstones. In 1587, Thomas Cavendish wreaked destruction upon the Pacific coast of New Spain, where he burned five prize ships and torched the ports of Guatulco, Navidad, and Acatlán. Moreover, Cavendish captured the Manila Galleon *Santa Ana* and her cargo of 122,000 gold pesos. Henry Morgan, a seventeenth-century buccaneer, wrought similar destruction in the Spanish Lake. In 1671, Morgan sacked the richest commercial town in America, Panamá City. He escaped with six hundred prisoners and somewhere between 150,000 and 750,000 pesos. Later, in 1680, pirates under the command of Richard Sawkins and Bartholomew Sharp destroyed 25 ships, killed hundreds, and inflicted millions of pesos of damage upon the Pacific Coast of New Spain. Peter Gerhard, *Pirates of New Spain, 1575-1742* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 57-60, 80-94, 109-21, 139-41.

<sup>94</sup> Joseph Barrell to John Kendrick, “Orders Given Captain John Kendrick of the Ship *Columbia* for a Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, 1787” in Frederic W. Howay, ed., *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 & 1790-1793* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1990), 111.;

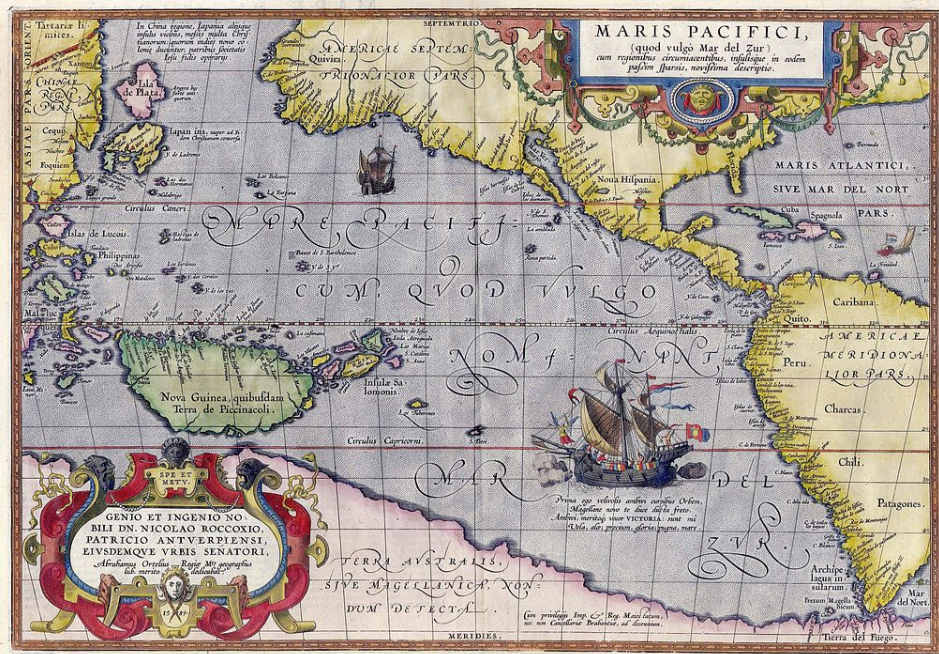


Figure 4. Abraham Ortelius, “Maris Pacifici quod vulgo Mar del Zur,” copper engraving with color, 34 x 49.5 cm., as reproduced in *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, Antwerp: Gilles Coppens de Diest, 1590.

Most significant to this dissertation, the silver trade prompted Spain to undertake the exploration, colonization, and fortification of the galleon route along the Northwest Coast and California. Spanish exploration of the coast proceeded in two phases, each of which produced geographic knowledge of value to future navigators, including the *Columbia* expeditions.<sup>95</sup> Spain began the opening phase in response to the presence of

<sup>95</sup> Limited exploration occurred before this period. In 1542-43, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo (João Rodrigues Cabrilho) and Bartolomé Ferrer (or Ferrello) became the first Europeans to reconnoiter San Diego Bay, the Channel Islands, and Cape Mendocino. Neither navigator made adequate descriptions of their discoveries, and, as a consequence, future expeditions would rediscover, rename, and retake possession of the same locations. See Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 2-5.; Iris H.W. Engstrand, “Seekers of the ‘Northern Mystery’: European Exploration of California and the Pacific” in Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi, eds., *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 83-86.



privateers. In 1579, Francis Drake landed in “Nova Albion,” or California, and took possession of the region for England.<sup>96</sup> Thereafter, reasoning that fortified settlements could secure the galleon route, Spanish officials dispatched expeditions to chart the coast of Alta California. In 1587, Pedro de Unamuno conducted a voyage from Manila to Acapulco, during which he reconnoitered Morro Bay and performed land exploration of the site of San Luis Obispo.<sup>97</sup> In 1602, Sebastián Vizcaíno, a merchant of New Spain, commanded another expedition, in which he investigated the excellent anchorages of San Diego Bay, Mission Bay, and Monterey Bay. The cessation of hostilities with England and Netherlands, however, caused the government of Spain to abandon its planned occupation of California.<sup>98</sup>

The intrusion of imperial rivals in the Pacific, during the middle eighteenth century, prompted the Spanish Empire to resume its exploration of the Northwest Coast.

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<sup>96</sup> Drake’s capture of *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* did not directly impact the Northwest Coast or California, but his exploits did emphasize the vulnerability of Spanish shipping throughout the Pacific. See Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 7-9.

<sup>97</sup> W. Michael Mathes, “Spanish Maritime Charting of the Gulf of Mexico and the California Coast,” in *Mapping and Empire: Soldier-Engineers on the Southwestern Frontier*, eds. Dennis Reinhartz and Gerald D. Saxon (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 24-26.; H.R. Wagner and Pedro de Unamuno, “The Voyage of Pedro de Unamuno to California in 1587,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1923): 142-43, 147-58.

<sup>98</sup> Vizcaíno probably felt a sense of urgency in the protection of the galleon routes. In 1587, he was a passenger aboard the galleon *Santa Ana* when the English buccaneer Thomas Cavendish attacked. In the aftermath, Vizcaíno forfeited a valuable cargo of pearls, perfumes, silks, and porcelain to Cavendish. See Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 10-14, 17-20.; Iris H.W. Engstrand, “Seekers of the ‘Northern Mystery’: European Exploration of California and the Pacific,” in *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush*, eds. Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 90-92.

In 1741, Russian explorers made claims to Alaska and portions of the Northwest Coast.<sup>99</sup> During wartime, British navigators once again invaded the Spanish Lake, seizing galleons in the Philippines and even occupying Manila.<sup>100</sup> In peacetime, Captain James Cook, a scientific navigator, placed Madrid in the uncomfortable position of knowing less about the Spanish Lake than did London.<sup>101</sup> Spain responded to the intruders with a second phase of exploration, colonization, and reinforcement of the Northwest Coast. In 1765, authorities in New Spain embarked upon an aggressive defense agenda that

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<sup>99</sup> Vitus Bering investigated the coast of Alaska as far east as Icy Bay, within sight of Mount St. Elias. Meanwhile, his partner, Aleksei Chrikov, reached a southern position within sight of the Alexander Archipelago. Their discoveries formed the basis of Russian territorial claims to the Aleutian Islands and Alaska. See Ilya Vinkovetsky, *Russian America: An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 29-33.

<sup>100</sup> In 1743, during the War of Austrian Succession, George Anson intercepted and seized the galleon *Nuestra Señora de Covadonga* off the coast of Cape Espiritu Santo, in the Philippines. In doing so, he captured £400,000 in tea, porcelain, silks, and gold bullion. Great Britain struck an even heavier blow during the Seven Years' War. The British occupation of Manila, from 1762-64, demonstrated that rival powers now possessed the logistical wherewithal to challenge the territorial basis of Spain's empire in the Pacific. See Williams, *The Great South Sea*, 241-47.; Nicolas Tracy, *Manila Ransomed: The British Assault on Manila in the Seven Years' War* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 57-108.

<sup>101</sup> James Cook brought new precision to the charting of lands such as New Zealand, Australia, the Hawaiian Islands, and the Northwest Coast. His first voyage, from 1768-71, succeeded in charting the coasts of New Zealand and Australia, thus setting the stage for later British colonization of these lands. Cook's second expedition, from 1772-75, disproved the existence of *Terra Australis Incognita*, a massive continent rumored to exist in the South Pacific. Moreover, he showed the Union Jack in the independent islands of Fiji and Tonga. During his third expedition, from 1776-79, he investigated the legendary "Straits of Anian," believed to be the entrance to a sea passage through the North American continent, from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean. Furthermore, Cook became the first European navigator to visit the Hawaiian Islands. In a tragic turn of events, he was killed in a skirmish with islanders at Kealakekua Bay, in February, 1779. Despite this gruesome conclusion, Cook's voyages laid the foundations of British territorial claims in the Pacific. See J.C. Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 196-225, 226-56, 331-356, 357-79, 591-636, 637-72.

included the construction of shipyards, the colonization of Alta California, and overland exploration to San Francisco Bay.<sup>102</sup> Later, Spanish navigators sailed northward under orders to take possession of the Northwest Coast.<sup>103</sup> Three decades of exploration, colonization, and acts of possession helped to forestall British and Russian encroachment in the Pacific, but Madrid failed to anticipate purely commercial threats to its empire.

In the years immediately prior to the *Columbia* expedition, three developments propelled Spain toward a vigorous defense of its northernmost claims. In 1778, James Cook conducted a systematic survey of the Northwest Coast, during which he made counterclaims to locations such as “King George’s Sound,” or Nootka, that Spain presumed to fall within its jurisdiction.<sup>104</sup> Next, in 1784, Russian trappers established that empire’s first colonial settlement in America at Three Saints Bay on Kodiak Island. The

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<sup>102</sup> King Carlos III of Spain must be credited for inaugurating the Bourbon Reforms, a reconsideration of imperial policies that propelled Spain into a second golden age in the late eighteenth century. Carlos appointed José de Gálvez, an energetic reformer, to oversee the defensive renovation of New Spain. Gálvez established a naval shipyards at San Blas, an anchorage in possession of ample freshwater and timber, and convenient to exploration of the Northwest Coast. Moreover, he spearheaded the colonization of Alta California, and theorized that mission settlements could serve as a bulwark against Russian settlement in the region. In 1769-70, Franciscans under the command of Fray Gaspar de Portolá explored San Francisco Bay and founded missions at San Diego and Monterey. See Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 45-50, 51-52.; Mathes, “Spanish Maritime Charting of the Gulf of Mexico and the California Coast,” 28-29.

<sup>103</sup> Multiple navigators attempted to take possession of the Northwest Coast, but most turned back in the face of storms, fog, or other unpredictable events. Juan Francisco de la Bodega established New Spain’s northernmost territorial claims when, in 1775, he took possession at Sitka and proceeded northward to the latitude of 58°30’, near Lituya Bay, Alaska. See Mathes, “Spanish Maritime Charting of the Gulf of Mexico and the California Coast,” 30-31.

<sup>104</sup> J.C. Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 591-636.

settlement, located at 57° north, also lay within the territorial limits of New Spain.<sup>105</sup> Finally, British fur traders such as James Hanna, Nathaniel Portlock, and John Meares began cruising the Northwest Coast in 1785-87. Spain viewed their exploitation of furbearing resources, and the practice of overwintering on the Northwest Coast, as a prelude to British colonization of locations such as Nootka Sound.<sup>106</sup> In 1788, authorities in New Spain launched a fact-finding mission to determine the scale, disposition, and positions of foreign intruders on the Northwest Coast. Its commander, Esteban José Martínez, reported on British and Russian plots to colonize the furbearing districts of the coast, and recommended the immediate fortification of Nootka Sound. Consequently, in 1789, military engineers prepared to construct the fort of San Lorenzo at Nootka.<sup>107</sup>

*Columbia* arrived in the Pacific at a pivotal moment in the Spanish Lake. Some events, occurring in Europe, influenced the rapid decline of Spain's empire in the Pacific. For example, the death of Carlos III, in 1788, brought his ambitious imperial reforms to a sudden end. In 1789, the French Revolution also cast Spain's foreign relations into disarray, as constitutionalism called into question the "family compact" between the French and Spanish Bourbons. In New Spain, Viceroy Manuel Antonio Flores noted that

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<sup>105</sup> Gwenn A. Miller, *Kodiak Kreol, Communities of Empire in Early Russian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 28-48.

<sup>106</sup> Dick A. Wilson, "King George's Men: British Ships and Sailors in the Pacific Northwest-China Trade, 1785-1821" (PhD Dissertation, University of Idaho, 2004), 14-36, 59-80, 104-26.; Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 85-145.

<sup>107</sup> Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 122-45.

“we should not be surprised if the English colonies of America, republican and independent, put into practice the design of discovering a safe port on the south sea.”<sup>108</sup> Although Flores recognized that the United States posed a threat equal to the British or Russians, later developments show that his subordinates—those charged with policing the Northwest Coast—did not. Meanwhile, Spain most feared the expansion of Great Britain, a nation with proven capacity to upset her military, economic, and scientific hegemony across the globe. Britain was ascendant in Europe, India, and the Atlantic World—but she was merely one contestant in the Pacific.

Some scholars have pointed to the emergence of an “English Lake” in the Pacific.<sup>109</sup> This periodization, however, overstates the permanence of British activity in the eighteenth-century Pacific. Scientific navigation provided Great Britain with superior knowledge of the ocean hemisphere—but few colonies. Indeed, during the eighteenth century, New South Wales, a penal colony, represented London’s sole territorial experiment in the Pacific. Two other events, Britain’s triumph in the Nootka Crisis and the creation of a protectorate in the Sandwich Islands, had limited value prior to the nineteenth century. In another sense, the “English Lake” overlooks the contemporaneous rise of American activity in the Pacific. Cook’s third expedition sailed in 1776, the same year that American revolutionaries declared the United States independent of Britain. In

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<sup>108</sup> Manuel Antonio Flores quoted in *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>109</sup> Arif Dirlik, “The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure,” *Journal of World History* 3, no. 1 (1992): 55-79.

1788, the First Fleet disembarked convicts at Botany Bay, but free Americans entered the Pacific aboard *Columbia*. In 1789, when Spanish Governor Esteban Martínez arrested British fur traders on the Northwest Coast, he permitted *Columbia* to continue trading for sea otters. Later, when George Vancouver and Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra convened to resolve the Nootka Crisis, their conclusions depended in part upon *Columbia*'s discoveries on the Northwest Coast. By 1797, five short years after the *Columbia* expeditions, the number of American fur-trading ships on the Northwest Coast exceeded those originating in the British Empire. Did Britannia displace Spanish power in the Pacific? If so, her unintended, and perhaps more significant, act was to clear the ocean for the United States.

### *Columbia and the Pacific World*

In 1788, when *Columbia* steered into the Pacific Ocean, she entered an ocean hemisphere that barely resembled the complex geography of trade routes, postcolonial island states, and multiethnic settlements familiar to modern eyes. Although the eighteenth century represented a time of great transformations in the region, the vastness of the ocean itself continued to dominate events in the Pacific World. For example, island civilizations of the South Pacific had occasional contact with Europeans but little or no interaction with Asians or American Indians. Northern Pacific cultures either experienced limited European colonization, as in Alaska and California, or inhabited the extreme fringe of world known to Westerners. Travelers crossed the ocean infrequently, and goods even less often. Scientific navigators made incremental study of the Pacific World

throughout the eighteenth century, but comprehensive exploration did not become a prestigious, geostrategic activity until the voyages of Captain James Cook. *Columbia* was the harbinger of dramatic changes in the Pacific. She represented a new commercial paradigm that would connect disparate communities, intensify the movement of trade goods, and open new commercial markets to the United States. For the Columbians, the Pacific Ocean was an indisputable reality, but what exactly was the “Pacific World”?

Many historians view the Pacific World through the conventions of other ocean histories, and, in particular, the analytical frameworks of the Atlantic World. The two oceans share many historical similarities, especially when considering economic, linguistic, and cultural diversity across the region.<sup>110</sup> In general, Atlantic historians assess relationships between individual places and peoples, rather than monolithic processes. They prefer to investigate global interactions rather than individual nations or states. Their central concerns are the conditions of migration, ethnicity, and colonialism that defined the New World against the Old, and positioned the ocean as a path between two

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<sup>110</sup> Matt Matsuda emphasizes the analytical similarities of ocean histories, noting that “the imaginative of a ‘Pacific’ rooted in the notion of a ‘distant’ ocean is logically Atlantic in inspiration.” Certainly, the oceans are similar enough that a number of concepts originating in Atlantic history are useful tools when assessing the Pacific. For example, Bernard Bailyn characterizes the Atlantic World as “multitudinous, embracing the people and circumstances of four continents, countless regional economies, languages, and social structures, beliefs as different as Dutch Calvinism and Inca sun worship, and ethnicities as different as those of Finland’s Saamis and Africa’s Igbos.” The Pacific is equally diverse. One might as easily describe a Pacific World that embraces the cultures of four continents (Asia, Australia, North America, and South America) as well as thousands of islands, hundreds of regional trade arrangements, languages, and social conventions, and beliefs as different as Chinese Confucianism and the veneration of the god Maui. See Matt K. Matsuda, “The Pacific,” *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 762.; Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 61-62.

hemispheres. Consequently, no standardized form of commercial, cultural, or social encounter predominated in the Atlantic.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, most historians find sufficient reason to speak of a single Atlantic World. Bernard Bailyn emphasizes that this world, forged through the sustained interaction of African, American, and European peoples, demonstrates “a common morphology, a general overall pattern, however fluid and irregular, of development and change.” The combination of generalities and particulars contribute to a scholarly understanding of a common “Atlantic” experience defined by the sustained social interaction, commercial exchange, and cultural hybridization of diverse peoples.<sup>112</sup>

Just as the *Columbia* navigated from the Atlantic to the Pacific, it is appropriate that the Atlantic World framework also has explanatory power in the Pacific. For example, David Igler explains that “the Pacific World concept is also unstable and problematic... [but] offers similar analytical payoff to the term ‘Atlantic World.’”<sup>113</sup>

Three similarities, relating to geographical space, demographics, and movement, suggest a common framework of analysis. The Pacific Ocean, like the Atlantic, is surrounded by

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<sup>111</sup> Alison Games concludes that “there was... no uniform style of cultural encounter or exchange around or within the ocean” to describe the grand diversity of human experience in the region. See Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges and Opportunities,” *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 744, 752.; Bailyn, 30-38, 44-49.

<sup>112</sup> Bailyn, *Atlantic History*, 62. Responding to the lingering disconnect between the local experiences and global dynamics, Mapp deems Atlantic History “a fruitfully effective model and a frustratingly elusive notion.” See Paul W. Mapp, “Atlantic History from Imperial, Continental and Pacific Perspectives,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2006), 713.

<sup>113</sup> Igler’s language carries a special concision that I cannot improve upon. Igler, *The Great Ocean*, 10.



four continents: Asia, Australia, North America, and South America. Moreover, Pacific archipelagos such as the Hawaiian, Society, Marquesas, and Samoan Islands are rough analogues for island chains in the Atlantic.<sup>114</sup> Second, the region features a range of social, ethnic, and political identities as complex as the Atlantic World. Pacific religions range from Sunni Islam to Animism. Likewise, ethnic affiliations differ as much as Han Chinese, Maoris, and Spanish Mestizos.<sup>115</sup> Third, the interconnectedness of disparate peoples, places, and ideas reflects an “ocean world” concept common to the Atlantic World.<sup>116</sup> Both oceans experienced sustained periods of economic and cultural integration. Integration of the Pacific began during the middle eighteenth century, when scientific voyages and commercial enterprise intensified connections between Europeans and Islanders. Maritime trade shaped the interaction of communities thousands of miles apart, such as Boston, the Northwest Coast, and Canton.<sup>117</sup>

Two remaining similarities between the Atlantic and Pacific Worlds relate to the choice of narrative. First, historians of European and American history find significant

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<sup>114</sup> Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges and Opportunities,” 743.

<sup>115</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History*, 61-62.

<sup>116</sup> Iglar, *The Great Ocean*, 10.

<sup>117</sup> Katrina Gulliver, “Finding the Pacific World,” *Journal of World History* 22, no. 1 (2011), 88-93. Bernard Bailyn explains that “a long phase of development and integration” was the hallmark of the Atlantic World. The integrative phase began around 1500, when the transatlantic slave trade forged human and economic connections between Europe, Africa, and America. Iglar observes a similar developmental pattern in the Pacific, where “commerce quickly multiplied the range of interactions between maritime traders and indigenous peoples.” See Bailyn, *Atlantic History*, 81.; Iglar, 7-8.

material in both oceans. For centuries, the Atlantic and Pacific each facilitated the geopolitical and economic expansion of Europe, and scholars often describe each region with respect to the dominant state in one period or another. Immanuel Wallerstein comments upon the successive “hegemonic powers” of Spain, Netherlands, and England, whose economies dominated the Atlantic for more than four centuries.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, scholars of the early modern period approach the Pacific Ocean as a Spanish or English “Lake,” while modernists often describe it as the “Mar Columbiana,” or American Sea. This dissertation seeks to address the moment of conceptual transition, when the United States supplanted Spain as the dominant maritime power in the Pacific.<sup>119</sup> Second, where indigenous histories speak to the Pacific World, these, too, parallel ethnohistory in the context of the Atlantic World. In recent decades, scholars described the Americas as the “Indians’ Old World” and increasingly adopted a perspective that “faces east” toward the Atlantic.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, historians of the Pacific are concerned with native peoples inhabiting a “sea of islands” or a vast “water continent,” and looking outward to

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<sup>118</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World Economy, 1600-1750, with a New Prologue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), xxii-xxv.

<sup>119</sup> Arif Dirlik, “The Asia-Pacific Idea,” 55-79.; Arrell Gibson, *Yankees in Paradise: The Pacific Basin Frontier* (Santa Fe: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>120</sup> Neal Salisbury, “The Indians’ Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans,” *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series* 53, no. 3, Indians and Others in Early America (1996): 435-458.; Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 7-8

neighbors beyond the horizon.<sup>121</sup> This dissertation adopts a similar maritime view, to describe the interactions between American fur traders and three communities defined by a relationship to the sea. Once again, the interpretive similarities draw attention to the application of an Atlantic-World model to the Pacific.

Nevertheless, both oceans maintain their individual properties as subjects of historical analysis, and the *Columbia* expeditions help to illuminate the differences between them. David Igler asserts that considerations of periodicity, scale, demographics, indigenous contact, and global commerce help to distinguish the Pacific.<sup>122</sup> Despite the “integrative phase” common to both oceans, that phase began almost three centuries later in the Pacific. Moreover, integration of the ocean occurred in large part because of *Columbia* and other pioneering commercial vessels.<sup>123</sup> The staggering scale of the Pacific, an “ocean hemisphere” covering one-third of the world’s surface, also contributes to its historical differences. By the middle seventeenth century, maritime activities had become routine in the Atlantic World. In contrast, the “tyranny of distance” continued to define the Pacific a century later. Expeditions to the ocean hemisphere, such as *Columbia*, faced the combined hazards of disease, typhoons, violence, lapses in

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<sup>121</sup> Epeli Hau’ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” *Contemporary Pacific* 6 (1994): 153.; Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds*, 5.; Mansel G. Blackford, *Pathways to the Present: U.S. Development and its Consequences in the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>122</sup> Igler, *The Great Ocean*, 10.

<sup>123</sup> William H. Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery* (New York: Viking Press, 1986), 232-33.

communications, and other undiscovered dangers—all impossibly far away from friendly shores.<sup>124</sup> Large human migrations, comparable to the Atlantic Slave Trade or immigration to the Americas, did not occur in the Pacific. Prior to the voyage of the *Columbia*, the largest migration was the Pleistocene peopling of Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, and Australasia, thousands of years in the past. *Columbia* sailed during a century when Pacific Islanders, traveling abroad as “cosmopolitans” for short periods, constituted the bulk of “migrants” in the Pacific.<sup>125</sup> Even the First Fleet that transported convicts to New South Wales did not arrive in Australia until 1788, contemporaneous with *Columbia*’s appearance in the Pacific.<sup>126</sup>

Meanwhile, distance buffered the indigenous peoples of the Pacific World from regular contact with Europeans until the final decades of the eighteenth century. When *Columbia* doubled Cape Horn, she exited the “red, white, and black” Atlantic and entered an ocean where regular interaction between Islanders and Europeans was less than a generation old.<sup>127</sup> On the Northwest Coast, her first destination, contact had occurred

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<sup>124</sup> Barry M. Gough, *Distant Dominion: Britain and the Northwest Coast of America, 1579-1809* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 1-7.

<sup>125</sup> Thomas, *Islanders*, 13-23, 47-53.; James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 141-42.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia’s Founding* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 43-83.

<sup>127</sup> Gary Nash, *Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early North America* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 1-15.

only a few years before, during the age of Captain Cook, if at all. Globalization and the “integrative phase” also accelerated more quickly than in the Atlantic. In 1788, *Columbia* marked the first appearance of the “Boston Men,” and their particular brand of market capitalism, in the Pacific.<sup>128</sup> Just two decades later, hundreds of American trading, whaling, and scavenger vessels would operate in the ocean hemisphere.<sup>129</sup>

This work also contends, however, that the *Columbia* expeditions complicate and extend Iglér’s interpretation of Pacific World. Iglér devotes only passing attention to *Columbia* in his landmark work, *The Great Ocean*, and his incorporation of primary sources relating to the voyages is quite selective. For example, he concludes that the Columbians preferred a strategy of “confrontation” and that “violence often figured prominently” in their expeditions.<sup>130</sup> I argue, on the contrary, that the expedition’s hallmark was its pragmatism in fostering conditions of mutual accommodation. *Columbia* is conspicuously absent in Iglér’s treatment of the maritime fur trade, the Northwest Coast, and Canton, even though her expeditions reveal much about the character of Early American involvement in those locations. Moreover, his analysis barely touches upon voyages prior to 1800.<sup>131</sup> Observations such as these, which challenge Iglér, do not detract from the significance of his broad claims about the Pacific World. Here,

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<sup>128</sup> Phelps, “Solid Men of Boston in the Northwest,” 31-83.

<sup>129</sup> Gibson, *Yankees in Paradise* 109-30, 131-43, 155-60.

<sup>130</sup> Iglér, *The Great Ocean*, 15, 77-82.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-20, 30, 33-36, 105-11.

*Columbia* contextualizes the beginnings of the “vital interplay between global, oceanic, and local scales of history,” and therefore, extends his argument backward into the eighteenth century.<sup>132</sup> Occupying a moment between the “scientific” and “commercial” periods of European involvement in the Pacific, the *Columbia* deepens our understanding the connections between these eras. Moreover, her voyages reveal environments in which American and European “hegemonic power” had not attained the prominence of later decades. Most importantly, the voyages underscore new conditions of “glocality” that connected the communities of Boston, the Northwest Coast, and Canton. Indeed, *Columbia* extends Iglar’s claim that the eighteenth-century Pacific “was not a single ocean world,” and demonstrates how it became an integrated, discernable ocean region.<sup>133</sup>

#### *A Note on Names*

Jason sent his invitation to all the adventurous young men of Greece, and soon found himself as the head of a band of bold youths... They are called the Argonauts, from the name of their vessel.

Throughout this work I refer to the captains and crew of both vessels, the *Columbia* and *Washington*, as the “Columbians.” The term connects them strongly to their flagship, in much the same manner as the Greek Argonauts are associated with a

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 4.

quest for the Golden Fleece aboard the ship *Argo*. The Columbians were American mariners, to be sure, but their significance as pioneers in the distant Pacific sets them apart from other Americans who followed them in later years. The *Columbia* expeditions took them far beyond the red line, so to speak, and frequently carried them into uncharted waters. Their choices, their attitudes, and the economic conditions they conjured into being, set the stage for American domination of the maritime fur trade, and the Pacific World, in later years. Thomas Bulfinch, the great American collector of mythologies, explained the *Argo* legend in terms that could easily describe the voyages of the *Columbia*:

This is one of those mythological tales, says a modern writer, in which there is reason to believe that a substratum of truth exists, though overlaid by a mass of fiction. It probably was the first important maritime expedition, and like the first attempts of the kind of all nations, as we know from history, was probably of a half-piratical character. If rich spoils were the result, it was enough to give rise to the idea of the golden fleece.<sup>134</sup>

It is possible that Bulfinch sensed this connection more strongly than we might expect. His father, the architect Charles Bulfinch, invested in the *Columbia*, which sailed in pursuit of its own golden fleece, the sea otter. Boston men set out to become the first “Free and Independent Americans” to enter the Pacific, touch upon the Northwest Coast,

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<sup>134</sup> Epigram and quotation from Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable, the Age of Chivalry, and Legends of Charlemagne* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1913), 131-32.

and return by an audacious circumnavigation of the globe.<sup>135</sup> During their odyssey, the Columbians allied with Indian chiefs, negotiated with representatives of an emperor, and first sighted the “Great River of the West.” Family history, local history, and global history became intertwined. If anything has the makings of a national mythology for the United States, it is the epic of the Columbians. And yet, as Bulfinch observed, when one peels back the veneer of myth, the “substratum” of complicated, unusual, and surprising reality is often more instructive than the legend itself.

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<sup>135</sup> Joseph Barrell “Orders Given Captain John Kendrick,” 112.



CHAPTER II  
“ADVENTURE TO THE PACIFIC”

In 1787, just after the departure of his ships *Columbia Rediviva* and *Lady Washington* from Boston, Joseph Barrell, esquire, penned a short note to accompany a package sent to the Congress of the Confederation, then meeting in New York:

Mr. Barrell in behalf of the Owners of the Adventure to the Pacific Ocean presents his most respectfull Compliments, to His Excellency the President of Congress, and Requests the honor of his Acceptance of a Medal struck on the Occasion.<sup>1</sup>

There is no record of the President’s reaction to receiving the medal, but its significance would could not have been overlooked. The medal, which celebrated the first American voyage to the distant Pacific, was also the first private commemorative piece struck in the United States. According to scattered and often inconsistent sources, Barrell is believed to have ordered some 300 medals in pewter, copper, and silver. Of these, he “caused also about a dozen silver ones to be struck; one of which was sent to General

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Barrell to President of Congress, n.d., probably 1787, enclosure with *Columbia and Washington* medal, ALS, Columbia Papers II, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Washington.”<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Barrell presented medals to the Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson, and their common friend, John Adams.<sup>3</sup> The medal was striking in simplicity and beauty, befitting a new nation founded upon republican principles only eleven years earlier. The obverse face featured a relief of the ship *Columbia* and its consort, the sloop *Lady Washington*, sailing together on a placid, indeed pacific, ocean. The unassuming legend “Columbia and Washington commanded by J. Kendrick” was embossed upon its broad, upset rim. The reverse face provided a continuation to that legend, stating that ships had been “Fitted at Boston N. America for the Pacific Ocean.” The words were illuminated by a shimmering star, perhaps a reference to the “New Constellation” of thirteen stars, one per state, on the new nation’s flag.<sup>4</sup> The legend concluded by

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to the four silver medals presented to the President of Congress, Washington, Jefferson, and Adams, three more are known to have been in the possession of Barrell, his brother-in-law Samuel Blatchley Webb, and Captain Robert Gray. Assuming that Hoskins is correct, and Barrell ordered a full dozen, the remaining medals were probably distributed to the other five investors in the voyage. See John Box Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’” in *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-90 & 1790-1793*, ed., Frederic Howay, ed. (Portland: Oregon Historical Society in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), 162.; Anne E. Bentley, “The Columbia-Washington Medal” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Third Series*, 101 (1989), 120-27.

<sup>3</sup> “Joseph Barrell to Thomas Jefferson, 24 November 1787,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 12, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 379.; Joseph Barrell, Boston, to John Adams, 24 November 1787, ALS, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>4</sup> Eran Shalev has demonstrated that astronomical knowledge affected the language and representation of politics during the eighteenth century. For example, “strong monarchs” such as Philip IV of Spain and James I of England presented themselves as the “embodiment of their respective states” and “as celestial bodies, particularly the sun.” Louis XIV of France, who may have uttered “I am the state” and cultivated a popular image as the “sun king,” is only the most obvious example. In this scheme, kings became the “monarchical pivot” around which “other planets,” symbolizing the subjects and territories of the nation, would “revolve.” By contrast, the United States adopted astronomical language and symbols to represent a nation constituted on republican principles. For example, in 1775, scientist John Rittenhouse delivered an oration that

attributing the expedition to Joseph Barrell and his partners—Samuel Brown, Charles Bulfinch, John Derby, Crowell Hatch, and John M. Pintard. The medal, long supposed to have been designed by Paul Revere, is now suspected to have been the handiwork of another Bostonian engraver, Joseph Callender, or perhaps even Barrell himself.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 5. Joseph Barrell and Joseph Callender. The *Columbia and Washington* Medal, 1787, obverse and reverse in silver, ex Appleton, 42 mm., Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

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likened the thirteen colonies to a “new American constellation” of thirteen stars. Ideology and iconography became even more closely connected during the American Revolutionary War. In 1776, the *Pennsylvania Ledger* published an essay describing the thirteen stars as “united upon the principles of perfect equality... gravitating towards one another.” Congress adopted the same iconography on June 14, 1777, when it designated that “the Flag of the thirteen United States” should feature “Thirteen Stars, white in a Blue Field, representing a new Constellation.” See Eran Shalev, “‘A Republic Amidst the Stars’: Political Astronomy and the Intellectual Origins of the Stars and Stripes” *Journal of the Early Republic* 31, no. 1 (2011): 40-42, 49-53.; *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, vol. 8, 1777, May 22-October 2, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), 464.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Barrell and Joseph Callender, *Columbia and Washington* medal, 1787, obverse and reverse in silver, ex Appleton, Massachusetts Historical Society; Bentley, “The Columbia-Washington Medal”, 121-23.

What justified this extraordinary act—that of sending commemorative medals of a Bostonian maritime enterprise to the new nation’s political elites? How might Washington, Jefferson, and Adams have reacted to receiving such an artifact as a gift? What was the meaning of the *Columbia*? Most likely, the three luminaries would have been enormously proud of what the expedition’s two captains, John Kendrick and Robert Gray, set out to accomplish. Certainly, the projected voyage was ambitious in the extreme. If successful, the *Columbia* and *Lady Washington* would become the first United States vessels to enter the Pacific Ocean. There, Kendrick and Gray would pioneer upon an American fur trade between the Northwest Coast and China. Later, having realized a significant profit, the *Columbia* and *Lady Washington* would return to the United States with cargoes of valuable tea, porcelain, and silk. In doing so, the vessels would achieve another “first”—becoming the first ships to circumnavigate the globe under American colors. Washington, Jefferson, and Adams must have recognized the enormous material requirements, financial risks, and unavoidable danger involved in the enterprise.

The *Columbia* expedition emerged from transformations in the political economy of the United States during and after the Revolutionary War. The experience of war taught American merchants crucial lessons about entrepreneurship, risk, innovation, resilience, and vision. In the aftermath, many merchants—and particularly Bostonians—advanced a program of free trade on the global stage. The *Columbia-Washington Medal* provides a window into the planning of, and provides a mission statement for, two voyages of commercial expansion in the Pacific. Such an ambitious program could only

be accomplished through a combination of ingenuity, information, and imagination. This chapter addresses each point in turn. First, it examines Joseph Barrell, the American entrepreneur most responsible for launching *Columbia*. Second, the chapter assesses the perspectives of three national leaders—Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams—whose views shaped American engagement with the Pacific World. Finally, the chapter shows how Barrell advanced his commercial vision and assembled the financial, human, and physical resources necessary to mount the expedition. In short, the Revolutionary War prepared merchant-capitalists, national statesmen, and veteran mariners to overcome the challenges of sending an expedition, that of *Columbia* and *Washington*, into the distant Pacific.

*“Fitted at Boston N. America... by J. Barrell...”*

What follows is the first detailed account of the life of Joseph Barrell, the entrepreneur responsible for sending Americans to the Pacific in 1787.<sup>6</sup> Barrell’s contemporaries regarded him as “well qualified by his experience and ability for taking the lead in such matters.”<sup>7</sup> How did this businessman, barely remembered today, develop the “experience and ability” needed to plan such an ambitious venture?

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<sup>6</sup> The information gathered here is collected from a wealth of primary and secondary documents, including letters, probate records, memoirs, periodicals, and government records. My account does not include the business records of N. Barrell and Company, housed within the Harvard Business Library, which lie outside the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Bulfinch, *The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch, Architect, with other Family Papers*, ed. Ellen Susan Bulfinch, editor (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), 64.

Joseph, born in 1740, would not have been the natural bet to become the most famous Barrell in history—his ancestors had accomplished much since the family immigrated to America, and his older brothers preceded him in business. Barrell descended from a family of coopers known since the time of the Norman Conquest of England. His adventurous forebear, George Barrell, hailed from the village of St. Michaels, one of the twelve “saints” parishes in Suffolk. In 1637, during a period of increasing social and political discontent, George and his family immigrated to the new colony of Massachusetts Bay, becoming one of thousands who took passage to New England during the “Great Migration.”<sup>8</sup> Settling in Boston, an aspiring village, he acquired a “great lot at the Mount” and resumed his family trade.<sup>9</sup> George’s eldest son John also trained as a cooper. Like his father, John intended to improve his own condition, albeit through social climbing rather than immigration. In 1643, he assumed the family business and entered service as a sergeant in the town’s artillery company. The status of an independent proprietor and a militia leader burnished his reputation as a solid

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<sup>8</sup> Drawn from a sketch of the Barrell genealogy included in a biographical memoir of the geologist Joseph Barrell, grandson of the merchant Joseph Barrell, and presented to the National Academy of Sciences at its annual meeting. See Charles Schuchert, *Biographical Memoir of Joseph Barrell, 1869-1919* (Washington: National Academy of Sciences, 1925), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Annie Haven Thwing compiled thousands of probate, title deed, and inheritance records into a single index, now located at Massachusetts Historical Society. See Annie Haven Thwing, *Inhabitants and estates of the town of Boston, 1630-1800: and the crooked and narrow streets of Boston 1630-1822* [CD-ROM] (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society and Massachusetts Historical Society, 2001), Reference Code 4591.

citizen.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, he married Mary Colburn, the daughter of William Colburn, a founder of the colony and an influential figure in Boston.<sup>11</sup> Their marriage placed the Barrell family in line for a share of the Colburn inheritance.<sup>12</sup>

John Barrell, Jr. began the family transition from manual labor to commercial enterprise. In 1673, he worked as a “servant” to Samuel Ward, also a cooper, perhaps in the capacity of an apprentice.<sup>13</sup> The arrangement must not have appealed to him—later generations remembered him alternatively as a “mariner,” “shopkeeper,” or even “Captain Barrell.”<sup>14</sup> His marriage to Abiah Sanderson, the daughter of a merchant, provided some of the capital necessary to embark upon a new, more profitable line of business. She brought three houses, a tenement, land, and £20 sterling into the marriage.<sup>15</sup> Following their wedding, John, Jr. established a small retail enterprise on Newbury Street. From 1706-1711, he constructed a stable on “his pasture” at South End, presumably to facilitate the movement of merchandise into, out of, and around Boston. Likewise, he made two additions to his “timber shop” on Newberry Street and

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<sup>10</sup> Thwing, *Inhabitants and estates of the town of Boston, 1630-1800*, Reference Code 4593.

<sup>11</sup> Schuchert, *Biographical Memoir of Joseph Barrell*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Thwing, *Inhabitants and estates of the town of Boston, 1630-1800*, Reference Codes 4608, 16160.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Reference Code 59967.

<sup>14</sup> Schuchert, *Biographical Memoir of Joseph Barrell*, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Thwing, *Inhabitants and estates of the town of Boston, 1630-1800*, Reference Codes 888, 889.

constructed a “new brick house” on the premises.<sup>16</sup> John, Jr. never knew his grandfather, George, who brought the Barrell family to Massachusetts, nor would he survive to meet his grandson Joseph, whose ship *Columbia* would carry a new nation into the Pacific. To his son, John Barrell III, he left a burgeoning family fortune and a middle-class lifestyle unknown to his ancestors.

Boston was a town in transition during the eighteenth century, and John Barrell III took advantage of its new commercial orientation. Considered “a well educated man and a successful shipping merchant,” he transformed the family business into a merchant house with connections throughout the Atlantic World.<sup>17</sup> John III purchased ships, established an overseas network of agents, and developed a vigorous shipping business between Massachusetts, Virginia, Great Britain, and distant places such as the Canary Islands.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, he amassed a fortune while supplying the British garrison in Nova

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Reference Code 4596.

<sup>17</sup> Schuchert, *Biographical Memoir of Joseph Barrell*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Oxnard, “To All people to whom these presents shall come, Thomas Oxnard, Samuel Wentworth, and Chales Aphorp of Boston, merchants, send greeting. Whereas Joseph Gerrish and John Barrell of Boston, merchants, of the one part, and Alexander French, late master of the ship *Hallowell* of Boston, of the other part, by their mutual bonds, of the twelfth of October instant, have submitted themselves to our final determination of all matters depending between them...” (Boston, 1739), *Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1679-1800*, Charles Evans and Roger P. Bristol, contributors (microfiche), no. 49215.



Scotia during King George's War.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, he married Ruth Green, with whom he fathered eight sons from 1729-45—Joseph Barrell and his brothers.<sup>20</sup>

According to tradition, Joseph's eldest brothers could be expected to inherit and either share, divide, or liquidate the family business. Indeed, Nathaniel assumed control the commercial house, which received the new name "N. Barrell and Company."<sup>21</sup> Colburn established a partnership with blacksmith Edward Foster, merchants Benjamin Davis and Edward King, and wharfinger Isaac Winslow, Jr.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Walter accepted a position as customs inspector in Nova Scotia.<sup>23</sup> Upon coming of age, Joseph became a junior partner at N. Barrell and Company.<sup>24</sup> Here, he learned the principles of accounting, investment, projected returns, and shipping—expertise that informed later ventures such

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<sup>19</sup> John Barrell III partnered with Joseph Gerrish, a veteran of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, to establish the provisions trade to Anapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. Later generations of the family would maintain these connections with the British government, prompting Colburn Barrell, a loyalist, to repatriate to London during the American Revolution. See Thwing, *Inhabitants and estates of the town of Boston, 1630-1800*, Reference Code 20936.; Stephen E. Patterson, "GERRISH, JOSEPH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 4*, (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003– ), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gerrish\\_joseph\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gerrish_joseph_4E.html) (Accessed on 23 May 2015).

<sup>20</sup> John Barrell III's eight sons were named John Nathaniel ("Nathaniel"), Colburn, Walter, Joseph (of *Columbia* fame), Theodore, William, Jeremiah, and Edward. Thwing, *Inhabitants and estates of the town of Boston, 1630-1800*, Reference Code 4597.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Reference Code 4597.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Reference Code 4601.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Reference Code 4605.

<sup>24</sup> Julie Aronson and Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Perfect Likeness: European and American Portrait Miniatures from the Cincinnati Art Museum* (New Haven: Yale University Press for Cincinnati Art Museum, 2006), 150.

as the *Columbia*.<sup>25</sup> For the moment, however, he continued training under his older brothers. In 1761, he began selling imported textiles, probably on consignment, out of R. Traill's store near the Boston Work House.<sup>26</sup> Soon enough, he planned to open his own business.



Figure 6. John Singleton Copley, *Portrait of Joseph Barrell*, c.1767, pastel on cream laid paper, 59.4 x 47 cm., Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA.

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<sup>25</sup> Barrell kept detailed records in advance of the second *Columbia* expedition recorded expenditures, including categories for outfit, provisions, tools, and cargo. [Joseph Barrell], "Expenditures for the *Columbia*'s Outfit and Cargo" in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 448-64.

<sup>26</sup> "Just Imported, and to be Sold by Joseph Barrell" *New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), 13 February 1761.

Like so many other Americans, Barrell found himself transformed by the American Revolution. The conflict informed his thinking about entrepreneurship, risk, and innovation, while instilling in him a sense of resilience. Most importantly, however, the revolutionary era forced him to embrace innovation and shaped his vision for the *Columbia* expedition.<sup>27</sup> In short, the struggle for independence taught him the lessons necessary for launching a commercial expedition to the Far East.<sup>28</sup>

Joseph Barrell faced significant risks from the moment he opened his “new STORE by the STATE-HOUSE,” in a high-rent commercial district of Boston, in 1762.<sup>29</sup> Many leading merchants considered the town to be saturated with retail shops.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> In modern terms, Joseph Barrell embodied several concepts central to the development of a successful business. Three of these, the identities of the *entrepreneur*, *risk-taker*, and *innovator*, can be measured in terms of discrete business outcomes. The remaining two characteristics, *resilience* and *vision*, are intangibles crucial to the survival and success of groundbreaking enterprises. Here, I evaluate his development of the first four characteristics, with special attention to wartime conditions and his home community of Boston. The fifth characteristic, *vision*, is addressed later in this chapter.

<sup>28</sup> In this respect, however, Barrell was not alone among American businessmen. Robert Morris and Elias Hasket Derby, shipping magnates of Philadelphia and Salem, respectively, also intended to revive national commerce through the China Trade. Both men launched profitable voyages to China via the Indian Ocean. In preparing to send his own expedition to the Far East, however, Barrell favored the Pacific. See Charles Rappleye, *Robert Morris: Financier of the American Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 386-90; E.H. Derby, Jr., “Elias Hasket Derby” in *Lives of American Merchants*, ed. Freeman Hunt (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1858), 2:52-54.

<sup>29</sup> “Imported and to be sold by Joseph Barrell” *New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), 19 November 1761.

<sup>30</sup> John W. Tyler, “Persistence and Change in the Boston Business Community, 1775-1790,” in *Entrepreneurs: The Boston Business Community, 1700-1850*, eds. Conrad Edick Wright and Kathryn P Viens (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1997), 101.

Moreover, commercial risk abounded in the 1760s, a period of imperial crisis in which a political rift gradually opened between Great Britain and America.<sup>31</sup> Barrell later remembered the period as one of “adversity” and “difficulties.”<sup>32</sup> In accepting the substantial risk of opening a grocery under such conditions, he exemplified the spirit of an entrepreneur, and set himself apart from his oldest brothers, who merely inherited and managed a successful family business.<sup>33</sup> The Stamp Act Crisis erupted in 1765, while Barrell was still becoming established in his new business. Merchants faced difficult choices in navigating the controversy. For Barrell, just starting out and struggling to build a customer base, the options posed a quandry: support Parliament and face public alienation, or endorse the Sons of Liberty and risk official retribution. Later generations remembered that he “he early espoused, and during the whole course of his life firmly maintained, the cause of his country.”<sup>34</sup> Like his Patriot brothers, Nathaniel and Colburn,

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<sup>31</sup> T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 204-34.

<sup>32</sup> Barrell used this language in conversation with John Adams. See John Adams, “Monday. June 17th. 1771,” *The Adams Papers, Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, vol. 2, 1771–1781, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), 35–37.

<sup>33</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary defines *entrepreneur* as “one who undertakes an enterprise.” The entrepreneur, then, accepts the financial responsibility for the *success* or *failure* of a *new* business. I contrast this definition against a different understanding of the entrepreneur as “one who owns and manages a business.” The second sense can apply to individuals who inherit, purchase, or otherwise enter into an *existing* business with a *proven* track record. In doing so, this “entrepreneur” risks little and is, in reality, a business manager. “entrepreneur, n.” OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/62991?redirectedFrom=Entrepreneur> (accessed May 26, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> “Died, at his seat, Pleasant Hill, Saturday morning last, very suddenly, Joseph Barrell, Esq.: in the 65<sup>th</sup> year of his age.” *New England Palladium* (Boston, Massachusetts), 13 October 1804.

he probably supported the Sons of Liberty in spirit if not in word.<sup>35</sup> For a young entrepreneur, the economic conditions of Boston shaped a volatile business environment. Although Parliament repealed the Stamp Act in 1766, the Townshend Acts, introduced in 1767, renewed the constitutional crisis and prompted another wave of boycotts. Bostonian merchants approved a comprehensive non-importation agreement that targeted all goods from England. Crucially, however, the agreement sought to “encourage the Use and Consumption of all Articles manufactured in any of the British American Colonies.”<sup>36</sup>

The new constraints did not stop Barrell. By 1768, he expanded his business to a grocery in Boston’s South End. Here, he advertised tea, sugar, peppers, chocolate, spices, and spirits in the customer’s choice of “large or small Quantities, on the very lowest terms for Cash.” While he did continue to sell “a few *English Goods*,” these did not necessarily breach the terms of non-importation. Barrell could justify the questionable items as having been purchased through middlemen in other colonies.<sup>37</sup> Few would have

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*Early American Imprints, Series II, 1801-1819*, Ralph R. Shaw and Richard R., contributors (microfiche), no. 6166.

<sup>35</sup> John Howard Smith, *The Perfect Rule of the Christian Religion: A History of Sandemanianism in the Eighteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 124-127, 149-151, 143, 151, 160.

<sup>36</sup> “Whereas this province labours under a heavy debt, incurred in the course of the late war : and the inhabitants by this means must be for some time subject to very burthensome taxes ...” Boston : [s.n.], 1767. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

<sup>37</sup> “To be sold by Joseph Barrell, The third Store on the South Side of Town-Dock, near the Swing-Bridge...” *Boston Gazette, and Country Journal*, 4 January 1768.

quarreled with this explanation, as he was considered “fair and honorable” by his peers.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, he probably acquired tea through smugglers, perhaps those associated with the Dutch East India Company.<sup>39</sup> The non-importation movement taught Barrell the value of adaptation in the face of institutional, social, or political obstacles.

Barrell became a seasoned risk-taker prior to the *Columbia* expeditions. Although risk is never desirable, Barrell understood it as a necessary evil in building a business. Consequently, he was not afraid to bet on a promising enterprise.<sup>40</sup> Even political economists of the eighteenth century recognized the centrality of risk. Richard Cantillon, a Franco-Irish economist, proposed the first theoretical treatment of the “entrepreneur” in his tract *Essai Sur la Nature du Commerce en Général* (1755). Here, Cantillon argued that entrepreneurs are best understood as those who “establish themselves with capital to run their enterprise” and “may be considered to be living with uncertainty.”<sup>41</sup> The

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<sup>38</sup> “Died, at his seat, Pleasant Hill,” *New England Palladium*, 13 October 1804.

<sup>39</sup> Victor Enthoven, “‘That Abominable Nest of Pirates’: St. Eustatius and the North Americans, 1680-1780” *Early American Studies* 10, no. 2, Special Issue: Anglo-Dutch Revolutions (2012): 244, 267-72, 276-93.

<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the Oxford English Dictionary provides a second definition of *entrepreneur* as “one who takes the risk of profit or loss” in an enterprise. This dimension of the entrepreneur, as the *risk-taker*, or what modern industry might deem a “risk management specialist,” is crucial to the development and growth of a business. “entrepreneur, n.” Oxford English Dictionary Online. March 2015. See Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/62991?redirectedFrom=Entrepreneur> (accessed May 26, 2015).; Tony Aspromourgos, “Entrepreneurship, Risk and Income Distribution in Cantillon’s *Essai*” in *Classical Political Economy and Modern Theory: Essays in Honour of Heinz Kurz*, eds. Christian Ghrke, Neri Salvadori, Ian Steedman, and Richard Sturn (London: Routledge, 2012): 105-119.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Cantillon, *Essai sur le Commerce* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1892), 71-72. Translation from French by this author.

uncertainty, he explained, resulted from an entrepreneur allocating known sums for goods, services, and equipment, without reliable foreknowledge of profits.

Entrepreneurial success, therefore, depended upon the business person becoming expert in the estimation and mitigation of risk. Cantillon categorized a variety of business people as “entrepreneurs,” including “merchants in wholesale and retail” as well as “those who purchase commodities... and transport them.”<sup>42</sup> During the turbulent 1770s, just as the term *entrepreneur* was becoming commonplace, Joseph Barrell expanded his business to include shipping—a trade fraught with risk on the high seas. By expanding into a second line of work, he exemplified the range of entrepreneurial activities available to a Bostonian.

During the non-importation movement, Barrell weathered his first major challenge, but the eruption of hostilities between the “United Colonies” and Great Britain presented an entirely new set of conditions. During the Revolutionary War, British warships enforced a blockade against the Thirteen Colonies, thus limiting imports of consumer and strategic goods. Elsewhere, British merchantmen ferried military supplies across the Atlantic.<sup>43</sup> For Americans, Privateer vessels represented a solution to both problems, and also an opportunity for a ship owner to reap astronomical profits.

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. Translation from French by this author.

<sup>43</sup> William M. Fowler, Jr., *Rebels Under Sail: The American Navy during the Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1976), 87-91.

Privateers usually began as small merchant or fishing vessels.<sup>44</sup> Fitted with light armament, manned by a skilled crew, and chartered with an official *lettres de marque*, such vessels became privateers authorized to take prizes at sea. In doing so, they deprived Britain of its shipping and simultaneously acquired goods needed in America.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the cost to outfit a privateer was feasible even for middling businessmen. One could acquire guns, equipment, and supplies for around £1,000 sterling, a sum comparable to Barrell's commercial losses during the early conflict.<sup>46</sup> Privateers often took prizes valued at tens of thousands of pounds. Custom dictated that the crewmembers receive half the value of a prize, while the remaining fifty percent belonged to the owner.<sup>47</sup> Barrell could theoretically recover his investment, and realize a profit, with a single cruise.

Privateering, however, was not without its pitfalls. As one historian of the revolution at sea has observed, "If the profits were high, so too were the risks."<sup>48</sup>

Schooners and sloops, though often able to escape from heavier vessels, could not stand

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<sup>44</sup> Carl E. Swanson, "American Privateering and Imperial Warfare, 1739-1748" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1985): 363.

<sup>45</sup> Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail*, 13.

<sup>46</sup> In 1776, Barrell's grocery burned during a fire in Boston's South End, as I discuss below in context of his *resilience*. The grocery losses appear to have sparked his interest in shifting investments to privateers. See Swanson, "American Privateering and Imperial Warfare, 1739-1748," 364.

<sup>47</sup> Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail*, 13.; Paul A Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 23.

<sup>48</sup> Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail*, 13.



gun-to-gun against British warships. Under poor wind conditions, or an incompetent master, a privateer might be captured or sunk, causing a businessman to forfeit his investment. Facing potential losses, Joseph Barrell became an expert in the management of risk. In doing so, he benefitted from local knowledge. Colonial investors launched hundreds of privateers—and took thousands of prizes—during earlier wars between Great Britain and France. Such expertise, which enabled a novice investor to anticipate risks, still circulated in the living memory of New Englanders.<sup>49</sup> Barrell could also consult his peers about risks unique to the revolutionary conflict. Massachusetts launched 958 privateers, carrying more than 35,000 crewmembers, during the Revolutionary War. Boston alone contributed 349 vessels.<sup>50</sup> There was no shortage of fresh information, or rumor, about wartime conditions at sea.

Barrell managed his investments through the common practice of sharing risk with multiple investment partners. Prior to 1779, he purchased a share in the *General Putnam*, a privateer owned by his brother, William Barrell of Philadelphia. Likewise, he also invested in the *Satisfaction* and *Vengeance*, ships owned by merchants in Newbury and Boston.<sup>51</sup> Beginning in 1779, he became the managing partner in collaboration with his

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<sup>49</sup> Swanson “American Privateering and Imperial Warfare, 1739-1748,” 359-61, 377.

<sup>50</sup> Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Third Series* 64 (October 1930 – January 1932), 45.

<sup>51</sup> William James Morgan, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, vol. 5 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1970), 792.; William James Morgan, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, vol. 7 (Washington: Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy,

brother-in-law, Colonel Samuel Webb of Wethersfield, Connecticut. Together, they financed several successful privateers, such as *Revenge*, *General Gates*, *Beaver*, and *Recovery*.<sup>52</sup> Barrell launched other vessels, including *American Tarter*, *Friends Adventure*, and *General Lee*, in partnership with fellow Bostonians.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, he took advantage of an employer's market in skilled seamen. Economic hardship in Massachusetts made the privateer an attractive option for sailors. The promise of regular wages, combined with the allure of prize money, drew many experienced sea workers from the waterfront to the deck.<sup>54</sup> A few sailors, such as Thomas Allen, who served aboard Barrell's vessel, *General Putnam*, returned with sufficient winnings to start new, profitable businesses of their own.<sup>55</sup> Barrell also profited handsomely upon his investment in privateers. *Vengeance* and *Revenge* each captured "large and valuable prize

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1976), 33.; Michael J. Crawford, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution, Volume 11* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 301.

<sup>52</sup> "Joseph Barrell to George Washington, 10 January, 1779" in *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, vol. 18, ed. Edeard G. Lengel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 609.; "Samuel Webb to Joseph Barrell, 6 July 1779" in *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb, Vol. II, 1778-1782*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford, (Lancaster, PA: Wickerham Press, 1893), 176.; "Joseph Barrell to Samuel Webb, 12 August, 1779" in *ibid.*, 194-95.; "Joseph Barrell to Samuel Webb, 30 March, 1780" in *ibid.*, 255-56.

<sup>53</sup> Gardner Weld Allen, *Massachusetts Privateers of the American Revolution* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1927), 73, 140, 203.

<sup>54</sup> Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail*, 13-14, 29-30.

<sup>55</sup> Sidney G. Morse, "The Yankee Privateersman of 1776" *The New England Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (March, 1944): 83.

ship[s]” that “more than cleared the first cost” of his investments.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, his customers maintained a steady appetite for captured cargoes, which included “Brown Sugar, Gin in Cases, French Brandy in Anchors” and “a few Cask of excellent Porter.”<sup>57</sup> Even where the prizes were insignificant, such as two oystermen, they were “palatable if not profitable.”<sup>58</sup> In short, privateering made Barrell an expert in the management of commercial risk.

Joseph Barrell also understood the value of innovation in business. Unlike the willingness to accept risks, the impulse toward innovation was not considered a defining characteristic of the entrepreneur during the eighteenth century. Like many businessmen of the revolutionary era, though, Barrell saw opportunities to deliver goods and services in new, creative ways.<sup>59</sup> He launched an innovative new enterprise in September, 1778, when the French Admiral, Charles Hector, Comte d’Estaing, brought his fleet to anchor

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<sup>56</sup> “Samuel Webb to Joseph Barrell, 6 July 1779” in *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb*, 2:176.

<sup>57</sup> “Joseph Barrell has for Sale, at the Store of Mr. Storer, in Union-Street” in *The Independent Ledger, and American Advertiser* (Boston, Massachusetts), 15 June 1778.

<sup>58</sup> “Samuel Webb to Joseph Barrell, 4 October 1779,” in *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb*, 2:205-06.

<sup>59</sup> Business scholar Scott Shane emphasizes that entrepreneurship depends upon “the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new goods and services” using organizations or methods “that previously had not existed.” Similarly, social scientist Peter F. Drucker describes innovation as “the means by which the entrepreneur either creates new wealth-producing resources or endows existing resources with enhanced potential for creating wealth.” In short, innovation enables new ventures to expand or improve upon existing business models. See Scott Shane, *A General Theory of Entrepreneurship: The Individual-Opportunity Nexus* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2004), 4-8.; Peter F. Drucker, “The Discipline of Innovation” *Harvard Business Review* 63, no. 3 (1985): 67.

in Boston Harbor. The fleet, sailing in support of the Franco-American alliance, included twelve ships of the line, four frigates, and more than 7,500 hungry crewmembers.<sup>60</sup> Their presence placed a heavy demand upon local resources. In the countryside, towns complained that the quartering of French troops created a dearth of household goods, foodstuffs, and livestock. Meanwhile, bread shortages triggered riots against the French in Boston.<sup>61</sup> Something had to be done. Charles Bulfinch recalled that “the unsettled state of the time prevented Mr. Barrell from engaging in any active business” prior to the arrival of d’Estaing.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Barrell perceived a golden opportunity to serve his country’s cause, feed the French, and profit.

He probably received an introduction to the admiral, as well as the French Consul-General, during a banquet hosted for the French by Nathaniel Tracy, another Bostonian merchant.<sup>63</sup> Thereafter, he sprang into action. Barrell mobilized his longstanding knowledge of goods, prices, producers, and teamsters.<sup>64</sup> He leveraged “local

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<sup>60</sup> I use “crewmembers” here as shorthand for officers, sailors, marines, and supernumeraries. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Major Operation of the Navies in the War of American Independence* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1913), 73-77, 100, 103.

<sup>61</sup> Fitz-Henry Smith, *The French at Boston During the American Revolution with Particular Reference to the French Fleets and the Fortifications in the Harbor* (Boston: Bostonian Society, 1913), 30-31, 36.

<sup>62</sup> Bulfinch, *The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch*, 41.

<sup>63</sup> Samuel Breck, *Recollections of Samuel Breck with Passages from his Note-Books (1771-1862)*, ed. H.E. Scudder (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1877), 25.

<sup>64</sup> “Joseph Barrell to John Green, 3 November 1775” in *Boston in 1775: Letters from General Washington, Captain John Chester, Lieutenant Samuel B. Webb, and Joseph Barrell*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (Brooklyn: Historical Printing Club, 1892), 35-38.

networks of exchange” that supplied the town of Boston with “all sorts of goods and services.”<sup>65</sup> Meat, bread, butter, cheese, and vegetables were all available in Boston, but usually through small neighborhood groceries. The existing network was adequate to feed families, but not thousands of sailors.<sup>66</sup> Barrell’s principal innovation was to coordinate, regulate, and concentrate foodstuffs in quantities adequate to meet the daily subsistence needs of the fleet.<sup>67</sup> In doing so, he intensified the consolidation of “local exchanges” into a sophisticated network that provided “a general run of products” into Boston.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, he reinvested his privateer winnings—including luxury goods, sugar, and tea—toward meeting the fleet’s needs. Barrell, the neighborhood grocer and privateer

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<sup>65</sup> Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, “Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1984): 349.

<sup>66</sup> Karen J. Fiedmann, “Victualling Colonial Boston” *Agricultural History* 47, no. 3 (1973): 193-200.

<sup>67</sup> Barrell was not the only American businessman to provision the French Fleet. For example, a number of Philadelphians profited handsomely through their connections to John Holker, Jr., the French agent of marine in the United States. Thomas Fitzsimmons, Benjamin Fuller, and Stephen Girard did business in the provisions trade with West Indian islands prior to the Revolution. As agents to John Holker, they shifted the agricultural supply chain toward the Fleet. Other merchants of Philadelphia, notably Robert Morris, the American Superintendent of Marine, used their connections with Holker to engage in war profiteering through speculation on the price of provisions. See Thomas M. Doerflinger, “Commercial Specialization in Philadelphia’s Merchant Community, 1750-1791,” *The Business History Review* 57, no. 1 (1983): 39-45.; Mary A.Y. Gallagher, “Private Interest and the Public Good: Settling the Score for the Morris-Holker Business Relationship, 1778-1790” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 69, no. 21 (2002): 186-93.

<sup>68</sup> Pruitt, “Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts,” 356.

owner, combined his agricultural and maritime expertise to achieve commercial innovation.

Charles Bulfinch described the result as “three months of hurried employment” along the waterfront.<sup>69</sup> Certainly, it was among the most profitable periods in Barrell’s professional life. He realized a small commission upon all transactions occurring under his supervision, including the purchase, transport, and sale of produce to the French.<sup>70</sup> Assuming a commission of 3% on a daily fleet expenditure of more than \$50,000, less Barrell’s operating expenses, his daily profit would have exceeded \$1,400. Extended across a period of sixty days, this sum would exceed \$80,000.<sup>71</sup> The enterprise, combined with privateering, propelled him into the ranks of Boston’s post-revolutionary elites. In

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<sup>69</sup> Bulfinch, *The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch*, 42.

<sup>70</sup> Laurence Wylie, “French Sails into Boston” *The French Review*, 49, no. 6, Bicentennial Issue, Historical and Literary Relations between France and United States (1976): 893.

<sup>71</sup> This calculation depends upon knowing the complement of d’Estaing’s fleet, or about 7,500 officers and crew. Furthermore, it draws upon proposed price indexes for Colonial Massachusetts and transport costs per ton, per mile. In developing a rough calculation, I have made some assumptions where reliable data is not available: for example, in the weight per pint of porridge, or allowing Clear Cider to stand in for beer, or assuming an average transport distance of 15 miles. My calculations do not take into account a commensurate price increase relating to heavier demand upon foodstuffs during the fleet visit, only because this information cannot be estimated in a reliable manner. Finally, the overall profit is estimated for a period of 60 days, roughly corresponding to the French stay in Boston from 28 August through 4 November, with additional time allowed for Joseph Barrell to have organized his supply system. See DeB. Randolph Keim, *Rochambeau: A Commemoration by the Congress of the United States of America of the Services of the French Auxiliary Forces in the War of Independence* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1907), 203.; Winifred B. Rothenburg, “A Price Index for Rural Massachusetts, 1750-1855” *The Journal of Economic History* 39, no. 4 (1979): 975-1001.; Idem., “The Market and Massachusetts Farmers, 1750-1855” *The Journal of Economic History* 41, no. 2, (1981): 283-314.

1771, prior to the Revolutionary War, Barrell ranked among the eighth decile of taxpayers, a vulnerable, lower-middle-class position. In 1784, following the conflict, he appeared in the top, wealthiest decile of taxpayers. In fact, his postwar assets compared favorably with those of “old money” merchants such as John Hancock, William Greenleaf, and Jonathan Amory, Sr. Only one other Bostonian, Samuel Breck, a purchasing agent for Admiral d’Estaing, rose so far and so fast.<sup>72</sup>

Life was full of ups and downs for Joseph Barrell. Throughout the period, though, he exhibited the intangible qualities of resilience and perseverance.<sup>73</sup> Barrell’s eulogists stressed that “during the darkest period of his life cheerfulness never forsook him.” Success or failure notwithstanding, he remained the indomitable optimist, always maintaining a hopeful perspective on the future. His friends recalled that he pursued his goals with “uncommon zeal, firmness, and perseverance.”<sup>74</sup> Their invocation of the word “perseverance” suggests that, throughout rough times, Barrell kept confidence in his own

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<sup>72</sup> Tyler, “Persistence and Change within the Boston Business Community, 1775-1790,” 111-16.

<sup>73</sup> Psychologists define *resilience* as the ability to adapt to adversity, or to “bounce back” from hardships. Moreover, those persons who exhibit high levels of resilience are “buffered from depression by a habit of positive emotions.” See Gideon D. Markman, Robert A. Baron, and David B. Balkin, “Are Perseverance and Self-Efficacy Costless? Assessing Entrepreneurs’ Regretful Thinking” *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 26, no. 1 (2005): 2.; Barbara L. Frederickson, Michele M. Tugade, Christian E. Waugh and Gregory R. Larkin, “What Good are Positive Emotions in Crises? A Prospective Study of Resilience and Emotions Following the Terrorist Attack on the United States on September 11, 2001” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 2 (2003): 10-11.

<sup>74</sup> “Died, at his seat, Pleasant Hill,” *New England Palladium*, 13 October 1804.

abilities.<sup>75</sup> Contemporaries affirmed that he was “bold and noble in his designs, and fearless of difficulties in accomplishing them.”<sup>76</sup> Barrell understood defeat, and relied upon his own talents to stage a reversal of fortune.

Two tragedies, both of which called for resilience and perseverance, struck during the 1770s. Either was sufficient to unravel a lesser individual. The first tragedy assumed an intensely personal character. In 1764, Barrell married Ann Pierce, whom he regarded as “the best of women.” Moreover, breaking with the conventions that often governed weddings in Boston, he married Pierce “from pure regard” rather than for economic advantage. Their love-match was a good one.<sup>77</sup> Then, in June of 1771, Anne died, probably following a battle with smallpox.<sup>78</sup> Barrell, wracked with despair, confided to his friend John Adams that “this World has lost all its Charms” and that he “would have been very glad to have gone with her.”<sup>79</sup> Although the period of mourning probably lasted for several months, he soon reverted to a state of optimism that helped him

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<sup>75</sup> Whereas *resilience* denotes the capacity for adaptation, *perseverance* indicates an individual’s awareness of this capacity. Business scholars define perseverance as the “perceived ability to overcome adverse circumstances” that helps entrepreneurs “to overcome snags and setbacks in their business.” See Gideon D. Markman et al., “Are Perseverance and Self-Efficacy Costless?,” 2.

<sup>76</sup> “Died, at his seat, Pleasant Hill,” *New England Palladium*, 13 October 1804.

<sup>77</sup> “Monday. June 17th. 1771.,” *The Adams Papers*, 2:35-36.

<sup>78</sup> Barrell later became a strong advocate of inoculation against smallpox, using the incision method practiced by the Continental Army during the siege of Boston. See Samuel Adams Drake, *Old Landmarks and Historic Personages of Boston* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873), 389.

<sup>79</sup> “Monday. June 17th. 1771.,” *The Adams Papers*, 2:35-37.



thrive.<sup>80</sup> Thereafter, Barrell honored Anna's dying wishes and remarried, wedding Hannah Fitch in December of 1771.<sup>81</sup> The second significant tragedy was professional in nature. The British occupation of Boston—Parliament's response to the famous "Destruction of the Tea" in 1773—severely limited imports and pushed many businesses toward bankruptcy.<sup>82</sup> If this were not frustrating enough for merchants of the town, a preventable fire ravaged Boston's South End in 1775. Thirty retail stores, including Barrell's grocery, burned in a matter of hours. In the aftermath, he lamented that "I suffered loss 1000 £ sterling, a sum more than I can at this time loose without feeling it."<sup>83</sup> Thereafter, compelled to start over, he shifted his investments into privateers. These two episodes, the loss of a spouse and a business, demonstrate Barrell's resilience in the face of catastrophic setbacks, both in the personal and professional spheres. His friends observed that "he passed through unusual vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity." Moreover, they recalled that "disappointment, which he sometimes experienced, sat apparently easy on his mind. He considered it as the lot of the enterprising."<sup>84</sup> Barrell's

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<sup>80</sup> Frederickson et al., "What Good are Positive Emotions in Crises?," 11-12.

<sup>81</sup> City of Boston, "City Document No. 101, Boston Marriages, 1751-1809" in *Documents of the City of Boston for the Year 1902*, (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1903), 4:330.

<sup>82</sup> G.B. Warden, *Boston, 1689-1776* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1970), 287-96.

<sup>83</sup> "Joseph Barrell to Anonymous, 24 May 1775" in *Boston in 1775*, 5.

<sup>84</sup> "Died, at his seat, Pleasant Hill," *New England Palladium*, 13 October 1804.

resilience served him well in later years, particularly when launching *Columbia* on an uncertain expedition to the Pacific Ocean.

Following his experiences during the American Revolutionary War, Barrell had acquired all the prerequisites to develop and communicate a strong vision for his next enterprise. What that enterprise might be, however, was not immediately obvious. Despite his entrepreneurial nature, Barrell was not the first to conceive of sending an American ship to China, nor was he the first to accomplish such a voyage. His visionary enterprise would represent an innovation upon the proven success of other groups, notably investors under the leadership of Robert Morris of Philadelphia.<sup>85</sup> Morris, the wealthiest individual in the United States, had amassed a fortune through his shipping firm, Willing, Morris, & Co.<sup>86</sup> One contemporary estimated his net worth at £350,000, although a recent biographer stresses that Morris was “rich in resources, but rarely in cash.”<sup>87</sup> During the American Revolution, he served in a succession of posts including delegate to the Continental Congress, Agent of Marine, and Superintendent of Finance. Morris also courted controversy. His enemies, including Henry Laurens, and Thomas Paine, accused him of using information gained from the Secret Committee on Trade to

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<sup>85</sup> Mary A.Y. Gallagher, “Charting a New Course for the China Trade: The Late Eighteenth-Century American Model” in *The Early Republic and the Sea: Essays on the Naval and Maritime History of the Early United States*, eds. William S. Dudley and Michael J. Crawford, (Washington: Brassey’s, Inc., 2001), 61-63.

<sup>86</sup> Rappleye, *Robert Morris*, 11-17, 24-26.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

engage in war profiteering. On the other hand, he occasionally paid the Continental Army out of his own pocket and countersigned for loans to Congress.<sup>88</sup>

In August 1783, while American ministers continued to hammer out a peace agreement with Great Britain, Morris announced to John Jay that “I am sending some Ships to China in order to encourage others in the adventurous pursuits of Commerce.”<sup>89</sup> Indeed, he was already planning the first commercial voyage from the United States to Canton, that of the *Empress of China*. In many ways, the expedition represented a transition from revolution to independence. Morris recruited experienced war veterans to supervise the peacetime venture.<sup>90</sup> John Green, another Philadelphian, had captained the merchant schooner *Queen of France* for Willing and Morris since 1764.<sup>91</sup> During the Revolution, he commanded the Continental ships *Lion* and *Duc de Lauzan*, ships which operated in the distant waters of the Caribbean and Europe.<sup>92</sup> Green received an

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-53, 77-78, 92-94, 169-72, 225-252, 309, 376.

<sup>89</sup> “Robert Morris to John Jay, Philadelphia, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1783,” in *The Life of John Jay: with Selections from his Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers*, ed. William Jay (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1833), 2:138-39.

<sup>90</sup> Gallagher, “Charting a New Course for the China Trade,” 61.

<sup>91</sup> “John Green to Henry Laurens, 19 February 1782,” in *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 1 (1909), 177.; Jason Dancer, *Old China Trade Collections Guide* (Philadelphia: Independence Seaport Museum, J. Welles Henderson Archives and Library, 2011), <http://www.phillyseaport.org/images/archives/China%20Trade%20Archive%20Materials%20Guide.pdf> (Accessed 9 September 2015).

<sup>92</sup> William James Morgan, *Captains to the Northward: The New England Captains in the Continental Navy* (Barre, MA: Barre Gazette, 1959), 142; “John Green to Benjamin Franklin, 18 November 1779,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 31, *November 1, 1779, through*

appointment to captain the *Empress*. Similarly, Bostonians Samuel Shaw and Thomas Randall also participated in the conflict, serving together in a Connecticut artillery company under the command of Major General Henry Knox.<sup>93</sup> Following the conflict, Shaw traveled with a personal letter of recommendation from General Washington, while Randall established a merchant house with Commodore Thomas Truxton in Philadelphia.<sup>94</sup> Morris brought both men into the enterprise as supercargoes, or business managers, aboard the *Empress*.<sup>95</sup> Even the ship represented a legacy of the Revolutionary War. Her designer was John Peck, considered the “most scientific naval architect” in the United States, whose frigates *Belisarius*, *Rattlesnake*, and *Hazard* had been among the fastest warships in the Continental Navy.<sup>96</sup> Peck designed the *Empress of China* to the

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*February 29, 1780*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 121.; Dancer, *Old China Trade Collections Guide*.

<sup>93</sup> Philip Chadwick Foster Smith, *The Empress of China* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Maritime Museum, 1984), 60.; Gerald J. Barry, *The Sailor’s Snug Harbor: A History, 1801-2001* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 8-10.; Phyllis Hunter, *Sailing East: the Voyage of the Empress of China* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming in 2020).

<sup>94</sup> “George Washington to Samuel Shaw, 3 November 1783,” (Early Access Document) Founders Online, National Archives, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-12014> [last update: 2015-06-29] (Accessed on 15 September 2015).; Smith, *The Empress of China*, 60, 93.

<sup>95</sup> “Samuel Shaw to George Washington, 2 January 1790,” *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, vol. 4, *8 September 1789–15 January 1790*, ed. Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 515-16.

<sup>96</sup> Justin Winsor, ed., *Memorial History of Boston, including Suffolk County, Massachusetts, 1630-1880. Vol.III, the Revolutionary Period and the Last Hundred Years, Part 1* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1881), 186-187.

same specifications as *Belisarius*, thus realizing the advantages of the blueprint for peacetime commerce.<sup>97</sup>

Morris financed the *Empress of China* in collaboration with a number of other investors who perceived new opportunities in the Far East. His partners included Daniel Parker and William Duer, established military contractors to the American Congress, and later, their silent partner John Holker, Jr.<sup>98</sup> The original model required Morris and “Daniel Parker & Co.” to finance two-thirds of the expedition. Meanwhile, the “sundry merchants of Boston,” probably including Joseph Barrell, were expected to purchase the final third.<sup>99</sup> According to one popular author, the “skittish Boston investors failed to buy in,” prompting the principals to revise their business model.<sup>100</sup> This claim, however, overlooks cargo space purchased by several Bostonians. Barrell shipped twenty-three casks of ginseng aboard the *Empress*, a cargo that realized \$4,053 in Canton. His involvement is best understood as experimental, or what modern businesspeople might call “test marketing.”<sup>101</sup> While Bostonian merchants did not invest directly in the

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<sup>97</sup> E. James Ferguson, “Appendix I, Early Records of Robert Morris’s Involvement in American Trade with China” in *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784*, vol. 8, ed. E. James Ferguson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1973), 859.

<sup>98</sup> Rappleye, *Robert Morris*, 371, 387-88.

<sup>99</sup> Gallagher, “Charting a New Course for the China Trade,” 60.; Smith, *The Empress of China*, 19-20.;

<sup>100</sup> Eric Jay Dolin, *When American First Met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail* (New York: Liveright Publishing, Inc., 2012), 13.

<sup>101</sup> Smith, *The Empress of China*, 276.

*Empress of China*, their involvement did defray some expenses and, most importantly, helped Morris attract additional attention to the China Trade.

On 22 February, 1784, the *Empress of China* weighed anchor and sailed out of New York Harbor. Morris instructed Captain Green to “run Southward” and then “proceed thence thro’ the Streights of Sunda to Macao,” the gateway to Canton.<sup>102</sup> Meanwhile, Morris briefly entertained the possibility of sending the *Empress* to the Pacific. The concept originated with John Ledyard, a Connecticut adventurer who had sailed with James Cook during the celebrated third voyage of 1776-80. Upon returning to the United States, which achieved its independence while he was at sea, Ledyard approached Morris with a scheme to realize an “astonishing profit” in the Pacific. In 1778, while anchored at Nootka Sound, Cook’s men purchased otter skins with “no thoughts at that time of using them to any other advantage than converting them to the purposes of cloathing.” Later, when the expedition put into Canton for supplies, Ledyard noted that “skins which did not cost the purchaser six-pence sterling sold in China for 100 dollars.”<sup>103</sup> The sum equates to a profit margin of more than 83,000 percent per unit.<sup>104</sup> In an astonishing decision, Morris and his partners passed up the opportunity—

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<sup>102</sup> “Daniel Parker, for himself and Owners of the *Empress of China*, to John Green, January 25, 1784,” in in *The Papers of Robert Morris*, 9:64.

<sup>103</sup> John Ledyard, *A Journal of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean and in Quest of a North-West Passage between Asia & America, Performed in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, and 1779* (Hartford: Nathaniel Patten, 1783), 69-70.; Ferguson, “Appendix I, Early Records of Robert Morris’s Involvement in American Trade with China,” 859-60.

<sup>104</sup> The Spanish silver dollar maintained a value of approximately 4s 2d sterling, or a grand total of 50d. N.A.M. Rodger, the historian of the British Navy, states that the exchange rate of the Spanish silver dollar remained “remained almost unvaried in 400 years of issue.” Ledyard’s

instead, they became convinced that the Pacific route was too unpredictable, dangerous, and worrisome.<sup>105</sup>

The moment when Joseph Barrell became interested in the Pacific Ocean is impossible to pinpoint, although the “South Seas” probably captured his imagination in the 1780s. We cannot know how Barrell might have viewed the Pacific had he, in 1784, been the principal investor behind an ambitious venture like the *Empress of China*. Having purchased cargo space aboard the vessel, though, he undoubtedly followed news of the expedition with great interest and understood the lessons of her commercial success at Canton.<sup>106</sup> Upon returning, in 1785, the *Empress* demonstrated that a trade from the United States to China could be profitable. She did nothing, however, to prove the feasibility of a commercial voyage in the Pacific. Barrell wrote that an American mission to the “Pacifick Ocean & China” was possible, and even desirable, as early as 1785—but he expressed no interest in personally launching such a venture.<sup>107</sup> Thomas Bulfinch later explained that Barrell became interested in financing an expedition to the

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reported sale price of 100 dollars (Canton) easily translates, therefore into a sum of 5,000 pence. When compared versus the 6d purchase price (Nootka), less that price per unit, the profit margin would approximate 83,233%! For further information about exchange rates during the period, see N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004), 2:xxiii.

<sup>105</sup> Ferguson “Appendix I, Early Records of Robert Morris’s Involvement in American Trade with China,” 862-63.

<sup>106</sup> “BOSTON, Wednesday, May 18.” *Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 18 May 1785.

<sup>107</sup> “Joseph Barrell to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 12 January 1785” quoted in Robert A. East, *Business Enterprise in the American Revolutionary Era* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1964), 253.

Pacific in 1787, after reading about the “discoveries of Capt. Cook, the account of which had lately been published.” Certainly, Barrell remarked that “there is a rich harvest to be reaped by those who shall go in first.”<sup>108</sup> He must have wondered, through, whether national leaders would support a Pacific expedition in the same manner as the *Empress*. Richard Henry Lee celebrated the “short and successful voyage made from hence to Canton” and looked forward to “a regular and useful commerce with that part of the world.”<sup>109</sup> James Madison also collected information concerning the *Empress* from a friend who “heartily wish[ed] to see the merchts. of our State engaged in this business.”<sup>110</sup> Although national leaders expressed support for the China Trade, few commented upon the potential for enterprise in the Pacific—would such a project garner their approval?

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<sup>108</sup> This story, although it may be correct, represents a minor historical problem in assessing the genesis of the *Columbia* expedition. Bulfinch is probably relating family lore originating with his father, Charles Bulfinch, who became a silent partner in *Columbia* and *Washington*. Although his account is probably correct, there is no documentary evidence dating from the period to confirm the claim. See Joseph Barrell quoted in Thomas Bulfinch, *Oregon and Eldorado; or, Romance of the Rivers* (Boston: J.E. Tilton and Company, 1866), 1-2.

<sup>109</sup> “Richard Henry Lee to James Madison, 30 May 1785,” in *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 8, *10 March 1784–28 March 1786*, eds. Robert A. Rutland and William M. E. Rachal (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 197), 288–290.

<sup>110</sup> “William Grayson to James Madison, 28 May 1785,” in *The Papers of James Madison*, 8:284–85.



“...for the Pacific Ocean”

For Americans in the 1780s, the Pacific Ocean represented a distant, relatively unknown, and forbidding quarter of the planet. Few Americans had traveled in the “South Seas” and most citizens rarely, if ever, considered doing so. Intellectuals took an interest in the region, but they labored to find adequate reference materials. “Pacific Studies” literature, as modern academics might call it, constituted a new genre in the eighteenth century for several reasons. First, older literature, primarily Spanish accounts of expeditions in the South Seas, was largely unavailable because of Spain’s secrecy regarding its geographical discoveries.<sup>111</sup> Second, until the middle eighteenth century, the proverbial “tyranny of distance” presented a powerful disincentive to voyages of discovery in the South Seas by most European powers other than Spain.<sup>112</sup> Third, many expeditions into the Pacific, such as George Anson’s circumnavigation in 1741-44, were the consequence of wartime privateer operations and did not represent scientific efforts directed toward geographical knowledge.<sup>113</sup> Fourth, publications concerning scientific

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<sup>111</sup> Henry R. Wagner, “Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast in the Sixteenth Century, Chapter V: The Occupation of the Philippines and the Discovery of the Return Route,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1928): 141-147.; Christon I. Archer, “Spain and the Defence of the Pacific Ocean Empire, 1750-1810” *Canadian Journal of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 11, no. 21 (1986): 17-19, 27, 36.; Glyndwr Williams, *The Great South Seas, English Voyages and Encounters, 1570-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 55-56.

<sup>112</sup> William Lythe Schurz, “The Spanish Lake” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 5, no. 2 (1922): 181-94.

<sup>113</sup> Peter Gerhard, *Pirates of New Spain, 1575-1742* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 229-37.

navigation, such as accounts of James Cook's three voyages to the Pacific, did not always appear on the market on a predictable schedule.<sup>114</sup> For the average American, the Pacific World was as unfamiliar as the moon.

For a growing number of American merchants, however, the Pacific Ocean represented a region of enormous economic potential. The China Trade, encompassing the exchange of Western Goods for Chinese products such as porcelain, tea, silk, nankeen cloth, and decorative arts, was a lucrative business for the European companies who held monopolies on trade with the Far East.<sup>115</sup> The United States, by contrast, did not possess a national corporation in the tradition of the British or Dutch East India Companies.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, most merchants preferred to restore existing commercial connections in Europe, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean, if possible, rather than risk their fortunes

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<sup>114</sup> J.C. Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 288-91, 456-71.; I.S. MacLaren, "Explorers' and Travelers' Narratives: A Peregrination through Different Editions," *History in Africa* 30 (2003): 213-18.

<sup>115</sup> "Nankeen" cloth received its name in recognition that it originated in the Chinese city of Nanking (Nanjing 南京). Chris Nierstrasz, *Rivalry for Trade in Tea and Textiles: The English and Dutch East India Companies (1700-1800)* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 54-90, 124-53.; Harriet T. Zurndorfer, "Cotton Textile Manufacture and Marketing in Late Imperial China and the 'Great Divergence'," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 54, no. 5 (2011): 720-721.

<sup>116</sup> The Congress of the Confederation, which so often foundered against the interests of individual states, was too weak to charter a national monopoly of special benefit to the commercial states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, and Pennsylvania. More importantly, in the aftermath of a revolution sparked, in part, by the commercial frustrations of American merchants toward British mercantilism, there was little public enthusiasm for an American East India Company. See James R. Fichter, *So Great a Proffit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 7-30.

on uncertain voyages to the Far East. Nevertheless, the China Trade excited the interest of national leaders, and many of them promoted commerce with the East Indies on the national stage. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams, the three most influential thinkers in the United States, each hoped to advance the cause of American commerce in the Far East. Crucially, they represented the three recognized sections of the Early Republic—the Southern, Middle, and New England states—and, therefore, they demonstrate that the China Trade was an enterprise of national interest.

Thomas Jefferson visualized the Pacific World principally through the discerning eyes of a geographer and natural historian. Three existing studies on this subject conclude that Jefferson was “an acute observer in the field,” whose “high attainments as a thorough and practical student” in the discipline made him “one of the greatest of American geographers.”<sup>117</sup> His approach to the discipline reflected a nuanced understanding of the interactions between climate, topography, demography, and economics—namely, a “man-land” tradition that privileged the interaction between human beings and nature.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> George Thomas Surface, “Thomas Jefferson: A Pioneer Student of American Geography” *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 41, no. 12 (1909): 743.; Adolphus Washington Greely, “Thomas Jefferson, Geographer” in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, 1903), vii.; Gary S. Dunbar, “Thomas Jefferson, Geographer.” *Special Libraries Association, Geography and Map Division Bulletin*, no. 40 (Washington: Library of Congress, 1960): 11-16.

<sup>118</sup> The “man-land” tradition constructs the term “environment” to denote a constellation of interrelated features: physical features such as rivers, mountains, and natural resources; biological features including animals, plants, and other biota; and finally, human features spanning cities, institutions, and cultural practices. See Christina L. Anderson, “The Young Thomas Jefferson’s Geographic Thought, 1743-1784” (master’s thesis, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2003), 11-15.

Nevertheless, despite Jefferson's expertise in the discipline, one historian has concluded that "Jeffersonian geography is a surface that historians of geography have barely begun to scratch."<sup>119</sup> There is strong indication that Jefferson became interested in geography under the influence of his father, Peter Jefferson, a professional surveyor and co-creator of the famous Fry-Jefferson Map. Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, as well as his examination of the American West, demonstrate a similar approach to the synthesis of original research, independent surveys, eyewitness accounts, folk traditions, and rumors.<sup>120</sup> This means of investigation, which favored the methodical acquisition of source materials, would inform his approach to gathering information about the Pacific.<sup>121</sup>

Jefferson is famous for his outspoken interest in the American West, but his geographic concerns also contributed to a quiet fascination with the Pacific World. Prior to 1790, he made few comments about the Pacific, and articulated his support for transcontinental exploration in terms of overland discovery, suggesting that explorers "penetrate through the main continent" and "make the attempt to search that country."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> William A. Koelsch, "Thomas Jefferson, American Geographers, and the Uses of Geography" *Geographical Review* 98, no. 2 (2008): 261-62, 276.

<sup>120</sup> Coolie Verner, "The Fry and Jefferson Map" *Imago Mundi* 21 (1967): 72-83.; Surface, "Thomas Jefferson: A Pioneer Student of American Geography," 745.

<sup>121</sup> Donald Jackson, *Thomas Jefferson and the Stony Mountains: Exploring the West from Monticello* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 5-7.; Koelsch, "Thomas Jefferson, American Geographers, and the Uses of Geography," 263-64.

<sup>122</sup> Jefferson approached George Rogers Clark, a fellow Virginian and participant in the western theater of the Revolutionary War, about a scheme to "attempt to search" the American West on foot, but Clark demurred for financial reasons. Jefferson later supported John Ledyard's scheme

The geographical works in Jefferson's library, however, provide a strong indication of his burgeoning interest in the Pacific World. Jefferson's first catalogue of books, begun in 1783, indicates a concentration in "geographic" works such as atlases, gazetteers, and area studies similar in character to his *Notes on the State of Virginia*.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, in addition to these works of a more functional nature, he also professed that he was "passionately fond of reading books of history."<sup>124</sup> Many of the historical works in his library focused principally or in part upon the Pacific World.

When acquiring literature related to the Pacific, Jefferson preferred material that was comprehensive in geographical scope and adopted the scientific lens of natural history. Mary Louise Pratt observes that travel writing of the eighteenth century

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to perform a solo expedition across Russia and then to "penetrate through the main continent" of North America. Ledyard was arrested in Siberia and deported before he could succeed. See "Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, 4 December 1783" in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 6, 21 May 1781–1 March 1784, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 371.; "Thomas Jefferson to Charles Thomson, 20 September 1787," in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 12, 7 August 1787–31 March 1788, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 159-60.

<sup>123</sup> Jefferson collected and catalogued multiple libraries during his lifetime. The first, constructed around a nucleus of books inherited from his father, burned in the fire that consumed Shadwell on February 1, 1770. Thereafter, he wasted little time in reassembling and expanding upon the lost collection, and, in the process, created a second library far more representative of his own interests. See Thomas Jefferson, "1783 Catalog of Books [1775-1812]," 10-12. Coolidge Collection of Thomas Jefferson Manuscripts, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>124</sup> Jefferson sold his second library to the Library of Congress for \$23,950, following the destruction of its original collection during the burning of Washington City in 1815. Thereafter, he assembled a third library for "the amusements of... old age" and a fourth, at state expense, to serve as the inaugural collection of the University of Virginia. See William Peden, "Some Notes Concerning Thomas Jefferson's Libraries" *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series* 1, no. 3 (1944): 266-269.

significantly contributed to “the construction of global-scale meaning through the descriptive apparatuses of natural history.” During this period, she contends, European elites practiced natural history “above all in navigational terms” of circumnavigation and cartography, projects that “embrace” the globe “as a chaos out of which the scientist *produced* an order.”<sup>125</sup> For Thomas Jefferson, a founding statesman of the United States and author of its Declaration of Independence, natural history was powerful stuff. Jefferson regarded natural history as the chief scientific component “of an useful American education,” and considered education the only “sure foundation... for the preservation of freedom, and happiness.”<sup>126</sup> First, natural history provided an avenue for America to take the measure of the world, and in doing so, measure up to the great powers of Europe.<sup>127</sup> Second, it enabled citizen-scientists to frame discoveries, and even the process of discovery itself, as the natural outgrowths of a republican society.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2d ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 15, 29-30

<sup>126</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to John Banister, Jr., 15 October 1785” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 8, 25 February–31 October 1785, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 635-38.; “Thomas Jefferson to George Wythe, 13 August 1786” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 10, 22 June–31 December 1786, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 243-45.

<sup>127</sup> “VII. Final State of the Report on Weights and Measures, [4 July 1790]” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 16, 30 November 1789–4 July 1790, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 650–74.; Koelsch, “Thomas Jefferson, American Geographers, and the Uses of Geography,” 275.

<sup>128</sup> “Constantin François Chassebouef, compte de Volney, to Thomas Jefferson, 24 August 1796” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 29, 1 March 1796–31 December 1797, ed. Barbara B. Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 174–177.; Deborah Allen, “Acquiring ‘Knowledge of Our Own Continent’: Geopolitics, Science, and Jeffersonian Geography, 1783-1803” *Journal of American Studies* 40, no. 2 (2006): 205-214, 231-23.; Merrill D. Peterson, “The American Scholar: Emerson and Jefferson” in *Thomas Jefferson and the World of Books: A*

Finally, when conducting natural history in the Pacific, one of the last remaining “undiscovered” regions, the United States could extend its values to an ocean hemisphere free of European colonialism.<sup>129</sup>

Jefferson made an effort to purchase every significant work of “Pacific Studies” that existed in the English language during the 1780s. Preferring accounts of scientific navigation, he acquired William Dampier’s *A New Voyage Around the World* (1699), Woodes Rogers’s *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* (1712), and George Anson’s *A Voyage Round the World* (1748). Jefferson also possessed a copy of Hawkesworth’s *Voyages* (1773), which included the accounts of circumnavigations under John Byron, Philip Carteret, and Samuel Wallis.<sup>130</sup> Because each circumnavigation spanned the South Seas, Jefferson learned much about the geography and conditions of the Pacific from these works. Moreover, during his diplomatic posting in Paris, Jefferson augmented his “Pacific” collection with important French-language titles, such as narratives of voyages by Frézier, d’Auroche, and Schouton. One oversight is striking: Louis Antoine de Bougainville’s *Voyage autour de monde* (1771), a significant work of navigation in the

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*Symposium Held at the Library of Congress, September 21, 1976* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1977), 24-25.

<sup>129</sup> “American Philosophical Society’s Subscription Agreement for André Michaux’s Western Expedition, [ca. 22 January 1793]” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 25, *1 January–10 May 1793*, ed. John Catanzariti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 81–84.; “Thomas Jefferson to Marc Auguste Pictet, 14 October 1795” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 28, *1 January 1794–29 February 1796*, ed. John Catanzariti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 505.

<sup>130</sup> Jefferson, “1783 Catalog of Books [1775-1812],” 18, 172.

Southern Hemisphere, is missing from what is otherwise a comprehensive list.<sup>131</sup> Recent accounts provided him with the most accurate information. Chief among these were three contemporary accounts of the voyages of Captain James Cook, including Cook's own *Journal during the First Voyage Round the World* (1772), Georg Forster's *A Voyage round the World in His Britannic Majesty's Sloop Resolution, Commanded by Capt. James Cook* (1777), and William Ellis's *Authentic Narrative of a Voyage performed by Captain Cook and Captain Clerke* (1782).<sup>132</sup> Each contains the standard sequence of literary, yet scientific, tropes common in works of navigational travel writing: storms, new islands, indigenous peoples, and the hardships of sailing a vast ocean. This combination of geographical and historical content, combined with the "scientific" authority of the "eyewitness," enabled Jefferson to comprehend the distant Pacific World.<sup>133</sup>

During the Confederation period, Jefferson wrote two letters that strongly attest to his geopolitical concerns regarding the Pacific. First, in 1783, while serving as a delegate to the Congress of the Confederation, Jefferson wrote to George Rogers Clark, a revolutionary-war commander associated with the American West. Here, Jefferson

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<sup>131</sup> Jefferson's catalog included marks to denote those books already in his possession as well as others that he hoped to acquire in the future. See *ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>133</sup> Peterson, "The American Scholar: Emerson and Jefferson," 29-30.; Merrill D. Peterson, "Jefferson, the West, and the Enlightenment Vision," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 70, no. 4 (1987): 270-280.



warned that the Royal Society of London had “subscribed a very large sum of money... for exploring the country from the Missisipi to California.” The observation is sufficient to show that Jefferson was watchful of European encroachment in North America. His following statements, however, demonstrate his specific interest in the Pacific.

Speculating that the sponsors of the expedition “pretend it is only to promote knolege,” he warned Clark that “I am afraid they have thoughts of colonising into that quarter.”<sup>134</sup>

Later, in 1786, during his appointment as the United States Minister to France, Jefferson penned a similar letter to John Jay, then the Secretary of Foreign Affairs in New York City. Here, he communicated reports concerning Jean-François de Galaup, comte de Lapérouse, whose scientific expedition to the Pacific Ocean was, at that moment, conducting surveys of the Northwest Coast of America. Jefferson explained to Jay that “the gazette of France of July 28, Announces the arrival of Peyrouse at Brazil,” and that the Lapérouse expedition would “touch at Otaheité [Tahiti], and proceed to California, and still further Northwardly.” Once again, he felt grave concern for European encroachment on the western coast of North America. Certainly, Jefferson feared that Lapérouse would “make an establishment of some sort on the North-west coast of America.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, December 4, 1783” in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 6:371.; Jackson, *Thomas Jefferson & the Stony Mountains*, 42-43.

<sup>135</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, 11 August, 1786” in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 10:221.

Both letters demonstrate that Jefferson conceived of the national domain as becoming transcontinental in scope and expose his anxiety that European colonization might frustrate this aspiration. Deborah Allen has observed that “Jefferson was keenly aware that European sponsors of exploratory expeditions used the disinterested language of science in order to conceal the extent to which these ventures were driven by a political and commercial agenda.”<sup>136</sup> Moreover, his parallel roles as statesman and amateur geographer prepared him to observe that, if scientific exploration might lead to colonization of the Pacific Slope, then those colonies would upset his notion of a continental “empire of liberty.”<sup>137</sup> In his estimation, the Pacific Ocean represented the western boundary of the national domain and, therefore, the final destination for republican government.

Benjamin Franklin, the most famous individual in Early America, approached the question of the China Trade with the questioning mind of a philosopher. He, like many other figures of the European and American Enlightenments, may have become interested in China after reading the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687). This incomplete translation of the Confucian classics, a landmark in the intellectual history of the

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<sup>136</sup> Allen, “Acquiring ‘Knowledge of Our Own Continent’,” 210.

<sup>137</sup> While this concept is often associated with later developments during his presidency, there is adequate evidence to assume that his concept of a “republican empire” had already begun to coalesce during the Confederation Period. Historian Peter S. Onuf contends that Jefferson’s concept of a continental republic derived from his understanding that the settlement of new lands was “itself the act of a free people.” See Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 21-23.

European Enlightenment, originated with Jesuit missionaries in China. Following its publication in Europe, the translation became a sensation among philosophers, and, “in one way or another, exercised an influence on a number of prominent individuals” including Daniel Defoe, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and many others.<sup>138</sup> Franklin’s fascination with applied sciences prompted him to research Chinese precautions against famine, eastern methods of making paper, the manufacturing of porcelain, and the production of silks.<sup>139</sup> Benjamin Vaughan, a close friend in London, observed that the scientist-printer wished to visit the Middle Kingdom.<sup>140</sup> Franklin read popular accounts of Western travelers in China and incorporated their details into his own publications, such as *Poor Richard Improved*.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Walter W. Davis, “China, the Confucian Ideal, and the European Age of Enlightenment” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44, no. 4 (1983): 538-542.

<sup>139</sup> “Benjamin Franklin To the Managers of the Philadelphia Silk Filature” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 19, *January 1 through December 31, 1773*, ed. William B. Willcox, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 134.; “Benjamin Franklin to Thomas Percival, 15 October 1773” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 20, *January 1 through December 31, 1773*, ed. William B. Willcox, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 442.; “Benjamin Franklin to John Bartram, 11 January 1770,” in *Memorials of John Bartram and Humphrey Marshall*, ed. William Darlington (Philadelphia: Sherman, 1849), 404-05.; Benjamin Franklin, “Description of Making Paper in the Chinese Manner,” 20 June 1788. American Philosophical Society Library.

<sup>140</sup> A. Owen Aldridge, *The Dragon and the Eagle: The Presence of China in the American Enlightenment* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 25

<sup>141</sup> Benjamin Franklin, “Notes on Reading an Account of Travel in China, 1762” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 10, *January 1 through December 31, 1763*, eds. Leonard W. Labaree and William B. Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 182; Benjamin Franklin, “‘The Spectator’: The Duke of York’s Travels” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 12, *January 1 through December 31, 1765*, eds. Leonard W. Labaree, Helen C. Boatfield, and James H. Hutson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 123.; Franklin, “‘A Traveller’: News-Writers’ Nonsense,” in *ibid.*, 132.; Richard Saunders (Franklin pseud.), *Poor Richard Improved: being an*

Franklin's philosophical curiosity about China extended to an economic interest in fostering an American China Trade. Since the 1740s, Franklin had advocated for the discovery of an overland route that might connect the commerce of North America and East Asia, via the Pacific Ocean. His 1748 edition of *Poor Richard's Improved* included an account of Christopher Middleton's voyage "in Search of the North-West Passage to the South-Sea."<sup>142</sup> Likewise, Franklin read accounts of the ship *California*, which probed Hudson Bay for a passage to the "Western and Southern Ocean" in 1746-47.<sup>143</sup> Both expeditions returned to England after failing to discover a passage.<sup>144</sup> Later, in 1753, Franklin helped to finance a voyage from Philadelphia, in which he subscribed "£1500 to fit out a Vessel in Search of a NWest Passage."<sup>145</sup> This vessel, the *Argo*, sailed under the command of a mysterious figure known as Captain Charles Swaine, who previously

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*Almanack and Ephemeris of the Motions of the Sun and Moon; the True Places and Aspects of the Planets; the Rising and Setting of the Sun; and the Rising, Setting, and Southing of the Moon for the Year of our Lord 1765* (Philadelphia: B. Franklin and D. Hall, 1765).

<sup>142</sup> Richard Saunders (Franklin pseud.), *Poor Richard improved: Being an Almanack and Ephemeris of the Motions of the Sun and Moon; the True Places and Aspects of the Planets; the Rising and Setting of the Sun; and the Rising, Setting and Southing, of the Moon for the Bissextile Year, 1748* (Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by B. Franklin, 1747).

<sup>143</sup> Charles Swaine, *An Account of a Voyage For the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights, to the Western and Southern Ocean of America, Performed in the Year 1746 and 1747, in the Ship California, Capt. Francis Smith, Commander* (London: Jolliffe, Corbitt, and Clarke, 1748), 1:i-vii, 102-11.

<sup>144</sup> Wendell H. Oswalt, *Eskimos & Explorers, Second Edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 56-64.

<sup>145</sup> "Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, 28 February 1753," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 4, *July 1, 1750, through June 30, 1753*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 446-49.

served as clerk aboard the *California*. Swaine's first voyage stalled when pack ice blocked his passage through Hudson Bay, and his second expedition concluded after the murder of several crewmembers, including his mineralogist.<sup>146</sup> Undaunted, Franklin continued to speculate on the existence of a Northwest Passage and corresponded with other philosophers concerning the fabled Strait of Admiral de Fonte.<sup>147</sup>

During the American Revolution, Franklin's interest in the Northwest Passage appears to have waned, but he remained fascinated with the possibility of an American China Trade. While serving as American Commissioner in Paris, Franklin received a lengthy memorandum entitled *Projet Essentiel pour les Etats-unis de L'amerique* ("Essential Project for the United States of America"), which outlined a program of commercial expansion for the United States following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. The provenance of this remarkable letter, both undated and of unknown authorship, is impossible to establish with certainty. I propose, however, a date of 1781-82 and possible authorship within the firm of Jacques, Louis, et Laurent Couteulx et Companie, then considering several expeditions to Canton.<sup>148</sup> Franklin often

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<sup>146</sup> For whatever reason, Swaine appears to have traveled under several aliases, including Theodore Swaine Drage, or Charles Swaine Drage. Glyndwr Williams, *Voyages of Delusion: The Quest for the Northwest Passage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 147-48, 212-213.

<sup>147</sup> "From Benjamin Franklin to John Pringle, 27 May 1762," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 10:85-100.

<sup>148</sup> I date this letter to 1781-82 based on a number of context clues. First, the author's regular reference to "Congress" versus the "Provinces" of the United States, and the necessity of Congress to seek consensus among the states, is indicative of the legislative restrictions that plagued the Confederation. The tendency of the author to speak of the "republic" notwithstanding, I believe this is merely a matter of convenience in reference to a *confederation* of republics—there is no mention of executive or presidential power in governing the United

corresponded with “Couteulx & Co.,” who became an important firm for the fulfillment of war materiel in the fight against Great Britain.<sup>149</sup>

The anonymous author observed that “the various provinces comprising the United States possess a considerable number of ports” and benefited from the blessings of “nature herself, who provides a trade in the commodities obtained in their vast territories.” Furthermore, he argued, because of these immense natural resources, “the inhabitants of these lands cannot have deficits [in trade] in the future.” Trade would, however, depend upon more than natural resources or the industry of the people.

Commercial enterprise would also require the development of routes and markets. Here,

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States. Such an assumption places the letter in 1787 at the latest (and Franklin died the following year). Second, Franklin’s mission to Paris concluded in 1785, making extended French letters addressed to him less frequent in later years. Third, the author makes no mention of the *Empress of China*, the first American ship to engage in the China Trade after independence, which sailed from New York in 1784. Indeed, the author writes as if no American had yet engaged in the China Trade. As the accomplishments of the *Empress of China* were well known among the commercial elites of Paris, the letter must date from at least 1784. Finally, in discussing the Pacific approach to China, the author discusses smuggling in the Spanish colonies as a possible means of financing a commercial voyage. Curiously, he does not mention the possibility of trading in otter skins, which was popularized by John Ledyard in *A Journal of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, published in the summer of 1783. This letter would, therefore, also appear to predate the “Ledyard Plan” for a maritime fur trade, and suggests a latest possible date of 1782. With regard to authorship, there are a number of French personalities who could have written to Franklin in the best interests of the United States, but few whose knowledge of the China Trade was detailed enough to pen the letter in question. Here, I propose the firm of Jacques, Louis, et Laurent Couteulx et Companie because, during 1780-81, the firm maintained close connections with a number of Americans whose interests paralleled their own in establishing a Franco-American China Trade. This educated guess also corroborates the possible date of the letter. Nevertheless, the authorship is impossible to prove with any certainty. Anonymous, “Projet Essentiel pour les Etats-unis de L’amerique.” n.d., *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, American Philosophical Society. Translation from French by this author.

<sup>149</sup> “Benjamin Franklin to Robert Morris, 26 July 1781,” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 35, *May 1 through October 31, 1781*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 311–13.

he advised Franklin that “the trade most helpful to the greatness of the United States of America is undoubtedly the East Indies Trade.” First, the author recommended the cultivation of “Items of Commerce Particular to America,” including ginseng, rhubarb, and varnish, all of which “would be of great value” and “would yield a real profit to the Republic.” Second, he recommended that Americans become involved in the Southeast Asian carrying trade, in which Americans could profit as middlemen. The author specifically noted a lucrative trade in mother-of-pearl between the Spanish Philippines and Canton, which Chinese carriers dominated with great success. Indeed, he commented, “this branch of trade is so profitable that it should be taken from the Chinese.” Finally, he reminded Franklin that “China would be a source of wealth for America, by way of shipments of porcelain, silks, silken goods, varnish, paper, lacquer, or by the benefits that America would realize through transporting the tea of this empire to the various kingdoms of Europe.”<sup>150</sup>

Whether Franklin replied to the memorandum is not known. Nonetheless, he certainly recognized the economic potential of the China Trade. Prior to the American Revolution, Franklin’s interest in science informed his commentary upon the natural resources of North America, its comparative advantages, and how these might be harnessed for the benefit of the British colonies. In a pamphlet published in 1760, Franklin argued “that the inland parts of America in question are well known to be fitted for the production of hemp, flax, potash, and, above all, silk; the southern parts may

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<sup>150</sup> Anonymous, “Projet Essentiel pour les Etats-unis e L’amerique.”

produce olive oil, raisins, currants, indigo, and cochineal; not to mention horses and black cattle.” America’s great commercial advantage, he concluded, was its access to river and maritime shipping, which he likened to the ancient trading routes of Eurasia. Using a combination of rivers, portages, and roads, Franklin explained that “*Furs* (the produce too of America) are brought to Amsterdam from all parts of Siberia, even the most remote—Kamtschatka.” Extending his analysis, he observed that “it is found worth while to keep up a mercantile communication between Pekin in China and Petersbourg.” Just as the “whole of the trade of the East” had once been conducted along the Silk Road, he thought, American merchants should concentrate upon a nautical route between the United States and China.<sup>151</sup>

The anonymous author who recommended an “Essential Project” to Franklin also identified a lucrative avenue for United States commerce with China. Seeking to maximize profits, the author suggested that Americans approach China via the Pacific, and proposed that “the republic’s ships, loaded with European cargoes, may pass into the South Sea, taking care to double Cape Horn in the most favorable season.” Following this route, Americans could finance a voyage in part by “selling these cargoes,”—in reality, smuggling the goods—in the Spanish colonies of New Granada, New Spain, and Peru. Moreover, he advised Franklin that “Americans could, using the method we describe

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<sup>151</sup> Benjamin Franklin, “The Interest of Great Britain Considered, with Regard to Her Colonies and the Acquisitions of Canada and Guadaloupe. To which are added, Observations concerning the Increase of mankind, Peopling of Countries, &c. (1760)” in *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 3, ed. John Bigelow (New York and London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, the Knickerbocker Press, 1904), 308-09.



here, earn the transportation cost by selling their goods, while other nations, who only earn a little money on the Indies, find that their earnings are absorbed by expense of crossing [the ocean].”<sup>152</sup> The proposal outlined the plan by which *Columbia* would later establish global trade in the Pacific, with one exception—neither Franklin nor his anonymous correspondent foresaw that the Northwest Coast, with its bounty of otter skins, would supplant the ports of Spanish America. The omission of furs indicates that the “Essential Project” is unlikely to have inspired the *Columbia* expedition.

Meanwhile, in connecting the parallel themes of North America’s natural resources and the colonial capacity for maritime commerce, Franklin foreshadowed a problem that would confound advocates of the China Trade: which American products would be of interest to the Chinese? Curiously, in drawing his analogies from the Eurasian trade, Franklin did not mention that furs—more than any other trade good—dominated overland trade route “between Peking and Petersburg.”<sup>153</sup> In fact, the overland fur trade motivated the Russian *Promyshlenniki* (trappers) who colonized Siberia and Alaska. Russia envisioned both colonies as mass-production centers to feed an insatiable appetite for luxurious, warm furs among the nobility, civil servants, and gentry of China.<sup>154</sup> The anonymous author submitted his proposal to Franklin, minus reference to

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<sup>152</sup> Anonymous, “Projet Essentiel pour les Etats-unis e L’amerique.”

<sup>153</sup> Benjamin Franklin, “The Interest of Great Britain Considered” in *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, 3:308-09.

<sup>154</sup> Gwenn A. Miller, *Kodiak Kreol: Communities of Empire in Early Russian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 11-27.

otters, in 1781-82. Within a year, John Ledyard, an adventurer from Connecticut, enlightened Americans about the economic potential of furs. Perhaps this information had escaped Franklin's attention, but it would later have enormous strategic importance to American commerce in the Pacific—furs would sustain the trade between Boston and Canton.

John Adams, whose state of Massachusetts suffered so much during the Revolutionary War, approached the question of the China Trade and the Pacific from the perspective of a seasoned strategist. Contemporaries recognized Adams, like his friend Thomas Jefferson, as possessing strong intellectual discipline, a formidable political acumen, and a commanding work ethic. The two shared many interests, among them geography, which Jefferson embraced out of academic interest and Adams understood as the basis of geopolitics. During his appointment to the Board of War in 1776, Adams observed that “Geography is a Branch of Knowledge, not only very usefull, but absolutely necessary, to every Person of public Character whether in civil or military Life.” The statement shows his preoccupation with geography as an applied field of study, different in character from the natural history that interested Franklin or Jefferson. Writing to his wife, Abigail, he commented that “The Board of War are making a Collection of all the Maps of America, and of every Part of it, which are extant, to be hung up in the War Office.” He listed several maps, including the most recent

representations of the Thirteen Colonies, the Ohio Country, Great Lakes, and Canada—in short, everything needed to run a “war room” in a conflict for independence.<sup>155</sup>

The collection also included a six-sheet map by John Green of London, published in 1753, which Adams described as “A Chart of North and South America, including the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, with the nearest Coasts of Europe, Africa, and Asia.”<sup>156</sup> Significantly, Green devoted some 40% of the surface area to “The Pacific Ocean or Great South Sea,” with attention to the locations of prominent islands, the routes of noted explorers, and wind patterns. Unlike most cartographers, he depicted the ocean hemisphere as an area of frenetic activity, rather than a vast, torpid wasteland. Moreover, in choosing to represent only the Eastern Pacific, Green created the illusion of an ocean embraced by the continental expanse of the Americas—a sea poised to become the *Mar Columbiana*.<sup>157</sup> The map must have impressed Adams, the patriot and strategist. Given his geopolitical interests, and his leadership in the creation of the Continental Navy, we can surmise that he focused his attention upon the Pacific Ocean as a possible theater of war—and later, as a stage for national economic expansion. For his part, Adams observed

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<sup>155</sup> “John Adams to Abigail Adams, 13 August 1776” in *The Adams Papers, Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 2, *June 1776–March 1778*, ed. L. H. Butterfield, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), 90-92.

<sup>156</sup> “John Adams to Abigail Adams, 13 August 1776,” in *The Adams Papers, Adams Family Correspondence*, 2:90-92.

<sup>157</sup> John Green, *A chart of North and South America including the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, with the nearest coasts of Europe, Africa and Asia*. Publish'd according to Act of Parliament Feb. 19, 1753, by T. Jefferys, Geographer to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales at the Corner of St. Martins Lane Charing Cross ... (London: Thomas Jefferys, 1753).

that while geography was crucial to anyone “who has any Pretensions to liberal Education,” it was also “equally necessary for Merchants.”<sup>158</sup>

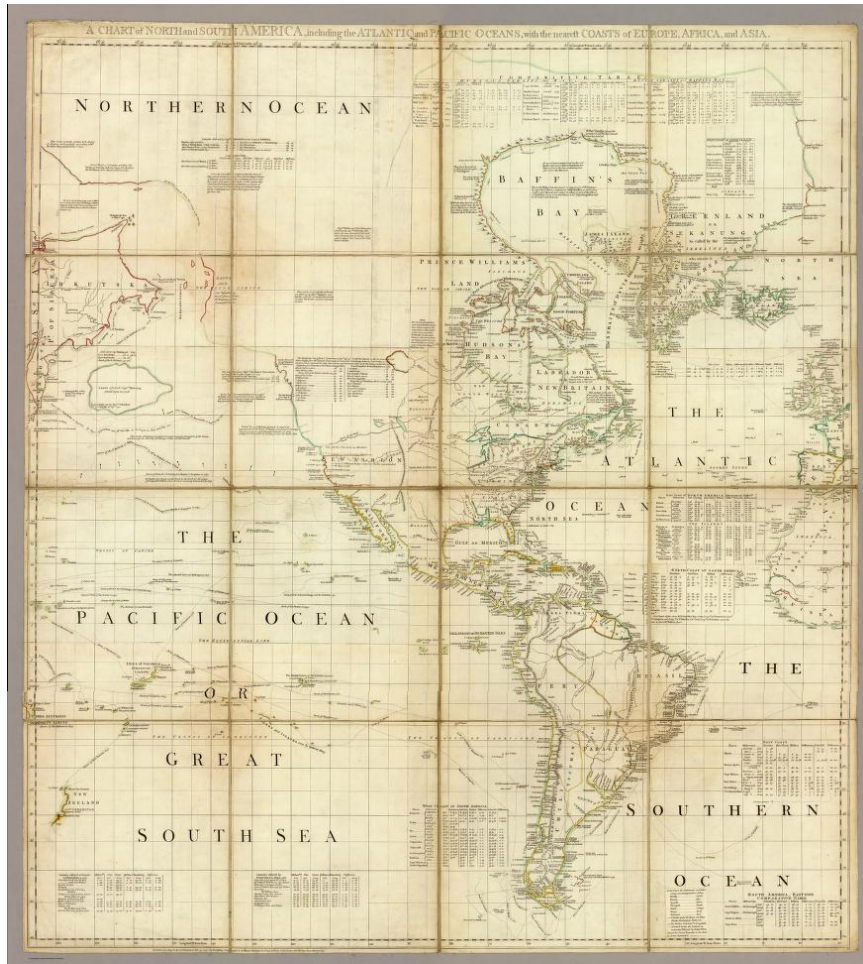


Figure 7. John Green, *A Chart of North and South America including the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, with the Nearest Coasts of Europe, Africa and Asia*, chart map, 127 x 114 cm. London: Thomas Jefferys, 1753. David Rumsey Map Collection.

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<sup>158</sup> “John Adams to Abigail Adams, 13 August 1776,” in *The Adams Papers*, Adams Family Correspondence, 2:90-92.

In the summer of 1783, while negotiating a peace treaty with Britain, Adams anticipated a new role for the United States in the Pacific. In June, during a carriage ride through the French countryside, he conversed with the British Minister Plenipotentiary, David Hartley, who “made his Propositions for the Definitive Treaty.” Adams recorded nothing more about the proposals, but took greater interest as the discussion turned to recent discoveries in the Pacific. Hartley expounded on a wealth of new information concerning the Northwest Passage, Russian Alaska, the Bering Strait, and the China Trade. The two diplomats also had “a long Conversation” about the myth of “De Fonte’s Voyage from Peru to Hudsons Bay.” Always seeking a strategic advantage, Adams committed the information to memory before returning to the business at hand. Later that evening, he recorded various nautical details, distances, and map coordinates in his diary.<sup>159</sup> One month later, while still haggling over treaty provisions, Adams guessed, correctly, that Westminster might impose prohibitive restrictions on commerce between the United States and the British Caribbean. Thereafter, he began to advocate for the China Trade as a method of restoring the maritime trade of the United States. Writing to Robert Livingston, an influential New Yorker, Adams recommended that American merchants should “send Ships immediately to China.” Elaborating on this program, he explained that “this Trade is as open to Us, as to any Nation,” and argued that “if our natural Advantages are envied Us, we should compensate ourselves in any honest way we

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<sup>159</sup> John Adams, “1783. June 19. Thursday. Fete Dieu.” in *The Adams Papers, Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, vol. 3, *Diary 1782–1804; Autobiography, Part One to October 1776*, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 139-141.

can.”<sup>160</sup> It is clear, then, that Adams visualized the Pacific as an American route to the orient.

Observers in Britain also recognized the potential for an American China Trade. In 1780, Thomas Pownall, the former Royal Governor of Massachusetts Bay, argued that the Americans, being “a People whose Empire Stands Singly predominant, on a great Continent,” would eventually seek to project their commercial power on a global scale. “Will that spirit,” he asked, “which has gone to Falkland’s Islands in Search only of Whales, be Stopped at Cape horn, or not pass the Cape of Good Hope?” Pownall provided a definitive answer for his audience. “It will not be long,” he explained, “after their Establishment as an Empire, before they will be found trading in the South Sea and in China.” Like Adams, Pownall understood the commercial value of the Pacific to the United States.<sup>161</sup> Meanwhile, the American Commissioners, including Adams and Franklin, possessed a Congressional mandate to forfeit access to the “East Indies”—we cannot be certain if this included Canton—in exchange for independence from Britain.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> “John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, 16 July 1783” in *The Adams Papers*, Papers of John Adams, vol. 15, *June 1783–January 1784*, eds. Gregg L. Lint, C. James Taylor, Robert F. Karachuk, Hobson Woodward, Margaret A. Hogan, Sara B. Sikes, Mary T. Claffey, and Karen N. Barzilay, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 122–126.

<sup>161</sup> “II. Translation of Thomas Pownall’s *Memorial*, 8-14 July 1780” in *The Adams Papers*, Papers of John Adams, vol. 9, *March 1780–July 1780*, Gregg L. Lint and Richard Alan Ryerson, eds. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 196–221.

<sup>162</sup> See endnote 1 in Ferguson, “Appendix I, Early Records of Robert Morris’s Involvement in American Trade with China,” 872.

Some commentators in Britain also perceived the China Trade as leverage in the peace negotiations. In 1782, an anonymous “Well-wisher of the East India Company” expressed fears of a “scheme to open a Trade from America to the East Indies” and warned that “if ships are not already gone to India from America, they will soon.” The author characterized such a development as an economic threat to Great Britain and hoped that “His Majesty’s Ships or your Cruizers will fall in with them.”<sup>163</sup> As the peace negotiations wore on through July of 1783, Adams looked for alternative avenues to supply the United States with the produce of the China. On 1 August, Adams reported on the progress of trade negotiations with the Portuguese Minister in Paris. Writing to Robert Livingston, he commented that Portugal “could supply us with Sugars, Coffee, Cocoa, Brazil Wood, and even with Tea” procured through the settlement at Macao. Nonetheless, the plan constituted an imperfect solution—it threatened to relinquish the lucrative carrying trade to European competitors.<sup>164</sup> Adams undoubtedly felt relief when Congress removed the China Trade from the bargaining table, and the “Definitive Treaty of Peace” made no mention of the East Indies, China, or the Pacific.<sup>165</sup> Thereafter, Americans would be free to conduct an independent trade between the United States and Canton.

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<sup>163</sup> Anonymous, quoted in Holden Furber, “The Beginnings of American Trade with India, 1784-1812,” *New England Quarterly*, XI (1938), 238-239.

<sup>164</sup> “John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, 1 August 1783,” in *The Adams Papers*, 15:193–196.

<sup>165</sup> “Definitive Peace Treaty between the United States and Great Britain, 3 September 1783” in *The Adams Papers*, 15:245–251.

## “Columbia and Washington”

In Boston, Joseph Barrell possessed a number of characteristics that informed his attitude as an entrepreneur, including willingness to accept risk, to innovate upon prior business models, and, most importantly, to persevere in the face of setbacks. These qualities, though, would not be enough to launch an enterprise into a distant, unfamiliar quarter of the world. First, he needed to recruit business partners who shared his vision of an “adventure to the Pacific.” Barrell’s main partners, Samuel Brown and Crowell Hatch, based their investment in *Columbia* upon his reputation as a resilient businessman, as well as a common desire to earn astronomical profits in the China Trade.<sup>166</sup> Second, Barrell had to reconcile his commercial objectives with the logistical challenges ahead, a suitable task for his main partners. As an entrepreneur, he could strengthen enthusiasm for the *Columbia* expedition, but he understood precious little about the demands of long-duration sailing. Brown and Hatch, however, possessed expertise concerning sailors, ships, and logistics.<sup>167</sup> Third, Barrell needed to recruit additional shareholders in order to

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<sup>166</sup> Business scholars concur that *vision* is crucial to commercial leadership, while admitting that it “is still not defined in a generally agreed upon manner.” Indeed, scholars understand this fuzzy concept in a number of ways. Understood as a form of leadership, vision is a “transaction between the leader, his or her followers, and the goal or dream,” in which interpersonal resonance creates “allies in support of a common cause.” Laurie Larwood, Cecilia M. Falbe, Mark P. Kriger and Paul Miesing, “Structure and Meaning of Organizational Vision” *The Academy of Management Journal* 38, no. 3 (1995): 741.; Warren Bennis, “The Leader as Storyteller” *Harvard Business Review*, 74, no. 1 (1996): 157.

<sup>167</sup> In a second sense, *vision* represents the task of synthesizing top-down objectives and a “bottom-up consensus” held by others. See Ray Stata, “The Role of the Chief Executive Officer in Articulating the Vision” *Interfaces* 14, no. 1 (1988), 3.



fully capitalize the enterprise. In reaching out to three silent partners, he emphasized that *Columbia* would be a strong investment, a source of commercial information about the Far East, and a wellspring of local pride.<sup>168</sup> Finally, Barrell stressed an attitude of flexible collaboration between investors, officers, and crew, without which an autonomous expedition to the Pacific could not hope to succeed.<sup>169</sup>

The *Columbia* expedition represented an enormous logistical challenge and a significant financial commitment. To overcome these problems, Barrell recruited two partners with nautical backgrounds, the merchants Samuel Brown and Crowell Hatch. Curiously, both men are all but forgotten today.<sup>170</sup> Born in 1753/4, Samuel Brown hailed from Newport, Rhode Island. Prior to the American Revolution, he captained a passenger ship, *Jupiter*, which carried settlers from Ulster to South Carolina.<sup>171</sup> Brown opened a

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<sup>168</sup> Conceptually, *vision* also describes a set of “competencies,” including the abilities to communicate a compelling goal, attract multiple constituencies to a project, and cultivate symbols that inspire commitment to a mission. See Warren Bennis, “The Artform of Leadership.” *Training and Development Journal* (1982), 44-45.

<sup>169</sup> More broadly, *vision* speaks to an organization’s core values, such as far-reaching strategic planning, a culture of consultation, and flexibility in decision making. Lacking a clear definition, it is worthwhile to note a common emphasis upon drawing together many minds, beliefs, and talents. Business scholars described the “visionary” entrepreneur as a “pragmatic dreamer” or “a craftsman with a clear vision of the results he expects and a deep understanding of the materials he is working with.” See Larwood et al., “Structure and Meaning of Organizational Vision,” 762.; Bennis, “The Leader as Storyteller,” 157.; Frederick W. Gluck, “Vision and Leadership.” *Interfaces* 14, no. 1 (1984), 11.

<sup>170</sup> Most of the individuals related to the *Columbia* have escaped the attention of historians, possibly because the voyages themselves have not received an adequate treatment. Brown and Hatch are no exception. The short biographies here may represent the first synthesis of sources to address either figure.

<sup>171</sup> There is some indication that he may have operated as an estate manager, in business with Ezra Ide, near Rehoboth, Rhode Island, although I cannot verify this possibility. See “All Persons

store in Boston as early as 1771, in which he sold “Choice Brown Sugars, by the Hogshead, Barrel, or smaller Quantity, Also, Glass and China Ware cheap for Cash.”<sup>172</sup> Following the British occupation of Newport, in 1776, he permanently relocated to Boston. Brown did not limit shipping to settlers, commodities, and luxuries. Like many Rhode Islanders, he generated a share of his wealth through the Transatlantic Slave Trade.<sup>173</sup> Even after moving to Boston, where slave trading was uncommon, he maintained his old partnership with William Vernon of Newport. Their operation traded between Africa and the sugar islands of the West Indies.<sup>174</sup> Their brig *Don Galvez*, which made five voyages from 1785-92, traveled far afield—to Mozambique and the Indian Ocean—in search of slave cargoes. The ship is believed to have disembarked 790 slaves during its career.<sup>175</sup> Brown also owned another vessel, *Pacific*, in partnership with

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having any Demands on the Estate of Lieut. Aaron Walker, late of Rehoboth, deceased,” *Providence Gazette; and Country Journal*, 2 December, 1775.; “On Monday the 21<sup>st</sup> of May next will be Sold ad public Vendue...” in *Providence Gazette; and Country Journal*, 28 April, 1781.

<sup>172</sup> “To be sold by Samuel Brown, At his Shop in Union-Street, almost opposite the Cornfields.” *Massachusetts Gazette: and the Boston Weekly News-Letter*, 31 January, 1771.

<sup>173</sup> “Samuel Brown to William Vernon, April 9, 1788,” Redwood Library and Athenaeum.

<sup>174</sup> “Within two or three weeks last past arrive in the eastern Passage of Rhode Island, and came to anchor, a brig—.” In *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, New York), 22 July 1789.

<sup>175</sup> The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages. <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces?yearFrom=1770&yearTo=1800&shipname=Don+Galvez> (Accessed on 26 September 2015)

Crowell Hatch of Boston.<sup>176</sup> Curiously, he does not appear in the Boston Directory of 1789, despite having lived in the town for more than a decade.<sup>177</sup> Little more is known about him during this period.

Crowell Hatch also remains largely unknown today. Hatch was born at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1737. His father, Edmund Hatch, a farmer, descended from separatists who immigrated to America during the early years of Plymouth Colony.<sup>178</sup> Jabez Hatch, his uncle, operated a wharf at Wheeler's Point in Boston.<sup>179</sup> Crowell Hatch first appears as a Bostonian merchant in 1764. His brigantine, *Sally*, plied the coast between Massachusetts and North Carolina.<sup>180</sup> He probably commanded this vessel himself, as contemporaries referred to him as "Captain Hatch" and he appears to have been comfortable at sea. In 1766, Hatch captained his own sloop, *Betsy*, between Boston and

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<sup>176</sup> Edward G. Porter, "Discovery of the Columbia River by Captain Robert Gray, of Boston, Mass., May 11, 1792." *Transactions of the Twentieth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1892* (Portland: Chausse-Prudhomme Co., 1912), 64.

<sup>177</sup> We can be certain that Brown was still living in Boston as late as 1785, when he published a public notification concerning a separation from his wife, Susannah. Moreover, all sources concerning the *Columbia* voyages identify him as a merchant of Boston in 1787. See *The Boston Directory* (Boston: John Norman, 1789), 6-12.; "This may certify all who it may concern, That I the Subscriber, and Susannah my Wife" in *American Herald* (Boston, Massachusetts), 18 July 1785.

<sup>178</sup> William Hatch (1598/9-1651), a draper and merchant from Kent, England, was the first member of the Hatch family to arrive in Plymouth Colony, in 1633. New England Historical Genealogical Society, *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register, Volume LXX*, ed. Henry Edwards Scott (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1916), 258-59.

<sup>179</sup> *The Boston Directory*, 24.

<sup>180</sup> "Custom-House, Boston, April 25," *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter*, 26 April 1764.

Annapolis.<sup>181</sup> Later, he commanded several transatlantic ships on voyages between Liverpool and Virginia.<sup>182</sup> Intercolonial trade, then considered an important growth industry, probably accounts for most his earnings.<sup>183</sup> During the Revolutionary War, Hatch operated the merchantman *America*, which smuggled tobacco, skins, and staves from the Chesapeake to Great Britain. Furthermore, he may have held a stake in the sloop *Nancy*, captained by a distant relation, Naler Hatch of Malden.<sup>184</sup> During 1782-83, while Great Britain enforced a blockade of the American coast, Hatch followed the example of other Bostonians and invested in privateers. In 1783, he purchased the privateer *Lady Washington*. A fast, ninety-ton brigantine, she would later navigate the Pacific as consort to *Columbia*.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Vaughan W. Brown, *Shipping in the Port of Annapolis, 1748-1775* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1965), 40.

<sup>182</sup> “Boston, February 27,” *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter*, 27 February 1772.

<sup>183</sup> April Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 5-53.

<sup>184</sup> William Bell Clark, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1964), 1389.; William James Morgan, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, vol. 9 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1986), 147.

<sup>185</sup> I contend that this is in fact the same *Lady Washington* later launched as the consort to *Columbia*, although that vessel is given as a “sloop” in documents related to the voyage. Nonetheless, her total guns (six) and complement (fifteen) are a close match. Context clues suggest that *Lady Washington*, like *Columbia*, may have received a refit prior to the expedition—Captain John Kendrick, who later appeared bent on converting the sloop into a brigantine, provides circumstantial evidence for this view. Indeed, he appears to have wanted to restore the vessel to its original rigging. Ultimately, the known documentation concerning *Lady Washington* is insufficient to determine her service history. See Charles Henry Lincoln, ed., *Naval Records of the American Revolution, 1775-1788* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 336, 368.; Allen, *Massachusetts Privateers of the American Revolution*, 200.

Evidence does not reveal how Brown and Hatch became involved with Barrell, but we can conclude that, for them, *Columbia* represented the extension of a standing partnership. Their merchant ship, *Pacific*, was a profitable venture that drew upon Hatch's connections in South Carolina.<sup>186</sup> The partnership appears to have been so close that, in later years, Hatch's reputation suffered from his association with Brown—future generations remembered Hatch as a “Black Bird,” or slave trader, even though he is not known to have participated in the notorious business.<sup>187</sup> Joseph Barrell probably encountered them both in 1783, when all three invested in an exclusive insurance group managed by goldsmith John Hurd.<sup>188</sup> Nevertheless, Barrell must have known Brown, a successful privateer owner, through reputation if not in person.<sup>189</sup> Likewise, he

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<sup>186</sup> J. Richard Nokes, *Columbia's River: The Voyages of Robert Gray, 1787-1793* (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1991), 17.

<sup>187</sup> Thomas R. Wilson, *The Aristocracy of Boston, Who they Are, and What they Were: Being a History of the Business and Business Men of Boston, for the Last Forty Years, by One who Knows Them* (Boston: Thomas R. Wilson, 1848), 9.

<sup>188</sup> East, *Business Enterprise in the American Revolutionary Era*, 70.

<sup>189</sup> Samuel Brown, too, owned and operated a vessel called *Lady Washington* in 1777, although her status at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War is unknown. This vessel, however, was a sloop and not a brigantine. Whether this sloop was reconstructed to become the brigantine owned by Crowell Hatch—a distinct possibility—remains beyond the scope of this project. If so, then John Kendrick's decision to refit the *Washington* on the Northwest Coast, in 1788-89, would constitute its second round of improvements in a decade. Brown also owned the brigantines *Juliet* and *Tybalt*. *Tybalt*, owned in partnership with Isaiah Deane, was the final American privateer commissioned during the Revolutionary War, on 28 March 1783. Furthermore, Brown appears to have been equally active in bonding others' privateers, such as *Anti Smuggler* (Nathaniel Freeman), *Mentor* and *Romeo* (Isaiah Deane), *Mercy* (Jacob Adams), *Ranger* (Daniel Sargent), and *Reprisal* (Tristram Coffin). See Lincoln, *Naval Records of the American Revolution*, 228, 362, 389, 391, 430, 436, 447, 482.; Allen, *Massachusetts Privateers of the American Revolution*, 200, 309.

undoubtedly recognized Hatch as the proprietor of Borland's Wharf, a commercial pier, and as a supporter the Boston Marine Society.<sup>190</sup> In 1787, Hatch appeared among the merchants who subscribed loans for the purpose of "quelling the tumults & disorders" of Shays' Rebellion.<sup>191</sup> Both partners were, therefore, active and successful merchants known throughout Boston. Brown ultimately purchased a three-fourteenth share of the *Columbia*, equal to £10,500. Hatch bought two shares at £7,000. Together, their shares equaled Barrell's own five-fourteenths.<sup>192</sup>

Concerning logistics and personnel, Brown and Hatch contributed the practical talents needed in planning a voyage to the Pacific Ocean. Samuel Brown possessed the greatest experience in long-duration navigation, a field of knowledge crucial to launching *Columbia* on her circumnavigation of the globe. To further complicate this ambitious feat, the expedition would make wide course deviations into the South Atlantic and North

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<sup>190</sup> Hatch became a member of the society in 1788, where he was member #313. The date of his membership, combined with his recommendation of both captains in the *Columbia* venture, warrants further investigation. It is possible that he undertook this membership on behalf of the crew, although such research is currently beyond the scope of this dissertation. See Thwing, *Inhabitants and estates of the town of Boston, 1630-1800*, reference code 37465.; Boston Marine Society, *Constitution and Laws of the Boston Marine Society* (Boston: Marsden & Crawford, Printers, 1837), 34.

<sup>191</sup> Hatch subscribed £100 to the General Court, and Samuel Brown subscribed £30. See "Subscription to Loan Money to the General Court," 4 January 1787. Massachusetts State Archives.

<sup>192</sup> Frederic W. Howay, "Letters Relating to the Second Voyage of the *Columbia*." in *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 24, no. 2 (1923), 132.

Pacific. *Columbia* would traverse almost 49,000 miles.<sup>193</sup> Of the principals, Brown best understood the requirements of sending ships beyond the Atlantic World. Furthermore, he probably established the particulars of *Columbia*'s itinerary. During the 1780s, as maritime trade recovered after the Revolutionary War, his business partner in Rhode Island, William Vernon, prepared to send their ships *Don Galvez* and *Ascension* on slave expeditions to Southeast Africa and the "Indian Ocean Islands."<sup>194</sup> Brown recognized the importance of intermediate ports in long-duration sailing. Locations such as Cape Verde and Saint Helena represented the last opportunity to provision, maintain, or repair a ship before embarking into the unfamiliar waters of the Indian Ocean. Brown probably recommended that *Columbia* take on additional supplies at Cape Verde, before navigating the desolate South Atlantic. Indeed, in 1787, the expedition later purchased livestock, citrus fruit, and salt at the port of "St. Jago's" (Santiago)<sup>195</sup> Brown would have recognized, however, that *Columbia* needed another waypoint before entering the hazardous Drake Passage around Cape Horn, gateway to the Pacific. Ships entering the torrid passage, infamous for destructive storms, often required months to tack against its stiff headwinds. Brown likely suggested a preliminary stop in the uninhabited Falkland

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<sup>193</sup> "Boston, Wednesday, Aug. 11, The Columbia." *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 11 August 1790.

<sup>194</sup> The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages. <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces?yearFrom=1760&yearTo=1795&anyowner=Vernon%2C+Wm> (Accessed on 4 October 2015).

<sup>195</sup> Robert Haswell, "A Voyage Round the World Onboard the Ship *Columbia Rediviva* and Sloop *Washington*" in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 6-10.

Islands, where the crewmembers went fowling and stockpiled fresh water.<sup>196</sup> Later, cruising west of Spanish Chile, *Columbia* could resupply in the Juan Fernández Islands, where feral goats roamed the countryside.<sup>197</sup> Brown's logistical insight would be of tremendous advantage to the expedition. Joseph Barrell, by comparison, had never attempted anything on such a scale.

Crowell Hatch contributed the practical experience of a working captain who sailed the Atlantic Ocean before, during, and after the Revolutionary War. First, having commanded vessels of various sizes and riggings, he could make strategic recommendations about the ships necessary for an expedition to the Pacific. The historical record does not reveal which partner selected *Columbia*, although Hatch undoubtedly approved of the flagship. She "sailed exceeding well," a characteristic of crucial importance to completing a journey of tens of thousands of miles in varied, unpredictable conditions.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, she accommodated a crew of thirty, which permitted Hatch to recruit sailors with redundant skills. His strategy recognized the dangers of seafaring and hedged against critical vacancies among the carpenters, hands, and even officers. For example, among the expedition's forty crew, eight individuals, or

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<sup>196</sup> Haswell, "A Voyage Round the World," 14-18.

<sup>197</sup> Lyndon Wester, "Invasions and Extinctions on Másatierra (Juan Fernández Islands): A Review of Early Historical Evidence." *Journal of Historical Geography* 17, no. 1 (1991), 22, 24-26.

<sup>198</sup> Haswell, "A Voyage Round the World," 5.



twenty percent, possessed training in piloting and navigation.<sup>199</sup> Hatch also emphasized redundancy, plus versatility, in the selection of vessels. He contributed his own fast and maneuverable sloop, *Lady Washington*, to sail as consort to *Columbia*. Hatch recognized that the companion vessel would permit multiple, simultaneous fur cruises, thus maximizing profits on the Northwest Coast. Alternatively, *Washington* could reconnoiter new trading partners while *Columbia* stockpiled furs in proven ports. Should tragedy strike either vessel, the crew might escape aboard the surviving companion, and, in the process, salvage the mission.<sup>200</sup> In short, Hatch possessed the nuanced understanding of

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<sup>199</sup> *Columbia's* roster upon beginning the voyage, in 1787, included twenty-seven persons, although she probably could have accommodated a few more. None of the surviving journals complain of cramped conditions aboard the ship. *Lady Washington's* opening roster included another thirteen crew, although she, too, could probably have accommodated up to fifteen. The individuals capable of navigation were John Kendrick, Robert Gray, Simeon Woodruffe, Joseph Ingraham, John B. Cordis, Robert Haswell, John Kendrick, Jr., and probably R. David Coolidge. See Nokes, *Columbia's River*, 28.; Frederic W. Howay, "John Kendrick and his Sons" *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (December, 1922), 295-96.

<sup>200</sup> There is some confusion on this point. Charles Henry Lincoln, in *Naval Records of the American Revolution* (1906), reproduces an original record describing Hatch's vessel as a brigantine, rather than a sloop. There can be no confusion, however, that the *Lady Washington of Columbia* fame began the expedition as a sloop. Multiple sources confirm this. Considerations of name, ownership, and John Kendrick's later decision to rebuild *Washington* as a brigantine, lead me to question whether the official record is, in fact, erroneous. Lincoln comments in his preface that the records "exist only in very incomplete forms, scattered in many different places, and having little of official character." Moreover, he states that the "Papers of the Continental Congress" provide "little beyond the bonds given by Letters of the Marque" and that records originating with the Marine Committee are "but a mere fragment." The Navy Department's contemporary effort to edit the *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, underway for decades, still has not proceeded beyond 1778 despite the release of twelve volumes since 1964. By contrast, the record concerning Crowell Hatch's *Lady Washington* is dated "1783 Jan. 16," a date well beyond the current scholarship. Future evidence may enable us to better understand the origin of the *Lady Washington* that sailed as tender to *Columbia*. For my purposes, the evidence connecting the "brigantine" with the sloop is too strong to be circumstantial, and, lacking more definitive sources, I proceed under the assumption that the ships are one and the same. See Lincoln, *Naval Records of the American Revolution*, 3, 368.

ships, crew, and officers needed to equip a challenging “adventure to the Pacific.” Joseph Barrell, by contrast, was no mariner.

Barrell’s own contributions lay in his dynamism as an entrepreneur, risk taker, and innovator. His interest in the economic potential of the Pacific, and his willingness to gamble upon an uncertain enterprise in that quarter, was without precedent in Boston. Conversely, Brown and Hatch both excelled in proven, predictable, and established forms of commerce. The Pacific, an unproven region, might not have entered their imagination without Barrell. *Columbia*’s success would depend upon his mastery of fur trading in the ocean hemisphere. First, there was the problem of financing otter furs. John Ledyard gave no definitive indication of what articles to exchange for otter skins, although he did observe “a few copper bracelets and three or four rough wrought knives” as evidence that “some sort of commercial intercourse, immediate or remote” existed on the Northwest Coast.<sup>201</sup> The observation may explain Barrell’s decision to provide the expedition with a plethora of metal items, including nails, thimbles, and chisels—popular trade goods among the coastal Indians.<sup>202</sup> In addition, perceiving Massachusetts coin as a possible trade commodity, he amassed an indeterminate “quantity of the copper Cents and Half Cents, struck at the public mint.” Finally, he included a limited number of “silver and

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<sup>201</sup> John Ledyard, *A Journal of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean and in Quest of a North-West Passage between Asia & America, Performed in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, and 1779* (Hartford: Nathaniel Patten, 1783), 77.

<sup>202</sup> “Calculation of the Washington’s Cargo and How Expended” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 152-53.; John Hoskins, “John Hoskins’ Memorial on the Trade at Nootka Sound,” in *ibid.*, 485-86.

copper medals,” probably the *Columbia-Washington Medal*, “to be distributed among the natives of the Indian Isles.”<sup>203</sup> Having solved the problem of financing furs, Barrell faced the challenge of trading at Canton.

During the summer of 1787, Barrell solicited commercial advice from Thomas Randall, the former supercargo of the *Empress of China* and now a partner in the China Trading firm Shaw, Randall, and Company of New York.<sup>204</sup> Randall informed him that “Exchange fluctuates in China” and described the expensive methods by which the British East India Company funded its trade using bills of exchange. Moreover, he explained, the company recently “sent out in their ships from England three millions of dollars” in order to improve the terms of exchange and compensate its Chinese creditors.<sup>205</sup> The letter must have reinforced Barrell’s confidence that trading in otter furs, as opposed to credit, would result in more advantageous terms of exchange for tea, porcelain, and silk. The profit margin would also depend, in part, upon negotiating the complicated system of trade at Canton. In this respect, Randall promised that the *Columbia* would “derive more considerable advantages from consigning to our house,

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<sup>203</sup> “Extract of a Letter from an American House in Cape Francois, Hispaniola, under Date of 4<sup>th</sup>. Ult, to a Gentleman in This Town,” *Salem Mercury; Political, Commercial, and Moral*, 2 October, 1787.

<sup>204</sup> General Henry Knox, a former Boston bookseller and a business associate of Robert Morris, introduced Barrell to Randall. See Henry Knox to Joseph Barrell, 23 August 1787, ALS, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

<sup>205</sup> Thomas Randall to Joseph Barrell, 7 September 1787, ALS, Columbia Papers I, Massachusetts Historical Society.

than it is possible for any supercargo... [who] is unacquainted with the trade.”<sup>206</sup> Barrell, whose background hinged upon personal connections, recognized that, as newcomers, the Columbians would face significant disadvantages at Canton. Moreover, his lucrative partnership with Samuel Webb probably informed a preference for working through an intermediary. Consequently, he consigned the sale of *Columbia*’s furs to the Canton office of Shaw, Randall, and Company.<sup>207</sup> Joseph Barrell, the entrepreneur, had acquired the knowledge to compete in a transpacific trade with China.

Barrell also demonstrated significant vision when promoting the *Columbia* enterprise to other potential investors. We cannot be certain what argument he made to convince the three remaining partners, as no sources illuminate his conversations with prospective shareholders. Nonetheless, the backgrounds of those partners suggest some tentative conclusions. Charles Bulfinch, John Derby, and John M. Pintard had little influence over the planning and execution of the voyages. In modern terms, they might be considered silent partners, or senior investors who remain uninvolved in the regular management of a business. Combined, the three purchased four shares in the business, or £14,000.<sup>208</sup> Their participation points to several other motivations for investment. *Columbia* was a local enterprise, a valuable avenue for young investors, and represented

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<sup>206</sup> Thomas Randall to Joseph Barrell, 24 August 1787, ALS, Columbia Papers, ., Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>207</sup> Howay, “Letters Relating to the Second Voyage of the Columbia,” 132.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

a crucial prototype for commerce in the Pacific Ocean. Barrell may have articulated these arguments when recruiting Bulfinch, Derby, and Pintard.



Figure 8. Mather Brown, *Charles Bulfinch*, 1786, oil on canvas, 74.9 x 62.9 cm, Harvard University Portrait Collection, Cambridge, MA. Gift of Francis V. Bulfinch to Harvard University, 1933.

Remembered today as America's first professional architect, Charles Bulfinch was then merely "a young man of inherited wealth and social position."<sup>209</sup> He was born in 1763 to Thomas Bulfinch, a respected physician and influential man-about-town. The

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<sup>209</sup> East, *Business Enterprise in the American Revolutionary Era*, 256.

family lived in Bowdoin's Square, an upper-crust neighborhood.<sup>210</sup> During the Revolutionary War, Dr. Bulfinch arranged a position for his son "in the counting room of Joseph Barrell, Esq., an intimate friend & esteemed a correct merchant." The economic vagaries of the conflict, however, meant that Charles was often "at leisure to cultivate a taste for Architecture."<sup>211</sup> Given a substantial monetary legacy in his name, and a burgeoning reputation as an architect, Charles Bulfinch had little financial need to invest in *Columbia*.

My supposition is that Bulfinch purchased a two-fourteenths share in anticipation of building a nest egg.<sup>212</sup> Moreover, he is reported to have invested "in connection with his father." Family accounts state that "it was at Dr. Thomas Bulfinch's mansion and by his fireside" that Barrell pitched the *Columbia* expedition to "a little circle of friends." We can suppose that Samuel Brown and Crowell Hatch participated in the meeting, although surviving sources do not identify the "friends."<sup>213</sup> After investing in the venture, Charles Bulfinch turned his attention to several large architectural projects, including the Boston Theater, Tontine Crescent, and the Massachusetts State House. Meanwhile, he exercised no discernable influence over the *Columbia* expeditions, and his professional

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<sup>210</sup> *The Boston Directory*, 50.

<sup>211</sup> Bulfinch, *The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch*, 41-42.

<sup>212</sup> Howay, "Letters Relating to the Second Voyage of the Columbia," 132.

<sup>213</sup> Bulfinch, *Oregon and Eldorado*, 1-3.

relationship with Barrell centered upon the construction of Pleasant Hill, Barrell's opulent new residence at Charlestown.<sup>214</sup>

John Derby, scion of a powerful merchant family of Salem, Massachusetts, purchased a single share of the *Columbia*, worth £3,500.<sup>215</sup> Derby was a famous name in Massachusetts in 1786-87. His father, Captain Richard Derby, was a shipping magnate whose fleet sailed between Salem and South Carolina, Virginia, the Caribbean, and Spain.<sup>216</sup> Born in 1741, John Derby captained ships prior to the Revolutionary War, but his notoriety dates from his participation in the conflict. Following the battles of Lexington and Concord, in April, 1775, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress commissioned him to deliver their account of events to sympathetic publishers in London.<sup>217</sup> According to one historian, "Derby cracked on sail... and made a passage across the Atlantic of twenty-nine days" aboard the family schooner *Quero*.<sup>218</sup> Thereafter, during the Revolutionary War, he partnered with local merchants to purchase

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<sup>214</sup> Bulfinch, *The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch*, 41-42, 94-104, 110-14, 193-95.

<sup>215</sup> Howay, "Letters Relating to the Second Voyage of the *Columbia*," 132.

<sup>216</sup> Robert A. Peabody, "Derbys of Salem, Mass." in *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute*, Vol. XLIV, no.3 (1908): 198.

<sup>217</sup> John Frayler, "The Man Twice Forgotten: Captain John Derby of the *Quero*." in *Pickled Fish and Salted Provisions: Historical Musings from Salem Maritime NHS, Volume II, no. 1* (2000): 2-3.

<sup>218</sup> Ralph D. Paine, *The Ships and Sailors of Old Salem Massachusetts* (Westminster MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 2007, original 1929], 129.

the privateers *Rover* and *Oliver Cromwell*.<sup>219</sup> Meanwhile, he captained two other privateers, *Patty* and *Astrea*, owned in partnership with his brother, Elias Hasket Derby. Later, he redoubled his fame by delivering the first news of peace between the United States and Great Britain.<sup>220</sup>

Elias Hasket Derby may have encouraged his brother John to invest in *Columbia*. While this cannot be proved, the supposition hinges upon his reorientation toward the China Trade during the Early Republic. Previously, the Derby family concentrated upon Atlantic shipping, and, during the Revolutionary War, Elias financed 158 privateers mounting some 2,000 cannon.<sup>221</sup> In 1785, however, he sent the first Massachusetts ship, *Grand Turk*, to Mauritius, India, and China, via the Indian Ocean. The profitable outcome of the voyage prompted him to dispatch another four ships to China in 1787.<sup>222</sup> *Columbia* presented a second avenue of commerce, and, given the allure of the sea otter, one with enormous potential. For a minimal investment, then, John Derby could provide his family with crucial, firsthand information about the requirements, challenges, and expenses of

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<sup>219</sup> Allen, *Massachusetts Privateers of the Revolution*, 230, 268.

<sup>220</sup> Frayler, "The Man Twice Forgotten", 2-3.

<sup>221</sup> Later known as "King Derby," Elias Hasket Derby earned a fortune in the tea, pepper, and cotton trades between the United States, India, and East Indies. In 1787, his name resounded across New England as an able successor to his father, Richard Derby, and for contributions to the naval war against Great Britain. Indeed, he was more famous than Joseph Barrell—although his great achievements in the China Trade began in tandem with the *Columbia* expeditions. See Derby, "Elias Hasket Derby," 2:2-3, 33.

<sup>222</sup> The four ships were *Atlantic*, *Astrea*, *Light Horse*, and *Three Sisters*. *Ibid.*, 2:2-3, 33, 48-57.



equipping their own adventure to the Pacific. Indeed, Derby left the partnership following *Columbia*'s first, unprofitable voyage.<sup>223</sup> Moreover, the outcome may have contributed to his family's disregard for the Pacific.<sup>224</sup>

John Marsden Pintard, a young gentleman of New York, embodied the partner who invests at a distance. Born in 1760, he descended from French Huguenot merchants of New Rochelle, in Westchester County, New York.<sup>225</sup> His father, Lewis Pintard, was among the incorporators of the New York City Chamber of Commerce and served as the principal importer of Madeira wine to the United States. In 1782, John M. Pintard became his father's resident purchasing agent on the Portuguese island of Madeira, off the coast of Morocco.<sup>226</sup> The following year, he received a commission to act as the commercial agent of Congress on the island.<sup>227</sup> From the distant isle, where he was "the

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<sup>223</sup> Howay, "Letters Relating to the Second Voyage of the *Columbia*," 132.

<sup>224</sup> Alex Roland, W. Jeffery Bolster, and Alexander Keyssar, *The Way of the Ship: America's Maritime History Reenvisioned, 1600-2000* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 100-02.

<sup>225</sup> John M. Pintard should not be confused with John Pintard, Jr., who was adopted into the same family and also raised by his uncle, Lewis Pintard. The presence of two Johns in the household may account for John M. Pintard's subsequent use of the middle name "Marsden." See C.H. Augur, *New Rochelle through Seven Generations* (New York: The National City Bank, 1908), 23-24.; Edwin Salter, "Huguenot Settlers and Land Owners in Monmouth County, New Jersey." In *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, Vol. XIX. (New York: The New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 1888), 30.

<sup>226</sup> *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 40, *May 16 through September 15, 1783*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 504-06.; Joseph Alfred Scoville, *The Old Merchants of New York City, Second Series* (New York: Carleton, 1864), 223-24.

<sup>227</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, vol. 15, *1783*, ed. Gaillard Hunt (Washington: Government Printing Officer, 1922), 778-80.

only American around,” he supplied wine to luminaries such as George Washington and Alexander Hamilton.<sup>228</sup> To date, no account of the *Columbia* expedition has explained how a young man residing on Madeira, and with few connections to Boston, came to invest in the voyage. In fact, his involvement appears to hinge upon relationships forged by his father during the Revolutionary War. In 1777, during the British occupation of New York City, Lewis Pintard became the designated agent for American soldiers under detention in the city.<sup>229</sup> In this capacity, Lewis Pintard negotiated prisoner exchanges, a duty that brought him into contact with Major Samuel Webb of Connecticut, then in detention on Long Island.<sup>230</sup> Their friendship continued after the war, and Webb, a relative of Joseph Barrell, is the most plausible connection between Pintard and the *Columbia*.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> “John Marsden Pintard to George Washington, 24 January–5 February 1786,” in *The Papers of George Washington*, Confederation Series, vol. 3, *19 May 1785–31 March 1786*, ed. W. W. Abbott. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 521-23.; “Alexander Hamilton to John M. Pintard, 23 April 1791,” in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 8, *February 1791–July 1791*, ed. Harold C. Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 304-05.

<sup>229</sup> Edwin G. Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots: the Untold Story of American Prisoners during the Revolutionary War* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 84-85.

<sup>230</sup> “Lewis Pintard to Samuel Webb, 7 May, 1778.” in *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb*, 2:92, 101-102, 105, 142-43.

<sup>231</sup> “Journal of Samuel Webb, September and October, 1787.” in Worthington Chauncey Ford, editor, *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb, Vol. III, 1783-1806* (Lancaster, PA: Wickerham Press, 1893), 84.; “Samuel Webb to Joseph Barrell, 27 April, 1788” in *ibid.*, 99-100.

Pintard owned one share in *Columbia*, worth £3,500, but later evidence suggests that his father managed, and perhaps even initiated, the investment.<sup>232</sup> No evidence accounts for the motives behind his share, but the investment *does* demonstrate faith in Barrell. Nonetheless, we can surmise a combination of motives based on context and outcomes. Like Bulfinch, Pintard's investment might have been intended to generate a nest egg suitable to a young gentleman. Perhaps, like Derby, the investment also served to generate commercial insights about the Far East, a future destination for ships belonging to the House of Pintard. In either case, the disappointing outcome of the *Columbia*'s first voyage convinced him, like John Derby, to withdraw from the enterprise.<sup>233</sup>

Assessment of the silent partners reveals three important facets of the *Columbia* expedition. First, although the venture was global in outlook, it remained local in origin. From the perspective of Bulfinch and Derby, then, it represented a business opportunity with trusted, successful neighbors. The commercial networks that connected the town of Boston, as well as neighboring communities such as Salem, worked to inspire confidence in local merchants whose own success depended upon maintaining good relationships

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<sup>232</sup> In 1793, Barrell contacted Lewis Pintard to confirm that "as soon as this is in my power, I will furnish you with the State of your Sons Account." Furthermore, Pintard may have assisted Henry Knox to broker the correspondence between Thomas Randall and Barrell, but the evidence for this supposition is circumstantial. See Thomas Randall to Joseph Barrell, 24 August, 1787, ALS, *Columbia Papers I*, Massachusetts Historical Society.; Joseph Barrell to Lewis Pintard, 9 June, 1793, ALS, *Joseph Barrell Letterbook, 1792-1797*. Massachusetts Historical Society.; Howay, "Letters Relating to the Second Voyage of the *Columbia*," 132.

<sup>233</sup> Howay, "Letters Relating to the Second Voyage of the *Columbia*," 132.

with neighbors and fellow business people. Second, *Columbia* was also an investment at a reasonable risk. Bulfinch and Pintard invested, in part, we may surmise, out of an interest to amass financial reserves. Both individuals could look forward to inherited wealth in the future, but their fathers also encouraged short-term investment. Third, *Columbia* presented a valuable source of information about the Pacific Ocean. Derby and Pintard, both of whom descended from merchant families, must have anticipated that the enterprise would generate commercial knowledge useful to their own, future, ventures to Canton. These three features of the voyage provided strong incentives to investment.

The choice of commanders would be crucial to an expedition in the unknown waters of the Pacific. Brown and Hatch recommended two trusted captains, John Kendrick and Robert Gray.<sup>234</sup> Once again, like so many individuals involved in the *Columbia* voyages, little is remembered about the commanders today. John Kendrick descended from immigrants who settled at Harwich, Massachusetts, in 1704.<sup>235</sup> Born around 1740, he is believed to have served among Massachusetts forces during the French and Indian War. Like many residents of Cape Cod, Kendrick found his calling

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<sup>234</sup> This is my supposition. Although I cannot locate any documents directly attesting to this, peripheral evidence confirms the relationship between Brown and Kendrick as well as Hatch and Gray. During the Revolutionary War, Brown invested in Adam Babcock's brigantine *Fanny*, commanded by Captain John Kendrick. Moreover, Brown and Hatch jointly owned the ship *Pacific*, a ship sailing under the command of Robert Gray in the "South Carolina Trade." See "Adam Babcock to George Washington, 12 June 1777" in *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 10, *11 June 1777–18 August 1777*, Frank E. Grizzard, Jr., ed. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 12–13.; Nokes, *Columbia's River*, 17.

<sup>235</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast, Vol. 1, 1543-1800* (San Francisco: The History Company, Publishers), 297-99.

and livelihood on the sea. Around 1760, he signed aboard a whale ship bound for the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. Kendrick appears to have acquired a strong background in navigation and command during this period, although no sources confirm the precise circumstances. Nonetheless, by 1772, he was registered as the master of the schooner *Rebecca*, a whale ship operating out of Martha's Vineyard.<sup>236</sup> One acquaintance recalled that "as a seaman and navigator, he had but few equals."<sup>237</sup> Family tradition holds that Kendrick was an ardent Patriot who participated in the famous "Destruction of the Tea" at Boston, in December 1773.<sup>238</sup> Two years later, he appeared as the master of the brigantine *Undutied Tea*, which traded in contravention of the Massachusetts Port Act.<sup>239</sup> Following the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, Kendrick served as commander of the privateer *Fanny*, an eighteen-gun brigantine known for taking multiple prizes throughout 1777.<sup>240</sup> In this context, Kendrick operated in coordination with Captain James Babcock of the *General Mercer*. Together, they caused a sensation by capturing the merchantmen

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<sup>236</sup> "Captain Lowndes in 16 days from St. Croix, ..." *Massachusetts Spy* (Boston, Massachusetts), 9 July 1772.

<sup>237</sup> Amasa Delano, *A Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres* (Boston: E.G. House, 1817), 400.

<sup>238</sup> Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast, Vol. 1*, 297-99.

<sup>239</sup> William Bell Clark, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1966), 1301-02.

<sup>240</sup> William James Morgan, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, vol. 8 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1980), 1041.; Idem., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, 9:575-76.; Michael J Crawford, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, vol. 12 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2013), 746.

*Clarendon* and *Hanover Planter*, both under military escort, near L'Orient.<sup>241</sup> Later, as a prisoner-of-war, Kendrick staged an roundabout escape via the Azores, Lisbon, and Paris, in order to return to Massachusetts.<sup>242</sup> He ended the Revolutionary War as captain of the *Marianne*, a Rhode Island brigantine of sixteen guns and a crew of sixty-five.<sup>243</sup> Following independence, he appeared in newspapers as master of the *Charleston Packet*, and perhaps became acquainted with Samuel Brown, Crowell Hatch, and Robert Gray though their common involvement in the "South Carolina Trade."<sup>244</sup> In 1787, Kendrick had just completed a transatlantic cruise as captain of the *Fortune*, from Dunkirk to Boston, when he was recruited to command the *Columbia*.<sup>245</sup>

While Kendrick's biography must be pieced together from disparate sources, even less is known about Captain Robert Gray. Born in 1755, Gray traced his heritage to

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<sup>241</sup> These tactics, the eighteenth-century equivalent of the submarine "wolfpack," were a principal method by which American privateers, acting in concert, could gain supremacy over more powerful British vessels. Kendrick repeated the feat in 1778, when he and Captain Thomas Truxton captured the snow *Scipio*. See Morgan, *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, 9:598.; Michael J. Crawford, *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, vol. 10 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2012), 787.

<sup>242</sup> Archives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the American Revolution, Volume K-L*, (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Company, 1902), 109.; "John Kendrick to Benjamin Franklin, 13 June 1779," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 29, *March 1 through June 30, 1779*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 681–682.

<sup>243</sup> Lincoln, *Naval Records of the American Revolution*, 383.

<sup>244</sup> "For Boston, the Brigantine Charleston-Packet, John Kendrick, Master" *Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 2 May 1787.

<sup>245</sup> "For Dunkirk, The Brig Fortune, John Kendrick, Master" *Massachusetts Gazette* (Boston, Massachusetts), 22 June 1787.

Saxon England and could claim relatives who fought at Hastings. His immediate ancestors immigrated to Plymouth Colony in 1643. Native to Tiverton, Rhode Island, he relocated to Boston sometime during the 1770s.<sup>246</sup> The timing is not clear, but perhaps the move followed the death of his uncle, Samuel Gray, during the Boston Massacre.<sup>247</sup> Where and how Gray acquired his sailing experience is unknown. There is a remote possibility that he, at the age of seventeen, became the master of the schooner *John*, registered in South Carolina. If true, this would indicate a prodigious talent for sailing.<sup>248</sup> Family tradition holds that “he was in the naval service of the United States during the Revolutionary War,” and indeed, his widow later attempted to claim his military pension. Frederic Howay concludes, however, that “there is no satisfactory evidence” to substantiate this possibility.<sup>249</sup> During the 1780s, Gray captained the merchant ship

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<sup>246</sup> Frederic W. Howay, “Some Notes on Captain Gray” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 1, (1930): 8.; Nokes, *Columbia’s River*, 17.

<sup>247</sup> Scott Ridley, *Morning of Fire: John Kendrick’s Daring American Odyssey in the Pacific* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 21.

<sup>248</sup> This “Robert Gray” was probably another person. The connection to South Carolina, however, could be of importance in determining whether Gray of Tiverton somehow began his sailing career outside New England. R. Nicholas Olsberg, See “Ship Registers in the South Carolina Archives, 1734-1780” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 74, no. 4 (1973): 237.

<sup>249</sup> There is a strong possibility, however, that Gray saw some form of action—perhaps in the merchant marine—during the Revolutionary War. Spanish sources describe him as “one-eyed,” perhaps a reference to a wartime injury. In contrast, however, none of the *Columbia* chroniclers mention the feature. There is also no evidence that he sustained the wound during the expeditions. See Frederic W. Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, xiii.; Dionisio Alcalá-Galiano, Cayetano Valdés Flores Bazán y Peón, Josef Espinosa y Tello, and José Cardero, *A Spanish Voyage to Vancouver and the North-West Coast of America: Being the Narrative of the Voyage Made in the Year 1792 by the Schooners Sutil and Mexicana to explore the Strait of Fuca*, trans. and ed. Lionel Cecil Jane (New York: AMS Press, 1971), 22.

*Pacific*, owned by Brown and Hatch, in their “South Carolina Trade.” Some scholars have associated Robert Gray with Samuel Brown’s trade in slaves.<sup>250</sup> This reading may result from an erroneous association between him and Daniel Grey, another mariner who commanded Brown’s ship *Don Galvez* on runs to West Africa during the 1780s.<sup>251</sup> In contrast, Robert Gray, master of the “fast-sailing Ship *Pacific*,” made transatlantic runs from Charleston to Hamburg.<sup>252</sup> In 1787, shortly after returning from a Europe, Gray received the offer to command Hatch’s vessel *Lady Washington*, tender to the *Columbia*.

The captains possessed complementary experience that made them suitable leaders for an ambitious “adventure to the Pacific.” Some evidence of their collaborative potential, as well as their attitudes toward command, must be gleaned from accounts of the expeditions. John Kendrick was respected as “a man of extraordinarily good natural abilities, and was noted for his enterprising spirit, his good judgment and superior courage.”<sup>253</sup> Having coordinated with other privateer captains during wartime, he assumed command of *Columbia* with a solid record of collaboration. Likewise, his

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<sup>250</sup> Nokes, *Columbia’s River*, 17.

<sup>251</sup> Several of the sources relating to *Don Galvez* list the captain’s name only as “Grey,” thus leading to some confusion. Brown appears to have employed both men at the same time, but on separate routes. See The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, Voyages: <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces?yearFrom=1514&yearTo=1866&shipname=Don+Galvez> (Accessed on 10 October 2015).

<sup>252</sup> “For Hamburgh, The fast-sailing Ship *Pacific*, Robert Gray, Master” *Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 13 April 1787.

<sup>253</sup> Delano, *A Narrative of Voyages and Travels*, 400.



victories against enemy warships recommended him as a daring, resourceful captain, capable of overcoming long odds at sea. Later events demonstrate his attention to fine detail, whether in regards to management of cargo space, rigging of his vessel, or the drafting of contracts.<sup>254</sup> In contrast, one historian describes Robert Gray as “a resolute, self-reliant, and determined man” who was “eminently practical.”<sup>255</sup> Gray, whose background in the merchant marine attuned him to business, appreciated the financial dimensions of navigation, including adherence to a schedule, quality of cargo, and profit margins.<sup>256</sup> Moreover, his impulse to become an “exploring captain” prompted him to seek new, lucrative discoveries in the Pacific.<sup>257</sup> The captains also differed in their approach to command. Kendrick was the more experienced mariner. He understood the navigational characteristics of schooners, brigs, brigantines, sloops, and ships, giving him the experience to command both *Columbia* and *Washington*. Where the crew was concerned, however, he was “whimsical and vacillating... [and] jealous of his authority.”<sup>258</sup> Gray was the superior commander in this respect. His consistent, firm

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<sup>254</sup> “John Kendrick to Joseph Barrell, 28 March 1792” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 472.; Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 6-9, 54-65.

<sup>255</sup> Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, xiv.

<sup>256</sup> “Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, 13 July, 1789” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 122-23.; “Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, 18 December, 1789” in *ibid.*, 128-130.; “John Hoskins and Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, 22 December, 1792” in *ibid.*, 488-489.; Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 15

<sup>257</sup> Robert Gray, “Remnant of the Official Log of the ‘Columbia’” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 435-438.; Nokes, *Columbia’s River*, 176, 193-94, 197-206.

<sup>258</sup> John Kendrick’s subsequent conduct as a captain continues to the subject of controversy. Frederick Howay concludes that “as the commander of an expedition he was a complete failure”

manner made him an exceptional leader of men. Throughout the voyages, he obtained superb teamwork from his crew. Together, they erected Fort Defiance, constructed the sloop *Adventure*, and rescued *Columbia* from catastrophic damage.<sup>259</sup> In short, the captains complemented one another. Most importantly, in case of unforeseen trouble, each possessed the expertise to assume overall command and lead *Columbia* home.

In addition to collaboration, the partners also emphasized that the commanders should exercise good judgement while cruising the ocean hemisphere. Barrell recognized that “it would be impossible upon a voyage of this nature to give with propriety very binding instructions.” Communications from *Columbia* would be strained by distance, logistics, and happenstance. Barrell informed the captains that “you will be on the spot, and as circumstances turn up you must improve them.”<sup>260</sup> He understood that critical

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whose “uncertainty of action and his leisurely movements were the defects which prevented him from obtaining those results to which his other qualities should have entitled him.” Most other commentators on the voyages tend to agree. One notable exception is Scott Ridley, whose *Morning of Fire* discusses Kendrick in a more sympathetic manner, contending that he was “a bold thinker, a trusted captain, [and] a man who plunged into the unknown wilderness.” Howay does concede, however that “when his responsibility was reduced to the control and direction of a small vessel he showed qualities of initiative, perseverance, courage, energy, and foresight.” Kendrick’s strengths and weaknesses are ultimately outside the scope of this dissertation. Moreover, Barrell and the partners could not have anticipated the command difficulties that would erupt in the Pacific. Therefore, my analysis concerns the collaborative relationship they *intended* to foster between Kendrick and Gray, based on the information at their disposal in 1787. See Howay, “John Kendrick and his Sons,” 277-302.; Ridley, *Morning of Fire*, 1-3.

<sup>259</sup> John Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage from Boston, (on a voyage, round the Globe)” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 406-413. John Hoskins, “The Narrative of a Voyage,” 247-48, 248-275, 338.

<sup>260</sup> Joseph Barrell, “Orders Given Captain John Kendrick of the Ship *Columbia* for a Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, 1787” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 111-12.

decisions would rest with the captains in the Pacific, rather than with the owners in the United States. Taking his instructions to Kendrick and Gray as a single body of thought, it is remarkable how few orders he dictated. Instead, Barrell advised the captains with a series of guidelines.<sup>261</sup> He employed the word “if” on fourteen occasions, and couched most aspects of the instructions in the conditional language of “may,” “should,” and “would.” Other language demonstrates the full latitude permitted to the captains. For example, Barrell explained that “it would not be amiss if you purchased some advantageous tract of land” on the Northwest Coast. Moreover, he suggested that “in case you sell your ship,” the partners would be “willing to go hand in hand in this concern.”<sup>262</sup> Elsewhere, he recognized the limits of foresight. If trade was disadvantageous at Canton, for instance, he suggested “trying what can be done on the coast of Japan and Pekin.”

Instead of providing direct orders, Barrell preferred to “advise,” or recommend, certain courses of action in the Pacific. His stance reveals a further dimension of the authority granted to the captains. Kendrick and Gray received permission to deviate from the partners’ intentions if necessary to ensure the success of the expedition. Barrell “advised” them to trade downriver from Canton, and considered it “advisable” that the

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<sup>261</sup> Barrell penned his “guidelines” to Kendrick in 1787 (first voyage) and Gray in 1790 (second voyage). Again, as identical logistical demands bore on the two expeditions, my analysis treats both sets of instructions as a single body of ideas. In the world of fiction, Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) provides a vivid illustration of the concept of “guidelines” in *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2013).

<sup>262</sup> “Joseph Barrell’s Instructions to Robert Gray, Boston, September 25, 1790,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 443-47.; Joseph Barrell, “Orders Given Captain John Kendrick,” 111-12.

Columbians construct an additional sloop on the Northwest Coast.<sup>263</sup> Even where he “strictly enjoined” the captains “not to touch at any part of the Spanish dominions on the western continent of America,” the threat of unforeseen events prompted him to add “unless driven there by some unavoidable accident.”<sup>264</sup> Even his imperative that “you will write to us by all possible opportunities” would depend upon serendipitous meetings between *Columbia* and other ships. Recognizing the resourceful character of Kendrick and Gray, Barrell authorized them extend the expedition “if you find the trade advantageous, and can get the supplies you want.” Finally, because “the voyage proposed is of very long duration,” he encouraged the captains to “enjoin system, good order, prudence, and economy, which, with a tender treatment of the men under your command, will show you to be a father to your crew.”<sup>265</sup> Barrell phrased his instructions as recommendations to be considered, and followed or discarded, accordingly.

Finally, while individuals had a strong influence over the planned expedition, we must not overlook the central role of one remaining “personality” central to the voyage—the ship *Columbia*. Like so many individuals connected with the voyages, she, too, remains the subject of speculation. L. Vernon Briggs, a historian of shipbuilding at Scituate, on the North River, stated that “the first American vessel that ever circumnavigated the globe was built by James Briggs at Hobart’s Landing in 1773,” and

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<sup>263</sup> Barrell, “Joseph Barrell’s Instructions to Robert Gray,” 443-47.

<sup>264</sup> Barrell, “Orders Given Captain John Kendrick,” 111-12.

<sup>265</sup> Barrell, “Joseph Barrell’s Instructions to Robert Gray,” 443-47.

adds that “this was the ship ‘COLUMBIA.’”<sup>266</sup> Upon closer inspection, however, the account appears to be based in tradition rather than the documentary record. Briggs based his account upon local lore as presented by Charles Torrey, a resident of Scituate, Massachusetts, in 1845.<sup>267</sup> In contrast, Frederic Howay concludes, based upon “the correct information... [in] two registers of the *Columbia* in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.,” that the flagship was originally constructed at Plymouth. He also suggests an original construction date of 1787.<sup>268</sup> Nonetheless, J. Richard Nokes, the biographer of Captain Robert Gray, contends that “one must yield to the original Briggs records as to the original construction date and place.”<sup>269</sup> Briggs contends that *Columbia* was “registered in Boston,” but not constructed, in 1787.<sup>270</sup> Curiously, the later provenance could instead correspond to a “generally accepted” tradition that *Columbia*

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<sup>266</sup> L. Vernon Briggs, *History of Shipbuilding on North River, Plymouth Country, Massachusetts, with Genealogies of the Shipbuilders, and Accounts of the Industries upon its Tributaries, 1640 to 1872* (Boston: Coburn Brothers, Printers, 1889), 298.

<sup>267</sup> Torrey declares that “Here our carpenters launched the first American vessel that ever doubled the stormy Cape Horn, and coasted the western shores of our continent. She was manned, in part, tradition says by our townspeople.” See Charles T. Torrey, *Home! or the Pilgrims’ Faith Revived* (Salem: John P. Jewett and Company, 1845), 16.

<sup>268</sup> Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, vi

<sup>269</sup> Seventeen miles separate Scituate and Plymouth, but the confusion is resolved if we understand “Plymouth” to refer to Plymouth County. See note 10 in Nokes, *Columbia’s River*, 303.

<sup>270</sup> Briggs, *History of Shipbuilding on North River*, 298.

was “refitted for the voyage [to the Pacific] at Long Wharf.”<sup>271</sup> If this is true, the Briggs account introduces another problem in that Long Wharf is located in Boston, not Plymouth. Further complications arise from their disagreement on the physical characteristics of the *Columbia*. Howay describes her as “a ship of 212 8/95 tons”<sup>272</sup> In contrast, Briggs gives her tonnage as 220, whereas Nokes references an unidentified source placing her tonnage at 300.<sup>273</sup> One possibility is that the various accounts of the *Columbia* may, in fact, refer to different ships. Moreover, where was *Columbia*, and what purposes did she fulfill, during the fourteen years between 1774 and 1787? The documentary record does not reveal these secrets.

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<sup>271</sup> This view provides a possible explanation for the name *Columbia Rediviva*, or “Columbia Revived.” See note 10 in Nokes, *Columbia’s River*, 303.

<sup>272</sup> Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, vi.

<sup>273</sup> Briggs, *History of Shipbuilding on North River* 298.; Nokes, *Columbia’s River*, 14.

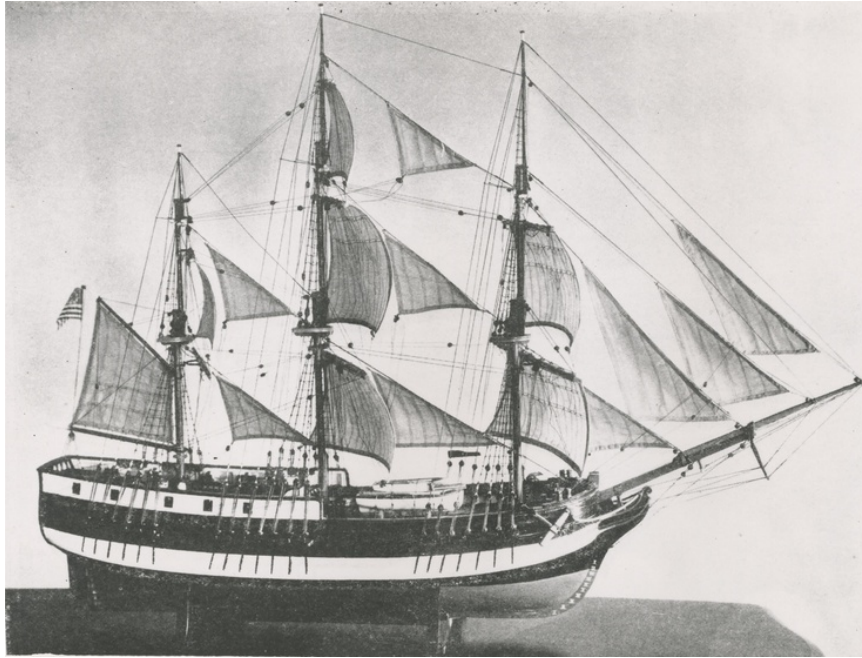


Figure 9. *Model of Columbia Rediviva*, n.d., photograph, Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

We can be certain of several features that made *Columbia* a suitable vessel to carry American colors on their first “adventure to the Pacific.” First, *Columbia* was a three-masted, full-rigged ship constructed to support intercontinental shipping. Boasting dimensions of 83’6” length and 24’2” beam, and an estimated draught of 11’, her size was sufficient to support an autonomous mission.<sup>274</sup> She possessed a hold adequate to outgoing trade goods, an intermediate stock of otter furs, and a return cargo of teas, porcelain, and silks. The hold was also more than adequate to ensure self-sufficient operations for long periods of time, if necessary. Second, *Columbia* was suitable in navigational terms. Swift but sturdy, she could easily navigate the dangerous waters of

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<sup>274</sup> Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, vi.

the Drake Passage and the Northwest Coast. Her timbers, probably cut from white pine, could withstand the punishing conditions of squalls and extremes of temperature. Indeed, she survived storm damage, onboard fires, and submerged rocks during her voyages in the Pacific.<sup>275</sup> Third, *Columbia* boasted ten cannons and numerous swivel-guns, making her formidable for her size. The armaments ranked her among the most powerful ships in the Pacific, comparable even to warships launched from New Spain. Finally, sailing in coordination with *Lady Washington*, she could lead simultaneous missions of exploration, coastal reconnaissance, diplomacy, and, of course, fur trading. In short, *Columbia* was the ideal ship for a mission to the Pacific Ocean.

*Columbia* and *Washington* embarked on their groundbreaking voyage on 30 September 1787, becoming the first American vessels destined for the remote Pacific. Their expedition, however, represented much more than an expedition into new quarters. The Columbians would establish a new commercial relationship between the United States, the Northwest Coast, and China—one with rippling implications for America's role in the Pacific World.

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<sup>275</sup> Robert Haswell, "A Voyage Round the World," 20-21, 51-52, 55-56, 93.; Idem., "A Voyage on Discoveries in the Ship *Columbia* Rediviva," in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 338.



CHAPTER III  
“IRON BOUND COAST”

On 4 August 1788, *Lady Washington* prepared to anchor “within a quarter of a mile of a ledge of rocks,” perhaps near Castle Rock, off Point Saint George, California. Robert Haswell observed “a canoe with the natives of the Countrey paddling toward us... These were the first inhabitation we had seen here.” He added that “on their approach they made very expressive signs of friendship.”<sup>1</sup> The Indians were the first human beings, other than one another, that anyone aboard the sloop had seen since leaving the Cape Verde Islands, nine months earlier. Haswell did not comment upon the importance of this moment—the first encounter between Americans and peoples of the Pacific—but there is no reason to think that the Columbians overlooked its significance.<sup>2</sup> It is more probable that ocean conditions dominated their immediate thoughts. Captain

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<sup>1</sup> *Columbia* and *Lady Washington* became separated in the Drake Passage and sailed independently to Nootka Sound. See Robert Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World Onboard the Ship *Columbia Rediviva* and Sloop *Washington*” in *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 & 1790-1793*, ed. Frederic W. Howay (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), 29.

<sup>2</sup> One literary theorist has described encounters between Europeans and indigenous peoples as an experience “both sudden and sustained” that served as a “cultural shock for European visitors, whose vaunted sophistication was often found wanting.” See Percy Adams, “Perception and the Eighteenth Century Traveler,” *The Eighteenth Century* 26, no. 2 (1985): 140.

Gray had approached “within a mile of a ledge of rocks” where he intended to drop anchor, but choppy seas and a “stiff breeze” thwarted his efforts.<sup>3</sup>

Some crewmembers’ work permitted them to steal glances of an astonishing scene. The Indians approached aboard dugout canoes “hued from a tree of vast bulk,” undoubtedly redwood. To a professional sailor, the canoes appeared to be “of the most clumsy shape in the world,” but, in fact, the boats answered the purposes of long-distance sailing, hunting of sea mammals, and deep-sea fishing. Plus, the Indians were confident, expert pilots.<sup>4</sup> Their own appearance was equally impressive. Haswell recorded that “they were cloathed chiefly in deerskins and they were ornamented with beads of European manufactor,” which he suspected to have originated “with the Spaniards at Monteray.”<sup>5</sup> Given the location of the landfall, between one and two degrees of latitude north of Cape Mendocino, the locals can be identified as Yurok or Tolowa Indians.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>3</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 29.

<sup>4</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 29.; Robert W. Jobson and William R. Hildebrand, “The Distribution of Oceangoing Canoes on the North Coast of California” *California and Great Basin Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1980): 167, 172.

<sup>5</sup> Haswell’s conclusion was probably correct. Indian trade routes connected all the coastal peoples with the Spanish Mission settlements at San Francisco and Monterrey. Conversely, he did not comment on the preponderance of beads crafted from seashells, especially the exotic *dentalium* shell, harvested around Nootka Sound and traded south to California. Nevertheless, *dentalium* beads were manufactured to a high level of precision along the coast, and there is a possibility that he mistook these for items of “European manufactor.” See Robert Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 29.

<sup>6</sup> To my knowledge, no scholarship has attempted to assess this question, despite Haswell’s fine observations and ample ethnological studies of both candidate groups. The work of anthropologist Alfred A. Kroeber, as well as his successors, is particularly useful in determining which Indians welcomed *Lady Washington* in 1788. See Robert F. Hezier and William

evidence, relating to oceangoing canoes, geographical features, and body piercing, more strongly indicates the Tolowas.<sup>7</sup>

The moment of contact between Tolowas and Americans could have resulted in brief exchange, an extended stay, or possible misunderstandings between the two groups. Instead, the encounter ended sooner than either party might have expected. Captain Gray began distributing presents in order to convince the Tolowas of his peaceful intentions, a precursor to trading for sea otter pelts. Meanwhile, the Indians probably viewed the Americans, who anchored in their territorial waters, as a windfall of enormous proportions. Western trade goods could enhance their prestige among neighbors. Before the two parties could begin to trade, however, the weather worsened. Haswell recorded that “our attent[i]on was called another way,” a reference to Gray’s command to weigh

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Sturdivant, eds., *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 8: California* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), ix.; Richard A. Gould, “Tolowa” in *ibid.*, 128-29.

<sup>7</sup> Three pieces of evidence inform my argument. First, the canoes, fabricated from the massive trunks of Redwood trees, were common among Indian cultures between Cape Mendocino and Point Saint George, California. Tolowa people, however, were more dependent upon marine resources, and more confident upon the ocean, than the Yuroks. Second, the presence of an offshore “ledge of rocks” probably indicates the Dragon Rocks, which extend westward into the Pacific from Point Saint George. The formation is visible from the sites of *daʔtūdən*, *meʔsteldən*, and *taaʔaadən*, three of the principal Tolowa towns. Moreover, Castle Rock, a constituent, is located approximately one half-mile from shore and possesses enough flat area as to match Haswell’s description of a “ledge.” Geography, then, also suggests contact with the Tolowas. Finally, his comment that the Indians were “punctuated,” or pierced, provides strong evidence to distinguish between the two candidate groups. Tolowa culture featured body piercing for many purposes, but most frequently as a marker for either shamanic status or of women’s sexual maturity. Earrings located in the lobes and the auricle, as well as noseplugs, served as adornment and remained in use through the middle twentieth century. In contrast, the Yuroks are not known to have incorporated body piercing to such a degree, if at all. See *ibid.*, 165-69.

anchor and put to sea. He added that “the wind by this time b[l]ew a gale.”<sup>8</sup> The captain would not have wanted to be driven against the rocks. The encounter was not unusual in its brevity. Previous European expeditions along the coast had rarely lingered more than a day, or a few hours, in a single location before weather, violence, or standing orders urged them on.<sup>9</sup> Future encounters between the *Columbia* expedition and Indians, however, assumed the form of sustained interaction, calculated exchange, and cultural introductions to the indigenous world of the Northwest Coast.

“*A Brisk Trade*”

*Columbia* connected indigenous peoples to a global commercial network that spanned two hemispheres, three continents, and countries as different as the United States and China. The Columbians accomplished this through a process of improvisation and adaptation that encompassed both voyages to the Northwest Coast. Improvisation is an important skill to all explorers, diplomats, and entrepreneurs, but for visitors to the Northwest Coast, who embodied all three roles, improvisation became the most significant tool in “learning the neighborhood.” In a fundamental sense, the Columbians

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<sup>8</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 30.

<sup>9</sup> Kent G. Lightfoot and William S. Simmons, “Culture Contact in Protohistoric California: Social Contexts of Native and European Encounters,” *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (1998): 145.

did business through practices of trial and error, making do with limited resources, and finding creative solutions to unexpected developments.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 10. Robert Haswell, Title image (Detail of Columbia and Washington at Anchor on the Northwest Coast), c. 1788, ink on paper, as reproduced in Robert Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World Onboard the Ship Columbia Rediviva and Sloop Washington,” Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

The coast itself encouraged improvisation on the part of merchant-captains who often sailed into uncharted waters. They approached the coast first as explorers on the edge of the world, hundreds of miles north of Spanish California. Geological time laid

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<sup>10</sup> Business scholars have defined *improvisation* in a variety of ways, including “to continuously and creatively adjust to change and to consistently move products and services out the door.” See Shola L. Brown and Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, *Competing on the Edge: Strategy as Structured Chaos* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998), 33.

out a dangerous labyrinth of islands, channels, and fjords north of Cape Flattery, on the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Climate conditions shrouded the southern stretches of the coast, including tidal basins and river entrances, in a relentless fog. The challenge of locating the most lucrative anchorages was fraught with trial and error—sailing was improvisation against geography itself. Even the recommended harbors, such as Clayoquot and Nootka Sounds, concealed navigational hazards such as submerged rocks and shallow draughts. The *Columbia* expeditions faced these challenges on a regular basis, often braving previously unexplored waters, such as the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Strait of Georgia, and the Columbia River. During one moment of danger, Robert Haswell noted that the surf “dashed us upon the rocks with the utmost fuery” while the “wind increased violently.” Under such conditions, he explained, “every surge left us resting dry upon the pinnacles of this murcieless Iron bound coast.”<sup>11</sup> Invisible hazards lurked beneath the surface. *Columbia* and *Lady Washington* struck rocks even under the command of Captain Robert Gray, a cautious and expert navigator.

Improvisation did not end when a ship anchored on the Northwest Coast. Europeans and Americans entered each harbor with scant information, if any, about the indigenous people who might become their trading partners. Shifting to a diplomatic role, merchant-captains grasped their own status as outsiders, and approached the Indians with cautious camaraderie and gifts. Here, captains improvised in their choice of gifts, hoping to choose the most suitable items in each location. Gifts served multiple purposes. They

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<sup>11</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 93.

recognized the authority of local leaders, who might distribute exotic items in order to enhance their own prestige. Most importantly, however, gifts served to showcase the items available for trade. If selected carefully, relatively inexpensive gifts set the stage for exchange of more substantial items, such as copper and furs. In another sense, Haswell's reference to the "Iron bound coast" is an unintentional metaphor for the regional economy, which placed a high value upon metals. The Columbians correctly determined that "iron was the only item of trade held in high estimation" by the Tsimshian People, and offered hard, sharp chisels useful to woodworking.<sup>12</sup> Among other peoples, however, the most valuable trade goods failed to engender a market. John Hoskins commented that the Clayoquot People "appeared quite indifferent about trading, rather wishing to receive our articles of traffic as presents."<sup>13</sup> Merchant-captains negotiated the complex economic conditions of the Northwest Coast much as they navigated the geography of the coast itself—by trial and error. Where commercial knowledge, the correct commodities, or both, were missing, traders improvised to enhance the value of their goods. In 1792, Joseph Ingraham, former Chief Mate aboard *Columbia*, returned to the coast in command of his own brigantine. Finding that other traders had flooded the market with iron chisels, he ordered his blacksmith to rework his own supply of chisels as decorative collars, which immediately became items of high

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>13</sup> John Hoskins, "Narrative of the Second Voyage of the 'Columbia'," in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 183.

demand.<sup>14</sup> Negotiation of the economic environment taught valuable lessons about the importance of improvisation.

Improvisation provided the experience necessary for merchant-captains to implement new adaptations as they embarked on subsequent voyages.<sup>15</sup> The knowledge gained through trial-and-error during a first expedition informed the itinerary, business practices, and cargo prepared for the second.<sup>16</sup> Upon returning to the Northwest Coast, traders frequented those harbors in which a customized cargo might fetch “prime furs” at the most advantageous prices. In some cases, it paid to make additional arrangements with preferred trading partners. For example, Captain John Kendrick attempted to establish exclusive trade zones on “five tracts of land.” In these agreements, Kendrick promised to supply several chiefs with firearms and powder in return for a consistent supply of furs.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, where gift-giving had opened mutually-beneficial trade

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Ingraham, *Voyage of the Brigantine “Hope” on a Voyage to the Northwest Coast of North America, 1790-1792*, ed. Mark D. Kaplanoff (Barre, MA: Imprint Society, 1971), 105.

<sup>15</sup> Here, *adaptation* is used as “a general term that describes a period of general, long-continued, and incremental change” in response to changes in the business environment. See Daniel F. Jennings and Samuel L. Seaman, “High and Low Levels of Organizations Adaptation: An Empirical Analysis of Strategy, Structure, and Performance,” *Strategic Management Journal* 15, no. 6 (1994): 459.

<sup>16</sup> It is crucial that a team uses improvisation to implement adaptation, rather than treating improvisation itself as a substitute for a structured solution. See Dusya Vera and Mary Crossan, “Improvisation and Innovative Performance in Teams,” *Organization Science* 16, no. 3 (2005): 203-05.

<sup>17</sup> “John Kendrick to Joseph Barrell, 28 March, 1792,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 472.; United States Congress, Senate. Committee of Public Lands. Report No. 335 (Felch Report). 32<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Reports of the Committees of the Senate of the United States*, vol. 2. (Washington: A. Boyd Hamilton Printer, 1852), 20-25.; José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka:*



between outsiders and Indians, adventurers could reinforce the developing bonds of trust through acts of friendship or service. The Columbians acculturated themselves to native society on numerous occasions, but especially during the long months in which the expedition anchored in winter quarters. John Boit attended a coming-of-age ceremony for the son of Wickaninnish, Chief of the Clayoquots, where his status as a foreign guest enhanced the chief's influence.<sup>18</sup> Such activities enabled outsiders to become insiders.

The most important adaptations, however, which transformed indigenous communities, related to new understandings of market conditions on the Northwest Coast. Just as Bostonians benefited from newspaper reports of "prices current" in their city, the Columbians would attempt to compile market research about the peoples of the coast. Educated guesswork might dominate the preparations for an initial voyage, but firsthand knowledge enabled investors and captains to equip a second expedition with a customized cargo of valuable goods.<sup>19</sup> In 1790, following the return of *Columbia* to Boston, Captain Robert Gray advised Joseph Barrell to make copper the centerpiece of a second expedition. The decision had larger implications than merely setting *Columbia* on a course for financial success—copper consolidated a trade network that connected the

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*An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792*, ed. and trans. Iris Higbie Wilson (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), 71.

<sup>18</sup> Hoskins, "Narrative of the Second Voyage of the 'Columbia'," 254-56.

<sup>19</sup> "Prices Current at the Quay at Boston, August 9, 1793." *American Apollo* (Boston, Massachusetts), 9 August 1793.; John Hoskins, "John Hoskins' Memorandum on the Trade at Nootka Sound," in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 485-86.

Northwest Coast to Boston, and Boston to the copper mines of Southwest England. The copper served, of course, to purchase otter skins, and in this respect it was a stunning success. More importantly, though, furs tell a reciprocal story in which the Northwest Coast became intensively connected to the ancient markets of Canton in China. Together, copper and furs became the engines of change for chiefs such as Maquinna and Wickaninnish, who utilized their status as middlemen to become the principal powerbrokers on Vancouver Island. Moreover, their new wealth, distributed to followers through the institution of the potlatch, triggered local adaptations that improved, undermined, and otherwise changed traditional ways of life.

Finally, the experience of the *Columbia* on the Northwest Coast undermines the opposing narratives of the “bad Indian” and the “exploitative European.” The Columbians, cruising so far from their operational base in the United States, turned to the indigenous peoples of the coast not only as trading partners, but often as allies and friends. Indian communities, in particular the Clayoquot and Mowachaht Peoples, found compelling reasons to welcome the outsiders. From their perspective, the Columbians represented a source of valuable, exotic goods, all of which could enhance their own position within the preexisting, indigenous trade network. Between 1788 and 1792, *Columbia* became the vehicle of globalization in these native communities.

*“Copper was the article in demand”*

When *Columbia* arrived on the Northwest Coast in August 1788, she entered a thriving world of indigenous exchange. For centuries, two primary trade vectors connected the coastal peoples to their neighbors. The first vector, which extended along a general west-to-east axis, connected littoral regions with the continental interior. These “cispacific” routes often extended from protected harbors on the coast, across mountains or straits, and into the heart of North America. Three major routes followed the Columbia, Fraser, and Skeena Rivers.<sup>20</sup> In this setting, coastal peoples exchanged sea resources such as salmon or baleen in return for continental goods including land furs, obsidian, iron, and copper. The cispacific routes, often transcontinental in scope, developed well before the arrival of maritime fur traders, and archeological evidence attests to this fact. For example, *dentalium* shells discovered among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians reveal the existence of commercial interaction between peoples of the Upper Missouri River and those of the Northwest Coast.<sup>21</sup> The routes continued operating in the period following contact with Europeans. In 1789, British explorer Alexander Mackenzie made his first attempt at a transcontinental crossing from Fort Chippewyan, in Canada, to the Northwest Coast. Upon encountering a group of Inuits

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<sup>20</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 24-30.

<sup>21</sup> Alan Taylor, “Continental Crossings,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 24, no. 2 (2004): 182-88.; Colin C. Calloway, “The Inter-Tribal Balance of Power on the Great Plains, 1760-1850” *Journal of American Studies* 16, no. 1 (1982): 36-37.

along the Slave River, Mackenzie learned of “large Canoes full of white men to the Westward 8 or 10 Winters since, from whom they got Iron”<sup>22</sup> The description probably indicated the doomed Russian settlement at Three Saints Bay. Later, in 1805, the Americans Meriwether Lewis and William Clark observed the vigor and speed of indigenous trade along the transcontinental routes. Having manufactured iron hatchets for exchange during their winter at Fort Mandan, the explorers continued overland to discover their handiwork already circulating among the Nez Perce Indians.<sup>23</sup>

The second trade vector followed the north-to-south axis of the coastline and connected native communities that shared a common dependence upon sea resources. This “circumpacific” route extended for more than 2,400 miles, with approximate endpoints at Kodiak Island, in the north, and San Francisco Bay, in the south.<sup>24</sup> The circumpacific route differed from the cispacific corridors in two important ways. First, the conditions of geography, namely the presence of mountains and an arid interior beyond them, dictated the existence of a single north-south “trunk” route. The trunk facilitated a broad distribution of “northern” and “southern” goods—for example, walrus ivory and redwood canoes, respectively—that contributed to a general uniformity of

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<sup>22</sup> Alexander Mackenzie, *Exploring the Northwest Territory; Sir Alexander Mackenzie's Journal of a Voyage by bark canoe from Lake Athabasca to the Pacific Ocean in the summer of 1789*, ed. T. H. McDonald, (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1966), 82.

<sup>23</sup> James Ronda, *Lewis and Clark Among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1984), 102-04.

<sup>24</sup> Bailyn, *Atlantic History*, 24-30

material culture along the coast.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, the coastal route facilitated exchange between communities with access to similar marine resources, and therefore, it encouraged each group to maximize their comparative advantage in local products. For example, the people of Vancouver Island harvested and prepared ornamental *dentalium* shells, which became a prized ornamental item across the Northwest Coast.<sup>26</sup> Immediate neighbors also exchanged specialized foodstuffs, such as whale blubber, acorns, and eulachon fish oil.<sup>27</sup> The concentration of goods along a single corridor, combined with an emphasis upon competitive advantage, made metals—rare, lustrous materials—the ultimate status symbol.<sup>28</sup> Once again, ancient routes continued to steer, and even intensified, the indigenous exchange economy following contact with Europeans. Iron tools, probably originating in Russian Alaska or Spanish California, circulated along the

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<sup>25</sup> Kenneth M. Ames and Herbert C.G. Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast: their Archaeology and Prehistory* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 113-46.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew John Barton, “Fishing for Ivory Worms: A Review of Ethnographic and Historically Recorded Dentalium Source Locations” (Master’s Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1979), 34-39, 99-101.; Rebecca W. Andrews, “Hiaqua: Use of Dentalium Shells by Native Peoples of the Pacific Northwest” (Master’s Thesis, University of Washington, 1989), 311-12.

<sup>27</sup> James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods* (Tacoma: University of Washington Press, 1999), 8-11.; Erna Gunther, *Indian Life of the Northwest Coast of America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 37.60.; Alan McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 17, 132, 139, 144-45..

<sup>28</sup> Carol F. Jopling, “The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians: Their Origin, Development, and Possible Antecedents,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series* 79, no. 1 (1989), 52

coast prior to the arrival of Captain Cook, who observed their use as wealth items among the Haidas and Mowachahts.<sup>29</sup>

When fur trading expeditions began arriving on the coast in the 1780s, they exchanged large quantities of metal in a number of preferred locations, notably Nootka Sound, home of the Mowachaht People. The documentary sources, which are particularly strong for Nootka, attest to an incredible volume of metal entering the coastal economy during this period. In 1785, Captain James Hanna purchased his legendary cargo of 560 prime skins, worth \$20,600, using nothing more than bar iron. During the next summer, Captains Nathaniel Portlock and George Dixon traded a cargo of “hatchets, adzes, howels, tin kettles, pans, &c.,” all of which the Mowachahts happily accepted.<sup>30</sup> In 1787, John Meares also did business at Nootka, where he exchanged a cargo of “iron, copper, beads, &c.”<sup>31</sup> British captains provided their trading partners with enormous quantities of metal, and especially iron. Curiously, during the years 1785-87, the growing supply of iron did not immediately suppress demand. This was undoubtedly because coastal trade tended to disperse local concentrations of exotic goods. By 1788, however, the

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<sup>29</sup> Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*, 217.; Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *The Chinook Indians: Traders of the Lower Columbia River* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 32-35.

<sup>30</sup> George Dixon, *A Voyage Round the World but more Particularly to the North-West Coast of America: Performed in 1785, 1786, 1787, and 1788; in the King George and Queen Charlotte* (London: George Goulding, 1789), 199

<sup>31</sup> John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789 from China to the N.W. Coast of America, with an Introductory Narrative of Voyage Performed in 1786, from Bengal, in the Ship Nootka* (Logographic Press: London, 1791), 193.

proliferation of iron drove a widespread devaluation, as observed by members of the *Columbia* expedition. While *Columbia* and *Washington* overwintered at Nootka Sound, Robert Haswell witnessed the price of iron decline among the Mowachaht Indians. Haswell commented that the Indians would still accept “Iron worked into chizles after there own plan” as trade goods but complained that “these they soon reduced the value of, inhancing the prise [of otter skins] from three chizles to ten.”<sup>32</sup>



Figure 11. John Webber, *A View of the Habitations in Nootka Sound*, 1778, watercolor on paper, 38 x 23 cm., State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

During the first *Columbia* expedition, 1788-89, copper began to supplant iron as the preferred trade metal on the Northwest Coast. When *Columbia* made her second expedition to the coast, in the summer of 1791, the transformation in price structures had

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<sup>32</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 55.

radiated outward from Nootka. Indians north and south now desired trade goods of higher quality, and copper in particular. John Boit recorded that, at Clayoquot Sound, the Indians traded prime skins only in exchange for “Copper and blue Cloth.”<sup>33</sup> John Hoskins observed the new paradigm while trading among the Cheklesah People, the northern neighbors of the Mowachahts. Hoskins noted that “our articles of traffick were principally copper and cloathing,” but granted that “iron was more valuable than at Clioquot.” Later, during a southward cruise, he remarked upon the same conditions among the Makah, recording that “copper and cloathing were our articles of commerce.” Furthermore, Indians began to monetize copper as the preferred medium of exchange for other items, including slaves. Chief Cassacan of the Ditidaht People reported to Hoskins that he “sold a female prisoner or slave girl for several sheets of copper.”<sup>34</sup> The

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<sup>33</sup> John Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage from Boston, (on a voyage, round the Globe),” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 370.

<sup>34</sup> This is the sole occasion on which the Columbians mention slaves among the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast, although the presence of enslaved individuals probably did not surprise them. First, although the institution of slavery was uncommon in New England, it was nonetheless familiar to the Columbians—and especially to Captain Robert Gray, whose prior commands took him to South Carolina, a state where African-American slaves comprised a majority of the population. In 1787, when *Columbia* embarked for the Pacific, Massachusetts held the rare distinction of being the *only* state to have prohibited slavery within its borders. 5,463 persons, or 1.44% of the state population appear as nonwhite “free persons” on the roster for Massachusetts in the federal census of 1790. We can presume that many, if not most, of these individuals had once been enslaved, and that the Columbians interacted with former slaves on a regular basis in the context of labor, business, and community. Second, the Columbians would have recognized Indian slavery—that is, indigenous communities retaining unfree persons—as an institution common to Native Americans. As practiced by Indians, slavery served to reconstitute communities in the aftermath of conflict, disease, or starvation, rather than to exploit unfree labor. Indeed, as Daniel Richter observes, following the Columbian Exchange, “people were the scarcest resource of all in the Indians’ New World... so communities went to war to obtain them.” Native American launched “mourning wars” in order to take prisoners whose adoption, marriage, or religious integration helped to counteract population losses. The Columbians, like all New Englanders, shared a cultural memory of English captives, such as Mary Rowlandson, taken



following year, 1792, Boit confirmed that the preference for copper had taken root far to the south, along the Columbia River. He reported an exchange price of “4 Otter Skins for a Sheet of Copper” while trading among the Chinooks.<sup>35</sup> The rate represented a sort of “floor price” for the metal, but demand frequently drove prices much higher.

The Columbians discovered that copper goods formed a special category of trade on the Northwest Coast. The expedition often encountered peoples for whom “copper was all there cry.”<sup>36</sup> During an opening encounter with the Coast Salish, on 20 August 1788, Robert Haswell reported a successful trade of skins for iron implements, probably chisels, but that the Salish “expressed a great desire for copper.”<sup>37</sup> In some locations, Haswell noted the demand to be so high that, lacking copper goods, a successful trade was hardly possible at all. When negotiating with the Mowachaht People of Nootka Sound, Haswell again recorded that “copper was the article in demand” and lamented that

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during conflicts such as King Philip’s War. Third, Indian slavery was common on the Northwest Coast. Here, the category of “slave” denoted persons captured, born into servitude, or whose debts required a period of servitude. In this regard, as Philip Drucker notes, enslaved persons, “like the natives’ dogs, or better still, like canoes and sea otters and blankets, were elements of the social configuration but had no active part to play in group life.” Still, the boundary between “free” and “unfree” status remained permeable, depending upon circumstances. That slaves did not participate in civil society is, perhaps, the main reason for their absence from the chronicles of the *Columbia* expedition. See John Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 195-98.; Census Bureau. “First Census of the United States,” 8.; Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 59-67.; Rebecca Blevins Faery, “Mary Rowlandson (1637-1711),” *Legacy* 12, no. 2 (1995): 121-132.; Philip Drucker, “Rank, Wealth, and Kinship in Northwest Coast Society,” *American Anthropologist, New Series* 41, no. 1 (1939): 55-65.

<sup>35</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 397.

<sup>36</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 44.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

“this we were unprovided with.”<sup>38</sup> The rage for copper continued throughout the winter and into 1789. That spring, when trading with the Clayoquot People, Haswell compared the value of copper versus iron, and we can almost imagine his exasperation. “In all these houses they have plenty of skins,” he wrote, “which they told us they would rediely part with for [iron] Chizles or Copper but of the former they demand an exorbitant price ten for a skin and the latter we are totally destitute of.”<sup>39</sup>

Did the expedition expend its copper early in the voyage, or was it, in Haswell’s words, “destitute” of this commodity from the beginning? The existing documents are silent on this matter. The original bill of lading for the *Columbia* is missing and copper does not appear on the “Calculation of the Washington’s Cargo and How Expended.”<sup>40</sup> Yet, the dearth of copper was probably not an oversight on the part of the owners, but rather an unknown factor that remained undiscovered until *Columbia* arrived on the Northwest Coast. In 1787, Joseph Barrell had access to only a few sources concerning the peoples of the Northwest Coast, all of which originated during Cook’s third voyage. The most familiar was *A Journal of Captain Cook’s Third Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (1783), written by John Ledyard, a former British marine from Connecticut. In his

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>40</sup> Metal items appearing in this document include hatchets, axes, adzes, knives, fish hooks, brass pans and lids, tin pots and kettles, needles, awl blades, hammers, saws, pewter porringers, “elegant earrings”, wire, brass tobacco boxes, and skillets. Most of these items are manufactured of iron, and none purely of copper. See “Calculation of the Washington’s Cargo and How Expended” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 44.

account, Ledyard attested to the presence of “copper bracelets” and “copper trinkets” among the peoples of the Northwest Coast, but did not identify the metal as an important item of trade.<sup>41</sup> Historians contend that Barrell and Bulfinch, and perhaps the other owners, referenced Ledyard’s account while preparing to launch the *Columbia*. There is no evidence, however, concerning their access to other narratives of the Third Voyage. William Ellis, a surgeon’s mate, reported that the Mowachaht People were “fond of brass buttons, pieces of copper and brass, particularly if bright, and pewter and tine, which they converted into bracelets.”<sup>42</sup> John Rickman, a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, stated that the Indians desired “cutlery wares of all sorts, edge-tools, copper, pewter, iron, brass, or any kind of metal, with the use of which they were not unacquainted.”<sup>43</sup> We can surmise that, had these other narratives come to Barrell’s attention before 1787, he would have taken special care to load the *Columbia* with copper.

In any case, *Columbia* appears to have sailed without an adequate cargo of copper, a situation that hampered her commercial options during the first expedition to the Northwest Coast. The Columbians had ample opportunities to trade with the locals

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<sup>41</sup>John Ledyard, *A Journal of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, and in Quest of a North-West Passage between Asia and America; Performed in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, and 1779* (Hartford: Nathaniel Patten, 1783), 77, 80.

<sup>42</sup> William Ellis, *An Authentic Narrative of a Voyage performed by Captain Cook and Captain Clerke in his Majesty’s Ships Resolution and Discovery, during the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779 and 1780, Volume 1* (London: G. Robinson, 1784), 194.

<sup>43</sup> John Rickman, *Journal of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean on Discovery, performed in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779* (London: E. Newsley, 1781), 234.

while anchored at Nootka Sound through the winter of 1788-89. Nonetheless, trade still depended upon a mixture of copper and other goods, some of which the Americans had no intention of trading. One trading opportunity involved Wickaninnish, Chief of the Clayoquots, who brought “his brother and several persons of distinction” on a diplomatic mission to the Mowachahts in January 1789. The Mowachahts, however, had not yet returned to their villages at Nootka Sound. In the meantime, according to Robert Haswell, Wickaninnish presented “upwards of 30 excellent sea otter skins but they sold us furs as they wanted Copper and muskets.” Lacking copper, the Columbians could have substituted firearms as trade goods, but their reluctance to arm the Indians brought the negotiations to a close. The following day, the Mowachahts “began to come down in great numbers,” and their arrival altered the commercial conditions at Nootka. Now, competition between the two Indian groups drove prices down so far that “a good many sea otter skins were purchased” without further demand for copper—or firearms.<sup>44</sup>

The presence of copper among the Mowachaht People, as described by members of Cook’s third voyage, attests to the preexisting metals trade among the peoples of the Northwest Coast.<sup>45</sup> Copper, however, greatly exceeded iron in their estimation. Indians regarded copper as one of two mineral goods that conferred high status.<sup>46</sup> In this respect,

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<sup>44</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 56.

<sup>45</sup> Jopling, “The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians,” 46-50.

<sup>46</sup> Obsidian, a volcanic glass originating in Northern California, represented the other prestige mineral. Neither malleable nor tensile, it could not be worked into successive forms. See Susan

coastal peoples contributed to a near-universal demand for the metal among Indians of North America.<sup>47</sup> Copper occurred along the Northwest Coast in the form of “float copper,” or nuggets. Nuggets varied in purity according to the circumstances of their occurrence, namely, the ratio of ore to rock. Copper originated in subterranean veins, but glaciers—acting over thousands of years—dredged metal fragments from below and scattered them across the landscape. Prince of Wales Island, the Queen Charlotte Islands, Hope Island, and the appropriately named Copper River represented the main deposits on the Northwest Coast.<sup>48</sup> Some copper may have originated around the Great Lakes, where an indigenous metalworking tradition thrived for more than 7,000 years. This occurrence constitutes the largest “native,” or ore-bearing mineral, deposits of copper in the world.<sup>49</sup>

Copper resonated with the Columbians as a trade commodity with great potential, but it carried a broader cultural significance for the Indians of the Northwest Coast.

Indeed, Spanish naturalist José Mariano Moziño commented in 1792 that “Copper...

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Fox Hodgson, “‘Obsidian Spirits Just Speak Once’—California Indians in a Geothermal Land,” *Proceedings of the World Geothermal Congress* (2005), 1-4.

<sup>47</sup> Kathleen L. Ehrhardt, “Copper Working Technologies, Contexts of Use, and Social Complexity in the Eastern Woodlands of Native North America,” *Journal of World Prehistory*, 22, no.3, Modeling Early Metallurgy I (2009): 214-220.

<sup>48</sup> Jopling, “The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians,” 50-52.

<sup>49</sup> Ehrhardt, “Copper Working Technologies, Contexts of Use, and Social Complexity in the Eastern Woodlands of Native North America,” 214-220.; H. Kory Cooper, “Innovation and Prestige Among Northern Hunter-Gatherers: Late Prehistoric Native Copper Use in Alaska and Yukon,” *American Antiquity* 77, no. 3 (2012): 565-590.; Stanley H. Ross, “Metallurgical Beginnings: The Case for Copper in the Prehistoric American Southwest”, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 58, no. 2 (1968): 360-370.

among them has the same value gold has to us.”<sup>50</sup> For the Indians, demand for copper reflected not only its ornamental beauty but also the social prestige, political authority, and magical potency that it conferred upon an owner. First, copper indicated an elevated social status. “Throughout the Northwest Coast,” as anthropologist Philip Drucker states, “possession of riches was the basis of social gradation.” Wealth indicated status because it signified an individual’s ability to sustain the community—that is, to provide abundance in a world of subsistence. Those in possession of “riches” were, therefore, poised to exercise a fuller “extent of participation” in the community than their poorer neighbors.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, ethnologist George McDonald has concluded that, among a broad constellation of status-bearing goods, Indians of the Northwest Coast regarded copper as “the ultimate symbol of wealth.”<sup>52</sup> Second, because copper represented a supreme form of wealth, it also, in a plutocratic society, signified the “ultimate” political authority. While anyone could own copper, only chiefs possessed “coppers,” a form of ornamental household crest hammered into shape from the raw metal. “Coppers” reinforced a chief’s ruling authority by placing his command of materials, as well as communal labor, on display. More importantly, among some peoples, a prominent chief’s power could be “stored” in a “copper” and passed down to future generations through the process of

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<sup>50</sup> José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka*, 42.

<sup>51</sup> Philip Drucker, “Rank, Wealth, and Kinship in Northwest Coast Society,” 56, 64.

<sup>52</sup> George F. McDonald, “Painted Houses and Woven Blankets: Symbols of Wealth in Tsimshian Art and Myth,” in *The Tsimshian and Their Neighbors of the North Pacific Coast*, eds. Jay Miller and Carol M. Eastman (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 133.

inheritance.<sup>53</sup> Finally, copper was a “supernatural” material that carried a spiritual charge, and humans could access that potency through interaction with the metal.<sup>54</sup> Indians regarded copper as magical because of its “distinctive metallic properties and seemingly fortuitous occurrence in nature.” Moreover, those who possessed the metal had “tangible evidence of contact with the supernatural... [and] the element of luck.”<sup>55</sup> Copper possessed *tsh’ih* (ᵗʰih, “supernatural power” or “spirit”), a magical energy that connected the spiritual and material worlds. It bound together people, animals, and material objects according to their respective abilities and effects on human lives.<sup>56</sup> *Tsh’ih*, therefore, closely resembled the concept of *Manitou* (“magic” or “control-power”) understood by Eastern Woodland Indians. The shaman, or even the individual practitioner, could “tap into” the potency of copper in order to correct social injustices, transmute natural resources into wealth, increase human fertility, or protect against malevolent supernatural beings.<sup>57</sup> Americans and Europeans who introduced copper into the coastal economy

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<sup>53</sup> Jopling, “The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians,” 20-28.

<sup>54</sup> Gunther, *Indian Life of the Northwest Coast of America*, 37.; McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 97, 157-58.; Ruby and Brown, *The Chinook Indians*, 33-35.;

<sup>55</sup> Jopling, “The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians,” 18, 20.

<sup>56</sup> Morris Swadesh, “Mosan II: Comparative Vocabulary,” *International Journal of American Linguistics* 19, no. 3 (1953): 234.; Bruce M. White, “Encounters with Spirits: Ojibwa and Dakota Theories about the French and Their Merchandise,” *Ethnohistory* 41, no. 3 (1994): 390-91.

<sup>57</sup> White, “Encounters with Spirits,” 378-381.; Jopling, “The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians,” 16-18.

were, from the perspective of the Indians, releasing enormous amounts of prestige, power, and spiritual energy into their world.

The *Columbia* made its first expedition “destitute” of copper, but Captain Robert Gray became strongly attuned to the importance of the supernatural metal as a trade commodity. Within three weeks of arriving on the Northwest Coast, in August of 1788, Gray determined that the expedition required a supply of copper in order to maximize purchases. Writing to Joseph Barrell, he commented that he “intended” to overwinter in Macao, “there to get some articles of Trade which I had not on board, that suits best on this Coast.” Gray did not specify copper as the “articles” in question, but Robert Haswell’s journal of the first voyage makes clear that the *Columbia* and *Washington* were well stocked in iron and textiles, the other principal items of trade. Gray, therefore, probably intended to purchase sheet copper in Macao. Nevertheless, Gray lamented that Captain Kendrick, the overall commander of the expedition, “depriv’d me of my intentions, and [of] acting myself, he thinking it best to winter here [at Nootka].” Gray concluded that, under the circumstances, he had “made two Cruises with considerable success,” but lacking copper, “the voyage will not turn out to the Owners expectation.”<sup>58</sup> The difference of opinion between the two captains prevented the first expedition from achieving a profit. Without copper, the Columbians could not secure the participation of indigenous communities in the fur trade with China.

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<sup>58</sup> “Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, July 13, 1789,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 122-23.



Gray insisted, though, upon rectifying the situation, and he probably emphasized the demand for copper upon returning to Boston in the summer of 1790. While no record attests to the conversations between Gray and Joseph Barrell, documentary records confirm that the *Columbia* began its second expedition with an ample stockpile of the metal. According to the ship's inventory, Herman Brimmer, a Boston merchant, provided the ship with 143 sheets of copper. John Pintard, one of silent partners in the *Columbia* enterprise, contributed an additional 124 sheets. Collectively, the 267 sheets weighed a total of 3,495 ¼ pounds, an impressive figure that guaranteed the expedition would have a sufficient supply of the “ultimate symbol of wealth.”<sup>59</sup> On average, each sheet weighed 13 pounds. The inventory does not indicate the precise dimensions of a single sheet, but it is possible that these were available in 6-inch squares, each having a thickness of 1⅛ inches.<sup>60</sup> In comparison to other trade goods aboard the ship, copper sheets ranked second in weight only to a large supply of iron chisels, a utilitarian, bread-and-butter trade item of the Northwest Coast.

The precise geographical origin of the *Columbia*'s copper sheets is unknown, but we can make some educated guesses about their provenance. Prior to the American Revolution, copper mining constituted an important growth industry in the colonial world. Between 1709 and the 1750s, a number of profitable mines operated in

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<sup>59</sup> “Expenditures for the *Columbia*'s Outfit and Cargo, September 1790” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 460.

<sup>60</sup> Jopling, “The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians,” 54.

Connecticut's "Copper Valley," along New Jersey's Raritan River, and in northwestern Maryland.<sup>61</sup> Copper smelting, too, accelerated during the 1720s, with new industries along the Naugatuck River providing the base metal for Connecticut's provincial mint. During the 1770s, however, both the mining and smelting industries entered a steep decline, largely because of the depletion of known deposits and the associated costs of further exploration. The American Revolution interrupted any attempts to revive copper, and the dire conditions of the Confederation period exacerbated the difficulty of attracting new investors. By 1790, when *Columbia* was preparing for a second expedition to the Northwest Coast, copper smelting was defunct in the United States.<sup>62</sup> American industries would, therefore, depend upon imports from the world's largest suppliers of copper: Great Britain, Norway, and Sweden. British copper, in particular, developed in tandem with the Royal Navy's demand for hull sheathing that protected its ships against weeds, shipworms, and corrosion. Given the standing commercial relationships between American merchants and British manufacturers, it is probable that Brimmer and Pintard imported their copper from suppliers in Cornwall and Wales.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Connecticut's "Copper Valley" is located along the Quinnipac River, in the vicinity of Cheshire and Wallingford. Colonial entrepreneurs also opened mines at Simsbury and Enfield. See Collamer M. Abbott "Colonial Copper Mines," *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series* 27, no. 2 (1970): 296-307.; Charles Rufus Harte, "Connecticut's Iron and Copper, Part 1," Presented at the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Society of Civil Engineers, Inc., at Hartford, Conn. (22 March 1944): 145-163.

<sup>62</sup> Otis E. Young, Jr., "Origins of the American Copper Industry," *Journal of the Early Republic* 3, no. 2, (1983): 121-26.

<sup>63</sup> Robert B. Pettengill, "The United States Foreign Trade in Copper: 1790-1932," *The American Economic Review* 25, no. 3 (1935): 426-27.; Roger Burt, "The Transformation of the Non-Ferrous Metals Industries in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *The Economic History*

Table 2. Copper Traded during the Second *Columbia* Expedition.

DATE	AUTHOR	PEOPLE	TRADE	SKINS	NOTES
5 June 1791	Boit	Clayoquot	Copper	“many”	
5 June 1791	Hoskins	Clayoquot	“articles of traffic”		<i>Unofficial mention</i>
16 June 1791	Hoskins	Clayoquot	1 Sheet of Copper	4 skins	<i>Summary of exchange rate</i>
20 June 1791	Boit	Cheklesaht	Copper	“many”	
28 June 1791	Hoskins	Ditidaht	Copper	“several very valuable”	
28 June 1791	Boit	Ditidaht	Copper		(duplicate)
1 July 1791	Boit	Makah	Copper	“many”	
1 July 1791	Hoskins	Makah	Copper		(duplicate)
10 April 1792	Boit	Coosa	Copper	“many fine”	
27 April 1792	Boit	Quilute	Copper	“a fine lot”	
12 May 1792	Boit	Chinook	Copper	“a good lot”	
12 May 1792	Boit	Chinook	1 Sheet of Copper	4 skins	<i>Summary of exchange rate</i>
12 June 1792	Boit	Kwakiutl	Copper	“kept bringing furs”	

Copper enabled the second *Columbia* expedition to do business in a manner that stands in stark contrast to the “destitute” first voyage. The purchasing power of copper was obvious from the first afternoon of trading. On 5 June 1791, John Boit reported from Clayoquot Sound that “we purchas’d many of the Sea Otter skins in exchange for

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*Review, New Series* 48, no. 1 (1995): 38-42.; Jopling, “The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians,” 58-60.

Copper.” This auspicious beginning was a sign of good things to come. Later that month, at Chekleset Bay, Boit commented that copper had secured “many Sea Otter and Land furs” in return for “Copper, Iron and Cloth.”<sup>64</sup> Similarly, John Hoskins recorded that “several very valuable skins were purchased for copper and cloathing” from the Ditidaht Indians.<sup>65</sup> In July, upon arriving among the Makah People of Cape Flattery, Boit noted that “we Collected many Otters” because “these natives gave the preference to Copper.”<sup>66</sup> The lustrous, supernatural metal enabled the second expedition to trade on much more favorable terms and virtually cemented its success from the beginning.

During the second expedition, Boit and Hoskins recorded trades of copper on twelve occasions, although their stockpile of the metal probably accounts for a significant share of what Hoskins called “our various articles of traffic.”<sup>67</sup> According to their notes, copper purchased large quantities of skins, as attested by references to “many” or “a good lot” of skins. On other occasions, such as the purchase of “several very valuable” otters, the metal traded for the highest quality of fur. In other cases, copper attracted both quantity and quality, making for exceptional trades of “many fine” or “a fine lot” of furs. Overall, Boit and Hoskins explicitly commented upon copper in terms of its purchasing power on ten of twelve, or eighty-three percent, of occasions. In two instances they

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<sup>64</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 370.

<sup>65</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 196.

<sup>66</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 371.

<sup>67</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 196.

recorded a precise exchange rate—one copper sheet per four otters. On another, Boit noted that “the natives kept bringing furs,” a comment that indicates a large transaction.<sup>68</sup> Two remaining mentions of copper, which appear to neglect the purchasing price, are in fact instances where one author has duplicated the other. Boit and Hoskins mentioned copper on just two occasions when *no* trading took place. In July 1791, while cruising the Queen Charlotte Islands, Boit commented that “copper was not in demand” among the Haida People.<sup>69</sup> His observation is not surprising, given that the islands represented a major indigenous source of the metal. Later, in January 1792, Hoskins mentioned that the Ditidaht People desired a trade in muskets “which now supplants copper and cloathing.”<sup>70</sup> These two instances, one in which copper could not compete in a producer’s market, and another in which an alternative item of trade superseded its primacy, must be considered outliers against *Columbia*’s success in meeting demand for the metal on the Northwest Coast.

Boit and Hoskins also commented upon copper’s economic pull during two concentrated periods of time. Seven of twelve observations correspond to the first month after *Columbia*’s return to the Northwest Coast. As such, these indicate the first reckoning with adjustments in local prices since the first expedition. The Columbians are certain to have been pleased that their cargo of copper sheets would trade for quantity and

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<sup>68</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage from Boston,” 404.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 372.

<sup>70</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘*Columbia*’,” 258.

quality of furs. The second time period, which includes five of twelve mentions, corresponds to the first month of the 1792 season. These instances constitute a reassessment of trade conditions since the previous summer, and again, the Columbians would have been pleased to discover that little change had occurred since that time. Boit and Hoskins discontinued their commentaries upon copper following each month-long assessment. We can reasonably interpret their silence to indicate price stability, particularly in light of “a brisk trade for Otter furs” that often “drain’d the village” of its merchandise.<sup>71</sup> That merchandise, otter skins, formed a reciprocal commodity that intensified the integration of coastal communities into the global marketplace.

### *“Furry Gold”*

Just as copper represented a trade commodity of importance prior to the arrival of Europeans, the maritime fur trade also emerged from preexisting commercial arrangements in North America. Where copper enabled the Columbians to establish a profitable trade between Boston and the Northwest Coast, furs enabled Indians to participate in a broader world of goods. Like copper, which traded along the Northwest Coast before contact between the native peoples and outsiders, furs also had a much longer commercial history among Europeans. For centuries, furs served as markers of hereditary rank among the European nobility, and during the rise of landed gentry, they became symbols of acquired status. During the late medieval period, the market for

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<sup>71</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 393, 400.

animal pelts expanded in tandem with economic growth. Beginning around 1200, though, a parallel intensification in trapping prompted a decline of furbearing animals in Western and Central Europe. Overhunting took a disastrous toll upon the limited furbearing populations of the British Isles. By 1400, European commercial trapping had pivoted to the east, and most furs originated in the Russian principalities of Novgorod and Moscow.<sup>72</sup>

Russian pelts, and the fur trade that surrounded them, contributed to the development of early-modern commercialization, chartered corporations, and managerial structures. Russia provided its European neighbors with a number of “northern furs,” including sable, ermine, black fox, seal, and marten, as well as more common bear and beaver pelts.<sup>73</sup> Control of the fur trade provided these kingdoms in Russia, like later fur empires, with fabulous wealth and contributed to their political ascendancy among their neighbors. Meanwhile, European middlemen in the market towns of Bruges, Leipzig, and London profited handsomely as the local distributors of individual furs as well as finished coats, shawls, and hats.<sup>74</sup> Expansion of the fur trade, and profits from furs, contributed to

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<sup>72</sup> Eric Jay Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 6-8.; Raymond Henry Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade, 1550-1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), 1-16.

<sup>73</sup> T.S. Willan, “Trade between England and Russia in the Second Half of Sixteenth Century,” *English Historical Review* 63, no. 248 (1948): 307-321.; Janet Martin, *Treasure of the Land of Darkness: the Fur Trade and its Significance for Medieval Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1-2, 17.

<sup>74</sup> Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade*, 190-209.

the growth of the world's first multinational trading company. Chartered in 1553, the Royal Muscovy Company held a monopoly on shipping between Russia and London. The company also pioneered the English practice of establishing trading posts, or "factories," in foreign countries where a resident manager, or "factor," could make dynamic business decisions about prices for labor and trade goods.<sup>75</sup> The practice of middlemen operating from trading posts in distant places would inform generations of fur traders, including Joseph Barrell, the principal investor in the *Columbia*.

Nevertheless, centuries of fur trapping also reduced the population of furbearers in Russia, with the result that European states looked to North America for fresh supplies. During the colonial period, European competition for control of furs provided the background, and occasionally the proximate cause, for wars of empire in the New World.<sup>76</sup> The North American trade began as a secondary effect of French fishing on the Grand Banks, in the North Atlantic, in which fishermen dried cod at temporary camps on the continental mainland. In the process, the fisherman engaged in limited trade with Micmac and Wabanaki Indians, including the exchange of animal furs. Reports of high-quality furs, combined with spontaneous exchange between merchant-explorers and

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<sup>75</sup> Mildred Wretts-Smith, "The English in Russia during the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 3 (1920): 72-102.; Willan, "Trade between England and Russia in the Second Half of Sixteenth Century," 307-321.; Ann M. Carlos and Stephen Nicholas, "'Giants of an Earlier Capitalism': The Chartered Trading Companies as Modern Multinationals," *The Business History Review* 62, no. 3 (1988): 398-419.

<sup>76</sup> W.J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade and Eighteenth-Century Imperialism," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (1983): 341-62.



native peoples, prompted European companies to develop trading posts in America. The trading companies provided the critical foundation for two settler colonies, New France and New Netherland, both of which survived principally on beaver revenues. Conversely, the New England colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts, and Connecticut began as plantations, but rapidly evolved to become secondary producers of beaver pelts.<sup>77</sup> Later, colonies such as Virginia, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina would deliver bear, rabbit, and deerskins for market in Europe.<sup>78</sup> In all cases, profits depended upon commercial partnerships with the principal suppliers of furs—the native peoples of North America. This characteristic persisted during the *Columbia* expeditions.

European trade in furs, combined with the participation of Indian suppliers, extended the influence of the global “world of goods” deep into the continental interior. Two British firms, the Hudson’s Bay and North West Companies, also based their commercial success upon close relations with indigenous peoples of North America. The Hudson’s Bay Company, founded in 1670, operated according to the trading-post model, in which Indians delivered seasonal catches of beaver, bear, and buffalo skins to the company’s three outposts.<sup>79</sup> Each post commanded a vast hinterland and depended upon

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<sup>77</sup> Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire*, 1-12, 24-36, 37-57.

<sup>78</sup> Gary B. Nash, “The Quest for the Susquehanna Valley: New York, Pennsylvania, and the Seventeenth Century Fur Trade,” *New York History* 48, no. 1 (1967): 3-27; Wilma A. Dunaway, “The Southern Fur Trade and the Incorporation of Southern Appalachia into the World Economy, 1690-1763,” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 17, no. 2 (1994): 215-242.

<sup>79</sup> Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson’s Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974),

networks of indigenous trade routes. Many routes followed geographical features such as rivers, portages, and lake passages, all of which eased the process of transporting goods over long distances. York Factory, the company's principal trading post, stood at the convergence of routes following the Burtwood, Grass, and Minago Rivers, each of which terminated in a different region of the hinterland. Some routes, such as the Saskatchewan River, extended to the Canadian Rockies, where other paths led westward to the Pacific.<sup>80</sup> Trading posts prompted Indians to become systemic producers of furs, but also sparked intense competition between different groups for control of the carrying trade to the European trading posts. Later, commercial pressure from the rival North West Company, established in 1779, prompted the construction of inland trading posts to provide logistical support and provisions across the company's extensive western domains. Inland posts also offered clear advantages for Indians: they eliminated long journeys to market, permitted regular trade, and improved access to desirable European goods such as firearms, textiles, and cookware. More importantly, the posts enabled some groups, such as the Assiniboine and Plains Cree, to become middlemen rather than primary producers, a development that brought new affluence to their communities.<sup>81</sup>

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51-55.; Frances Backhouse, *Once They Were Hats: In Search of the Mighty Beaver* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2015), 55-62, 118-119.

<sup>80</sup> Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 51-55., 15, 55-61.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-34.

Where business competitors, foreign relations, or the overhunting of furbearing animals interfered with “business as usual,” fur traders attempted to extend their operations through exploration and consolidation of new resources. Following the American Revolution, all three considerations became significant factors in the westward thrust of the fur trade. First, stiff competition between the Hudson’s Bay and North West Companies prompted both to explore the possibilities of transcontinental trade routes, trading posts, and client peoples.<sup>82</sup> Second, a noticeable decline in furbearing animals throughout old territories lent urgency to the search for new domains.<sup>83</sup> Finally, American independence, and the recognition of a national border along the 48<sup>th</sup> Parallel, excluded the British companies from vast territories formerly within their economic sphere.<sup>84</sup> Taken together, the picture of diminishing profits, resources, and territories was not reassuring. Beginning in 1789, concurrent with the *Columbia* voyage, the Northwest Company commissioned Alexander Mackenzie to investigate possible routes to the fabled fur wealth of the Pacific. Mackenzie, therefore, traveled into uncharted country in order to determine “the probable advantages that may be derived from advancing the trade of it, under proper regulations, and by the spirit of commercial enterprize.”<sup>85</sup> His

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<sup>82</sup> Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire*, 170-71.

<sup>83</sup> Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 117-24.

<sup>84</sup> Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire*, 124-25.

<sup>85</sup> Mackenzie, *Exploring the Northwest Territory*, 341.

overland expeditions succeeded in charting routes to furbearing regions on the Arctic and Pacific Oceans.

Meanwhile, the American fur trade suffered from poor capitalization and limited access to the western territories of the United States. The depression that struck the United States following the Revolution discouraged investment in furs, while the interstate disputes of the Confederation period prevented resolution of competing claims to furbearing lands. To make matters worse, the continued presence of British forces in the Ohio Country, in contravention of the Treaty of Paris, jeopardized American access to the region's fur resources.<sup>86</sup> Meanwhile, Americans pondered the resources of the West, including its vast repository of furbearing animals, and considered the exploration of new territories. In 1783, Thomas Jefferson entertained the possibility of sponsoring an overland expedition from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. From his perspective, American commerce and expansion was threatened by the potential for European "colonizing into that quarter." Nonetheless, coming immediately on the heels of independence, an expedition to advance the flag and national commerce was beyond the capacity of the Confederation Congress.<sup>87</sup>

The Northwest Coast, remote and largely unexplored, represented the most promising untapped source of furs in North America. Russian trappers made the earliest

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<sup>86</sup> Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire*, 125-29.

<sup>87</sup> "Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, 4 December 1783," *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 6, 21 May 1781–1 March 1784, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 371.

limited inroads into the acquisition of Arctic furs. In 1741, sea expeditions from Kamchatka provided the Russian Empire with claims in Alaska. Later, in 1784, the Shelikhov-Golikov Company, a fur trading enterprise headquartered at Irkutsk, in Siberia, established the first Russian settlement in Alaska at Three Saints Bay.<sup>88</sup> This operation, largely dependent upon indigenous serfdom, produced a combination of seal, otter, and walrus skins, all traditional sources of fur among the Alaska natives. The post remained unprofitable, however, owing to chronic starvation, native resistance, and the logistical challenges of shipping furs to central Siberia.<sup>89</sup> In 1788, immediately prior to the arrival of *Columbia* on the coast, a tsunami annihilated the settlement at Three Saints Bay. Meanwhile, the Spanish Empire maintained claims to the entirety of the Northwest Coast, from Cape Mendocino northward to Alaska. Spanish navigators had explored the coast intermittently since the sixteenth century, and, most recently, Juan Pérez had undertaken an expedition to map the region's "northern mysteries."<sup>90</sup> Pérez commented upon the coast's prodigious fur resources, but its productive potential did not resonate in Mexico City or Madrid. Spanish bureaucrats concerned themselves instead with silver,

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<sup>88</sup> Ilya Vikovetsky, *Russian America: An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 27-51.

<sup>89</sup> Gwenn A. Miller, *Kodiak Kreol, Communities of Empire in Early Russian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 28-48.

<sup>90</sup> Juan Pérez, *De San Blas Hasta la Alta California: Los Viajes y Diarios de Juan Joseph Pérez Hernández*, ed. María Luisa Rodríguez Sala, (México: Universidad Autónoma de México, 2006), 35.; W. Michael Mathes, "Spanish Maritime Charting of the Gulf of Mexico and California Coast," in *Mapping and Empire: Soldier-Engineers on the Southwestern Frontier*, ed. Dennis Reinhartz and Gerald D. Saxon, (Austin: University of Texas, 2005), 20-31

the financial lifeblood that coursed through the commercial arteries of a global empire. Their attention was, therefore, fixed upon the rich mining economies of New Spain and Peru.<sup>91</sup> In contrast, Spain perceived its claims to the Northwest Coast in terms of a strategic bulwark against Russian or British encroachment, rather than a site of economic expansion.<sup>92</sup>

Spanish and Russian explorers established imperial claims to portions of the coast, but the economic significance of the sea otter remained unknown until the arrival of British navigator James Cook in 1778. While lingering at Nootka Sound, Cook conducted detailed hydrological surveys of its channels and islands, made observations about the Mowachaht Indians, and took possession of the harbor for Great Britain. During their spare time, his crew traded personal items to the Indians in exchange for soft, warm, and comfortable furs. Lieutenant John Rickman commented that the Mowachahts offered “a great variety of valuable skins, such as beaver, foxes, racoons,

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<sup>91</sup> Adele Ogden, “The Californias in Spain’s Pacific Otter Trade, 1775-1795,” *Pacific Historical Review* 1, no. 4 (1932): 444-69.; Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, “Born with a ‘Silver Spoon’: The Origin of World Trade in 1571,” *Journal of Economic History* 6, no. 2 (1995): 201-221.; Richard L. Garner, “Long Term Silver Mining Trends in Spanish America: A Comparative Analysis of Peru and Mexico,” *The American Historical Review* 93, no.4 (1988): 898-905, 934-35.; Jaime Vicens Vives, *Economic History of Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 395-97.

<sup>92</sup> New Spain exported otter skins to Canton on a limited basis, although the government in Mexico appears to have regarded furs as a strategic resources. Spanish warships, rather than commercial vessels, performed the bulk of trading on the California and Northwest Coasts. Furthermore, the government used furs to purchase quicksilver, a substance vital to the mining industries of Spanish America. See Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 114-134, 395, 414-15.; Ogden, “The Californias in Spain’s Pacific Otter Trade, 1775-1795,” 444-469.

squirrels, rein-deers, bears, and several others, with which we were but little acquainted.”<sup>93</sup> The most important new furbearing animal was what William Ellis, Cook’s surgeon, described as the “sea-beaver,” or sea otter. The crew first encountered otter fur as a component of water-resistant clothing, crucial to the damp climate of the Northwest Coast. Ellis explained that the Indians wore cloaks “apparently made of the bark of a tree” and “trimmed with the fur of the sea-beaver” for warmth.<sup>94</sup>



Figure 12. S. Smith after John Webber, “A Sea Otter,” engraving, image cropped, colors, and tone slightly adjusted, as reproduced in James Cook, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean . . . Performed under the Direction of Captains Cook, Clerke, and Gore . . . 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780*, London: W. Strahan, 1780. Library of Congress.

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<sup>93</sup> Rickman, *Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage*, 234.

<sup>94</sup> Ellis, *An Authentic Narrative of a Voyage*, 191.

Cook first learned of the sea otter from accounts written by Russian adventurers in Alaska, but had never personally seen an otter skin. The captain “entertained doubts, whether the many skins which the natives brought, really belonged to this animal.” Cook positively identified the otter after purchasing a recently-killed, unprepared specimen of the species.<sup>95</sup> Indian hunters expressed pride in their abilities to catch otters, and Lieutenant Rickman reported that they “made no secret of their methods of curing the skins, with which they carried on a traffic with occasional visitors.”<sup>96</sup> Those crewmembers who purchased skins noted their superior protection against the elements, which far exceeded that of English woolens. Corporal John Ledyard commented that the crew had “no thoughts at that time of using them to any other advantage than converting them to the purposes of cloathing.” Their intentions changed upon arriving at Macao. Ledyard reported that “skins which did not cost the purchaser six-pence sterling sold in China for 100 dollars.”<sup>97</sup> This magnificent profit margin prompted the crew to part with their skins, and inspired merchant-captains to dream of harvesting furry gold. Following the publication of these accounts, British adventurers, operating outside the structures of

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<sup>95</sup> James Cook, *The Voyages of Captain James Cook Round the World, complete in Seven Volumes, Volume VI, being the Second of the Third Voyage* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821), 270.

<sup>96</sup> Rickman, *Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage*, 237.

<sup>97</sup> Ledyard, *A Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage*, 70.



either the East India or South Seas Companies, rushed to exploit the furs of the Northwest Coast.<sup>98</sup>

Otter skins recommended themselves as valuable commodities for a number of reasons unique to the species. First, the species was, at the beginning of the maritime fur trade, both widespread and numerous. Native to a broad territorial arc spanning the North Pacific, sea otters (*Enhydra lutris*) probably numbered between 150,000 and 300,000 individuals prior to the beginning of intensive hunting in the eighteenth century.<sup>99</sup> Second, otter coats exhibit a rich combination of luster and color. Captain Cook remarked upon the opulent “shining or glossy black color” of adolescent otters, prized among the nobles, gentry, and bureaucrats of China.<sup>100</sup> But the appearance of otter became even more pleasing with age. John Hoskins, furrier aboard the *Columbia*, commented upon the development of a “beautiful silver grey” color among the most valuable, adult animals.<sup>101</sup> Third, otter coats boast a texture that Hoskins considered “finer and more delicate than

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<sup>98</sup> James Hanna, Nathaniel Portlock and George Dixon, and John Meares all promoted the Pacific fur trade through their accounts of the Northwest Coast. By and large, however, their voyages were structured as seasonal affairs, rather than the extended enterprise envisioned for *Columbia*. John Meares did remain on the coast during the winter of 1786-87, but only because “the bad weather had set in, with continual gales of wind, accompanied by sleet and snow.” Portlock and Dixon rescued his disintegrating crew, now struggling against scurvy and subsisting almost entirely upon alcohol, the following spring. See Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, xxi-xxii.; George Dixon, *A Voyage Round the World*, 157.

<sup>99</sup> Marianne L. Riedman and James A. Estes, *The Sea Otter (Enhydra Lutris): Behavior, Ecology, and Natural History* (Washington DC: Fish and Wildlife Service, 1990), 73-75.

<sup>100</sup> James Cook, *The Voyages of Captain James Cook*, 270.

<sup>101</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 283.

any heretofore known.”<sup>102</sup> Bosting average density of 650,000 hairs per square inch—the highest of any mammal—otter pelts are exceptionally soft and comfortable.<sup>103</sup> Finally, the structure of the coat contributes to an unusual warmth and water-resistance. Otter fur consists of two layers. An outside layer of long, flat “guard hairs” preserve the integrity and alignment of the dense undercoat. The undercoat—because of its staggering density—traps air bubbles between the individual hair fibers, producing a formidable layer of insulation that is both heat-retentive and water-resistant. These characteristics are of great importance to otters, whose activity, size, and metabolism prevent them from building up blubber.<sup>104</sup> Humans also appreciate these features in peltry. The otter’s broad application in hats, capes, scarves, shoes, robes, and especially winter coats, made it the most valuable fur available.<sup>105</sup>

For the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast, whose access to exotic goods depended upon the circumpacific trade route, otters formed a ubiquitous part of all coastal ecosystems. Prior to contact with Europeans, however, Indians hunted sea otters for purposes of subsistence and local trade, rather than as mass market “commodities.” Archeological evidence points to longstanding hunting of sea otters on the coast,

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<sup>102</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 284.

<sup>103</sup> David Iglar, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 106.

<sup>104</sup> Riedman and Estes, *The Sea Otter*, 20-21.

<sup>105</sup> Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire*, 139-140.

beginning a minimum of 8,000 years before the present. Otters were already “economically significant” as a source of meat and furs during this period.<sup>106</sup> Indian men began an otter hunt during the early morning and approached their quarry in canoes. The animals often gathered around rocky outcroppings where their own prey, mollusks and crabs, were abundant. Occasionally, entire rafts of otter could be found sleeping on kelp beds, clutching the plants in order to remain anchored. Most often, Indian hunters attacked small groups of three or four otters.<sup>107</sup> One method involved shooting otters with arrows and then approaching to collect the wounded animals. From a medium range, hunters often speared, or harpooned, the otter from a crouching position in a canoe.<sup>108</sup> When otters attempted to escape by diving, multiple canoes could be maneuvered into a circle around the location of the dive, until the animals were forced to resurface for air. In close quarters, the hunter might club an animal and then pluck its buoyant body,

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<sup>106</sup> Kenneth M. Ames, “Economic Prehistory of the Northern British Columbia Coast,” *Arctic Anthropology* 35, no. 1, Northern Pacific and Bering Sea Maritime Societies: The Archaeology of Prehistoric and Early Historic Coastal Peoples (1998): 68-87.; Gary Coupland, “Maritime Adaptation and Evolution of the Developed Northwest Coast Pattern on the Central Northwest Coast,” *ibid.*: 39-41.; Thomas A. Wake and Dwight D. Simons, “Trans-Holocene Subsistence Strategies and Topographic Change on the Northern California Coast: The Fauna from Duncans Point Cave,” *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (2000): 298-300, 303, 310.

<sup>107</sup> Victor B. Scheffer, “The Sea Otter on the Washington Coast,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1940): 378-80.

<sup>108</sup> Arthur Woodward, “Sea Otter Hunting on the Pacific Coast,” *The Quarterly: Historical Society of Southern California* 20, no. 3 (1938): 119-123.; Eugene Y. Arima, “Notes on Nootkan Sea Mammal Hunting,” *Arctic Anthropology* 25, no. 1 (1988): 22-23.

unconscious, from the water. When hunting on land, a variety of snares, traps, nets, or lassoes could be used to catch otter.<sup>109</sup>

Upon returning to the village, Indian men dressed and stretched the otters. Dressing required specialized knowledge passed down over generations. First, hunters washed the otters to remove unwanted brine, sand, and plant material. Next, they skillfully performed a series of incisions around the feet, under the tail, and up the animal's belly.<sup>110</sup> Thereafter, men carefully peeled the skin away from the carcass, leaving the meat, organs, and skeleton for other purposes. "Fleshing" involved the removal of small bits of muscle and connective tissue that clung to the skin. This process, accomplished with sharpened stone or iron tools, required great care in order to avoid unwanted perforation of the pelt. Finally, having fully cleaned the otter skin, hunters stretched the skin flat across a cedar plank to dry.<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile, Indian women boiled or roasted otter meat, which was considered to be superior to other mammals because of its sweet, buttery quality.<sup>112</sup> Woman also transformed the skins into coats, coat linings, and

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<sup>109</sup> Terry L. Jones, Brendan J. Culleton, Shawn Larson, Sarah Mellinger, and Judith F. Porcasi, "Toward a Prehistory of the Southern Sea Otter (*Enhydra lutris nereis*)" *Human Impacts on Seals, Sea Lions, and Sea Otters: Integrating Archaeology and Ecology* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 2011), 248-49.

<sup>110</sup> Missouri Department of Conservation, "Missouri's River Otter: A Guide to Management and Damage Control," (Jefferson City: Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri, 2002), 22-25.

<sup>111</sup> North American Fur Auctions and Wild Fur Shippers Council, *Wild Fur Pelt Handling Manual* (Toronto: NAFA, n.d.), 34.

<sup>112</sup> David Riches, "Hunting, Herding and Potlatching: Towards a Sociological Account of Prestige," *Man, New Series* 19, no. 2 (1984), 238.; M. Susan Walter, "Polygyny, Rank, and

blankets. On average, a mature pelt spans six to eight square feet in area, large enough to serve as a small blanket.<sup>113</sup> Indians used blankets as both practical household items and as gifts associated with courtship between noble families.<sup>114</sup> The most beautiful, lustrous, and comfortable skins were sewn together as ceremonial robes, indicative of wealth, for use by chiefs.<sup>115</sup> Otter bones and teeth became small tools, ornaments, and ritual items used in “summoning” animals during future hunts. Coastal communities often traded otter furs for produce of the continental interior, including obsidian, woodpecker scalps, iron, and copper.<sup>116</sup>

The sheer prevalence of otter, congregating in vast multitudes in every harbor along the Northwest Coast, also marked the species as being of strong cosmological importance to Indian societies. Indians perceived otters as something more than animal

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Resources in Northwest Coast Foraging Societies,” *Ethnology* 45, no. 1 (2006): 45-46.; Scheffer, “The Sea Otter on the Washington Coast,” 380-81.

<sup>113</sup> Prime skins, acquired from adult otters, averaged 5½ feet by 3 feet in size. See Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*, 6.

<sup>114</sup> Vincent A. Koppert, “The Nootka Family,” *Primitive Man: Quarterly Bulletin of the Catholic Anthropological Conference* 3, nos. 3-4 (1930): 49-53.

<sup>115</sup> Drucker, “Rank, Wealth, and Kinship in Northwest Coast Society,” 56.; Scheffer, “The Sea Otter on the Washington Coast,” 378.

<sup>116</sup> Jon M. Erlandson, Mark A. Tveskov and R. Scott Byram, “The Development of Maritime Adaptations on the Southern Northwest Coast of America,” *Arctic Anthropology* 35, no. 1, North Pacific and Bering Sea Maritime Societies: The Archaeology of Prehistoric and Early Historic Coastal Peoples (1998): 11.; Richard G. Lesure, “The Constitution of Inequality in Yurok Society,” *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (1998): 175.; Scott Byram and David G. Lewis, “Ourigan: Wealth of the Northwest Coast,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 102, no. 2 (2001): 143-44.

resources. Instead, because of their common creation, otters were sentient creatures or “people” with kinship to human beings. They could, like all creatures, remove their animal robes and appear as human beings. Some animals were said to have married human beings, who gradually assumed the physical characteristics of their animal spouses.<sup>117</sup> Otters communicated with human beings on a regular basis. Moreover, humans could mimic the phonetics of an animal “accent” in order to hold conversations in “otter-language.”<sup>118</sup> Because supernatural beings often appeared in the form of otters, their speech was regarded as being especially potent. Young men who aspired to become shamans were required to capture a river otter, kill it, and remove its tongue as a magical item. The tongue conferred an ability to understand the languages of all minerals, plants, and animals.<sup>119</sup> Indians understood that sea otters, like humans, inhabited towns and societies of their own, an impression strengthened by the rafting behavior of the species. They returned to the hidden otter towns, inaccessible to human beings, after gathering mollusks and crabs.<sup>120</sup> The personification of otters colored all perceptions of the species.

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<sup>117</sup> June McCormick Collins, “The Mythological Basis for Attitudes toward Animals among Salish-Speaking Indians”, *The Journal of American Folklore* 65, no. 258 (1952): 253-56.; Jay Miller, “People, Berdaches, and Left-Handed Bears: Human Variation in Native America,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 38, no. 3 (1982): 274-78.

<sup>118</sup> Dell Hymes, “How to Talk like a Bear in Takelma,” *International Journal of American Linguistics* 45, no. 2 (1979): 101-06.

<sup>119</sup> A.W. Buckland, “Religion and Family Among the Haidas (Queen Charlotte Islands): Note,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 21 (1892): 31.; Jan P. Van Eijk, “Who is Súnulqaz?: A Salish Quest,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 43, no. 2 (2001), 178-85.

<sup>120</sup> Collins, “The Mythological Basis for Attitudes toward Animals,” 254-55.

Commenting on this facet of indigenous belief, the anthropologist Franz Boas commented that “the most important characteristic of mythological concepts is personification. It is not difficult to understand why animals should be personified, for their behavior resembles in many ways that of man. Their actions are easily understood as motivated by hunger, fear, anger, and love.”<sup>121</sup> Indeed, Indians understood otters and other animals to be “people.”

Nevertheless, Indians of the Northwest Coast did not consider otter “people” to be of *equal* creation despite their spiritual kinship. The creator had, in fact, provided animals for the disposal and sustenance of human beings.<sup>122</sup> The paradox of this relationship, in which the hunter kills a kindred creature, is resolved through spiritual preparation and practice in hunting. The Columbians observed that their Clayoquot hosts “believe in Good and evil Spirits,” and that specific rituals preceded each hunt.<sup>123</sup> Indians recognized that each species of animal “people” enjoyed the protection of a guardian-spirit, a powerful patron whose character and attitudes exemplified the essence of the animal under its care. Prior to beginning a hunt, it was necessary to consult that animal’s guardian-spirit in order receive permission to kill.<sup>124</sup> Permission depended upon

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<sup>121</sup> Franz Boas, “Mythology and Folklore,” *General Anthropology* (Boston: D.C. Heath & Company, 1938), 614.

<sup>122</sup> Edward Sapir, “A Flood Legend of the Nootka Indians of Vancouver Island,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 32, no. 124 (1919): 354.

<sup>123</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 383.

<sup>124</sup> Collins, “The Mythological Basis for Attitudes toward Animals,” 357.

“medicine,” or magical substances and rituals, which could have a critical impact upon the success of a hunt. Proper application of “medicine” often required personal purification or identification with the essential spirit of the animal.<sup>125</sup> The Columbians noted the use of snakeskin as a purifying material prior to several hunts. Boit wrote that “these Indians are very superstitious in regard to this animal [the snake],” and observed that “when they go on a whaling cruise, they always rub their face with a piece of it.” The snake, whose venom contained the power of death, could improve upon the outcome of a hunt.<sup>126</sup> John Hoskins explained that “a piece of this magic animal insured success at all time and on all occasions.”<sup>127</sup> Other rituals shaped a relationship between the hunter and his prey through the manipulation of animal relics, such as an otter’s flipper, that embodied the unique abilities of the species.<sup>128</sup> Indians also performed secret familial rituals, in order to request assistance from a household patron, such as the bear, the

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<sup>125</sup> A.A. Goldenweiser, “Totemism, an Analytical Study,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 23, no. 88 (1910): 218.

<sup>126</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 383.

<sup>127</sup> Hoskins reports having caught a brief glimpse of “an animal which I conceiv’d to be an alligator.” In contrast, an Indian described the “frightful animal” as having “a long sharp head something like a hound with a good set of teeth the rest of the body in every other respect like a serpent.” None of the lizard or snake species native to British Columbia fit the description. It is possible that Hoskins spotted an eel, although this conflicts with his observation that it crept “along the edge of the bush.” Whatever species he witnessed, it bore sufficient resemblance to a snake to have ritual value. See Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 249-50.

<sup>128</sup> Goldenweiser, “Totemism, an Analytical Study,” 218.



thunderbird, or the otter.<sup>129</sup> The guardian-otter, for example, provided its human followers with a magical harpoon to ensure success in hunting.<sup>130</sup> Following a hunt, Indians also performed rituals intended to honor the otter's life, comfort its departing soul, and recognize its sacrifice. Adherence to ritual secured that animal's reincarnation and, therefore, the stability of the species in the material world.<sup>131</sup> Indians who failed to respect animals as "people" risked the retribution of a guardian-spirit, which manifested as sickness, starvation, or social unrest.<sup>132</sup> Otter skins, therefore, were not commodities for a mass market, but rather, a precious gift of comfort given by animal kin.

The intensification of the fur trade, which assumed industrial proportions in the early nineteenth century, changed much of this veneration for animals. Indians became increasingly dependent upon furs as export items to be exchanged for manufactured goods, and the acceleration of hunting placed a severe strain upon traditional views of otters as "people." External demand for furs, originating in China and Europe, prompted hunters to harvest otters on an unsustainable scale unknown to previous generations. Sea otters, now understood as commodities to be counted, graded, and sold, ceased to be

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<sup>129</sup> Sapir, "A Flood Legend of the Nootka Indians of Vancouver Island," 352.

<sup>130</sup> Goldenweiser, "Totemism, an Analytical Study," 207.; Collins, "The Mythological Basis for Attitudes toward Animals," 358.

<sup>131</sup> Sapir, "A Flood Legend of the Nootka Indians of Vancouver Island," 352.

<sup>132</sup> Collins, "The Mythological Basis for Attitudes toward Animals," 357.

animal “people” and assumed the status of natural resources.<sup>133</sup> Consequently, sea otter populations on the Northwest Coast declined from an estimated 150,000 individuals around 1780 to a few thousand by 1900. Put another way, hunters trapped tens of thousands of otters per year from 1790-1820, but, a century later, annual catches had fallen to a few hundred otters across the North Pacific.<sup>134</sup>

The *Columbia* expedition used a number of strategies to locate sources of otter skins, including written accounts, word of mouth, cruises of exploration, and extended stays in preferred otter ports. Published accounts provided a starting point. Basing his business plan on the accounts of Cook’s third voyage, Joseph Barrell selected Nootka Sound as the principal destination for the first *Columbia* expedition. The accounts, containing both navigational and commercial points of interest, were familiar to all the expedition’s officers. Robert Haswell often reflected on how conditions at Nootka Sound compared to published accounts of the harbor, and John Hoskins challenged Cook in regard to the mythological Straits of Admiral de Fonte.<sup>135</sup> New accounts, written by rival fur traders, became available in the United States prior to the second *Columbia* expedition. These sources also provided useful information. For example, Hoskins

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<sup>133</sup> Igler, *The Great Ocean*, 105-111.

<sup>134</sup> Karl W. Kenyon, *The Sea Otter in the Eastern Pacific Ocean* (Washington: Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, 1969), 135-37.; Richard Ravalli, “The Near Extinction and Reemergence of the Pacific Sea Otter, 1850-1938,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 100, no. 4 (2009): 181-191.

<sup>135</sup> Haswell, *Voyage Round the World*, 47, 54, 58-59.; Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 233, 336.

commented that James Hanna, captain of the *Sea Otter*, first sighted and named the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1787.<sup>136</sup> Word-of-mouth information became equally important to the commercial exploitation of otter skins. Where the Columbians encountered other American ships, exclusively during the second voyage, they trusted their countrymen to provide helpful reports. In August of 1791, *Columbia* encountered the brig *Hancock*, also from Boston, under the command of Captain Samuel Crowell. Crowell informed Gray that “we should find other tribes that were better stocked with skins” among the Haida People of Masset River.<sup>137</sup> Conversely, the Columbians remained wary upon meeting British traders, their competitors. For example, they judged the unscrupulous John Meares to be “so intent... in deceiving us that he hesitated not to forfeit his word and Honour to what we were convinced was a notorious falsity.” Indeed, the Columbians caught Meares in several lies, and correctly guessed that his account of the coast was blatant misinformation.<sup>138</sup>

Published accounts and secondhand reports could not, however, substitute for individual cruises of exploration or lingering in preferred anchorages, both of which

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<sup>136</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 232.

<sup>137</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage on Discoveries in the Ship *Columbia Rediviva*,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 293-95. Three Bostonian vessels became the first imitators to follow *Columbia* into the Pacific. *Hancock* (Samuel Crowell), *Eleanora* (Simon Metcalfe), and *Hope* (Joseph Ingraham) are, therefore, a testament to the influence of the first expedition upon Bostonian entrepreneurs. *Grace* (William Douglas), a British schooner, sailed under American colors as a flag of convenience. See Frederic W. Howay, *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-1825*, ed. Richard A. Pierce (Kingston, ON: The Limestone Press, 1973), 9-13.

<sup>138</sup> Haswell, *Voyage Round the World*, 48-51.

provided direct access to otter skins. “Exploring Captains” tended to prefer the strategy of making cruises. During the first *Columbia* expedition, in 1788-89, Captain Robert Gray made three separate cruises in the course of five months. Put another way, he encountered eighteen native groups in an equal number of ports.<sup>139</sup> The cruise strategy permitted the Columbians to expand their operations beyond known harbors, such as Clayoquot and Nootka Sounds, where their presence tended to exhaust local supplies of otter. During the first expedition, for example, exploration revealed seven ports where skins were available in quantities of ten or more.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, four of these harbors had the capacity to provide “maney,” “a good maney,” or an “abundance” in successive days of trading.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> This assessment includes the southern cruise from Point Saint George to Nootka, a second cruise around Vancouver Island, and the northern cruise to Brown Passage and the Queen Charlotte Islands. In terms of months, the calculation includes only those months in which the *Lady Washington* was at sea, and excludes five months of winter quarters at Nootka Sound. Robert Haswell, the sole chronicler of these cruises, does not identify the various peoples encountered during the three cruises, but cross-reference of ethnohistorical sources reveals a roll-call of peoples along the Northwest Coast. My research concludes that the Columbians encountered the following groups: Tolowa, Alsean, Tillamook, Chinook, Southwestern Coast Salish, Quilute, Ohiaht, Clayoquot, Mowachaht, Ahousat, Ditidaht, Pacheenaht, Makah, Ohiaht, South Tsimshian, Coast Tsimshian, Sayna, and Haida.

<sup>140</sup> Here, I do not count Nootka Sound as “new” because the Columbians knew of its potential from the Cook accounts and planned this as their principal trading port. Clayoquot and other harbors on Vancouver Island are, by contrast, considered to be “new” because the Columbians had no prior knowledge of their commercial potential.

<sup>141</sup> In some cases, Haswell reports the purchase of discrete numbers of skins, but, more often than not, he provides only comparative descriptions of quantity. Nor does comparison of his language with that of Boit or Hoskins, during the second expedition, provide any illumination. The three chroniclers either comment upon different points of interest, or did not witness the same transactions. The one correspondence between Haswell and Boit indicates that Haswell described a single otter skin as “a fue.” The limited value of this correspondence compels me to base my analysis on several suppositions. First, Haswell probably uses “some” to indicate otters in numbers greater than one can count on a single hand, that is, five-plus skins. Second, because he often provides distinct, round numbers for larger hauls, beginning with “ten” at the lowest, “some” probably does not extend, in his estimation, above nine skins. Therefore, “some” equates

Meanwhile, other ports offered smaller numbers of skins of exceptional quality. Five harbors offered “good,” “excellent,” or “prime” skins. The Columbians, of course, prized those anchorages that offered a combination of quantity and quality of furs. Nootka Sound was the gold standard in this regard. Haswell described the harbor as a marketplace where one could purchase “a good maney” of “excellent sea otter skins.”<sup>142</sup> Three new ports offered the same balance of quantity and quality: Clayoquot Sound, Cumshewa’s Inlet, and Neah Bay. Their common commercial orientation is undoubtedly due to the fact that, like Nootka, the harbors had seen significant British trading activity in recent summers, and the locals had become producers of fur, rather than mere users of fur.

Such locations encouraged an alternate strategy, namely, the extension of trade in “preferred” anchorages. This option appealed to ships’ furriers, such as John Hoskins, who gained more opportunities to judge, haggle over, and select from a larger inventory of skins. Each of the “preferred” harbors could sustain consecutive days of trading in high volume, with an equally wide range in quality. Hoskins complained when Gray abandoned a promising location too quickly, believing that the cruising strategy was less

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to between five and nine skins in this analysis. The consequence is that descriptors indicating larger quantities of otter, such as “a number,” “maney,” “a good maney,” and “abundance,” refer to trades in excess of ten skins. It is tempting to assume that “a good maney” serves to intensify “maney” in a discrete systematic manner, such as doubling, perhaps. One also wonders about the precise limits. Does “abundance” equate to increments such as the “200” acquired from the Haida on 1 June 1789? Unless another account of the first *Columbia* expedition voyage is discovered, against which some comparisons can be made, we may never know for certain.

<sup>142</sup> Haswell, *Voyage Round the World*, 56.

effective than cultivating reliable markets. For example, during two days of trading among the Makah Indians, near Tatoоче’s Island, the Columbians acquired approximately 60 pelts, including “20 prime skins.” This, of course, includes around 40 skins of lesser quality, including a handful of rough furs whose quality went unmentioned. One disadvantage to the strategy of the preferred anchorage was that new markets were volatile and additional days of trading might yield diminishing returns. In fact, this occurred on the second afternoon at Tatoоче’s Island. Haswell recorded the purchase of “upwards of 30 sea otter skins” but lamented that “we had the Mortification to see them carey off near 70 others all of excellent quality.”<sup>143</sup> The comment indicates that the total number of skins available, of all qualities, far outnumbered those purchased. Conversely, the exchange demonstrates that even the preferred harbors could be inconsistent in supply, terms of exchange, or local whims. Another disadvantage was that a ship that lingered in one location might unwittingly forfeit business to rival fur traders. In 1792, the consort schooner *Adventure* tarried on the northern coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands before proceeding to Sitka Bay. Upon anchoring in the bay, Haswell learned to his chagrin that the Sitka Indians had already exchanged “all the skins they had this season” to a competitor, probably the *Grace* of Boston.<sup>144</sup> In this sense, the cultivation of a lucrative otter port was akin to a trade secret, learned through painstaking trial-and-error.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 345.

By 1791, when *Columbia* arrived on the Northwest Coast for a second expedition, another five harbors offered a combination of quantity and quality. Among these, two additional anchorages, the Cumshewa Inlet and the Columbia River, proved capable of sustained trade over multiple days. John Boit recorded that, during two days of trading at Cumshewa Inlet, the Columbians purchased “a Good Lot of furs” including “sevrall fine Sea Otter skins.”<sup>145</sup> Haswell considered this haul rich enough to repeat. In May 1792, the following season, he returned in the consort schooner *Adventure* and acquired “a considerable number” of “good skins” over three days.<sup>146</sup> During the same week, *Columbia* topped this record while cruising separately along the newly “discovered” Columbia River. John Boit recorded the purchase of “a good lot” of furs across ten days of consecutive trading, with more than 150 otter and 300 beaver changing hands on a single afternoon.<sup>147</sup> The emergence of two new “preferred anchorages” demonstrates that, as word of outsiders passed between the coastal peoples, Indians began to modify their hunting behaviors to accommodate a more intensive trade in otter.

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<sup>145</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage from Boston,” 374.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 329-30.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 396-99.

Table 3. Notable Fur-Trading Anchorages on the Northwest Coast.

ANCHORAGE	QUANTITY	QUALITY	NOTES
Cape Scott	“many”	“valuable”	
Clayoquot Sound	“abundance” “many”	“fine” “good”	Sustained trade during each visit—preferred
Columbia River	“a good lot”		Sustained over multiple days—preferred
Coos Bay	“many”	“fine”	
Cumshewa’s Inlet	“a considerable number” “a good lot”	“prime” “fine”	Sustained trade during each visit—preferred
Gray’s Harbor	“a great many” “plenty”		
Kuileut River	“a fine lot”		
Masset River	“abundance” “a considerable number”		
Neah Bay & Tatoоче’s Island	“abundance” “plenty”	“prime” “good”	Sustained trade during each visit—preferred
Nitinaht	“many”	“good”	
Nootka Sound	“a good many”	“excellent”	Intended port of call, first expedition
Port Hardy	“many”	“prime”	
Prince of Wales Island	“plenty”	“fine”	
Sushin Village	“many”	“fine”	

The Columbians assessed otter skins predominantly in terms of quality and price, but they occasionally considered the ease of doing business. In 1788-89, sea otter furs, being a recent commodity, were not yet subjected to a standardized set of quality assessments. The modern system of grading, developed during the height of the maritime



fur trade, did not exist.<sup>148</sup> For this reason, qualitative assessments vary throughout the accounts of the two *Columbia* expeditions. The chroniclers of the voyages made reference to “good,” “fine,” “excellent,” and “prime” skins, and occasionally described them as “valuable.” John Hoskins, the expedition’s furrier and clerk, used these terms with the most precision, and probably conceived of them as individual grades of fur.<sup>149</sup> During the 1730s, Georg Wilhelm Steller, a German naturalist working in Russian Alaska, provided a qualitative scale for the assessment of otters. Steller wrote that “the head of the best grade of otters is silvery gray; the cheaper grade of otter has a head of a tawny color and yellowish fur; and the lowest grade of otter is that which has no hair, and is clad only in short, dirty-gray fur.”<sup>150</sup> The top grades probably correspond to Hoskins’

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<sup>148</sup> Sea otters are a protected species, and hunting is restricted Canadian First Peoples and Alaska Natives. Nevertheless, modern grading of river otter pelts gives some indication of the range of considerations in the contemporary fur trade. North American Fur Auctions, *Technical Manual, 2009: River Otter*: [http://www.nafa.ca/wp-content/uploads/NAFA\\_TechManual\\_2012\\_Otter.pdf](http://www.nafa.ca/wp-content/uploads/NAFA_TechManual_2012_Otter.pdf) (retrieved: 19 March, 2014).

<sup>149</sup> Once again, we are faced with problems of terminology. Robert Haswell and John Hoskins employ two different descriptive conventions in assessing otter skins. Both men appear to have considered “prime” to be the highest possible grade, and, on this count, modern terminology corresponds to the usage. Beyond this, however, their respective usages diverge and my assumptions are based on educated guesswork. First, the hundreds of occasions in which the chroniclers refer to “furs” or “skins” in the abstract, without providing a grade, suggest that the majority of pelts were of a rough or unremarkable quality. Here, I assume that such “ungraded” skins represent those of average commercial value. Haswell’s common references to “good” skins, therefore, probably indicate furs considered to be valuable but imperfect. Hoskins, by contrast, avoids the descriptor “good” whenever possible, a preference that probably reflects his professional training as a furrier. Instead, he regularly notes “fine” furs. It is my contention, therefore, that “good” and “fine” are equivalent terms. Finally, Haswell also describes furs as “excellent,” but the infrequency of this descriptor suggests that he used the term interchangeably with “prime.”

<sup>150</sup> Georg Wilhelm Steller, *De bestiis marinis, or, The Beasts of the Sea*, Walter Miller and Jennie Emerson Miller, trans., Paul Royster, ed. (Lincoln: Zea Books, 2011), 59.

usage of the terms “prime” and “fine,” respectively, while he records the purchase of an average skin without description.

Having assessed the quality of skins, the Columbians made judgments about prices and supplies of trade goods. Hoskins in particular kept close watch over rates of exchange. He noted, for example, that skins were available for “cloathing in proportion” at Clayoquot Sound, or that fur could be purchased “with chizles from two to four for a skin” at Cumshewa Inlet.<sup>151</sup> On several occasions, the Columbians refused to trade because they considered local prices to be too steep. While trading with the Clayoquot People, Haswell observed that otter skins were available in exchange for iron chisels, but that “they demand an exorbitant price ten for a skin.” Similarly, he complained that the Haida People “would not indeed sell me their skins without an exorbitant price.”<sup>152</sup> Unreasonable prices constituted a strong incentive to weigh anchor and do business elsewhere. Conversely, Hoskins often reported upon the ease of doing business with a particular trading partner. He considered the Cheklesah Indians to be “inoffensive,” commented upon their welcoming attitude, and emphasized that “in their dealings they are exceeding fair.”<sup>153</sup> In short, he preferred locations where skins were cheap, the

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<sup>151</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 187, 213.

<sup>152</sup> Haswell, *Voyage Round the World*, 69; *A Voyage of Discoveries in the Ship Columbia Rediviva*, 323.

<sup>153</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 192-95.

partners were reasonable in their demands, or both. Hospitality softened the sting of high prices.

When the *Columbia* expedition sailed into previously unexplored waters, its commercial influence prompted native peoples to become producers for the maritime fur trade. Indian communities that once harvested otters at a subsistence level now increased their trapping to satisfy the growing demand for furs. In this respect, *Columbia* duplicated the achievements of British traders who first exchanged iron for otters on the Northwest Coast.<sup>154</sup> The Columbians improved upon the British accomplishments by introducing new, exotic goods that intensified the indigenous interest in foreign trade. One encounter during *Lady Washington*'s exploration of the Queen Charlotte Sound, in May 1789, exemplifies the process in which a coastal community oriented itself toward the global market. Having already done business in neighboring waters, Captain Gray sailed the *Washington* into the Brown Passage, where the crew sighted smoke rising over a Tsimshian village. The Tsimshian People had scant experience with fur traders, and it was not encouraging—their sole interaction had been a bloody encounter with James Colnett, a British captain, in 1787.<sup>155</sup> Despite the painful memories, Indians soon approached in their canoes with “a fue otter skins.” Haswell recorded that the people

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<sup>154</sup> Dick A. Wilson, “King George’s Men: British Ships and Sailors in the Pacific Northwest-China Trade, 1785-1821” (PhD Dissertation, University of Idaho, 2004), 23, 53-54, 69, 121-22, 184, 246-47.

<sup>155</sup> Charles R. Menzies, *People of the Saltwater: An Ethnography of Git lax m’oon* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 31-32, 33-34, 39.

“were very anxious that we should tarrey here two or three days, supposing that they wished to inform the rest of the tribe of our arrival, that they might bring their skins for sale.” Four days later, the trappers returned with ten fresh kills in their canoe, some of which were “yet warm with life.” According to Haswell, the Indians communicated that they had labored “all the insueing night in drying and preparing their skins.” The otters, prepared in haste and of rough grade, were “to our disappointment” not of prime condition and would be worth little in China.<sup>156</sup> From the Tsimshian perspective, however, the skins represented an immediate response to the opening of communication with the outsiders, whose exotic merchandise enriched their experience of the world. Moreover, for every additional skin hunted, cured, and sold, their communities became more connected to a global “world of goods.”

#### *Wickaninnish: Trade and Hegemony*

Among all those who became powerful as middlemen on the Northwest Coast, none was as commanding as Wickaninnish, Chief of the Clayoquot People. His importance as a local ruler predated the arrival of the Columbians, but the American presence contributed more than any other factor to his emergence as the most powerful chief of Vancouver Island. Documentary and oral historical sources are silent about the chief’s life prior to contact with Europeans and Americans. Today, his dates of birth and death remain unknown. In 1790, the Spanish navigator Manuel Quimper described

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<sup>156</sup> Haswell, *Voyage Round the World*, 90.

Wickaninnish as “a heavy man of good face, serious aspect, and about forty years old.”<sup>157</sup> The description corresponds to John Meares’ observation that the chief “though rather inclined to be corpulent, was athletic and active.”<sup>158</sup> Certainly, his reputation in whaling, which underscored his physical and spiritual prowess, was unparalleled. Wickaninnish appears to have descended from a line of long-lived forebears.<sup>159</sup> He also maintained familial relations with a number of neighboring chiefs, and particularly with his northern rival, Maquinna of the Mowachaht People. The personal connection appears to have minimized conflict between them.<sup>160</sup> Elsewhere, his attitude varied. Wickaninnish positioned himself toward his weaker neighbors either as a benevolent overlord or as a threatening nemesis. Before, during, and after contact with the outsiders, he gradually imposed his authority over a number of neighboring tribes.<sup>161</sup> John Boit stated without

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<sup>157</sup> Manuel Quimper, “Diario,” in *Spanish Explorations in the Strait of Juan de Fuca*, ed. Henry R. Wagner (Fine Arts Press: Santa Ana CA, 1933), 84.

<sup>158</sup> Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, 137.

<sup>159</sup> His father, who must have been at least sixty years old, visited the *Columbia* on multiple occasions. Wickaninnish lived at least as long, as known from his involvement in the assault on the ship *Tonquin* in 1811. The final mention of the chief dates from a French journal of 1817, but some evidence suggests that he lived to 1825 or longer. Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 275.; Valerie Sherer Mathes, “Wickaninnish, a Clayoquot Chief, as Recorded by Early Travelers,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (1979): 119-20.

<sup>160</sup> Mathes, “Wickaninnish, a Clayoquot Chief,” 110.

<sup>161</sup> Eugene Arima and John Dewhirst, “Nootkans of Vancouver Island,” in *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7: Northwest Coast*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 407-08.; Daniel Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 131-45.

reservation that he was “the most powerfull chief we have yet seen on this Coast.”<sup>162</sup>

Wickaninnish held a similar view of the Columbians. *Columbia* soon became the vehicle for the radical economic, political, and technological expansion of his Clayoquot Confederacy.

The Columbians frequented a number of “preferred” anchorages, but, among those, Clayoquot Sound offered the most favorable combination of geographic, political, and economic conditions for trade.<sup>163</sup> John Boit commented that the “land about this River is the best without exception I’ve yet seen, on the NW Coast, and a place well calculated for a *Factory* for to reap the advantages of the fur trade.”<sup>164</sup> The alternative anchorages each suffered from liabilities that made them less than ideal locations for *Columbia* to trade. The nearest anchorage, Nootka Sound languished under Spanish occupation by forces hostile to foreign encroachment, making an unsuitable powder keg of the harbor.<sup>165</sup> Tatoosh’s Island, which controlled the fur hinterland of Cape Flattery, stood exposed to the ocean and provided poor protection from storms. Cumshewa Inlet and the Houston Stewart Channel, both excellent anchorages with ample supplies of otter, had negligible demand for copper, a material present in native deposits on the Queen

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<sup>162</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage from Boston,” 382.

<sup>163</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘*Columbia*,’” 187.

<sup>164</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage from Boston,” 377.

<sup>165</sup> Frederic W. Howay, “The Spanish Settlement at Nootka,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1917): 163-171.; Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 105-106.

Charlotte Islands.<sup>166</sup> Nitinat Inlet offered significant amounts of fur but functioned within the economic sphere of the Clayoquot People. Clayoquot Sound, in contrast, offered protection from the sea, remained unoccupied by Europeans, maintained strong demand for copper, and prospered under the leadership of the powerful Chief Wickaninnish.

Wickaninnish strengthened his advantage as a trading partner by providing valuable provisions, resources, and information to the *Columbia* expedition. The Clayoquot People, who numbered “upwards of 3000 souls,” took great care to provide the expedition with provisions in order to facilitate trade. John Boit recorded that “the natives made us frequent visits” in order to deliver supplies of fish, geese, ducks, teal, turkey, and venison. Furthermore, he commented that the Indians “kept us well supplied with *Berries* of different kinds, which was very grateful.”<sup>167</sup> Likewise, John Hoskins noted a number of occasions in which the locals provided fresh vegetables, leeks, onions, greens, and potatoes.<sup>168</sup> Taken together, these foodstuffs provided all the protein, vitamin, and calorie requirements of a ship’s complement at sea. Additionally, the combination of greens, leeks, and berries helped to prevent scurvy. Wickaninnish also permitted the Columbians to help themselves to the harbor’s ample stands of timber. Robert Haswell often commanded short woodcutting missions, a crucial activity that provided firewood for cooking, heating, and feeding the blacksmith’s forge. Haswell reported that “there is

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<sup>166</sup> Jopling, “The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians,” 50-52.

<sup>167</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage from Boston,” 382-83.

<sup>168</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘*Columbia*,’” 183-89.

plenty, though indifferent, timber,” but granted that he “found plenty of good pitch pine trees.” On other occasions he “had parties out cutting logs for plank” needed to repair *Columbia*.<sup>169</sup> The ship required seasonal maintenance, such as replacement of rotten boards, broken spars, and replacement of knees. Moreover, she struck rocks during her second voyage, and without replacement timber, the flagship might not have survived the experience.<sup>170</sup>

In addition to food and timber, Wickaninnish also leveraged his diplomatic connections with neighboring tribes in order to provide commercial, geographical, and political information to the Columbians.<sup>171</sup> Occasionally, he even informed upon *Columbia*'s competitors in a manner calculated to keep his own “preferred” partners close and obstruct his enemies. For example, Wickaninnish attested to having traded “a great number of skins” to John Meares, an exchange that Meares later attempted to misrepresent to Captain Robert Gray. Gray saw through the ruse.<sup>172</sup> Crucially, the Clayoquot People provided assistance that improved the Columbians' sense of security

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<sup>169</sup> Haswell, *A Voyage of Discoveries in the Ship Columbia Rediviva*, 308-09.

<sup>170</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia's voyage from Boston,” 406.

<sup>171</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 182-89.

<sup>172</sup> Haswell, *Voyage Round the World*, 45, 48-49.; Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 187.



on a distant, foggy, and often dangerous coast. Their hospitality cemented the relationship between Clayoquots and Bostonians.<sup>173</sup>



Figure 13. George Davidson, *Winter Quarters*, 1793, watercolor on paper, 26.5 x 35.4 cm., Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

Fort Defiance, *Columbia's* winter quarters in 1791-92, continued the pattern of mutual accommodation between the Columbians and the Clayoquot People. The settlement, which included a log house, forge, storage shed, saw pits, defensive breastwork, and a miniature shipyard, became a stage for intercultural exchange.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 140.

<sup>174</sup> Hoskins, "Narrative of the Second Voyage of the 'Columbia'," 247-48.; Haswell, *A Voyage of Discoveries in the Ship Columbia Rediviva*, 304-06.

Indians and Americans engaged in a number of cooperative activities during the winter. The mutual need for subsistence resulted in joint hunting parties, regular trade, and dinner invitations.<sup>175</sup> The Columbians invited their Indian friends to a Christmas celebration in which “the principall Cheifs of the sound by invitation din’d on board ship.”<sup>176</sup> Wickaninnish returned the favor when he hosted the Columbians for a dinner of roasted heron, root vegetables, and herbs.<sup>177</sup> Meanwhile, the Indians observed the construction of the fort and, according to John Boit, “appear’d to be highly pleased with the different works going on at the Cove.”<sup>178</sup> Certainly, the Columbians and their industry enhanced the regional reputation of the Clayoquots. Throughout the winter, Wickaninnish and his family remained in constant contact with the Columbians. Robert Haswell noted that “all the winter they had stayed on board... and partook of our table as we ate and drank.” Indians also took interest in *Columbia* and made visits to the ship, usually in small groups, every two or three days.<sup>179</sup> During such occasions, the two groups exchanged stories and ideas about the cosmos. The Clayoquot People explained that thunder was the sound of the thunderbird carrying a whale into the heavens. Boit

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<sup>175</sup> Haswell, *A Voyage of Discoveries in the Ship Columbia Rediviva*, 249-50.; Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 385.

<sup>176</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 384-85.

<sup>177</sup> Hoskins, *A Voyage of Discoveries in the Ship Columbia Rediviva*, in Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, 260-61.

<sup>178</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 382.

<sup>179</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage on Discoveries in the Ship Columbia Rediviva,” 309.

commented that “we cou’d not make them to understand the real cause” of thunder and lightning but, in describing Benjamin Franklin, “much suppriz’d them by saying there was a man in our Country that made both.”<sup>180</sup> The Indians explained their cosmological system in great detail, explaining their kinship with animals, rituals of the first hunt, and relationships with the Spirit Guardians.<sup>181</sup> Likewise, during the Christmas Day celebration at Fort Defiance, the Columbians explained their religious beliefs to the fascinated Indians.<sup>182</sup> Exchange of ideas facilitated friendship, reinforced trust, and enabled mutuality between Indian and outsider.

Trust permitted other, more symbolic relationships between the two groups. Throughout the winter, the Columbians came and went from the principal Clayoquot town of Opitsat, where they “met with very civil treatment.”<sup>183</sup> Boit developed especially close relationships with several Indians, including the chief, and often stayed overnight in the town among his new friends. On these occasions, he commented broadly on Indian architectural, culinary, and healing practices.<sup>184</sup> Hoskins observed that Indian spiritual practice emphasized a different set of medical diagnoses. Shamans supposed that Yethlan, the ailing brother of Wickaninnish, was dying of “an excess of grief at the loss

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<sup>180</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 383.

<sup>181</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 248-50.

<sup>182</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 385.

<sup>183</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage on Discoveries in the Ship Columbia Rediviva,” 309.

<sup>184</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 384-87.

of his only child.” In fact, the nobleman lost his appetite following the tragedy. Captain Gray determined the cause of the illness to be malnutrition, and he prescribed a nourishing diet of soup, rice, and bread stuffing. Both diagnoses were correct, but—from an Indian perspective—Yethlan recovered because the Columbians devoted their spiritual potency to healing him, not because Gray provided a material cure.<sup>185</sup> On other occasions, the Columbians enhanced the chief’s prestige through their participation in ceremonies, rituals, and feasts. In 1792, they attended a ceremony in which Wickaninnish bestowed his own name upon his eldest son. By witnessing the event, the Americans acted as representatives of a powerful foreign tribe, now gathered to pay homage to the heir apparent. In doing so, they enhanced the prestige of father and son.<sup>186</sup> Spiritual relationships and prestige intensified the new commercial network that connected Boston and Clayoquot Sound.

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<sup>185</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 254-55.

<sup>186</sup> The chief was known as Ya’aihlstohsmahlneh before receiving the heredity name “Wickaninnish” from his father. After passing the name to his own son, he assumed the name Hyyous. For clarity, I refer to this important ruler as Wickaninnish throughout the dissertation. See Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 132, 136.; Mathes, “Wickaninnish, a Clayoquot Chief,” 116.



Figure 14. John Webber, *A Man of Nootka Sound*, c.1778, black and red chalk with pencil, gray wash and pen and black ink on laid paper, 27.9 x 40.6 cm., Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Meanwhile, Wickaninnish positioned his people as the most significant middlemen of the Northwest Coast, a role that enabled them to profit from the coordination of trade between indigenous communities and the global marketplace. Under his leadership, the Clayoquot People harnessed a preexisting trade with neighboring tribes in order to deliver larger quantities of otter to the Columbians. John

Boit commented that “the Natives, I dare say, have always plenty of *Otters*.”<sup>187</sup> Similarly, having observed “plenty of skins” in Clayoquot houses, Robert Haswell speculated that “I really think there is a great inland communication by rivers.”<sup>188</sup> Indeed, Wickaninnish often used water corridors to facilitate trade and diplomacy with his immediate neighbors, such as the Sheshaht People of Barkley Sound.<sup>189</sup> Elsewhere, John Hoskins remarked on evidence of “trade carried on between the natives of the island and the main,” a dynamic also common on Vancouver Island.<sup>190</sup> The Clayoquot People maintained trade with a commercial hinterland via corridors such as the central lakes, Butte Lake, and Alberni Inlet.<sup>191</sup> The Coast Salish and Kwakiutl Peoples, whose cultures spanned the Strait of Georgia, represented their immediate trading partners on the mainland. Wickaninnish improved upon preexisting trade connections with continental groups in order to acquire otter skins at a volume impossible to sustain at home.

Sheet copper, acquired from the Columbians, enabled Chief Wickaninnish to establish a reciprocal trade in which he became a supplier of luxury metals to his

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<sup>187</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage from Boston,” 378.

<sup>188</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 69.

<sup>189</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 78-79.; Mathes, “Wickaninnish, a Clayoquot Chief,” 113.

<sup>190</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘*Columbia*,’” 214.

<sup>191</sup> The Mowachaht People maintained similar overland trade routes to Nimpkis Lake and Woss Lake. See Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘*Columbia*,’” 265. Arima and Dewhirst, “Nootkans of Vancouver Island,” 394.; Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 125.

neighbors. Copper, as we have seen, was a prestigious metal because of its supernatural connotations, and it became an important medium of exchange during the fur trade. Wickaninnish demanded the metal during almost every exchange. The *Columbia* chroniclers each observed the use of copper in personal jewelry, ornamentation, and decorative arts. None, however, commented upon its appearance in a volume consistent with trade between the Columbians and Clayoquots.<sup>192</sup> The dearth of copper probably, in fact, indicates that it also served as an item of exchange between Indians.<sup>193</sup> In effect, Wickaninnish became a merchant—by monetizing copper, he cemented and enhanced his position as the dominant middleman of Vancouver Island. Otters purchased copper from the Columbians, and copper bought more otters from neighboring groups. Wickaninnish could profit without producing. The Clayoquot People probably extended their advantage as purveyors of metals by transforming sheet copper into valuable “coppers” for exchange with their neighbors. While the coastal peoples of Vancouver Island valued copper as a prestigious material, they did not personally wear or display “coppers.” The practice was, however, common among their continental trading partners, the Coast Salish and Kwakiutl Peoples.<sup>194</sup> Drawing upon his personal relationship with the Columbians, and their supply of metals, Wickaninnish may have directed his people to

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<sup>192</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World,” 60-61.; Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 194-95, 287-88.; Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage from Boston,” 385-86.

<sup>193</sup> Jopling, “The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians,” 56.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

begin manufacturing coppers for trade with the continental peoples. Production of coppers would have permitted the Clayoquot People to improve upon and enhance the exchange price of an already valuable material.<sup>195</sup>

Capitalizing upon bidirectional trade in furs and copper, Wickaninnish accumulated new wealth that dramatically expanded his purchasing power. Documentary sources do not attest to the mechanism by which the chief accomplished this, but he probably placed a markup, or handling fee, upon goods passing through Clayoquot Sound. Although the percentage markup cannot be known with certainty, we can draw some rough conclusions about its overall size. During the second expedition, *Columbia* appears to have traded copper in three forms: plates, sheets, and decorative bangles. Hoskins recorded in June 1791, that “for a sheet of copper we got four skins.”<sup>196</sup> Bangles traded at a rate of ten pieces per individual skin.<sup>197</sup> Working inductively, we can imagine that Wickaninnish, in order to turn a profit, transferred copper plates to the Coast Salish and Kwakiutl Peoples at a rate of five or six otter apiece. The rate would have replaced his inventory of skins and provided a 25-50 percent profit in kind. Moreover,

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<sup>195</sup> Wickaninnish is known to have ordered the manufacture of copper and iron bracelets. There can be no doubt that he also understood the value of “coppers” to other groups on the Northwest Coast. Numerous chroniclers of the period remark upon stockpiles of copper inside Indian households, although none explicitly describe the items in terms that specifically identify them as “coppers.” I consider it plausible that Wickaninnish could have ordered the manufacture of these goods, as well, in order to convert the “raw” material into a “finished” form, thus enhancing its value. See Jopling, “The Coppers of Northwest Coast Indians,” 21.; Alan D. McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 184-185

<sup>196</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 187.

<sup>197</sup> Hoskins, “John Hoskins’s Memorandum on the Trade at Nootka Sound,” 486.



manufactured “coppers” carried a significant added value and probably traded at double or triple the exchange value of unfinished squares, or a rate of twelve to eighteen otters. Wickaninnish could potentially realize a profit margin of 200-350 percent. There is a strong possibility, however, that Salish and Kwakiutl trappers did not immediately increase their production of skins by the same, large percentages.<sup>198</sup> Overall profits, therefore, probably increased by a maximum of about 100 percent, still an excellent performance for an emerging entrepôt and artisan economy. Less valuable items such as wooden or stone tools and *dentalium* beads, traded at rates far beneath a single otter skin. In such cases, copper bangles provided a convenient form of “small change” that traded in parallel with plate and finished coppers.

Wealth intensified the familial economic ties between the Clayoquots and their close neighbors, while facilitating their domination of the peoples of Barkley Sound. Wickaninnish maintained friendly relations with Chief Cleaskinah, a relative also known as “Captain Hanna,” whose Ahousaht People controlled the principal entrance to Clayoquot Sound.<sup>199</sup> Haswell wrote that Cleaskinah “seemed a very intelligent old

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<sup>198</sup> Their subsistence economies could only gradually accommodate the increase in hunting, either in terms of additional work, additional trappers, or exploitation of new otter rookeries. Moreover, in the long term, otter populations could not withstand the scourge of overhunting. See Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). 32-33.; Iglar, *The Great Ocean*, 105-111.

<sup>199</sup> As a token of mutual respect and friendship, Cleaskinah had exchanged names with Captain James Hanna in 1785. This development fit within the Nootka tradition of name-changing throughout the life of an individual. See Joshua L. Reid, *The Sea is My Country: The Maritime World of the Makahs, an Indigenous Borderlands People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 73.; José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka*, 53.

Fellow,” and there is significant evidence to suggest that he was an important mentor to Wickaninnish.<sup>200</sup> Economic relationships also helped to support an accommodation between the rulers and gatekeepers of Clayoquot Sound. Cleaskinah provided advance warning of incoming trade vessels, and, being “under the jurisdiction of Wickananish,” received a share of the burgeoning trade revenue in return.<sup>201</sup> Their cooperation, which engendered peaceful conditions in the harbor, was a central factor in making Clayoquot Sound a “preferred anchorage” for the *Columbia*.

Wickaninnish also used his growing riches to impose economic hegemony over his neighbors on Barkley Sound.<sup>202</sup> The harbor, located immediately south of Clayoquot Sound, constituted another rich source of furs and provided access to the continent via Alberni Inlet. The economic carrot, combined with a military stick, enabled him to dominate the otter trade here, as well. When the Columbians attempted to purchase otters from the Sheshaht People, inhabitants of Barkley Sound, they received the answer that “Wickananish had been down there and purchaced all they had.”<sup>203</sup> Wickaninnish paid handsomely for otter, and some groups adopted exclusive partnerships in order to obtain a share of his wealth. In some cases, the chief’s envoys literally went extra the mile in order to dominate the local market in skins. The Columbians expressed surprise that

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<sup>200</sup> Haswell, *Voyage Round the World*, 67, 77.

<sup>201</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage from Boston,” 385.

<sup>202</sup> Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 136, 143-44.

<sup>203</sup> Haswell, *Voyage Round the World*, 79.

Tootiscoosettle, his eldest brother, had crossed the hazardous Strait of Juan de Fuca in pursuit of furs. While anchored at Tatooch's Island, in Makah territory, Hoskins recorded that "several good skins were purchased," but that "still more were carried away" after Tootiscoosettle agreed to match or exceed the American offer.<sup>204</sup> The Clayoquot People probably resold the same otters, with a heavy markup, to the Columbians.

Where economic incentives failed to cement his authority, Wickaninnish used his riches to achieve military supremacy through the purchase of firearms. British and Spanish navigators were fearful of providing the Indians with firearms, but the Columbians had fewer reservations in doing so. Wickaninnish provided John Kendrick with an easement on the animal and timber resources of Clayoquot Sound in return for four muskets.<sup>205</sup> This miniscule stockpile was, however, merely a down payment on services rendered. José Mariano Moziño later observed that Kendrick "furnished Wickananish with more than two hundred guns, two barrels of powder, and a considerable portion of shot."<sup>206</sup> Once again, the purpose of militarization was to dominate trade in Barkley Sound. In early 1792, Haswell commented that Wickaninnish intended "to attack a village called Highshakt and had purchased many muskets and some ammunition for that purpose, and had even been very anxious that I should allow the

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 20-25.

<sup>206</sup> José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka*, 71.

smiths to make daggers to kill the Highshakt People with.”<sup>207</sup> Indeed, the Clayoquots sought to limit the expansion of their rivals, the Haachaht (“Highshakt”) tribe, who refused to pay tribute to Wickaninnish and threatened a number of his otter-producing tributaries.<sup>208</sup> In seeking retribution, the chief followed a ruthless policy of total extermination of his enemies, and is believed to have wiped out several rival groups during his career.<sup>209</sup> In this regard, the animal resources of Vancouver Island became “blood skins” used to finance military conquest. Other groups feared destruction more than subjugation and chose a different path. During the 1790s, the Toquaht and Ucluelet Peoples aligned their otter economies and military strength behind the Clayoquot Confederacy, becoming, in effect, the chief’s enforcers in Barkley Sound. Otter wealth made a paramount chief of Wickaninnish.<sup>210</sup>

Finally, Wickaninnish distributed new forms of wealth through the potlatch, a practice representing the sinews of the indigenous body politic.<sup>211</sup> Considered an important ceremony on the Northwest Coast from ancient times to the present day, the potlatch is a communal gathering in which a chief transfers a significant share of his wealth, in the form of gifts, to individual members of his community. It is not surprising,

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<sup>207</sup> Haswell, “A Voyage on Discoveries in the Ship Columbia Rediviva,” 313.

<sup>208</sup> Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 143.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-49.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 144-46.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

then, that *potlach* translates both as “to nourish” and as a “place to be satisfied.” In a ceremonial sense, the potlach affirmed his legitimacy as a sovereign and reinforced his authority as a provider. Moreover, gifts obligated subordinates to provide loyal service in times of emergency or military necessity. In an economic sense, it bestowed accumulated personal wealth into the communal domain, thus forming the basis of a gift economy. The transfer of wealth, combined with the rituals specific to each occasion, represented a chief’s unbroken capacity to provide for his community in good times and in bad. The potlach often accompanied marriages, naming-ceremonies, and noble succession—all moments associated with the continuity of kingship.<sup>212</sup> In short, the potlach defined the channels of power in a Northwest Coast community. Wickaninnish’s great wealth permitted him to be generous toward his followers, allied chiefs, and even toward fur traders. In January, 1792, Hoskins and Gray received an invitation to a potlach in which “Wickananish was going to give a great deal both to the Chiefs and people.” Moreover, Hoskins noted, the chief “wished to give us some skins”<sup>213</sup> Although Wickaninnish personally dominated the trade with the *Columbia*, the potlach transferred large amounts

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<sup>212</sup> Franz Boas, “The Social Organization of the Tribes of the North Pacific Coast,” *American Anthropologist, New Series* 26, no. 3 (1924): 323-332.; Franz Boas, “The Potlach” in *Indians of the North Pacific Coast*, ed. Tom McFeat (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978), 72-80.; Marcel Mauss and W.D Halls, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 33-42.; Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 32-50.

<sup>213</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 265.

of iron implements, copper bangles, textiles, and “great coats” to the Clayoquot People. His success as a middleman carried over to them, and his prosperity became theirs.

*Columbia*'s second expedition departed the Northwest Coast on 30 September 1792, but the consequences of her voyages continued to unfold for decades. In an immediate sense, the introduction of firearms enabled indigenous peoples to assert themselves against outsiders, both Indian and European. Muskets enhanced the security of small groups when traveling or working outside the village. Guns also permitted communities to resist seaborne raids, such as those perpetrated by the Haida Indians against the peoples of Vancouver Island and Cape Flattery.<sup>214</sup> Elsewhere, firearms became the preferred means of settling resource disputes. During a conflict over fishing rights, for example, Ahousaht warriors used muskets to gun down eighty members of the rival Otsosaht People. Following the massacre, the Ahousahts decapitated their victims and seized the fishing grounds. In other cases, firearms facilitated acts of revenge in answer to insults or crimes. The murder of a Clayoquot, in 1792, served as the proximate cause for Wickaninnish to unleash his arsenal upon the rival Haachaht People.<sup>215</sup> Similarly, Indians used firearms to deter plunder, pillage, and violence on the part of Europeans. The Mowachaht People endured numerous provocations that motivated them to amass guns. Maquinna was mortified when a merchant-captain remembered only as

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<sup>214</sup> McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 144-45, 154.; Reid, *The Sea is My Country*, 30.

<sup>215</sup> Margaret Horsfield and Ian Kennedy, *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound: A History* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2014), 35-36.

“Tawnington” entered his house and looted forty otter skins at gunpoint.<sup>216</sup> The chief expressed outrage at the abduction, rape, and murder of native girls by Spanish soldiers stationed at Fort San Lorenzo. Furthermore, he grieved when Governor Estevan Martínez responded to an exchange of insults by executing Callicum, the second-ranked chief of Nootka Sound.<sup>217</sup> Such incidents demonstrated the need for indigenous rulers to purchase muskets and become proficient in their use.

Wickaninnish established a terrifying reputation as a modernizing warlord—one whose investment in firearms enabled him to resist foreign encroachment. Again, his earliest purchase, acquired from John Kendrick, consisted of two hundred muskets, powder, and shot.<sup>218</sup> The behavior of other fur traders, however, convinced him to continue building his arsenal. In 1792, Captain William Brown, commander of the *Butterworth* squadron, attempted to pillage otter skins from the Clayoquot People. Wickaninnish fought back with deadly force, killing one Englishman. In reprisal, Brown kidnapped and tortured nine Indians, before throwing his victims overboard at sea to drown. Wickaninnish lost a brother to the deep. Thereafter, he redoubled his efforts to amass firearms.<sup>219</sup> Muskets represented a clear improvement over traditional arms such as stone and whalebone clubs. Moreover, their range and destructive force exceeded that

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<sup>216</sup> McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 185-86.

<sup>217</sup> Reid, *The Sea is My Country*, 74.

<sup>218</sup> José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka*, 71.

<sup>219</sup> Horsfield and Kennedy, *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound*, 66-67.

of the bow and arrow. Concentrated in villages along the coast, firearms enabled Wicakaninnish to guard against foreign encroachment upon the inlets, rivers, and coves of Clayoquot Sound.<sup>220</sup> Tactics enhanced his defense of strategic points. Fur traders soon reported that Wickaninnish had mastered the musket-volley, a development that made his warriors every bit as dangerous as Europeans.<sup>221</sup> Armed and emboldened, the chief became more demanding and aggressive toward outsiders. In 1795, Wickaninnish participated in the last peaceful trade to be documented at Clayoquot Sound, with Englishman Charles Bishop.<sup>222</sup> Meanwhile, Maquinna amassed a similar arsenal, and his armed resistance became a significant factor in the Spanish withdrawal from Nootka Sound, also in 1795.<sup>223</sup>

The acquisition of firearms represented only one dimension of an indigenous arms race that escalated during the early nineteenth century. Rivalries between paramount chiefs, such as Wickaninnish and Maquinna, prompted them to imagine a world of indigenous sea power. If canoes symbolized wealth, and a successful whale hunt legitimized a chief, then possession of a Western vessel represented the ultimate

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<sup>220</sup> McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 147-52, 185-86.

<sup>221</sup> Joshua L. Reid, *The Sea is My Country*, 42.

<sup>222</sup> Horsfield and Kennedy, *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound*, 67.; Charles Bishop, "Journal of Captain Charles Bishop of the 'Ruby' in 1795," introduction and notes by T.C. Elliott. *Oregon Historical Society* 9, no. 4 (1928): 337-346.

<sup>223</sup> McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 187, 190.; Howay, *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-1825*, 29.



expression of *tsh'ih*—the supernatural force that provided each chief with his temporal power.<sup>224</sup> Indians made keen observation of *Columbia*, *Washington*, and other vessels originating in Europe or America. Ships conferred a spiritual potency upon their commanders, not least because of the prominence of metal in their hulls, armaments, and navigational instruments.<sup>225</sup> Furthermore, their size implied physical strength of the sort belonging to large mythological creatures such as giants and thunderbirds.<sup>226</sup> In 1793, Wickaninnish attempted to purchase the schooner *Resolution* from Captain Josiah Roberts, but the Bostonian refused.<sup>227</sup> Later, Maquinna decided to take what Wickaninnish had been unable to buy. In 1803, his warriors boarded and captured the fur-trading ship *Boston* at Nootka Sound. Maquinna executed most of the crew, although he enslaved two individuals crucial to maintaining the vessel—armorer John Jewett and sailmaker John Thompson.<sup>228</sup> Jewett became a producer of iron tools and other trade goods that enriched the Mowachaht People. In meetings with friends and rivals,

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<sup>224</sup> Aldona Jonaitis, *The Yuquot Whaler's Shrine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 4-10.; Earl Maquinna George, *Living on the Edge: Nuu-Chah-Nulth History from an Ahousaht Chief's Perspective* (Winlaw, BC: Sononis, 2003), 52-61.; McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 18-19, 36-37, 160-62.

<sup>225</sup> McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 181.

<sup>226</sup> Michael Harkin, "Whales, Chiefs, and Giants: An Exploration into Nuu-Chah-Nulth Political Thought," *Ethnology* 37, no. 4 (1998): 324-28.

<sup>227</sup> Reid, *The Sea is My Country*, 42.; Howay, *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-1825*, 20-21.

<sup>228</sup> Horsfield and Kennedy, *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound*, 68-69.; McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 188.

Maquinna exhibited the prisoners both as loot and the personification of his own power. Wickaninnish recognized the economic value of Jewett, and he offered to purchase the armorer on four separate occasions, to no avail.<sup>229</sup> In 1811, he attempted to address the strategic imbalance by capturing the ship *Tonquin*, a constituent of the Pacific Fur Company. Clayoquot warriors managed to seize the vessel, but the plan fell apart when surviving crewmembers scuttled the ship. The sailors ignited 9,000 pounds of gunpower intended for the Russians at Sitka, triggering an explosion that obliterated the vessel.<sup>230</sup> Both incidents, the capture of *Boston* and destruction of *Tonquin*, resulted in diminished trade with Americans. Nonetheless, they demonstrate that indigenous rulers perceived ships in terms of strength, wealth, and prestige.

Over the long term, however, the decline of furbearing resources along the Northwest Coast, combined with indigenous reliance upon Western manufactured goods, brought about conditions of dependence, debt, and poverty. *Columbia* arrived on the coast neither as an agent of colonization nor exploitation, but she became the unwitting agent of economic imperialism in the Pacific. Historian Paige Raibmon has observed that the “unmaking of native space” often occurred not through individual acts of colonization, but rather, through economic behaviors that collectively advanced the

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<sup>229</sup> Reid, *The Sea is My Country*, 49-50.

<sup>230</sup> See *Ibid.*, 81-83.; James P. Ronda, *Astoria and Empire* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 236-37.

conditions of colonialism.<sup>231</sup> For example, where the introduction of firearms contributed to more effective hunting of sea otters, that hunting also resulting in a steep decline in otter populations.<sup>232</sup> Diminishing returns in the fur trade, combined with the ongoing purchase of foreign goods, reduced indigenous communities to a state of peonage. Prior to 1825, Indians exchanged otters for leather, spoons, cloth, and muskets. Thereafter, their preferences expanded to include a trade in blankets, rum, rifles, knives, metal utensils, and carpenter's tools. Some communities even imported products of the Pacific World, such as coral, sandalwood, and camphor boxes.<sup>233</sup> Indians offset the trade imbalance by taking on debt to American and British traders.<sup>234</sup>

The scarcity of furbearing animals also intensified conflict between indigenous peoples. Because social cohesion required the distribution of wealth through the potlatch, impoverished chief felt themselves under intense pressure to seize resources from weaker neighbors.<sup>235</sup> During the 1840s, the indigenous peoples of Vancouver Island contended in the "Long War," a conflict driven by the scarcity of furbearing resources, competition for

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<sup>231</sup> Paige Raibmon, "Unmaking Native Space: A Genealogy of Indian Policy, Settler Practice, and the Microtechniques of Dispossession," in *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Alexandra Harmon (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 67, 70-71.

<sup>232</sup> Reid, *The Sea is My Country*, 39-40.

<sup>233</sup> Van Den Brink, J.H. *The Haida Indians: Cultural Change Mainly Between 1876-1970* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 32.; Reid, *The Sea is My Country*, 92-105.

<sup>234</sup> Raibmon, "Unmaking Native Space," 67, 70-71.

<sup>235</sup> Reid, *The Sea is My Country*, 36-37, 40.

access to firearms, and a decline in tribal populations. The replacement of population, through the taking of prisoners, became a significant factor upon the continuation of hostilities. Vancouver Island witnessed an outbreak of measles in 1848 and a smallpox epidemic in 1852-53. Warfare and disease are responsible for a population decline from approximately 30,000 (1788) to 3,500 (1885) inhabitants.<sup>236</sup> Similarly, the Haida Peoples of the Queen Charlotte Islands suffered a decline from 8,000 individuals (1780s) to barely 800 (1885).<sup>237</sup> Violence begat violence, and chiefs could no longer expect to retire peaceably and pass their names to a younger generation. Maquinna died while raiding a Muchalaht village in the late 1820s. His enemies drowned him. Wickaninnish was luckier—he is believed to have died of old age around 1820.<sup>238</sup> With their deaths, much knowledge of the first contact with Americans—and especially the Columbians—passed into oral tradition.

*Columbia* served as a powerful vehicle of globalization and change on the Northwest Coast. Through her engagement with the indigenous peoples of the coast, she heralded a new period in which Indian communities would become producers for the “world of goods.” The otter furs they produced, and the copper that the Columbians used to purchase those furs, connected the coastal peoples to distant quarters of the globe, including England, Boston, and Canton. *Columbia* did not arrive on the Northwest Coast

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<sup>236</sup> Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 144-48.; McMillan, *Since the Time of the Transformers*, 191-95.

<sup>237</sup> Van Den Brink. *The Haida Indians*, 21-22.

<sup>238</sup> Reid, *The Sea is My Country*, 86.

as an active agent of empire, but she contributed to conditions in which colonialism could thrive. Meanwhile, Indian leaders leveraged their positions as middlemen to amass new and different forms of wealth. Chief Wickaninnish of the Clayoquot People was merely the most successful example. In the end, a combination of economic and military might propelled the Clayoquots to a position of leadership in an emerging confederacy—one that could increasingly steer the interaction between indigenous communities and outsiders from the West.

## CHAPTER IV

### “ALL THINGS IN ABUNDANCE”

Late in 1789, following a sixteen-week transit of the Pacific Ocean, Captain Robert Gray penned a letter to his employers in Boston. “Gentlemen,” he wrote, “I have the pleasure to inform you of my safe arrival at Canton in the ship *Columbia* from the NW Coast of America. . . . where I arrived on the 17th Novr.”<sup>1</sup> Gray had good reason to be pleased—he understood the significance of *Columbia*’s transpacific crossing from the Northwest Coast to China. On one hand, it represented a logistical triumph for Boston and the United States. On the other, the Columbians now prepared to trade in the third—and most critical—location of the expedition, the metropolis of Canton. Would the port answer the promise of the maritime fur trade, or dash their hopes for a lucrative voyage? Canton held the potential to generate astronomical profits, but its commercial system could also deal out ruinous losses. In short, China would determine the overall success of the expedition.

More importantly, *Columbia*’s arrival at Canton established the first commercial route between the United States, the Pacific World, and Asia. In doing so, she established an entirely new model for trade. *Columbia* expanded upon prior models of transpacific

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<sup>1</sup> “Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, December 18, 1789,” in *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 & 1790-1793*, ed. Frederic W. Howay (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), 128-29.

commerce. The Manila Galleons, for example, linked the economies of China, Spanish America, and Europe, but the galleons accomplished this in an indirect manner that required the assistance of Cantonese junks and teamsters in New Spain.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the British East India Company conducted direct trade between China and Europe, but not the Americas.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, British fur traders established a route between China and the Northwest Coast of America, but chartered companies hindered their interaction with Great Britain.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, *Columbia* established direct trade—without geographic, territorial, or institutional compromises—between Massachusetts, Pacific America, and China. From a historiographic perspective, her accomplishments challenge the dominant narrative of United States involvement in the Pacific. *Columbia* sailed six decades prior to Matthew Perry and a century before the Spanish-American War. Indeed, less than a

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<sup>2</sup> Spanish galleons called neither in China nor Spain. In Asia, Cantonese pilots transshipped the produce of China to Manila. In America, Chinese goods proceeded overland across New Spain, from Acapulco to Veracruz, before traversing the Atlantic Ocean. Both components of the clumsy arrangement—still active in the eighteenth century!—recognized the papal division of the globe between Spain and Portugal. See Matt Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 114-17, 122.

<sup>3</sup> In 1773, Parliament authorized the East India Company to market its teas in North America without first shipping that product through Great Britain. The Tea Act, intended to discourage smuggling and restore the company's fortunes, prompted the legal confrontation and "Destruction of the Tea" in Boston Harbor. American independence severed this brief connection between the producers of the Far East and consumers in the thirteen colonies. See Robert Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 225-33.

<sup>4</sup> Fur traders could not easily market their wares in Europe because of the territorial intervention of the East India Company, in the Indian Ocean, and the South Sea Company, in the Pacific. See James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods* (Tacoma: University of Washington Press, 1999), 25-26.

decade after independence, the Columbians charted a global direction for the United States, becoming rivals to the British at Canton.



Figure 15. *View of Canton*, c.1800, watercolor and gouache on paper, 71.2 x 128.5 cm., Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

Canton (Guangzhou, 廣州), China's premier international port, also represented the sole commercial location where the Great Qing Dynasty permitted Westerners to trade with Chinese merchants. Located on the Pearl River (*Zhu Jiang*, 珠江), eighty miles from the South China Sea, the port bustled with the energies of mariners, artisans, and merchants. John Boit, fifth mate aboard the *Columbia*, noted that “the streets are generally thronged with people, all busily engag'd in their sevrall avocations.”<sup>5</sup> For more than two millennia, Canton had prospered as one of the busiest and most cosmopolitan ports in the Far East. The metropolis ranked among the most urbanized places in the

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<sup>5</sup> John Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*'s voyage from Boston (on a Voyage, round the Globe)” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 423.



world in the late eighteenth century, with some 800,000 inhabitants. Canton dwarfed Boston and presented a panorama utterly at odds with the indigenous villages of the Northwest Coast.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, business was booming in Canton. In 1787, Western traders imported goods worth more than \$5½ million and exported a commensurate value in teas, porcelain, silks, and other products of China.<sup>7</sup> Boit considered the city's shops to be "well stock'd with Goods." When cruising the Northwest Coast of America, the Columbians had proven themselves deft observers of the environment, culture, and human nature. Surprisingly, though, the Columbians recorded little more than commercial information during their two visits to China.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Boit commented that "so much has been said about Canton and the Manners and Customs of the Chinese, that 'tis needless for me to make any further remarks on the subject."<sup>9</sup> Where business was concerned their observations were also far from comprehensive. The historian must also incorporate other contemporary accounts in order to reconstruct *Columbia's* experiences

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<sup>6</sup> Hugh R. Clark, "Frontier Discourse and China's Maritime Frontier: China's Frontiers and the Encounter with the Sea through Early Imperial History." *Journal of World History* 20, no.1 (2009): 11-13, 22-30.; Tertius Chandler, *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: an Historical Census* (Lewiston, NY: St. David's University Press, 1987), 68.

<sup>7</sup> Hosea Ballou Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China, 1635-1834* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926), 2: 136.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Haswell's log of the first *Columbia* expedition concludes abruptly before leaving the Northwest Coast. Likewise, of three chroniclers of the second voyage, Boit alone commented upon China, and his account is unusually terse. See Robert Haswell, "A Voyage Round the World Onboard the Ship *Columbia Rediviva* and Sloop *Washington*" in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 101.

<sup>9</sup> Boit, "Remarks on the Ship *Columbia's* voyage," 423.

in China. Those sources emphasize the sheer complexity of commercial arrangements, restrictions, and challenges facing the Columbians at Canton.

Europeans began trading with mainland China following the settlement of Portuguese Macao, in 1557, and established a direct commercial connection with Canton in 1578-79.<sup>10</sup> Their chartered companies became established in Canton a century later, when the Qing conquest of Taiwan—and the suppression of piracy—permitted the dynasty to relax its attitude toward foreign commerce.<sup>11</sup> Thereafter, the complex commercial order known as the “Canton System” evolved to meet the overlapping needs of multiple constituents, including European and Chinese merchants, Cantonese sea workers, Qing bureaucrats, and the Emperor. The principal elements of the system evolved from 1700-1730. In 1757, following an abortive attempt by British merchants to expand their business to Chusan Island (Zhoushan, 舟山島), an archipelago off the coast of Zhejiang Province, the Qianlong (乾隆) Emperor restricted Western trade to Canton.<sup>12</sup> Although this chapter will discuss the characteristics of the Canton System with respect to the *Columbia* expeditions, it is worthwhile to summarize its complexities in brief.

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<sup>10</sup> John E. Wills, Jr., “Maritime Europe and the Ming,” in *China and Maritime Europe, 1500-1800: Trade, Settlement, Diplomacy, and Missions*, ed. John E. Wills, Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 201), 36, 40-41.

<sup>11</sup> Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, *Maritime Taiwan: Historical Encounters with the East and West* (Armonk: East Gate, 2009), 39-44.

<sup>12</sup> Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong King University Press, 2005), 5-10, 15-16.

Major Samuel Shaw, a Bostonian and the first United States Consul to reside in Canton, provided a crucial view of the Canton System through the eyes of an American. Each foreign vessel required the patronage of a Chinese “security merchant” (*baoshangren*, 保商人), who became answerable for the ship, her crew, and her cargo. In practice, the security merchant arranged all commercial transactions on behalf of his clients, as well as collecting duties, fees, and tribute on behalf of the imperial government.<sup>13</sup> Shaw observed that the security merchant “takes out a permit for unloading... [and] when the return cargo is to be sent on board, the mandarins attend, as before, and each package must have the seller’s *chop* upon it.” The security merchants comprised a guild whose members had grown rich in their capacity as middlemen. Meanwhile, a ship captain negotiated contracts with licensed river pilots, compradors, and linguists in order to transport his cargo up the Pearl River. These specialists provided for the logistical needs of a merchantmen during its journey to Canton. Pilots navigated the sandbars and draughts of the river, compradors provisioned the crew, and linguists offered translation and negotiation services. Shaw considered it especially important to contract a capable linguist. He asserted that “this person is absolutely necessary, as he is employed in transacting all business with the customhouse... and is always on call.”<sup>14</sup> Reliable service workers were indispensable to a successful voyage.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-12.

<sup>14</sup> Samuel Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw, the First American Consul at Canton, with a Life of the Author, by Josiah Quincy* (Boston: William Crosby and H.P. Nichols, 1847), 176-77.

Incoming merchantmen stopped at multiple checkpoints between Macao and her final anchorage at Whampoa (Huangpu, 黄埔), near Canton. In order to counteract smuggling, Chinese customs agents searched the ship at each location. Upon arrival at Whampoa, officers and dignitaries received permission to continue upriver and lodge among the European “thirteen factories” of Canton. Finally, the law required foreigners to leave Canton soon as a transaction was complete and a *grand chop* (*waiyang chuanpai*, 外洋船牌), or exit permit, could be certified. Beginning in 1759, the Qianlong Emperor extended this regulation to all foreigners, mandating that European factors leave Canton and return to their permanent residences during the annual off-season.<sup>15</sup> Shaw explained that “no Europeans are suffered to remain at Canton throughout the year. After their ships are gone, and they have settled their accounts with the Chinese, they repair to Macao, where each nation has its separate establishment.”<sup>16</sup> Qing authorities endeavored to maintain strict control over foreigners.

The greatest single challenge that westerners faced was an official view, originating in the Forbidden City, that European trade was inconsequential to China.<sup>17</sup> In 1793, Qianlong received George Macartney, an ambassador sent to negotiate a new

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<sup>15</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 13-14.

<sup>16</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 173.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that the Chinese tradition of “guest ritual” distinguished between the concepts of trade and tribute. Qianlong and his bureaucrats sought to restrict the former, but not the latter. William T. Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 127-38.

commercial agreement between Great Britain and China. The emperor refused. He articulated his perspective that “Our Celestial Empire possesses all things in prolific abundance and lacks no product within its own borders.” Great Britain had nothing to offer China.<sup>18</sup> An enlightened ruler, Qianlong traveled widely throughout his empire, curated a collection of treasures from previous dynasties, and oversaw the publication of a 36,000-volume encyclopedia.<sup>19</sup> He understood that China’s natural resources were among her greatest assets, and “there was therefore no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians in exchange for our own produce.”<sup>20</sup> When pressed, he confronted Macartney with the statement that “we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country’s manufactures.”<sup>21</sup> Western merchants also remarked on China’s vast resources. William Trotter, an American in Canton, observed that the Chinese “are very sensible of the local situation of the Country and well assured that it produces every necessary of life that can render them independent of intercourse with the European World.”<sup>22</sup> European merchants found themselves unable to

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<sup>18</sup> “Qianlong to George III, 3 October 1793,” in *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking*, eds. E. Backhouse Bland and J.O.P. Bland (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 322-31.

<sup>19</sup> Mark C. Elliott, *Emperor Qianlong: Son of Heaven, Man of the World* (New York: Longman, 2009), 68-85, 113-23.

<sup>20</sup> “Qianlong to George III, 3 October 1793,” in *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking*, 322-31.

<sup>21</sup> “Qianlong to George III, 23 September 1793,” in *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking*, 322-31.

<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Trotter commented that Qing officials “regard with a jealous eye the restless and ambitious Spirit of the trading powers of Europe.” Regardless of the economic justification for the Canton System, Trotter believed that xenophobia toward foreign “sea barbarians” constituted the

achieve a balance of trade in goods and instead purchased Chinese manufactures using specie, most often silver dollars minted in New Spain.<sup>23</sup> Beginning in 1784, the American financiers of the *Empress of China* compensated for a lack of coin by exporting ginseng, a medicinal herb, to China. In 1789, *Columbia* arrived with a cargo of furry gold—priceless otter skins that served as symbols of status among the Manchu overlords of China.

Upon arriving at Canton, then, *Columbia* entered a commercial system designed to regulate trade, sustain local and imperial constituents, and limit the presence of foreigners on Chinese soil. Despite its complexities, supercargoes and factors recognized that the Canton System benefitted its constituents, both Chinese and European. Indeed, Shaw commented that the system was ultimately “as simple, as any in the known world.”<sup>24</sup> For the Columbians, who arrived without a clear understanding of how to do business in Canton, the first expedition would be shaped by the problems of mounting expenses and bureaucratic delays. The experience of selling furs on a regulated yet unpredictable market would teach them new lessons about the importance of

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real reason for Chinese restrictions upon trade with Westerners. See William Trotter, Ship Pigou, to William Lansom, 10 March 1797, ALS, William Trotter Letter, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>23</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 70-71, 108-17, 139-49, 276-83.; Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 160-62, 189-91, 271-74.

<sup>24</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 168.

improvisation. Those lessons laid the foundations for *Columbia*'s successful return voyage two years later, and most importantly, for the pioneering development of a Pacific route from the United States to Asia.

*“Nothing but Money”*

Money—its form, its supply, or the lack thereof—constantly bore upon *Columbia*'s operations in China. *Columbia* faced mounting expenses from the moment she arrived in the Middle Kingdom, causing overhead to become an increasing drain upon her profitability. The expenses appeared in many forms as she proceeded toward Canton. Ships entering the Canton System needed to hire pilots, linguists, and compradors to manage the logistics of trade. Imperial officials exacted a series of fees, presents, and commissions before permitting a transaction to begin. Moreover, successful transactions often depended upon the consignment of a cargo to a middleman. *Columbia* sustained all of these expenses. Coming to grips with her expenditures is crucial to understanding the lessons that the Columbians learned during their first expedition to China. Our effort is complicated. The chroniclers of the voyage did not differentiate between the various costs that the Canton System imposed upon *Columbia*. For this reason, any assessment of her financial performance must be based on a reconstruction of her itemized expenses. In doing so, the historian can see how a series of minor costs—and several large ones—complicated the commercial outlook for small American ships like *Columbia* and *Washington*.

*Columbia*'s participation in the Canton System began as soon as she approached the Lema Islands, constituents of the Wanshan (萬山) Archipelago, off the southern coast of Guangdong Province. The islands, lightly populated, constituted an important economic outpost of the Qing Empire. John Boit noted the presence of "hundreds of fishing boats," reaffirming Lord Anson's observation of "an incredible number" of vessels that "seemed to cover the surface of the sea as far as he eye could reach."<sup>25</sup> Fishing represented an important source of income for local inhabitants, as well as urban populations on the mainland who had abandoned farming in favor of tea and silk cultivation.<sup>26</sup> Some fishermen, however, earned additional income by hiring out themselves as "outside pilots" (*yuyinren*, 魚引人) who guided foreign vessels through to Macao Roads.<sup>27</sup> There is no account of the *Columbia*'s first encounter with the Chinese, but in all likelihood, a fisherman guided her among the islands in 1789. Indeed, Boit commented during the second voyage that the Columbians "got a Pilot on board, who agreed to carry us to Macao Roads, for 25 Dollars."<sup>28</sup> This was probably an average price for an outside pilot, as some charged two or three times as much during bad weather.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Boit, "Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*'s voyage," 348.

<sup>26</sup> Robert B. Marks, "Commercialization without Capitalism: Processes of Environmental Change in South China, 1550-1850," *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 61-66.

<sup>27</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Boit, "Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*'s voyage," 420.

<sup>29</sup> Étienne Marchand, *Voyage Round the World, Performed during the Years 1790, 1791, and 1792 by Étienne Marchand, Preceded by an Historical Introduction an Illustrated by Charts, etc.*,



Joseph Ingraham recalled that the first expedition approached in “thick weather,” and Gray’s accounts confirm that the *Columbia* paid a larger sum of forty-three dollars, for “pilotage of Ship from Grand Lama to Macoa.”<sup>30</sup>

After passing through the archipelago, *Columbia* stood into Macao Roads, or Lingding Channel (*Lingdingyang*, 伶仃洋), a crowded commercial strait linking the Pearl River estuary with the South China Sea. She probably anchored between Portuguese Macao and the “Nine Islands” (*Jiudao*, 九島).<sup>31</sup> From the anchorage, the Columbians could discern the geographical situation and architecture of Macao (*Aomen*, 澳門). Founded in 1557, the town was situated on an island notable for a temple dedicated to Mazu, the patron goddess of fishermen.<sup>32</sup> Rugged terrain predominates at Macao, and one Philadelphian merchant described the geography of the island as “very uneven and almost surrounded by high hills.”<sup>33</sup> Ming Dynasty officials understood that, in permitting

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vol. 2, trans. C.P. Claret Fleurieu, (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, Paternoster-Row; and T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, in the Strand, 1801), 89.

<sup>30</sup> In this chapter, I convert all monetary figures to Spanish Dollars using the exchange rate of \$1 (Spanish silver pesos) per £0.2083 (pounds sterling) or 7,200 兩 (*liang*, silver taels). Robert Gray gives the pilotage fee as £9. See Joseph Ingraham, *Journal of the Brigantine “Hope” on a Voyage to the Northwest Coast of North America, 1790-1792*, ed. Mark D. Kaplanoff, (Barre, MA: Imprint Society, 1971), 174.; “Robert Gray’s Accounts with the Owners of the Columbia,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 137.

<sup>31</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship Columbia’s voyage,” 420.

<sup>32</sup> Zhidong Hao, *Macau History and Society* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 12-13.

<sup>33</sup> William Trotter, Ship Pigou, to William Lansom, 10 March 1797, ALS, William Trotter Letter, Massachusetts Historical Society.

the Portuguese to settle in such an isolated location, the imperial government could control the “sea barbarians” (*hailiao*, 海獠), or Westerners, while still learning and profiting from them. The town soon became a destination for silk merchants and Jesuit missionaries. During the seventeenth century, Macao emerged as a bustling trade hub, with routes to Portuguese Goa and Timor, Spanish Manila, and Nagasaki.<sup>34</sup> Commercial wealth also supported the construction of churches, a convent, and public buildings in a distinctive baroque style.<sup>35</sup> The town lay within a defensive wall and under the protection of several forts, bristling with cannon.<sup>36</sup>

Macao Roads represented the final destination for the outside pilot, who relinquished control of a foreign ship to a licensed “Macao pilot.” Qing regulations barred foreign vessels from independent ascent of the Pearl River. The presence of a licensed pilot ensured that a ship could safely ascend the river, with its tides, sand bars, and shallow draughts. Licenses also granted customs officials with an additional means of supervising the “sea barbarians.” The European trade companies retained a pilot for service as soon an affiliated vessel was sighted entering Macao Roads. Small operators

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<sup>34</sup> Hao, *Macau History and Society*, 16-18, 57

<sup>35</sup> Jeremy Tambling and Louis Lo, *Walking Macao, Reading the Baroque* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), ix-x, 3-9.

<sup>36</sup> William Milburn, *Oriental Commerce; or the East India Trader's Complete Guide; Containing a Geographical and Nautical Description of the Maritime Parts of India, China, Japan, and Neighbouring Countries, Including the Eastern Islands, and the Trading Stations on the Passage from Europe* (London: Printed for Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen, Leadenhall Street, 1825), 450-51.

could not afford this advantage, and were required to put ashore in search of a pilot.<sup>37</sup> We know nothing about how *Columbia* acquired her pilot in 1790. Boit remarks that “Capt. Gray went to *Macao* in the pinnace” during the second expedition, and we can assume he did likewise during the first arrival in China.<sup>38</sup> Foreigners recruited their Macao pilots from a limited pool, probably numbering no more than ten or eleven candidates in the 1780s. Some were respected professionals and others were barely competent.<sup>39</sup> The sources reveal nothing about the identity, language ability, or experience of *Columbia*’s pilots during either expedition. The sources do indicate, however, that no incidents occurred in transit, indicating that each pilot was equal to his task. In 1789, Gray recorded that the expedition paid \$63, for “pilotage from Macao to Wampo.”<sup>40</sup> In comparison, Van Dyke demonstrates that ships regularly paid \$32-64 for pilotage in either direction during the 1780s, meaning that *Columbia*’s fee fell in the upper range.<sup>41</sup>

*Columbia* now sailed upriver under the care of her Chinese pilot. She could traverse the distance to Whampoa Roads in two days, given suitable tides. Proceeding northward, the geography of the Pearl River underwent a dramatic transformation from a

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<sup>37</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 37-45.

<sup>38</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage,” 420.

<sup>39</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 45.

<sup>40</sup> Gray gives this sum as £13 4s. See Gray, “Robert Gray’s Accounts with the Owners of the *Columbia*,” 137.

<sup>41</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 44.

wide estuary to a clearly defined river. The most pronounced change occurred at Bocca Tigris (“Mouth of the Tigris,” *Humen*, 虎門), a place that one navigator described as “a narrow passage... somewhat more than a musquet-shot over.” *Columbia* faced her first round of customs inspections at this choke point. To prevent smuggling, the Qing government maintained two powerful forts on either side of the passage, one resembling “a large castle” and the other featuring “eighteen embrasures, reaching to the water’s edge.”<sup>42</sup> If the fortifications were not sufficient to deter unwelcome vessels from ascending the river, the river itself presented hazards such as bars and shallow draughts.

Navigational hazards necessitated the assistance of flat-bottomed tow boats known as “sampan” (*shanban*, 舢舨). Again, the Columbians left scant information about the sampans needed to ascend the Pearl River. Gray’s accounts mention only those boats hired for transport between Whampoa Roads and Canton.<sup>43</sup> However, we can be certain that sampans guided *Columbia*’s passage from Bocca Tigris to Whampoa. She needed their maneuverability to avoid the river’s hazards. *Columbia*, at 212 tons, probably required the assistance of two sampans, each powered by a team of sixteen oarsmen. Her ascent, then, entailed an additional labor cost of \$1 per oarsman, or a total of \$32. *Columbia* would also require sampans during her departure from China, in 1790.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Gilbert, *Voyage from New South Wales to Canton in the Year 1788, with Views of the Islands Discovered* (London: George Stafford for J. Derbitt, 1789), 83.

<sup>43</sup> “Robert Gray’s Accounts with the Owners of *Columbia*,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 137-39.

<sup>44</sup> Van Dyke explains that “ships of less than 250 tons did not need to take as many extra precautions when navigating the river. ... but they still needed a couple of large, oared sampans to pull them through the channels of the river. These special sampans had at least sixteen oarsmen

While *Columbia* could avoid river hazards with the help of sampans, the expedition still needed assistance in overcoming the language barrier. The solution was to hire a linguist capable of translating between Cantonese and English. *Columbia* would pass three tollhouses along the river, and a linguist was needed to communicate the toll prices at each location. Later, at Whampoa, his duties expanded to include all communication with Qing imperial officials and the merchants of Canton.<sup>45</sup> The chroniclers of the first expedition do not make specific mention of a linguist, with the exception of a sum of \$72 with which Gray “paid Linguist to obtain pilot.” We know nothing, therefore, about this person or his language abilities.<sup>46</sup> Once again, *Columbia*’s

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(eight on each side) and charged a fee of Spanish \$1 per oarsmen.” Although Van Dyke does not state whether the \$1 wage was daily or per passage, the Macao pilots charged “per passage” and I assume the same rate for the sampan oarsmen. This yields a sum of Spanish \$32 (2 sampans at 16 oarsmen apiece), per passage, or a grand total of Spanish \$64 to and from Whampoa Roads. See Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 52.; Frederic W. Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast*, vi.

<sup>45</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 77-82.

<sup>46</sup> We cannot know who served as *Columbia*’s “linguist,” but strong possibilities are Chicqua, Heedqua, and “Old Tom.” The linguist known as Chauqua (or “Chicqua,” orthography unknown), was the “most uniformly preferred” choice in 1788. Alternatively, the Columbians may have contracted with Heequa (Ni Yongguan, 倪永官), who interpreted for the *Empress of China*. “Old Tom” or “Tsaemow” (Cai Mo, 蔡莫?) was better known in the nineteenth century, and he would have been a junior linguist during the 1789-90 season. Nonetheless, Westerners considered him “a remarkable man” who rendered “a wonderful convenience to the community at large.” Old Tom established a reputation for resolving serious disputes between foreigners, *hong* merchants, and imperial officials. The sum paid for a linguist is given as £15. See William C. Hunter, *The Fan Kwae Before Treaty Days, 1825-1844* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, & Co., 1882), 50-53.; Anonymous, *Crisis in the Opium Traffic, Being an Account of the Proceedings of the Chinese Government to Suppress that Trade* (Canton: Office of the Chinese Repository, 1839), 98; Jean McClure Mudge, *Chinese Export Porcelain for the American Trade, 1785-1835, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Revised* (East Brunswick, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1981), 50.; Paul A. Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Politics and Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 385.; Idem., *The Canton Trade*, 26-27, 85.

linguist can be assumed to have performed translation, negotiation, and supernumerary duties without incident. Additionally, he assumed responsibility for hiring subcontractors such as the carpenters, caulkers, boatmen, and other specialists who performed maintenance upon *Columbia*.<sup>47</sup> For purposes of hiring a linguist, Gray would most likely have paid a retainer of \$216.<sup>48</sup> *Columbia*'s total expense in linguist fees and other services rendered was probably Spanish \$288, or 3.91% of her total expenditures at Canton. In short, the linguist represented a small investment with large implications for the expedition.

Following the departure from Bocca Tigris, *Columbia* continued her ascent of the river to the great anchorage at Whampoa. Sadly, the Columbians recorded no impressions of countryside that fascinated other travelers as "extra-ordinary" and left them "lost in amazement." Other accounts, however, suggest how the Columbians might have experienced their arrival in China. William Trotter, a merchant from Philadelphia, remarked upon the "curious and interesting" sights that "strike the eye of an European... in this part of the world." While sailing up the Pearl River, in 1797, he admired the "extensive rice fields bordering on the River, and on the numerous Canals &c. which

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<sup>47</sup> "Robert Gray's Accounts with the Owners of Columbia," 143

<sup>48</sup> Van Dyke observes that the linguist salary remained fixed at \$216 for American vessels from "the mid-1780s to 1842." See Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 82-83.

branch from it in all directions.”<sup>49</sup> The countryside supported the cultivation of rice, tea, and mulberry trees, whose leaves provided nourishment to the silkworm. Hydraulic works provided the irrigation and transport infrastructure needed to maintain a high level of cultivation, even on the slopes of hills.<sup>50</sup> Thomas Gilbert, a British navigator who arrived in 1788, commented upon the vertical orientation of farms “cut into terraces, and planted with sugar-canes, yams, plantains, and the cotton-tree.”<sup>51</sup> In recent centuries, Chinese agriculture had adopted a number of New World crops better suited to dry, cool, or alpine conditions. The revolution born of wheat, maize, and potatoes enabled the farmer to overcome topography and bring even the most rugged terrain under cultivation.<sup>52</sup> Trotter considered the panorama a credit to the “assiduous labour of the industrial Chinaman, and his anxious desire not to lose a spot that he can render capable of yielding any increase.” Both travelers also recognized the sophistication of China’s built landscapes. Trotter was especially impressed by “lofty Pagodas which intersperse the surrounding country” and inspired in his mind “a kind of respectful veneration.” He described the pagodas as “stupendous stone Buildings” that dwarfed even the largest

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<sup>49</sup> William Trotter, Ship Pigou, to William Lansom, 10 March 1797, ALS, William Trotter Letter, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>50</sup> Rowe, *China’s Last Empire*, 93-96.; Marks, “Commercialization without Capitalism,” 60-61, 69-70.

<sup>51</sup> Gilbert, *Voyage from New South Wales*, 84.

<sup>52</sup> Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing, Inc., 1972), 198-201.

houses of worship in the United States, such as Philadelphia's Christ Church.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, Gilbert commented upon "a number of considerable towns within the reach of the eye."<sup>54</sup> Guangdong Province's commercial economy supported the growth of a dense network of market towns, cities, and dock facilities along the river.<sup>55</sup>

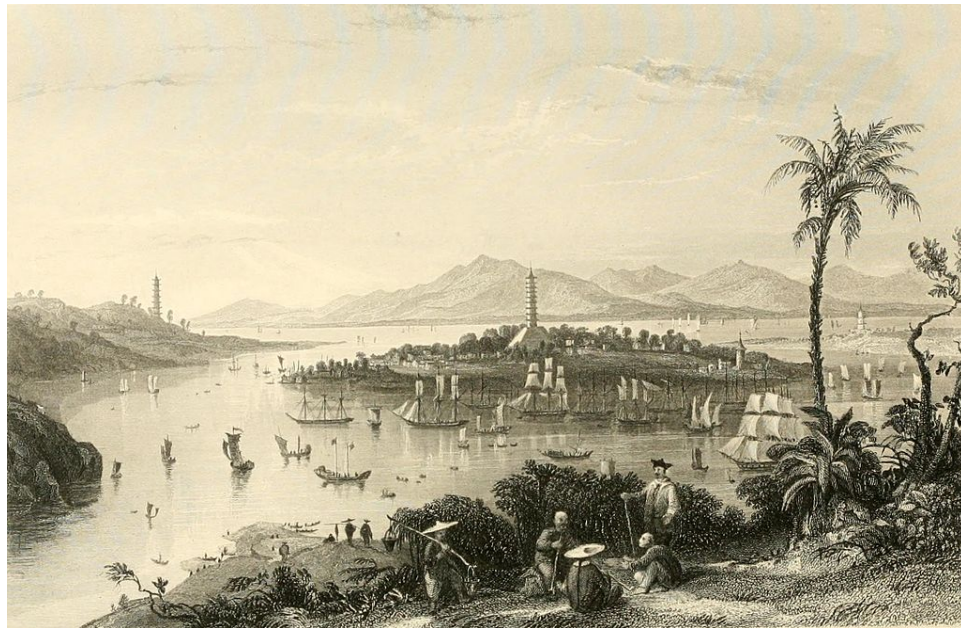


Figure 16. Thomas Allom, "Whampoa, from Dane's Island," 1800, engraving, as reproduced in Thomas Allom, *China, in a Series of Views, Displaying the Scenery, Architecture, and Social Habits of that Ancient Empire, Vol. 1*, London: Fischer, Son, & Co., 1800, 80.

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<sup>53</sup> William Trotter, Ship Pigou, to William Lansom, 10 March 1797, ALS, William Trotter Letter, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>54</sup> Gilbert, *Voyage from New South Wales*, 84.

<sup>55</sup> Marks, "Commercialization Without Capitalism," 60-67.



Whampoa Roads, which Trotter described as “an extensive harbour about twelve miles below Canton,” served as the final anchorage for foreign vessels.<sup>56</sup> *Columbia* arrived here on 17 December 1789. Situated at the confluence of two branches of the Pearl River, the anchorage could accommodate scores of ships. Captain Gray recorded the presence of “fourteen Americans and about seventy Ships of other Nations” at the anchorage.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, foreign traffic snarled the river at Whampoa. In another effort to control the movement of “sea barbarians,” Qing imperial regulations prohibited Western vessels from continuing upriver to Canton. *Columbia* would remain here until her business was complete, on 12 February 1790.<sup>58</sup>

*Columbia*'s linguist sprang into action upon arriving at Whampoa. He sent notification of the ship's arrival to the Superintendent of Marine Customs, or *Hoppo* (*hubu*, 戶部), an imperial official responsible for assessing port fees upon all incoming vessels.<sup>59</sup> The announcement did not, however, indicate that *Columbia* would be

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<sup>56</sup> William Trotter, Ship Pigou, to William Lansom, 10 March 1797, ALS, William Trotter Letter, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>57</sup> “Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, 18 December 1789,” 129.

<sup>58</sup> “Boston, Wednesday, Aug. 11, The Columbia.” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 11 August 1790.

<sup>59</sup> “Hoppo” is an Anglicization of the term *Hubu*, or “business manager,” a description that does not reflect the full scope of this important office. The Chinese official title, unknown to most Europeans of the period, is rendered as *Yuehai guanbu* (粵海關部). Charles Hucker describes the office of Superintendent as “a duty assignment for a Grand Minister of the Imperial Household Department to manage China's trade with foreigners at Canton.” The superintendent held authority over all of Guangdong Province. See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1985), 598.; John L. Cranmer-Byng and

measured right away. Samuel Shaw, the United States Consul in Canton, observed that the *Hoppo* measured ships only “as often as there are three or four that have not been visited.”<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, the linguist arranged to hire shipwrights, carpenters, caulkers, and other subcontractors needed to repair *Columbia*. Additionally, he helped recruit a purveyor of provisions to feed and supply the Columbians.<sup>61</sup> Finally, the linguist began the process of engaging a security merchant—sometimes known as a *fiador*, or *hong* (*hang*, 行) merchant—to assume responsibility for the ship, its cargo and crew, and the payment of port fees and tariffs. Shaw stressed the importance of the security merchant to a ship, stating that “a *fiador*, or surety, must be engaged, before she can discharge any part of her cargo.”<sup>62</sup> In return for assuming legal responsibility over the enterprise, the security merchant received the right of first refusal on the cargo.<sup>63</sup> In this respect, *Columbia* would face unexpected difficulties.

Subsistence, and the acquisition of provisions, are key considerations for any vessel anchored in an unfamiliar port. The Canton System required foreigners to draw up

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John E. Wills, Jr., “Trade and Diplomacy with Maritime Europe, 1644-1800” in *China and Maritime Europe, 1500-1800*, 193-94.; Hunter, *The Fan Kwae Before Treaty Days*, 35-36.

<sup>60</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 176.

<sup>61</sup> “Robert Gray’s Accounts with the Owners of Columbia,” 137-39.

<sup>62</sup> The vocalization *hang* is Cantonese and does not reflect the Mandarin form, *xing*. The character literally translates as “business” or “professional.” See Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 173-74.

<sup>63</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 11-12.

contracts with purveyors of provisions, or “compradors.”<sup>64</sup> Captain Gray appears to have recorded all expenses associated with *Columbia*’s provisions, but he was inconsistent in his categorization of food, naval stores, materials, and other goods delivered to the ship. Richard Howe attributed the first shipment of provisions to “Wyqua Compradore for Supplies.”<sup>65</sup> Wyqua may have been Cai Fuguan (蔡福官), a “fairly prominent merchant” in a longstanding house of compradors.<sup>66</sup> He is known to have furnished provisions to British fur traders during the 1780s.<sup>67</sup> Wyqua supplied a variety of meats, vegetables, bread, and spirits during his tenure as comprador to *Columbia*, albeit at unpredictable prices. He delivered some foodstuffs, such as poultry and bread, at a typical market rate.

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<sup>64</sup> “Comprador” is a Portuguese term meaning “purchaser,” but which came to mean “purveyor” in the context of the Canton System. Where a chartered company employed a comprador in a full-time capacity, the meaning expanded to something approaching “chief cashier” or “major-domo.” See Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:176.

<sup>65</sup> “Bill for the *Columbia*’s Supplies” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 127-28.

<sup>66</sup> Another reference to “Wyqua” suggests that, if referring to the same person, the comprador also engaged in the tea trade. See Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 178, 346.

<sup>67</sup> Curiously, Wyqua is not specifically mentioned in the “sundry disbursements” listed in Gray’s “Accounts with the Owners of the *Columbia*.” The reason for this omission is unclear. It is perhaps attributable to Robert Howe keeping the former accounts and Captain Gray recording the latter. The recipient of the “sundry disbursements” for provisions cannot, therefore be known with certainty. Van Dyke observes that the Canton System favored individual vendors who controlled “the daily flow of victuals and naval stores to the crews.” For this reason, I attribute the supplies to Wyqua even where his name is not specifically entered in Gray’s account book. Some exceptions to this rule appear in the records, as well. Van Dyke notes that “in the 1780s and 1790s foreigners began selling provisions privately to other foreigners, bypassing the compradors.” See Dick A. Wilson, “King George’s Men: British Ships and Sailors in the Pacific Northwest-China Trade, 1785-1821” (PhD Dissertation, University of Idaho, 2004), 89.; “Bill for the *Columbia*’s Supplies,” 127-28.; “Robert Gray’s Accounts with the Owners of *Columbia*,” 137-39.; Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 51-52.

Other items, including beef, pork, and eggs, traded at two or three times the usual price.<sup>68</sup>

The immediate cause of the price inflation cannot be known for certain, but it may represent a secondary effect of rice shortages across Guangdong Province in 1786-87.<sup>69</sup>

The Columbians ultimately purchased foodstuffs worth \$424. Meanwhile, Wyqua also supervised the acquisition of replacement and repair materials, such as lumber, duckcloth, and cordage, which constituted another expenditure of \$1,013.<sup>70</sup> In total, *Columbia's* comprador fees represented an outlay of \$1,436, or 14% of her total expenses at Canton.

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<sup>68</sup> The unpredictable nature of prices at Canton is evident in the list of perishables delivered to the *Columbia*. In some cases, we can compare the *Columbia's* cost of provisions against expected prices during the late eighteenth century. Van Dyke's calculation of food prices at Canton provides a starting point to develop an "expected" price for provisions during both expeditions, in 1789-90 and again in 1792-93. Based on projections for 1789, it appears that *Columbia* purchased poultry at a price near the expected rate (0.1 taels). Likewise, bread appears to have traded at a reliable rate of four candareens (0.04 taels) per loaf or pound. In contrast, other perishables witnessed price inflation above the expected rate. For example, the price per catty of beef (0.07 taels) represents a moderate rise in the expected price. Meanwhile, the Columbians paid more than double the expected rate for eggs (0.0066 taels). Worse still, they paid over *three times* the expected price per catty of pork (0.3117 taels). The pork calculation of 15 stone, or 210 pounds, is equal to approximately 157.5 Canton catties. Although the accounts for supplies list "Fish and Vegetables," the two categories of food cannot be differentiated with sufficient precision to compare the prices for fish. My comparison is based on price estimates are derived from chart "Canton Food Prices from 1704 to 1833" in Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 65.; See also "Bill for the *Columbia's* Supplies," 127-28.; "Robert Gray's Accounts with the Owners of *Columbia*," 137-39.; Patrick H. Hase, *Custom, Land and Livelihood in Rural South China: The Traditional Land Law of Hong Kong's New Territories, 1750-1950* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 404.

<sup>69</sup> The increase in the price of foodstuffs correlates to an inflationary trend in prices of gold (+59%), silk (+93%), and pepper (+100%), all valued in silver, since the late seventeenth century. See Robert B. Marks and Chen Chunsheng, "Price Inflation and Its Social, Economic, and Climatic Context in Guangdong Province, 1707-1800," *T'oung Pao, Second Series* 81, Fasc. 1/3 (1995): 128.; Cranmer-Byng and Wills, "Trade and Diplomacy with Maritime Europe," 220-22.

<sup>70</sup> *Columbia* also acquired a small number of items from private vendors operating at Whampoa. For example, the expedition purchased ten oars from Samuel Howell and

Table 4. Expected Prices for Selected Provisions in 1789 and 1792, Canton.

PROVISION	BASELINE YEAR	UNIT	PRICE 1789 (liang, 兩)	PRICE 1792 (liang, 兩)	ANNUAL +%
BEEF	1704	catty	0.0595	0.0616	3.5
CAPONS	1726	catty	9.14	9.57	2.9
EGGS	1726	(each)	0.0028	0.0066	2.3
FISH	1704	catty	0.053	0.055	2.5
GOAT	1704	catty	0.1262	0.1307	3.3
PORK	1704	catty	0.087	0.106	3.4
POULTRY <sup>71</sup>	1704	catty	0.087	0.106	3.4

Before *Columbia* could receive permission to transmit her goods to Canton, however, Chinese customs officials needed to assess port and service fees, discounts, and commissions. This responsibility belonged to Fu Ning (傅寧), the Superintendent of Maritime Customs. Appointed in 1787, Superintendent Fu assumed the office following a series of corrupt and overbearing occupants.<sup>72</sup> His assessment of *Columbia* depended entirely upon the dimensions of the ship’s cargo space, calculated using a series of bamboo measuring poles. The Columbians did not record the measurements or the fees, but it is possible to estimate both using the probable dimensions of her cargo hold. *Columbia* probably paid a grand total of \$3,266.83 in fees, commissions, foreign

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vinegar from I. Ashmead, respectively. See “Robert Gray’s Accounts with the Owners of *Columbia*,” 138.

<sup>71</sup> Poultry includes ducks, chickens, geese, and sundry fowl, but excludes capons (listed separately). Price estimates derived from chart “Canton Food Prices from 1704 to 1833” in Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 65. Comparison with prices paid by first *Columbia* expedition in Canton. See “Bill for the *Columbia*’s Supplies,” 127-28.

<sup>72</sup> I cannot confirm the orthography for this name, and the characters I provide above (傅寧) represent an educated guess. See Weng Eang Cheong, *The Hong Merchants of Canton: Chinese Merchants in Sino-Western Trade* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 1997), 208-213.

exchange adjustments, and a surcharge known as the “Emperor’s Present.” This sum, typical of vessels in the smallest measurement category, third-rate, constituted a heavy burden. Indeed, the combined port fees represent the single largest expense, at 32%, of the expedition.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, *Columbia* arrived at Whampoa without an adequate supply of silver, meaning that she needed cash to pay her fees and receive a permit to disembark cargo. Thomas Randall, the American Vice-Consul in Canton, would have urged the Columbians to smuggle their cargo “below”—in the neighborhood of Macao—and then sail to Canton with “nothing but money.”<sup>74</sup> The strategy would have required *Columbia* to register as a “rice ship” and import a modest amount of the grain from points downriver.<sup>75</sup> *Columbia*’s passage up the river foreclosed on this option, and, as newcomers, the Columbians probably had no knowledge of the alternative. Given the circumstances, Captain Gray consigned his cargo to the Shaw & Randall partnership in

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<sup>73</sup> This sum is equal to 2,352.12 兩, or silver taels. *Columbia*’s estimated rate (11.091 兩 per ton) closely matches that of comparable ship, *Hazard* (11.178 兩 per ton), which traded in Canton in 1805. For a discussion of the method of measurement and its application to *Columbia*, see Appendix A: Estimate of Port Fees for Ship *Columbia Rediviva*. See Also “Canton Port Fees paid by 44 American Ships from 1788 to 1842” (Appendix AF) in Paul A. Van Dyke, “Port Canton and the Pearl River Delta, 1690-1845, Volume 1” (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 2002), 688.

<sup>74</sup> “Messrs. Shaw & Randall to Joseph Barrell, Canton, February 7<sup>th</sup> 1790,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 139-40.

<sup>75</sup> Because of their importance in replenishing Canton’s granaries, “rice ships” were allowed to do business using silver alone. See Marks, “Commercialization Without Capitalism,” 63-64, 67.; Robert B. Marks and Chen, “Price Inflation and Its Social, Economic, and Climatic Context in Guangdong Province, 1707-1800,” 136-141, 144-46.

exchange for a substantial cash advance. The advance enabled *Columbia* to disembark her furs, but it also secured the services of Thomas Randall in brokering a sale to the merchants of Canton. Shaw & Randall contracted to receive a commission of 7.5 percent of the otter proceeds. In consigning with the partnership, however, the Columbians incurred “factory fees,” which incorporated the costs of transporting, storing, marketing, and selling the otters in Canton. The expedition probably paid \$2,659, or 26 percent of its total expenditures, in factory fees.<sup>76</sup> Ultimately, *Columbia* incurred a grand total of \$10,163 in expenses—a staggering sum for a small American vessel doing business in a strange land, without support from home, and short of hard currency. Indeed, the cost almost outweighed the benefits of trading at Canton.

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<sup>76</sup> Once again, the Columbians did not record the factory fees, but we can estimate this expense by a simple process of elimination. “The *Columbia*’s Accounts with Messrs. Shaw & Randall” provides a grand total of expenses at Canton of Spanish \$10,163, with commissions of \$1,605 paid to Shaw & Randall. Subtraction returns \$8,558 for the ship’s “Bill of disbursements and Factory expenses,” as noted by Gray and Howe. Beyond this point, some educated guesswork is required. I presume the subtraction of another subtotal of \$5,899.60 in port fees, goods and services, supplies, presents, and wages. The remaining sum of \$2658.50 is probably specific to “Factory expenses.” Smaller sums of river tolls and baggage taxes may also be included, as such transactions also occurred outside the factories, although it is impossible to estimate these numbers in any reliable manner. That the sum accounts for more than one-quarter of the *Columbia*’s expenses at Canton is not surprising. Van Dyke, “Port Canton and the Pearl River Delta,” 42-43, 46-47.

Table 5. Ship *Columbia* Estimated Expenses at Canton, 1789-90.

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY	SUM (\$ SPANISH)	% TOTAL
PORT FEES		3,266.63	32.14
PILOT		164.17	1.62
SAMPAN	<i>Upriver</i>	32.00	0.31
	<i>Downriver</i>	32.00	0.31
	<i>Whampoa</i>	20.16	0.20
COMPRADOR	<i>Provisions</i>	424.22	4.17
	<i>Supplies</i>	1012.94	9.97
PRIVATE VENDORS		30.24	0.30
LINGUIST	<i>Retainer</i>	216.00	2.13
	<i>Additional Services</i>	20.83	0.20
	<i>Subcontractors</i>	228.88	2.25
PRESENTS		11.59	0.11
WAGES		439.96	4.33
FACTORY FEES		2,658.50	26.16
COMMISSION		1,604.90	15.79
TOTAL		10,163.00	100.00

*Lady Washington* never traded at Canton. Gray admonished Kendrick that “you by no means attempt to bring your Sloop to Canton.” Knowing that the port-fee structure discriminated against smaller vessels, he warned his commander that “the Expense will amount to at least 2500 Dollars and would involve you in the greatest difficulty.”<sup>77</sup> Kendrick decided against trading at Canton, as *Lady Washington* would have incurred port fees exceeding \$3,114.<sup>78</sup> When compared against the *Columbia*’s probable fees, the

<sup>77</sup> “Robert Gray to John Kendrick, 21 November, 1789” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 127.

<sup>78</sup> This sum is equal to 2,242 兩. The precise specifications of *Lady Washington* are unknown, and, as a consequence, the historian faces difficulties in determining whether Gray was correct. My estimates take the contemporary brig *Union*, commanded by the former Columbian, John Boit, as a facsimile. For a discussion of the method of measurement and its application to *Lady Washington*, see Appendix B: Estimated Specifications and Hypothetical Port Fees for Sloop *Lady Washington*.



regulatory bias against small vessels is cast into stark relief. *Washington*'s cargo space encompassed perhaps 73 percent that of *Columbia*, but Kendrick would have incurred 95 percent of the fees charged to Gray and Howe. Furthermore, *Washington* would have faced pilotage, comprador, linguist, and sampan expenses totaling approximately \$2,243, only slightly less than *Columbia*.<sup>79</sup> Assuming a consistent rate of consignment paid to Shaw & Randall (7.5%), the commission on her sales would have totaled \$734. Furthermore, Kendrick could expect to spend an additional \$1,233 in factory fees and disbursements. *Lady Washington*'s business expenditures would have totaled \$7,940—a ruinous amount for the tiny brigantine.

Kendrick might have been lucky enough to dispose of his cargo, 530 furs, at the same price brokered for *Columbia*, an average of \$19 apiece.<sup>80</sup> The transaction would

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<sup>79</sup> Given identical river distances and a competitive market in pilots, I assume that *Lady Washington* would have incurred identical piloting fees (\$164). Likewise, the contract price for a linguist (\$216) is predictable. Provisions probably varied to an extent. Kendrick appears to have retained roughly half the Columbians. Moreover, he might have benefitted to some degree from the consignment of the *Columbia*'s cargo to Shaw & Randall. *Washington* may have waited a week or two to receive the *Hoppo*'s official measurement, but the sale of her furs would have required fewer than the eleven weeks required for *Columbia*'s cargo. For these reasons, I assume an equal number of mouths to feed over a shorter period of six weeks, with a proportionally smaller cost in provisions (\$231). Excepting the “nonessential” supplies purchased by Gray and Howe (candlesticks, forks and knives, chairs, a silk pennant, etc.), Kendrick would still have spent a significant sum on basic materials (\$949). Maintenance and cargo handling would have also absorbed a sum similar to that of *Columbia* (\$194). Meanwhile, the minimum cost for sampans would likely have been identical (\$84), as would the expenses for presents (\$26) and wages (\$440). Kendrick would have paid a hypothetical grand total of Spanish \$2,243 in additional expenses. The principal reason for the disparity in cost, however, is the Emperor's Present, a sum fixed at 1,950 兩 (\$2,708), regardless of an individual ship's specifications.

<sup>80</sup> This price, rounded up for convenience, is marginally *higher* than that received by *Columbia*, at an average of \$18.72 apiece. Garments are assumed to be fur robes comprising two full pelts each, at double the price (\$38). Kendrick stated that he also possessed “150 pieces both large and small,” and “as to the Quality we judge it equal to any that has been brought from the coast.” My calculation for pieces assumes an average size half that of whole pelts, with a proportionately

have generated proceeds of \$9,785, although *Washington*'s profit would have been a disappointing \$1,845, one-sixth that of *Columbia*. The sum could have purchased a return cargo of 99 chests of tea, but this miniscule cargo would be insufficient to turn a profit. In reality, however, the prior transaction of *Columbia*'s cargo would have depressed the price of furs, causing Kendrick to trade on far worse terms. Gray indicated this when he warned his counterpart that "you will not receive one third the Value for your Skins."<sup>81</sup> Moreover, Kendrick recognized his disadvantage in being "destitute of every necessary or Cash to purchase unless I dispose of my Furr[s]."<sup>82</sup> Gray was correct to caution against sailing the *Lady Washington* to Canton. Kendrick would likely have traded at a heavy loss.<sup>83</sup>

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lower price of Spanish \$9.50 each. See "Kendrick to Gray and Howe, 6 February 1790" in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 136.

<sup>81</sup> "Robert Gray to John Kendrick, Canton 4<sup>th</sup> Feby. 1790" in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 135.

<sup>82</sup> "John Kendrick to Robert Gray and Richard S. Howe, Macao January 27<sup>th</sup> 1790" in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 133.

<sup>83</sup> Kendrick would have lost money if the average price of furs dropped more than 25%, a distinct possibility given that *Lady Washington*'s cargo would have increased the supply of otters in Canton by roughly 50%. Moreover, Randall's correspondence with Alexander Hamilton indicates that the sale price he brokered for *Columbia* was unusually high for the season. The inflated price represents one outcome of the skins attracting the attention of Governor-General Fu, as detailed below.

Table 6. Projected Value of Furs aboard Sloop *Lady Washington*, 1790.<sup>84</sup>

COMPONENT	STOCK	UNIT (\$ SPANISH)	TOTAL (\$ SPANISH)
WHOLES	320	19.00	6,080
GARMENTS	60	38.00	2,280
PIECES	150	9.50	1,425
TOTAL	530		9,785

Instead, the captains arranged to smuggle *Lady Washington*'s cargo in the vicinity of Macao, where she could avoid the compounding expenses of pilots, sampans, tolls, port fees, and factory fees. This option eliminated all three of the problems facing *Washington* at Canton. First, Gray advised Kendrick that *Washington* could avoid the Cantonese bureaucracy "provided you *smuggle*" in the neighborhood of "dirty butter bay," or Lark's Bay, southwest of Macao.<sup>85</sup> The prospect of smuggling may have appealed to a former privateer such as Kendrick. Indeed, the Columbians could recall the importance of smuggling in New England's resistance to Great Britain during the American Revolution. After independence, too, smugglers attempted to evade state imposts on goods entering the United States. China was unfamiliar territory, but the Columbians probably felt comfortable with the general practice of smuggling.<sup>86</sup> Second,

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<sup>84</sup> "Kendrick to Gray and Howe, 6 February 1790," 136.

<sup>85</sup> The emphasis is Gray's. See "Robert Gray to John Kendrick, Canton January 29<sup>th</sup> 1790" in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 133-34.

<sup>86</sup> Joshua M. Smith, "Patterns of Northern New England Smuggling, 1789-1820" in *The Early Republic and the Sea: Essays on the Naval and Maritime History of the Early United States*, eds. William S. Dudley and Michael J. Crawford (Washington: Brassey's, Inc., 2001), 35-52.

Gray predicted that smuggling could result in sales of Spanish \$50-70 per otter, an improvement over the \$19 price in Canton.<sup>87</sup> The higher price reflected a lack of imperial supervision among the coastal islands, inlets, and coves, and indicated a flourishing free trade area. Lark's Bay attracted both Chinese and European smugglers, and ranked among the busiest illicit anchorages in China. British merchants operated several hulks, or floating warehouses, for purposes of stockpiling contraband. Meanwhile, merchant-captains could do business free of the onerous port fees at Whampoa.<sup>88</sup> Finally, by smuggling, *Lady Washington* could potentially exchange her cargo for silver. If lucky, Kendrick could proceed upriver to trade at Canton with "nothing but money," as Randall had suggested.<sup>89</sup> Smuggling represented a lucrative alternative for small vessels.

Smuggling also opened up competition between buyers that would not have been possible under the security-merchant system in Canton. Gray recommended that Kendrick do business with John McIntyre, a private British merchant and longtime resident of Macao who was "interested in the fur trade."<sup>90</sup> Although the sources relating to McIntyre are thin, there is a strong possibility that he specialized in the "country

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<sup>87</sup> "Robert Gray to John Kendrick, Canton January 29<sup>th</sup> 1790," 133-34.

<sup>88</sup> Paul A. Van Dyke, "Smuggling Networks of the Pearl River Delta before 1842: Implications for Macao and the American China Trade," in *Americans and Macao: Trade, Smuggling, and Diplomacy on the South China Coast*, ed. Paul A. Van Dyke (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2012), 50-55.

<sup>89</sup> "Messrs. Shaw & Randall to Joseph Barrell, Canton, February 7<sup>th</sup> 1790," 139-40.

<sup>90</sup> "Robert Gray to John Kendrick, Canton January 29<sup>th</sup> 1790," 133-34.; Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:175.

trade,” or carrying trade, between various points in Asia. There is some indication that his career began in British India during the 1760s, the first decade of British conquests on the subcontinent.<sup>91</sup> He relocated to Macao sometime during the 1770s, from whence he shipped porcelain and silk home to his family in Edinburgh, Scotland.<sup>92</sup> Operating from Macao, he could procure merchants for incoming cargoes and, likewise, maintained contacts along the long-distance routes connecting Canton to the Straits of Melaka, India, and beyond.<sup>93</sup> In addition to shipping the usual Chinese goods, he probably also facilitated the resettlement of Cantonese carpenters, blacksmiths, and laborers to the mining districts of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. McIntyre possessed “a good command of Chinese and Malay” as well as talents for bookkeeping, finance, and public administration. Later, in the 1790s, he would become one of the “pioneers... responsible for the development and vitality of the new port” at British Penang.<sup>94</sup> Following his contact with Gray he requested information concerning the “Quantity and Quality of skins” aboard *Lady Washington*.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, a second “Gentleman” expressed interest

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<sup>91</sup> Letter 156, “Thomas Fitzhugh to the Court requesting permission to take John McIntyre out with him as his menial servant, 14 Dec 1761,” IOR/E/1/43 ff 348-349, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library.

<sup>92</sup> John McIntyre Correspondence, private collection.

<sup>93</sup> Ingraham, *Journal of the Brigantine Hope*, 178-79.; Nordin Hussin, *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka: Dutch Melaka and English Penang, 1780-1830* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2007), 16, 36-37, 73.

<sup>94</sup> Hussin, *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka*, 53-54, 75, 238, 241, 244, 309.

<sup>95</sup> “Robert Gray to John Kendrick, Canton January 29<sup>th</sup> 1790,” 133-34.

in purchasing the cargo and sent representatives to inspect the otters.<sup>96</sup> Kendrick later communicated that “Several Chinese merchants have proposed to purchase the whole.” Nonetheless, he preferred to wait for a counteroffer from McIntyre in order to sell the furs “to the Best advantage.”<sup>97</sup> Barring these possibilities, Gray believed that Kendrick would find other “Merchants in abundance” to purchase *Washington*’s cargo.<sup>98</sup>

The documentary record does not attest to the circumstances surrounding the sale of *Lady Washington*’s cargo, and therefore, information such as the date and recipient of the transaction remain unknown. The sale cannot have occurred earlier than 6 February 1790, when Kendrick first anchored at Lark’s Bay.<sup>99</sup> Likewise, John Hoskins reported that upon arriving in the harbor, Kendrick “was seized with a violent fever; which caused his life for some time to be despaired of.”<sup>100</sup> The captain may have contracted any number of infectious diseases common to South China, including Malaria, Yellow Fever, Dengue Fever, Leptospirosis, or Hepatitis.<sup>101</sup> In any case, the transaction could not have

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<sup>96</sup> The “Gentleman” was probably a merchant of Canton. Gray did not record his identity, although a letter of introduction issued to his representatives (“The Bearers of this accompanied by the linguister are the persons alluded to in our last”) is sufficient to mark them as Cantonese. See “Robert Gray to John Kendrick, Canton January 29<sup>th</sup> 1790,” 133-34.; “Robert Gray to John Kendrick, Canton January 30<sup>th</sup> 1790” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 135.

<sup>97</sup> “John Kendrick to Robert Gray and Richard S. Howe, Macao February 6<sup>th</sup> 1790,” 136.

<sup>98</sup> “Robert Gray to John Kendrick, Canton, 4<sup>th</sup> Feby. 1790,” 135.

<sup>99</sup> “Robert Gray to John Kendrick, Canton, 4<sup>th</sup> Feby. 1790,” 135.

<sup>100</sup> John Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 164.

<sup>101</sup> The coastal marshlands of tropical China are a natural habitat for bacteria and viruses that thrive in standing or contaminated water. Likewise, the region is a breeding ground for organisms

occurred until he was well enough to negotiate the terms, and, at the earliest, not before *Columbia* departed on 12 February.<sup>102</sup> Kendrick later suggested a sufficient delay that he “unfortunately lost the season” for trading, and it is possible that he did not complete the transaction until his return to Macao in 1792-93.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the identity of the buyer is unattested in the chronicles of either expedition, and no clues suggest whether the transaction involved McIntyre, the “Gentleman,” the “Chinese merchants,” or another party entirely. We do, however, know the sales price. Kendrick recorded that “I sold the

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that transmit disease, such as mosquitos. Kendrick probably did not contract chronic Malaria (*Plasmodium falciparum*), a disease characterized by recurring expression of symptoms in the weeks and months following the initial infection. At least, there is no indication that Kendrick suffered from multiple bouts of disease after Lark’s Bay. It is possible that he contracted a milder form of Malaria (either *P. vivax* or *P. malariae*), Yellow Fever or Dengue Fever (both in genus *Flavivirus*), or Leptospirosis (genus *Leptospira*). Victims of these diseases, however, tend to recover within a short period of time as the infection clears up in a week or less. My conjecture is that Kendrick contracted Hepatitis A, a viral infection contracted through ingestion of water contaminated with *Hepatovirus*. The incubation period for Hepatitis is typically between two and six weeks, meaning that Kendrick probably contracted the disease at sea or in the Sandwich Islands, located approximately 5-7 weeks away from China. In either case, it is not difficult to imagine that conditions at sea, where twenty-odd men worked in close quarters without reliable access to clean water, were anything but sanitary. Moreover, Hoskins’ observation that Kendrick suffered “for some time” would seem to match the longer recovery period (three to eight weeks) associated with Hepatitis. It is noteworthy that “Messrs. Wood and Stoddard,” two of Kendrick’s followers aboard the *Lady Washington*, later died under circumstances that resonate as being related to tropical diseases. Indeed, John Boit expressed his belief that “they liv’d too fast for the climate.” See Médecins Sans Frontières, *Clinical Guidelines: Diagnosis and Treatment Manual for Curative Programmes in Hospitals and Dispensaries, Guidance for Prescribing, 2016 Edition* (Paris: Médecins Sans Frontières, 2016), 141-47, 210-212, 213-16, 220-223; Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s voyage,” 422.

<sup>102</sup> I contend that, given their previous communication on the matter of the sale, Kendrick would have notified Gray concerning any transaction that occurred. The absence of documentation suggests that *Columbia* sailed prior to the sale. See “Boston, Wednesday, Aug. 11, The *Columbia*.” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 11 August 1790.

<sup>103</sup> Kendrick’s language is not clear on this point. “John Kendrick to Joseph Barrell, Macoa, in China, Mar. 28, 1792,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 470-471.

Cargo of the Sloop... for the sum of eighteen thousand dollars.”<sup>104</sup> The sum represents an average sales price of Spanish \$33.96 per otter. Kendrick could have purchased a whopping 961 chests of tea, half again as many as the *Columbia* could afford in Canton. Sadly, the owners did not benefit from the windfall—Kendrick chose to reinvest the money in another voyage to the Northwest Coast, rather than sending tea to Boston.

In the end, the question of money hindered both *Columbia* and *Lady Washington* during the first expedition to China. *Columbia* racked up enormous expenses during her first week at Canton, and, as we shall see, the sale of her cargo was anything but certain. Meanwhile, the prohibitive costs of the Canton System drove *Washington* to the unpredictable business of smuggling. The experiences of both ships, however, hinged upon the standing of a commodity, otter skins, that was perhaps *too* valuable.

### “*Splendid Furs*”

Chinese consumers had a longstanding relationship with furs. Beginning around 200 BCE, and continuing into modern times, furs constituted an important commodity of trade between the nomadic societies of Central Asia and the agricultural states of China.<sup>105</sup> Furs were commonplace for the Turkic, Mongolian, and Jurchen peoples, whose homelands centered upon the animal-rich steppe and taiga. The abundance of furs

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Hans Derks, “Nomads in Chinese and Central Asian History: The Max Weber Case,” *Oriens Extremus* 41, no. 1/2 (1998/99): 18.; Christopher P. Atwood, “The Mutual-Aid Co-operatives and the Animal Products Trade in Mongolia, 1913-1928,” *Inner Asia* 5, no. 1 (2003): 65-91.



enabled them to keep warm in the harsh winters, but pelts became “very impractical” during the hot summers.<sup>106</sup> By contrast, Chinese manufacturers could provide silk and cotton textiles, cool in the heat of summer, prompting the development of a reciprocal trade during the Han Dynasty.<sup>107</sup> The emergence of the Mongol Empire, during the thirteenth century, had important implications for the appearance of mass-market furs in China. Mongol conquests opened a new, expansive, and safe trade network that extended across the Eurasian steppe from Manchuria to Poland.<sup>108</sup> Ambassadors from distant places brought furs as tribute to the great khans. William of Rubrick remarked upon “great quantities of presents” delivered to the court of Güyük, a grandson of Genghis Khan. Among the gifts, he regarded “splendid furs” to be riches comparable to silks, samites, baldachins, and belts of gold.<sup>109</sup> The Golden Horde, a Mongol state in European Russia, imposed taxes in fur upon its Russian subjects. The khans then exported most of the furs eastward in exchange for silks, spices, and other goods originating in China.

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<sup>106</sup> Henry Serruys, “The Dearth of Textiles in Traditional Mongolia,” *Journal of Asian History* 16, no. 2 (1982): 125.

<sup>107</sup> Mark Edward Lewis, *The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 113-15, 130-32, 141-45.; David Christian, “Silk Roads or Steppe Roads? The Silk Roads in World History,” *Journal of World History* 1, No. 1 (2000): 5-9.

<sup>108</sup> Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System, A.D. 1250-1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 154-59.

<sup>109</sup> William of Rubrick, *The Journey of William of Rubrick to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, as Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*, ed. and trans. William Woodville Rockhill (London: Hayluyt Society, 1900), 23.

Ermine was otherwise unavailable in China and fetched high prices.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, Marco Polo noted that the Mongols regarded ermine as “the queen of furs.” Sable, too, fetched a high price. Polo calculated the value of a prime pelt at “two thousand besants of gold.”<sup>111</sup> Even after the collapse of their empire, Mongols continued to exchange furs for cloth, silk, rice, and manufactured goods originating in Ming China.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, Beijing entertained Mongol trade missions, in which visiting merchants received valuable gifts, as the “least costly and most effective” means of eliminating border raids.<sup>113</sup>

Fur motivated China’s earliest interactions with the Russian Empire. Russia began its eastward expansion during the sixteenth century, when Muscovite merchants found themselves encircled by the Ottomans, Tatars, Swedes, Poles, Lithuanians, and the Hanseatic League.<sup>114</sup> Following the Russian conquest of Kazan, in 1552, trappers known as *promyshlenniki* began Muscovy’s colonization of Siberia.<sup>115</sup> The *promyshlenniki* extended their commercial influence across the taiga using a system of rivers, portages,

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<sup>110</sup> Janet Martin, “The Land of Darkness and the Golden Horde: The Fur Trade under the Mongols XIII-XIVth Centuries,” *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 19, no. 4 (1978): 415-16.

<sup>111</sup> Marco Polo, *The Travels*, ed. John Mansfield, (London: J.M Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1908), 199.

<sup>112</sup> Derks, “Nomads in Chinese and Central Asian History,” 19.

<sup>113</sup> Peter Purdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 67, 72.

<sup>114</sup> G. Patrick Marsh, *Eastern Destiny: Russia in Asia and the North Pacific* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1996), xiv.

<sup>115</sup> Purdue, *China Marches West*, 81; R.K.I. Quedsted, *Sino-Russian Relations: A Short History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 25.

and trading fortresses that reflected similar patterns among the British Hudson's Bay and North West Companies in North America. In doing so, *promyshlenikki* became heirs to transcontinental trade routes developed under the Mongol Empire. Meanwhile, using superior firepower, they implemented a system of forced production, known as *yasak*, among the native peoples of Siberia.<sup>116</sup> Forced labor produced millions of Siberian pelts for the Russian market during the early seventeenth century. Later, when establishing their fur regime along the Amur River, trappers alienated indigenous peoples nominally under the protection of the Manchu Qing.<sup>117</sup> During the years 1651-52, they also undertook the construction of forts at Nerchinsk, Albuzin, and Khabarovsk, in ignorance of existing geopolitical relations in the region. Indeed, Russian and Qing aspirations threatened to erupt into violence in the Amur Basin.<sup>118</sup> The potential for conflict

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<sup>116</sup> Historian Patrick Marsh explains that “the normal practice” of *yasak* “was to demand furs from the intimidated native population and enforce compliance as necessary by the taking of hostages.” Although the use of forced labor in the production of animal pelts is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it nevertheless deserves mention as a factor in creating a Sino-Russian fur trade. Elizabeth Mancke has observed that most seafaring European powers lacked “financial resources and coercive power” needed to impose metropolitan authority over distant colonial territories. Likewise, this was also a consideration in Moscow’s colonization of Siberia and the Russian Far East. For this reason, Moscow did little to impede the brutal methods by which *promyshlenniki* obtained pelts and consolidated the taiga as imperial space. Patrick Marsh observes that, in recognition of this pragmatic arrangement, local governors known as *voevoda* selected the best furs for presentation to the Czar. See Elizabeth Mancke, “Negotiating an Empire: Britain and its Overseas Peripheries, c. 1550-1780,” in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, eds. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002), 236.; Alexei D. Voskressenski, *The Difficult Border: Current Russian and Chinese Concepts of Sino-Russian Relations and Frontier Problems* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1997), 41.; Marsh, *Eastern Destiny*, 10, 30-31.

<sup>117</sup> Quested, *Sino-Russian Relations*, 29.; Purdue, *China Marches West*, 121.

<sup>118</sup> Russian historian S.B. Okun explains that the “whole vast region on the continent of Asia had been absolutely terra incognita to the European world prior to the advent of the Russians in the sixteenth century.” Marsh observes that Russian interest in geographical knowledge paralleled the

heightened when, in 1655, the *Lifan Yuan* (Bureau of Minority Affairs, 理藩院) discovered that several tribes in the region had switched their allegiance to the Russians.<sup>119</sup>

Following in the footsteps of the Ming, the Shunzhi Emperor attempted to reduce tensions through the lever of trade, once again including furs.<sup>120</sup>

In 1689, following a series of incidents in disputed territory, Russian and Qing diplomats convened a conference to define the boundary between their respective empires. Furs took center stage. Meeting at Nerchinsk, on the Amur, both sides sought to establish clear jurisdiction over tributary peoples, defensible borders, and control of trade.<sup>121</sup> The preamble to the Treaty of Nerchinsk recognized that disputes had arisen, in part, from “the crossing of the frontiers by hunters of the two Empires in pursuit of game.” Insofar as trappers might operate in the region, the diplomats agreed that they were “not allowed to cross the fixed border” and that commercial competition should

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growth of the Siberian fur trade, and comments that “there was a strong urge to pursue trade as deep into Central Asia as feasible with the ultimate hope of reaching fabled Cathay and its riches. Despite the fact that China and Russia had once been part of the same Mongol Empire, connections had been sundered now for hundreds of years.” John Stephan observes that “the Amur Basin became one of several arenas of encounters between two converging empires and cultures, neither of which fully understood the others’ values, objectives, and territorial magnitude.” See S.B. Okun, *The Russian-American Company* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 7.; John J. Stephan, *The Russian Far East: A History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 29.; Marsh, *Eastern Destiny*, 42.

<sup>119</sup> Marsh, *Eastern Destiny*, 45.

<sup>120</sup> Stephan, *The Russian Far East*, 30.

<sup>121</sup> S.C.M. Paine, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 10.

“not be permitted to become a cause for war, and even less for acts of bloodshed.”<sup>122</sup> The treaty demonstrated that, in defining the northern boundaries of his empire, the Kangxi (康熙) Emperor preferred to uphold the conditions of peace vital to a successful fur trade. Thereafter, and throughout the eighteenth century, the exchange of Russian furs for Chinese textiles defined the relationship between the two empires.<sup>123</sup>

Furs were of great importance to the Manchu rulers of the Qing Dynasty, a people acquainted with the cold. Their homeland, the region known as Manchuria, is characterized by windswept plains, mountainous taiga, and conditions ranging from cool to frigid. Prior to the twentieth century, mean annual temperatures averaged below 10° C (50° F), with a minimum of five months in which freezing conditions prevailed.<sup>124</sup> Low temperatures prevented agricultural development across the majority of Manchuria, where the summer growing season was a brief 100-150 days in duration. Farming occurred only in Liaodong and the Shandong Peninsula, below the 41<sup>st</sup> parallel.<sup>125</sup> Cold made woolen textiles, hides, and especially furs indispensable to the people of

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<sup>122</sup> English translation by the author from French text of Treaty, as recorded by Jean-Baptiste du Halde (1736). See “Treaty of Nipchu, or Nerchinsk (1689),” in China. The Maritime Customs. *III.—Miscellaneous Series: No. 30. Treaties, Conventions, Etc., Between China and Foreign States. Vol. I, Second Edition. Russia, International Protocol, Great Britain, United States of America, France, Import Tariff Agreement* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1917), 3, 5.

<sup>123</sup> Quoted, *Sino-Russian Relations*, 35-37.

<sup>124</sup> John R. Stewart, “Manchuria: The Land and Its Economy,” *Economic Geography* 8, no. 2 (1932): 135.

<sup>125</sup> James Reardon-Anderson “Land Use and Society in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia during the Qing Dynasty” *Environmental History* 5, no. 1 (2000): 504.

Manchuria.<sup>126</sup> The region, home to a loose confederation of Jurchen tribes, was politically fragmented until 1616, when Nurhaci unified the tribes as the “Manchu” nation.<sup>127</sup> In 1621, Nurhaci commented upon the natural resources of Manchuria, emphasizing that the region was “endowed by heaven” with plethora of furbearers including sable, fox, lynx, otter, tiger, panther, squirrel, kolinsky, and raccoon-dog.<sup>128</sup> European travelers noted that a particularly “rich stock” was to be found throughout areas such as Daura, along the Amur River.<sup>129</sup> The animal resources could not, however, compensate for plummeting temperatures during the Little Ice Age, which drove the Manchus to expand southward and encroach upon the warmer lands of Ming China.<sup>130</sup> When choosing a capital for his “Latter Jin” (後金) dynasty, in 1625, Nurhaci selected the town of Shenyang. The walled town appealed to him as defensible and auspicious, but it also offered an economic benefit as an important market for furs.<sup>131</sup> Fur merchants

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<sup>126</sup> Stewart, “Manchuria: The Land and Its Economy,” 135.

<sup>127</sup> Frederic W. Mote, *Imperial China, 800-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 787-89.

<sup>128</sup> Jonathan Schlesinger, “The Qing Invention of Nature: Environment and Identity in Northeast China and Mongolia, 1750-1850” (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2012), 38.

<sup>129</sup> Lothar Maier, “Gerhard Friedrich Müller’s Memoranda on Russian Relations with China and the Reconquest of the Amur,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 59, no. 2 (1981): 232.

<sup>130</sup> Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 244-49.

<sup>131</sup> The Qianlong Emperor later remarked upon the strategic and geomantic qualities of Mukden (formerly Shenyang), which were expected to “continue to nurture the dynasty.” Philippe Forêt, *Mapping Chengde: The Qing Landscape Enterprise* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 107.

ranked among the most prominent retailers in Shenyang, a position they occupied into the twentieth century.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, the capital witnessed the revival of trade in Manchurian furs for Korean agricultural produce and tools.<sup>133</sup> In 1636, during a time of commercial prosperity earned in part through fur profits, Nurhaci's son and successor, Hong Taiji, renamed the dynasty "Qing." Furs later helped finance his campaigns against the Ming Empire.<sup>134</sup>

Following the Qing conquest of China, in 1644, furs assumed new importance as markers of Manchu identity. In their capacity as representatives of an alien "conquest dynasty" ruling over millions of Han Chinese, Manchus distinguished themselves from their subjects by visually proclaiming their distinctive "frontier" origins, martial traditions, and membership in the regime. Furbearing animals provided a convenient means of accomplishing such a goal. First, furs highlighted the environmental differences between Manchuria and China. Pelts connoted the Manchu homelands on the northern frontier and, therefore, conferred a geographic association upon the wearer. In contrast,

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<sup>132</sup> Frank Leeming, "Reconstructing Late Ch'ing Fengt'ien," *Modern Asian Studies* 4, no. 4 (1970): 314, 321.

<sup>133</sup> Kenneth R. Robinson, "From Raiders to Traders: Border Security and Border Control in Early Chošon, 1392-1450," *Korean Studies* 16 (1992): 97, 100.

<sup>134</sup> Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China, Volume 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 46-48, 48n.; Purdue, *China Marches West*, 121.

fur-bearing animals were few and far between in the deforested lands of China.<sup>135</sup> Second, furs recalled the nomadic lifestyle of the ancestral Jurchen tribes, for whom hunting was a “cunning, fearless, and manly” activity crucial to the survival of the tribe. Such activities contrasted neatly against the culture of sedentary agriculture, urbanization, and “soft” living that prevailed in China. Furs emphasized the cultural differences between conqueror and conquered. Indeed, historian Jonathan Schlesinger observes that “one could not separate the fur from the man.”<sup>136</sup> Third, Qing sumptuary practices reinforced the symbolism of furs. The government possessed a *de facto* monopoly over pelts, and officials in the imperial household acquired the best specimens for use of the emperor and his dependents, clients, bodyguards, and senior bureaucrats. The number of furs taken in this manner far exceeded the emperor’s needs, however, and he distributed furs as presents to allies, dignitaries, and meritorious officials. The recipient, upon accepting the gift, was both rewarded for allegiance to the regime and obtained the status of a fictive Manchu, regardless of actual ethnicity.<sup>137</sup> The symbolic association between furs, frontier, and the regime was so strong that the Qing dynasty introduced special land-management policies “aiming at the preservation of the frontier political and cultural status quo” in Manchuria. One important goal was the conservation of natural resources

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<sup>135</sup> Alexander Eckstein, Kang Chao and John Chang, “The Economic Development of Manchuria: The Rise of a Frontier Economy,” *The Journal of Economic History* 34, no. 1, The Tasks of Economic History (1974): 241.

<sup>136</sup> Schlesinger, “The Qing Invention of Nature,” 33-35.

<sup>137</sup> Chang Te-Ch’ang, “The Economic Role of the Imperial Household in the Ch’ing Dynasty” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31, no. 2 (1972): 261.



such as ginseng, pearls, and furbearing animals.<sup>138</sup> In the founding decades of the Qing Dynasty, then, prestige superseded function as the dominant value of furs.

Throughout the eighteenth century, however, furs entered the mass marketplace of China, becoming commodities of interest to Han Chinese consumers as well as Manchus. The final decades of the Kangxi reign (1661-1722) witnessed the gifting of pelts to new constituents such as career soldiers, literati, and elite households. During the reign of his successor, Yongzheng (雍正, 1722-1735), the imperial household opened the presentation of furs to commoners including elderly mothers, centenarians, and the descendants of Confucius. Under Qianlong (1735-1796), the court distributed pelts to meritorious recipients from all walks of life, and furs were “no longer confined to the northern frontiers, the inner court, or the military.”<sup>139</sup> Chinese consumers, eager to adopt an “elite” appearance, mimicked the distinctive fur elements of Manchu fashion. An official portrait of Qianlong, painted by Giuseppe Castiglione in 1736, depicts the youthful emperor in a golden brocade with cape, cuffs, collar, hem and crown all lined with black sable.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Eckstein et al., “The Economic Development of Manchuria,” 241.

<sup>139</sup> Schlesinger, “The Qing Invention of Nature,” 64, 75-78.

<sup>140</sup> Giuseppe Castiglione, *Portrait of the Qianlong emperor at the age of twenty-five*, Color on silk; 95 3/8 x 70 1/2 in. (c. 1735), Palace Museum, Beijing. Reproduction in *Splendors of China's Forbidden City: The Glorious Reign of Emperor Qianlong*, eds. Chuimei Ho and Bennet Bronson (London: Merrell Publishers, 2004), 63.



Figure 17. Giuseppe Castiglione, *The Qianlong Emperor in Court Dress*, 1736, colored inks on silk, 238.5 x 179.2 cm., Palace Museum, Beijing.

Qing regulations prohibited the use of sable, appreciated for its obsidian sheen and plush texture, outside the imperial household and court. Moreover, it remained outside the price range of most Chinese consumers.<sup>141</sup> Neither factor prevented artisans

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<sup>141</sup> Schlesinger, “The Qing Invention of Nature,” 79-81.

from transforming lesser furs, using a sophisticated dye technique, into imitation sable.<sup>142</sup> Commoners could also purchase a *chao pao*, or men's court robe, identical in design to restricted apparel but trimmed with black satin that suggested fur.<sup>143</sup> Meanwhile, consumers developed a taste for accessories featuring fur, including belts, sashes, caps, and mittens.<sup>144</sup> Urban merchants responded to the burgeoning market in pelts by specializing in fur-lined clothing. During the Qianlong reign, for example, Beijing boasted shops specializing in winter hats, hats for indoor settings, and neck warmers.<sup>145</sup> The most beautiful and warmest fur garments often became heirlooms.<sup>146</sup> Consumer demand for animal pelts, combined with deforestation, gradually reduced the furbearing capacity of Manchuria.<sup>147</sup> Russian merchants increased their efforts to supply the burgeoning market. The caravan of 1728, for example, shipped over 51,000 pieces of

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<sup>142</sup> Maier, "Gerhard Friedrich Müller's Memoranda on Russian Relations with China," 236.

<sup>143</sup> Valery Garrett, *Chinese Dress from the Qing Dynasty to the Present* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2007), 14.

<sup>144</sup> Georg Wilhelm Steller "De Bestiis Marinis, or, The Beasts of the Sea (1751)," eds. Walter Miller and Jennie Emerson Miller, trans. Paul Royster, in *The Fur Seals and Fur-Seal Islands of the North Pacific Ocean*, ed. David Starr Jordan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), 71.

<sup>145</sup> Schlesinger, "The Qing Invention of Nature," 83.

<sup>146</sup> Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*, 54.

<sup>147</sup> Reardon-Anderson "Land Use and Society in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia," 505-06, 512-513.

sable, 500,000 ermine, and a staggering 1,416,000 squirrels.<sup>148</sup> The volume of pelts produced in Siberia indicate the scale of the “fur revolution” underway in neighboring China.

Sea otters transformed the market for furs in China. During the eighteenth century, sea otters inhabited the coast of Northeast Asia, albeit in smaller numbers and concentrations than along the Northwest Coast of America. Their colonies lined the shores of northern Hokkaido, Sakhalin, the Kurils, Kamchatka, and the Commander Islands.<sup>149</sup> Japanese traders first introduced otter furs to the Qing Empire around 1700.<sup>150</sup> Nonetheless, sea otter pelts remained uncommon in China until Russian *promyshlenniki* took possession of the Kuril and Aleutian Islands in 1745. Thereafter, trappers began a relentless attack upon the population, driving otters into a steep decline within a generation.<sup>151</sup> Meanwhile, otter attained an unrivaled status as the “Royal Fur of China,” becoming fashionable among elites even as “land furs” entered the domain of the mass market.<sup>152</sup> Chinese buyers appraised the pelts according to their physical properties

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<sup>148</sup> Natalia Platonova, “Le commerce des caravans russe en Chine du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle à 1762” *Histoire, Économie et Société* 30, no. 3 (2011): 15.

<sup>149</sup> Marianne L. Riedman and James A. Estes, *The Sea Otter (Enhydra Lutris): Behavior, Ecology, and Natural History* (Washington DC: Fish and Wildlife Service, 1990), 73-75.

<sup>150</sup> Eric Jay Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 140.

<sup>151</sup> A. Aiken, “On Furs and the Fur-Trade,” *Transactions of the Society, Instituted at London, for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce* 49, part 1 (1831-1832): 206.

<sup>152</sup> Adele Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade, 1784-1848* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941), 6.

including water resistance, weight, wear, and place of origin.<sup>153</sup> Otters outclassed land furs in all categories, being superior in terms of resistance to moisture, thermal insulation, and luxurious bulk.<sup>154</sup> Meanwhile, imperial furriers classified pelts according to the characteristics of individual animals, using the terms *algin* (male), *uki* (female), and *imseke* (pup). The warmest, softest, and most lustrous specimens were selected to trim the emperor's winter dragon robes.<sup>155</sup> The imperial household also gifted otter pelts, in the manner of sable, to honored recipients among the civil and military establishments of the empire. In some cases, it authorized imperial textile commissioners to sell otter on the market, making their furs an important source of state revenue, as well.<sup>156</sup>

Scarcity, born of exotic origins, placed "foreign otter" among the commodities of greatest interest to the Chinese consumer.<sup>157</sup> John Meares, a British fur trader, remarked that prices were highest in the cold, northern provinces of China. Meares observed that "from five hundred to a thousand dollars, and even a larger sum, are frequently given for

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<sup>153</sup> Schlesinger, "The Qing Invention of Nature," 90-91.

<sup>154</sup> Riedman and Estes, *The Sea Otter*, 20-21.

<sup>155</sup> Schlesinger, "The Qing Invention of Nature," 64, 71.

<sup>156</sup> Chang, "The Economic Role of the Imperial Household in the Ch'ing Dynasty," 261.

<sup>157</sup> Frank Dikötter, *Exotic Commodities: Modern Objects and Everyday Life in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 26.

a single unit of this precious cloathing.”<sup>158</sup> Georg Wilhelm Steller, a naturalist, noted that otter was reckoned “dearer... than the skins of sables or foxes.”<sup>159</sup> Indeed, otter garments were valuable enough to pass as wedding gifts among northern elites.<sup>160</sup> Demand for pelts remained consistent in the southern provinces, although their usage varied with climate. Meares explained that “the thickness of its pile and length of its fur” was “too cumbersome” to serve as garments for the inhabitants of the tropical south. Its ornamental value was undiminished, however, and he observed that Cantonese elites “seldom fail of having a cape of the sea-otter’s skin to their coats, though perhaps at the extravagant price of six dollars.”<sup>161</sup> In short, while supplementing or replacing land furs known for their warmth, sea otters also became important status symbols.

China imported “land furs” from a number of locations along its borderlands, but sea otter pelts entered the empire only through the Russian border town of Kyakhta (Кяхта) and, later, through the southern port of Canton. In 1727, Russian and Qing diplomats negotiated the Treaty of Kyakhta, which defined the border between Siberia and Mongolia. The agreement also permitted caravans to conduct “free trade between the

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<sup>158</sup> John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789 from China to the N.W. Coast of America, with an Introductory Narrative of Voyage Performed in 1786, from Bengal, in the Ship Nootka* (Logographic Press: London, 1791), 315. qing otter

<sup>159</sup> Steller “De Bestiis Marinis,” 71.

<sup>160</sup> Schlesinger, “The Qing Invention of Nature,” 43-44.

<sup>161</sup> Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, 315-316.

two, the number of merchants not to exceed two hundred.”<sup>162</sup> The caravan route, which became “one of the most important trade routes in the Empire,” proceeded overland from Kyakhta to Beijing, via the intermediate towns of Urga and Kalgan.<sup>163</sup> Kyakhta soon emerged as the only settlement to offer a consistent supply of otter, and this fact bolstered its exchange economy through the 1760s.<sup>164</sup> Nonetheless, the Qing government did not extend permission for Russians to pursue maritime trade with China.<sup>165</sup> The result was that, rather than developing a straightforward coastal trade between the sea otter habitats and Canton, furriers were forced to transship otter pelts from Okhotsk, on the Pacific, to Kyakhta in Central Asia. The route, which proceeded across steep mountains, rushing rivers, swamps, rugged forests, and steppe, emerged in the late seventeenth century as a means of provisioning Russian settlements on the Pacific. Caravans traversed a distance ranging from 2,370 to 2,650 miles, depending on a combination of trail conditions, weather, pack animals, and availability of supplies.<sup>166</sup> Profits compensated for the

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<sup>162</sup> Maritime Customs, *Treaties, Conventions, Etc., between China and foreign States, Vol. I, Second Edition: Russia, International Protocol, Great Britain, United States of America, France, Import Tariff Agreement* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1917), 42-43. Translation from Latin by this author.

<sup>163</sup> Hosea Ballou Morse, *The Trade and Administration of the Chinese Empire* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Limited, 1908), 316.

<sup>164</sup> C.M. Foust, “Russian Expansion to the East Through the Eighteenth Century” *The Journal of Economic History* 21, no. 4 (1961): 479-82.

<sup>165</sup> Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*, 53.

<sup>166</sup> James R. Gibson, *Feeding the Russian Fur Trade: Provisionment of the Okhotsk Seaboard and the Kamchatka Peninsula, 1639-1856* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 78-

logistical challenges of the overland trade. Indeed, Chinese demand motivated a surge in the price of otter across Northeast Asia. Steller observed that the “finest skins” traded in Kamchatka for “5 or 6 rubles” during the 1730s. Two decades later, he explained, prime specimens “sold even in the land of Kamchatka or 25 and 30 rubles” and could occasionally “command a price of 70 and 80 rubles.”<sup>167</sup> Prices remained high throughout the century. In 1772, a share of cargo containing 20 otter pelts, 3 otter tails, and 52 pieces of fox sold at Kamchatka for 800 to 1,000 rubles.<sup>168</sup> The overland route linking the Pacific, Kyakhta, and Beijing remained the sole source of otter pelts for half a century.

Canton became the second site of otter importation following James Hanna’s pioneering British voyage to the Northwest Coast in 1785. His astounding profit of \$20,000 on a cargo of 560 otter pelts, or roughly \$35.71 per unit, alerted other navigators to the potential for opening a lucrative maritime fur trade. John Meares, whose ships *Nootka* and *Felice Adventurer* cruised the Northwest Coast, anticipated that the fur trade “might, in due time, become an object of the first importance” and strengthen the “connection hitherto formed with China”<sup>169</sup> He did not have long to wait. In 1786, seven British vessels made trading expeditions from Asia to the Northwest Coast. Four more

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102.; Mary E. Wheeler, “The Origins of the Russian-American Company,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge* 14, h. 4 (1966): 486-487.

<sup>167</sup> Steller, “De Bestiis Marinis,” 70.

<sup>168</sup> Wheeler, “The Origins of the Russian-American Company,” 487.

<sup>169</sup> Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, 315-316.



embarked for America in 1787. *Columbia and Washington* joined five British vessels on the coast in 1788.<sup>170</sup> Meares remarked that commerce at Canton “labours beneath very oppressive and increasing disadvantages” of a bureaucratic nature but considered the maritime trade superior to “long and circuitous land carriage” through Siberia. He reasoned that overland transportation drove up the prices for Russian furs. In contrast, Chinese merchants took “entire satisfaction, from being able to obtain the same species of furs which they had been accustomed to purchase at Kiascha, at a price so much below the usual rate on that market.”<sup>171</sup> Comparison of overland and maritime freight costs confirms his view. Russian merchants spent fifteen to twenty times more per unit of caravan freight than their British counterparts, whose shipping followed sea lanes. Merchants passed their costs along to consumers at home as well, meaning that prices in Europe also reflected the disparity in freight charges. For example, the worst teas retailed

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<sup>170</sup> 1786 witnessed the arrival of *Captain Cook* (James Strange), *King George*, *Queen Charlotte*, and *Experiment* (Nathaniel Portlock and George Dixon), *Nootka* (John Meares), and *Sea Otter* (William Tipping) on the Northwest Coast of America. James Hanna also performed a second expedition in his own *Sea Otter*. *Lark* (William Peters) performed fur-trading operations off Kamchatka and the Commander Islands, but did not cruise the Northwest Coast. Likewise, 1787 saw the commercial voyages of *Imperial Eagle* (Charles William Barkley), *Felice Adventurer* (John Meares), *Prince of Wales* (James Colnett), and *Princess Royal* (Charles Duncan), as well as the continuation of the Portlock-Dixon expedition. For comparison, *Columbia Rediviva* (John Kendrick) and *Lady Washington* (Robert Gray) embarked from Boston, Massachusetts in September, 1787, and arrived on the coast during the summer of 1788. *Felice Adventurer* (John Meares), *Iphigenia Nubiana* (William Douglas), *North West America* (Robert Duffin), *Prince of Wales* (James Colnett), and *Princess Royal* (Charles Duncan), all nominally under instructions from Meares, also made fur-trading expeditions in 1788. See Frederic W. Howay, *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-1825*, ed. Richard A. Pierce, (Kingston, ON: The Limestone Press, 1973), 3-6.

<sup>171</sup> Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, 293-94, 314-15.

in Moscow at higher prices than the best teas did in London.<sup>172</sup> Beginning in 1785, the Chinese market for sea otter gravitated toward less-expensive suppliers in Canton—suppliers such as *Columbia* and *Washington*.

*“Attended with the Greatest Trouble and Difficulty”*

*Columbia* benefitted from the commercial conditions that made Canton an emerging center of the maritime fur trade, but the expedition also relied upon local middlemen to facilitate a profitable exchange. The middlemen, known as *hong* merchants, formed a guild of licensed intermediaries between Chinese and Western producers. Chinese buyers traveled from distant parts of the Qing Empire, including the administrative cities of Beijing and Nanjing, to purchase pelts at Canton. Upon arrival, they traded teas, silks, porcelain, and other wares to Cantonese merchants, in exchange for imported broadcloth and furs.<sup>173</sup> The merchants, then, controlled the supply of Chinese goods available for export to the West. Furthermore, *hong* merchants also helped to legitimize foreign trade. Each foreign vessel required the sponsorship of a Cantonese intermediary, acting as a “security merchant,” in order to disembark cargo in China. The merchant assumed responsibility for the ship, its cargo, and the conduct of its crew, in exchange for a right of first refusal to imports and exports aboard the vessel.<sup>174</sup> The *hong*

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<sup>172</sup> A.M. Petrov, “Foreign Trade of Russia and Britain with Asia in the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1987), 630-31.

<sup>173</sup> Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*, 53-54.

<sup>174</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 10-12.

merchants, positioned between two exclusive groups of clients, exercised significant control over the terms of exchange.

Some merchants enhanced their intermediary position by establishing close relationships with Europeans. Conseequa (Pan Changyao, 潘長耀), a merchant who rose to prominence in the 1780s, appears to have made special efforts in this regard.<sup>175</sup> William Milburn, the author of *Oriental Commerce*, described him as “agreeable in his manners, polite, and hospitable” and noted that he possessed “a very superior knowledge of the English language.” Social graces and language talent also served Conseequa well. British personnel considered him “so satisfactory” and “agreeable” that he received preferential business and became personally “attached to foreigners.”<sup>176</sup> Meanwhile, Poankeequa (Pan Qiguan, 潘啟官), perhaps the most successful *hong* merchant of the eighteenth century, worked in especially close cooperation with the English East India Company (EIC).<sup>177</sup> From 1785-87, he brokered an agreement by which individual merchants agreed to purchase EIC woolens in proportion to their exports of tea. In doing so, he made himself indispensable to his fellow businessmen and foreigners alike.<sup>178</sup> Poankeequa died

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<sup>175</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 100.

<sup>176</sup> Milburn, *Oriental Commerce*, 456.

<sup>177</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 54-66.

<sup>178</sup> John Wong, “Global Positioning: Houqua and His China Trade Partners in the Nineteenth Century” (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2012), 66-67.

in 1788, and his son inherited the status of intermediary to the EIC. Meanwhile, *hong* merchants made similar inroads with Americans.

Western middlemen also supported the efforts of merchant-captains to make a favorable exchange in Canton. European companies trading in the port, such as the English East India Company and the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC), or Dutch East India Company, employed resident factors to oversee business at the “thirteen factories.” Factors provided three categories of service vital to European commerce in Canton. They extended accommodations and hospitality to traders hailing from their home countries, and also welcomed foreigners who lacked official representation in China. Samuel Shaw, the first American to reside in China, observed that “on the whole, the situation of the Europeans is not enviable” because of the duration, remoteness, and isolation of a posting to Canton. Factors worked hard to prevent the “want of society, and of almost every amusement” that faced the port’s foreign businessmen. Samuel Shaw experienced their hospitality firsthand in 1784, when he received enthusiastic greetings from EIC, VOC, French, Swedish, Danish, and German personnel. Europeans dined together and even formed an international orchestra that performed at the Danish factory on Sundays.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 164-67, 180.



Figure 18. William Daniell. *View of the Canton Factories at Canton*, 1805-06, oil on canvas, 94 x 182 cm., National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

Factors also arranged for storage of European goods in the thirteen factories, pending a transaction with the *hong* merchants of Canton. Shaw observed that the factories occupied “less than a quarter of a mile” of waterfront and “are extremely confined.”<sup>180</sup> Each structure featured office and warehouse space on the first floor, with residential areas situated on the second story. Factors leased the buildings from Cantonese landlords on a seasonal basis.<sup>181</sup> Each establishment received foreign captains, supercargoes, and goods arriving from the anchorage at Whampoa. Imports entered into

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<sup>180</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 178-79.

<sup>181</sup> Johnathan A. Farris, “Thirteen Factories of Canton: An Architecture of Sino-Western Collaboration and Confrontation” *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*, Vol. 14 (Fall, 2007), 66-68.

storage pending a transaction, or, if unsold, remained as overstock until the following season.<sup>182</sup>

Finally, European factors assisted in negotiations with the *hong* merchants in exchange for consignment of goods. In doing so, they leveraged relationships of trust, credit, information, and friendship shared with individual Cantonese. Shaw reported that Europeans received invitations “to dine with the Chinese merchants, who have houses and gardens on the opposite side of the river,” across from the thirteen factories. Guests returned the favor by contributing the “table furniture, wine, and a large portion of the victuals.”<sup>183</sup> Social relationships also cemented the business arrangements between Europeans and Cantonese. For example, EIC personnel often preferred to trade with Monqua (Cai Wenguan, 蔡文官), a powerful merchant who impressed his British counterparts as “a most independent and liberal man.” Monqua reciprocated by reserving his own business “chiefly to the East India Company, though he trades occasionally with persons from India and America.”<sup>184</sup> Western middlemen facilitated trade through a combination of cultural, physical, and social capital.

The United States did not, however, possess a national company trading to the Far East, and, therefore, no American factor resided in Canton. Instead, the Confederation Congress commissioned Samuel Shaw and Thomas Randall, principals in the Shaw &

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<sup>182</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 54.

<sup>183</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 178-79.

<sup>184</sup> Milburn, *Oriental Commerce*, 456.

Randall merchant house, to serve as the American Consul and Deputy Consul in Canton, respectively.<sup>185</sup> In this capacity, they monitored American commercial interests and, when requested, represented ships hailing from Philadelphia, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. Shaw recorded the presence of all American ships during the 1786-87 trading season, noting their names, captains, and ports of origin. In 1788, he supervised the sale of 140 piculs of ginseng imported aboard the *General Washington*, a ship originating at Providence. Likewise, he orchestrated a trade on behalf of a brigantine from New York, also called *Columbia*.<sup>186</sup> Randall performed the same services but specialized in financial instruments such as currency, bills of exchange, and credit.<sup>187</sup> He also corresponded with government figures such as Alexander Hamilton. In 1791, Randall reported upon commodities, prices, and volume of trade at Canton, making particular note of new trends such as “immense quantities of cotton... shipped by the English.”<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 219.

<sup>186</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 228, 247-48, 295-96, 304-05.; Gertrude Selwyn Kimball, *Papers from the Historical Seminary of Brown University, Vol. IV, The East-India Trade of Providence from 1787 to 1807* (Providence: Preston and Rounds, 1896), 3-13.

<sup>187</sup> Thomas Randall, New York, to Joseph Barrell, Boston, 7 September 1787, ALS, Columbia Papers I, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>188</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791” in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 9, *August 1791–December 1791*, ed. Harold C. Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 38–55.

Furthermore, the partners cultivated business relationships with Cantonese merchants. In 1789, Shaw negotiated a solution to a complicated financial dispute between Jonathan Mifflin, supercargo of the ship *Asia*, and the struggling merchant Houqua (Wu Zhongcheng, 伍忠誠). His intervention enabled Mifflin to recover \$19,915 and spared Houqua from embarrassment, or even punishment, as a debtor.<sup>189</sup> Moreover, Shaw laid the foundation of a long-term association between Americans and Houqua's Yihe Company (*Yihe hang*, 怡和行). His successor, Houqua II (Wu Bingjian, 伍秉鑑), would eventually become "a very opulent merchant" known for "large dealings with the Americans, to whom he is said to be attached."<sup>190</sup> Shaw and Randall operated on a system of rotations, with one partner residing in China while the other did business in the United States. *Columbia's* arrival at Canton, during the winter of 1789-90, corresponded to Randall's rotation in Canton, and he assumed a central role in negotiating the exchange of her cargo.<sup>191</sup>

Randall's involvement with *Columbia* began in August 1787, approximately one month before the ship sailed from Boston. Writing to Joseph Barrell, Randall described his partnership with Shaw and their "view to transact business in China." He further explained that a common friend, "Mr. Jarvis," probably either Benjamin or Philip Jarvis,

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<sup>189</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 228, 247-48, 295-96, 301-03.

<sup>190</sup> Wong, "Global Positioning," 71-76, 80, 114-16.; Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 324-25.; Milburn, *Oriental Commerce*, 457.

<sup>191</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 228, 247-48, 295-96, 318.



had informed him about the *Columbia*'s expedition "to the North West coast of America and from thence to China." Recognizing their mutual interests, Randall hoped to "solicit from you the consignment of this vessel to our house," and he encouraged Barrell to "favor us with the management of your commercial business in that country." He emphasized that the partnership built its expertise upon "two voyages" to China and a "fixed" business office in Canton. In this capacity, Shaw & Randall could provide "more considerable advantages" than "any supercargo... who had had no residence in that country and is unacquainted with the trade." Finally, he assured Barrell that "no exertions shall be wanting on our part to render the voyage lucrative."<sup>192</sup> The letter prompted a conversation in which Barrell requested further information about Shaw & Randall's "modes of transacting business in China" and methods of assuring a "profitable return cargo." In a passage reminiscent of Barrell's instructions to Kendrick, Randall emphasized that "it would be best for you to give us general instructions so that we may embrace the most advantageous mode of transacting your business."

No further documents attest to the correspondence, but Barrell probably agreed that *Columbia* would need a knowledgeable agent with connections in China.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> My assumption about the identity of "Mr. Jarvis" is based upon the appearance of "B. and P. Jarvis" among the contractors who outfitted the *Columbia* with "88 lb. of Shott" prior to the second expedition in 1790. Furthermore, the *Boston Directory* lists "Jarvis Benjamin and Philip" as purveyors of "wines, and grocery" on State Street. Barrell was undoubtedly well acquainted with both men. See "Thomas Randall, New York, to Joseph Barrell, Boston, 24 August 1787, ALS, Columbia Papers I, Massachusetts Historical Society.; *The Boston Directory* (Boston: John Norman, 1789), 56.; "Expenditures for the *Columbia*'s Outfit and Cargo" in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 452.

<sup>193</sup> The *Columbia Papers*, in possession of Massachusetts Historical Society, do not include Barrell's replies to Randall, nor an official agreement or letter of intent. Whatever the specific

Instructions from John Kendrick to Robert Gray, however, indicate that the investors had not reached a decision prior to the departure of *Columbia*. Kendrick explained that, lacking further instructions from Barrell at Macao, the expedition should “apply to Messrs. Shaw and Randall at Canton.” His language also suggests that the principals remained in negotiations with Randall. Kendrick observed that if the firm had “the Consignments of the Ship Clombia and Sloop Washington,” then the expedition should “follow their orders.” Lacking an arrangement with the firm, however, he instructed Captain Gray to “Sell to the Best advantage you Can.”<sup>194</sup> Once again, the commanders exercised considerable latitude in coping with unknown conditions at Canton. In this case, however, the principals forwarded a letter to Macao, expressing their decision to consign the cargo to Shaw & Randall.<sup>195</sup>

The Columbians did not chronicle their negotiations with the *hong* merchants of Canton. In fact, given the limited and choreographed nature of contact between foreigners and Chinese, they probably experienced few direct interactions with the merchants.<sup>196</sup>

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contents of Barrell’s letters, the correspondence was effective in convincing him to transact business with Shaw & Randall. The language here is drawn from Randall’s answers to Barrell. See Thomas Randall, New York, to Joseph Barrell, Boston, 7 September, 1787.

<sup>194</sup> Kendrick’s atrocious spelling of *Columbia* is especially humorous in light of the name appearing on the ship’s hull. See “John Kendrick’s Instructions to Robert Gray, February 1788,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 114-15.

<sup>195</sup> Although Barrell probably wrote the letters containing “instructions relative to the ship Columbia,” Gray does not identify its authorship in his own communication to Kendrick. See “Robert Gray to John Kendrick, 21 November, 1789,” 126-27.

<sup>196</sup> Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 56.

Fortunately, Thomas Randall described the fraught transaction in correspondence with Alexander Hamilton.<sup>197</sup> The importance that Randall placed upon the “the sale of the sea Otter skin, that has been lately sold in China,” is evident in his detailed treatment of the subject, which constitutes more than one-quarter of the letter. That he considered the *Columbia* transaction to be illustrative of the fur trade is equally beyond doubt. Indeed, his account of the episode revolves almost entirely around the difficulty of selling her cargo.<sup>198</sup> Randall reported that *Columbia* arrived with a cargo of “about fifteen hundred sea Otter skins of various sizes and quality” and he “expected to have made a very advantageous sale of those skins, from there being much wanted by the Mandarines.” The impressive profits achieved by British fur traders, combined with his own inexperience in the maritime fur trade, probably convinced him that the *hong* merchants would compete to make a quick, lucrative sale. Instead, in a frustrating process that left his patience “exhausted,” Randall struggled to conclude a deal for almost two months.<sup>199</sup> The arduous, unanticipated nature of the transaction also troubled the Columbians. In his communication with Kendrick, Robert Gray lamented that “our business is attended with

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<sup>197</sup> Randall penned this letter as a report on commercial conditions and trends at Canton. Hamilton had occupied the office of the Secretary of the Treasury since September, 1789, three months prior to the arrival of *Columbia* at Canton.

<sup>198</sup> Randall’s letter is 6,494 words in length, excepting formal components such as his salutation, date, and footers. His treatment of the maritime fur trade is 1,749 words in duration and accounts for 26.93 percent of the letter. Likewise, his account of the *Columbia* transaction runs to 1,608 words (24.76%). The passage also represents 91.3 percent of his discussion of the fur trade. See “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*.

the greatest trouble and difficulty.”<sup>200</sup> The expedition faced five significant hurdles to business—the cultural value of furs, a shortage of hard currency, posturing between trading partners, a lack of trust, and legal ambiguities—during the 1789-90 trading season.

The first challenge hinged upon the cargo itself—otter furs. The pelts, while valuable and desirable, presented “difficulties in obtaining a security merchant.”<sup>201</sup> In a microcosm of the tribute system that affirmed imperial sovereignty through presentation of rare goods, exotic and prestigious imports were subject to become a “rarity contribution” to the *hoppo* and mandarins at Canton. Paul Van Dyke observes that the practice enabled *hong* merchants “to purchase clocks and other luxury items at high prices from foreigners” and then to deliver them to the authorities “at reduced rates or as outright ‘gifts.’”<sup>202</sup> The rarity contribution permitted an imperial official to increase his status by keeping the gift or, alternatively, to ingratiate himself with a superior by passing the prestigious item up the chain of command. In exchange for his contribution, a *hong* merchant could expect the *hoppo* to reauthorize his commercial license and overlook minor infractions of customs regulations.<sup>203</sup> Otter skins represented one the most luxurious, prestigious, and exotic items available at Canton, making them prime

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<sup>200</sup> “Robert Gray to John Kendrick, 29 January, 1970,” 133.

<sup>201</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>202</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 97.

<sup>203</sup> Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 61.

candidates for the rarity contribution. For this reason, Randall discovered that “no private merchant would dare to purchase them, as they were known to be wanted by the mandarins for their own use.” Consequently, the merchants felt reluctant to grant security for the cargo, let alone accept the financial losses associated with purchasing otter pelts.<sup>204</sup>

Luckily, Randall received commercial advice from Pinqua (Yang Bingguan, 楊丙官), a merchant with whom he “was on friendly terms.”<sup>205</sup> Formerly a porcelain dealer on the West River, Pinqua was a newcomer to the ranks of the *hong* merchants. He launched his second career in collaboration with established merchants such as Chowqua (Chen Zuguan, 陳祖官), who dominated trade with the Dutch. Pinqua obtained his license as a merchant in 1782.<sup>206</sup> In his improved capacity, he found advantages in doing business with the other newcomers to the scene, the Americans.<sup>207</sup> In 1789, Pinqua took interest in the *Columbia* as an opportunity to build his fortunes by expanding into the lucrative, new fur trade.<sup>208</sup> Regarding the *Columbia*’s furs, he advised Randall that

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<sup>204</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>206</sup> Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 15, 177, 188.

<sup>207</sup> In 1786, Pinqua signed as security merchant for a vessel—probably *Grand Turk*—belonging to Elias Hasket Derby. See Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 190, n.27.

<sup>208</sup> Joseph Ingraham penned a short letter to Robert Gray “at Pinguas Hong Canton,” on behalf of Thomas Barrow, a British merchant who helped to provision the *Columbia* at Whampoa. The address suggests that Gray may have resided at Pinqua’s factory while awaiting a transaction, but this aspect evades mention in other sources. See “Joseph Ingraham to Robert Gray, 22 January, 1790” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 132.

“probably I should eventually obtain my price, if I waited with patience,” because the *hong* merchants “would be obliged to purchase them” as a rarity contribution. In this situation, Pinqua explained that the merchants “would have to divide the cost of this involuntary present with each other,” a practice that limited the economic harm to any one businessman.<sup>209</sup> He spoke from personal experience. Trade regulations required the merchants to assume group responsibility for unsecured foreign cargoes, unpaid debts, and other matters of commercial interest.<sup>210</sup> In 1784, the *hoppo* assigned him a share of debts owed by Tsjongua (Cai Xiangguan, 蔡相官), a bankrupt merchant, to the VOC.<sup>211</sup> Randall chose to follow his advice and wait.

The second challenge concerned *Columbia*’s return cargo of tea, the apex commodity that would make or break the expedition upon returning to Boston. Here, Randall faced a significant problem—*Columbia* arrived “destitute of money.”<sup>212</sup> The reasons for her shortage of silver are not entirely clear, but they appear to hinge upon the principals’ decision to launch *Columbia* without firm instructions on the question of consignment. In correspondence to Joseph Barrell, Randall explained that “had this vessel been regularly consigned to us, we would have advised Capt. Gray to have

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<sup>209</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>210</sup> The bankruptcy of a *hong* merchant saddled his colleagues with a terrible burden. In such cases, Qing officials expected the remaining merchants to compensate that individual’s creditors out of their own pockets. See Hunter, *The Fan Kwae Before Treaty Days*, 44-47.

<sup>211</sup> Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 134.

<sup>212</sup> “Messrs. Shaw & Randall to Joseph Barrell, 7 February 1790,” 139-140.

smuggled his Skins” downriver in exchange for silver dollars. Given that the principals *did* instruct the captains to consign with Shaw & Randall, we must assume either that their instructions provided insufficient guidance concerning silver, or that the firm was unaware of the need to advise the Columbians.<sup>213</sup> In either case, *Columbia* arrived at Whampoa “with no other funds” either for repairs to or purchase a return cargo. Under the circumstances, Randall decided to “advance the necessary money to refit” and also purchase tea “on my own account... in order to render the voyage as lucrative as possible to the owners.”<sup>214</sup> According to Richard Howe, Randall acquired “six hundred Chests of Bohea Tea” from Pinqua, but could not calculate the ship’s proceeds until the otter transaction was complete. Randall later invoiced *Columbia*’s teas at \$11,242.<sup>215</sup> Randall also observed that the “smallness of her funds” exacerbated the problem of attracting a buyer. Where the rarity contribution applied to a cargo, such as furs, the *hong* merchants hoped to trade an additional share of their wares for silver, a more secure form of wealth. In this respect, the Columbians had nothing to sweeten a sour deal.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> “Robert Gray to John Kendrick, 21 November, 1789,” 126-27.

<sup>214</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>215</sup> Calculated against the average price of tea during the 1789-90 season, Spanish \$51.04 per chest, the Columbians needed \$30,624 to purchase all 600 chests. In contrast, *Columbia* earned only \$11,241.51 after expenses. Taking the invoice in combination with *Columbia*’s expenses in China, \$10,163, we can deduce that her furs sold for an average price of \$18.73 apiece. See “Richard S. Howe and Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, 18 January, 1790” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 131-32.; “Inventory of Skins,” in *ibid.*, 125-26.; “The Columbia’s Accounts with Messrs. Shaw & Randall” in *ibid.*, 141.

<sup>216</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

Following the acquisition of a return cargo, Randall received notification that the *hong* merchants would assume collective responsibility for *Columbia*'s cargo. The development should have enabled a transaction to take place, but instead, it unleashed a third challenge as the merchants postured to gain advantage over the cargo. For example, an "altercation" occurred when *Columbia*'s otters arrived at Shaw & Randall's factory, space that the partnership rented from Pinqua. The merchant explained that the presence of the otters in his building would bring "a great injury to him," because Qing officials would appropriate a rarity contribution from the lot at his personal expense, rather than the expense of the *hong* community.<sup>217</sup> Randall assuaged Pinqua by transferring the skins to an unidentified European factory, perhaps the Swedish establishment, where a number of Americans had done business.<sup>218</sup> The incident suggests that the Mandarins could extract gifts based on the *appearance* of ownership alone, regardless of actual title. Meanwhile, other *hong* merchants made "applications to examine the skins," but also refused to complete a transaction "for fear of the Mandarines." Randall complained of "offers made to purchase, accepted by me, and then broke upon the part of the Chinese."<sup>219</sup> The *hong* merchants' behavior reveals that timing was of the essence. Seeking to avoid the dreaded rarity contribution, they inspected the pelts, proffered "test" deals, and waited for an advantageous moment to buy. Moreover, their "various and continued"

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 168, 254, 301.

<sup>219</sup> "Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791," 38-55.



interest also indicates that some may have planned to make an independent purchase—if the timing was right. Nonetheless, in spite of failing to complete a transaction, the *hong* merchants acted in a coordinated fashion to prevent a rival deal between Randall and “a private Chinese merchant” who attempted to purchase the entire cargo.<sup>220</sup> Their behavior reveals one additional aspect of the fur trade at Canton, namely, that the *hong* merchants would close ranks to prevent luxury goods from falling into the hands of outsider businessmen.

The waiting ended in January, 1790, when Fu Kang’an (福康安), the Governor-General of Liangguang, intervened to expedite the exchange of *Columbia’s* cargo. Randall observed that the “Viceroy” (*zongdu*, 總督), accomplished this by ordering the senior *hong* merchant, Monqua, to purchase the furs “in order that he [the governor] might make choice of the best.”<sup>221</sup> Although the *Columbia* sources do not speak to the Governor-General’s involvement beyond to a greater degree, we can presume that he intervened not out of altruism or sympathy for the Columbians, but rather to enhance his own position. Governor Fu was accustomed to wealth, power, and prestige. Prior to his appointment, in 1789, he distinguished himself within the imperial Board of Revenue and

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Charles Hucker describes the position of Governor-General (總督, *zongdu*, “Viceroy”) as “a nominal concurrent Censor-in-Chief” and “overall supervisor of all military and non-military affairs in a group of 2 or more neighboring Provinces.” The Qing government maintained nine posts of this nature throughout the empire. In most cases, the Governor-General exercised direct control over one province while devolving control to a Governor (巡撫 *xunfu*) in the remaining provinces under his supervision. See “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.; Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 255, 534.

as governor of eight other provinces. In 1787, he established a reputation as “one of the most capable commanders of the imperial troops” who suppressed a rebellion of “serious proportions” on the island of Taiwan. In recognition of his achievements, he received the noble rank of *gong* (公, “duke”) in 1788. Above and beyond all these accolades, his uncle was none other than the Qianlong emperor.<sup>222</sup>

Governor Fu’s decision to press the transaction enabled him to demand the best furs and, more importantly, to send luxurious pelts to the imperial court in Beijing.<sup>223</sup> In this respect, he occupied an unusual position. In 1740, the Qianlong Emperor issued an edict declaring that Governors-General “should not accept gifts from subordinate officials and clerks” upon the reasoning that “if they cannot eliminate this bad habit, then who knows if they will be able to prevent it from gradually worsening.” On one hand, then, Governor Fu committed the crime of “solicitation of unauthorized funds” (*kelian*, 恪斂, “to respectfully collect”) when demanding the rarity contribution.<sup>224</sup> In another way, though, his appropriation of the best pelts served the established system of imperial patronage that connected commoners, officials, and the emperor. Qianlong derived a

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<sup>222</sup> Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period*, vol. 1., A-O (Washington: United States Printing Office, 1943), 253-55.

<sup>223</sup> Chang, “The Economic Role of the Imperial Household in the Ch’ing Dynasty,” 260-263.

<sup>224</sup> Considered a sort of bribery in exchange for lawful favors (*bu wangfa*, 不枉法), solicitation was legally punishable according to the monetary value of the favor exchanged. In this case, the rarity contribution represented a bribe to ensure the “contributing” merchant’s license to trade, a favor of sufficient weight to warrant capital punishment. Obviously, it was not in the economic interest of either party to report the infraction. See Nancy E. Park, “Corruption in Eighteenth-Century China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 4 (1997): 970-73.

significant share of wealth from presents honoring his birthday, festival dates, and imperial tours of the provinces.<sup>225</sup> In short, Governor Fu's familial connection to the throne, combined with his position as the ranking official in Canton, exempted him from charges of criminal solicitation and transformed him into an important source of furs for the imperial court. None of this mattered, however, to the exasperated *hong* merchants who said "little that is good" about a governor with a "reputation for unscrupulousness."<sup>226</sup>

Although the Governor-General's order set the *Columbia* transaction in motion, it also revealed a fourth challenge—the lack of trust between Randall and the Cantonese.<sup>227</sup> Following a month of prospective sales, Randall received a visit from "a Mandarin of rank," probably a Fiscal Secretary (*zhengbi*), who "made choice of about one hundred" pelts for presentation to the Governor-General. Randall resisted the miniscule sale, preferring to "sell them altogether, as parting with the best would injure the sale of the remainder." Indeed, the removal of the best specimens would devalue the remaining furs, and, after the posturing of the previous month, he may have suspected that the *hong*

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<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 976-978.

<sup>226</sup> Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 1:253.

<sup>227</sup> Economists have confirmed that "trust plays a role in almost all human relationships" and the absence of trust between trading partners "severely hampers market transactions." Where trust is present, however, it functions as a social "lubricant" to enhance cooperation between trading partners. See Ernst Fehr, "On the Economics and Biology of Trust," *Journal of the European Economic Association* 7, no. 2/3, Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Annual Congress of the European Economic Association (2009), 235.; Christine Harbring, "On the Effect of Incentive Schemes on Trust and Trustworthiness" *Journal of Institutional Theoretical Economics (JITE) / Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 166, no. 4 (2010): 691.

merchants would combine efforts to avoid competitive bidding. Randall expressed surprise when the emissary “desired me to set my price for the whole” and offered that “if reasonable he would take them all.”<sup>228</sup> For Randall, the offer circumvented the problem of subdivision and prevented a price devaluation. Although he did not record his asking price, documentary clues suggest that it was in the neighborhood of \$25,400.<sup>229</sup> In contrast, the Fiscal Secretary may have seen a different sort of opportunity in purchasing the lot. His examination of the furs preceded the Lunar New Year, the most important holiday in China, by roughly two weeks.<sup>230</sup> Each year, the festival provided an occasion for the Governor-General and other imperial officials to extort additional presents from the *hong* merchants of Canton.<sup>231</sup> Rather than memorializing the throne about the abuse of power, the merchants calculated presents as an additional form of business overhead.

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<sup>228</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.; Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 1:338, 336-337.

<sup>229</sup> I derive this number from the sales price of the otter pelts (\$21,400) and evidence in Randall’s letter to Hamilton that he ultimately settled for a price “four thousand dollars less than the price agreed on before.”

Taken together, the asking price must have been \$25,400. “The Columbia’s Accounts with Messrs. Shaw & Randall,” 141.; “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>230</sup> The Chinese New Year is calculated as falling on the second new moon after the winter solstice, which occurred on 21 December 1789. The new moon in question, adjusted for the Earth’s rotation, occurred on 13 February 1790 in Europe, and on 14 February in China. See Isaac Bickerstaff, “XII Mon. December” in *The New England Almanack or, Lady’s and Gentleman’s Diary, for the Year of our Lord Christ 1789* (Providence: John Carter, 1788), 13.; Nathaniel Strong, *An Astronomical Diary, Kalendar, or Almanack, For the Year of our Lord 1790* (Hartford: Elisha Babcock, 1789), 4.

<sup>231</sup> Valery M. Garrett, *Heaven is High, the Emperor Far Away: Merchants and Mandarins in Old Canton* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 77.

The change in language, then, from the mandarin making “choice of the best” pelts to making a purchase of “them all,” may represent a recognition that Lunar New Year was approaching. Indeed, rather than claiming a fraction of the furs as a rarity contribution, the mandarin may have intended to purchase the *entire* cargo as a holiday gift for Governor Fu.<sup>232</sup>

The solution introduced new complications, however, as the mandarin requested to transport the furs “into the city” without making payment. The request placed Randall in a difficult position. Again, trust was at stake. As the middleman responsible to Captain Gray for *Columbia*’s exchange of furs, Randall refused to allow “one of them to go” until he received compensation “for the whole.” He could not trust an unknown mandarin to make payment, even if that individual was acting on behalf of the Governor-General.<sup>233</sup> Nonetheless, as a merchant whose livelihood depended upon brokering future trades, he cannot have wanted to alienate the imperial bureaucracy in Canton. Despite appearing “incensed” at Randall’s stubbornness, the mandarin suggested that Poankeequa II (Pan Youdu, 潘有度), “an opulent hong merchant,” should make immediate payment on behalf

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<sup>232</sup> Indeed, this conclusion is supported by Randall’s concern to complete the sale before the Chinese “holy days” began, a period “during which their Public offices are shut, and no business transacted for near three weeks.” See “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>233</sup> Economists have confirmed that “betrayal aversion,” or the fear of being cheated, is an important emotion “that adds importance to property rights and contract enforcement.” See Fehr, “On the Economics and Biology of Trust,” 236.

the Governor-General.<sup>234</sup> Once again, the proposal suggests a strategy of appropriating presents at the expense of *hong* merchants who depended upon good relations with imperial officials.



Figure 19. *Portrait of Puankequa II*, early nineteenth century, oil on canvas, 46 x 35.5 cm., Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong.

Poankeequa II descended from Han Chinese merchants who relocated to Guangdong Province following the prohibition of foreign trade in their hometown of Xiamen. In Canton, the family experienced a meteoric ascent to preeminence under the

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<sup>234</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

leadership of his father, also known as Poankeequa. In his youth, the patriarch entered the commercial world as a maritime trader on junks trading along the coast and in Manila. During the 1750s, he established his own Tongwen (同文) firm in Canton.<sup>235</sup> Thereafter, he gradually came to dominate the merchant community of Canton. In 1760, he masterminded an arrangement by which the *hong* merchants allotted shares of imports under the *Cohong* (*gonghang*, 公行), or merchant guild. Moreover, he established new regulations under which security merchants monopolized the lucrative trades in tea, silk, and other fineries. The regulations stipulated that “private” or “shopkeeper” merchants required would permission from a licensed *hong* in order to trade at Canton.<sup>236</sup> Poankeequa the Elder served as president of the *Cohong* until its dissolution in 1771, and again after the guild was reinstated in 1780.<sup>237</sup> Building upon these advantages, he also profited from the salvage of wrecked ships, maritime insurance, and illicit gold trading.<sup>238</sup> Vertical integration enhanced his economic control. The family owned tea plantations “of excellent reputation,” leased warehouse facilities, and operated a squadron

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<sup>235</sup> Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644-1912)*, Volume II P-Z (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 605.

<sup>236</sup> Again, this terminology reflects the Cantonese pronunciation *hang* rather than the Mandarin *xing*. See Cranmer-Byng and Wills, “Trade and Diplomacy with Maritime Europe, 1644-1800,” 231-33.

<sup>237</sup> Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 273.

<sup>238</sup> *Idem.*, *The Canton Trade*, 87-88, 120, 153.

of junks active in the carrying trade from Canton to Manila.<sup>239</sup> The patriarch died in 1788, less than eleven months prior to *Columbia's* arrival in China.<sup>240</sup>

Following his death, Poankeequa II assumed control of the Tongwen firm. According to one historian, he ascended to a position of incredible wealth and influence “but had neither proven ability, nor stature, nor probably any inclination to be chief” of the merchant guild.<sup>241</sup> Consequently, there is no obvious reason why the mandarin selected Poankeequa to purchase the cargo when Governor Fu had already designated Monqua, the leading *hong* merchant, for the task. One possibility is that, amidst a worsening situation, there was no previous relationship of trust between Randall and Monqua, an associate of the East India Company.<sup>242</sup> Poankeequa, by comparison, maintained working relationships with the Governor-General, the Americans, and the community of *hong* merchants. He often entertained foreigners with dinner parties, opera performances, and live music.<sup>243</sup> Furthermore, as the wealthiest merchant in Canton, he alone may have possessed sufficient assets to purchase the entire cargo at once.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Cranmer-Byng and Wills, “Trade and Diplomacy with Maritime Europe, 1644-1800,” 209, 214, 229.

<sup>240</sup> Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644-1912)*, 2:605.

<sup>241</sup> Cheong, *The Hong Merchants of Canton*, 173.

<sup>242</sup> Milburn, *Oriental Commerce*, 457.

<sup>243</sup> Hunter, *The Fan Kwae Before Treaty Days*, 40.

<sup>244</sup> Cheong, *The Hong Merchants of Canton*, 164.



Perhaps the gesture was intended to offer something in exchange for his economic sacrifice, namely, an opportunity to consolidate a level of influence comparable to that once exercised by his father, but we cannot be certain.<sup>245</sup>

Poankeequa resisted the dubious honor of purchasing the cargo on behalf of Governor Fu, which threatened him with a significant financial loss. Once again, mistrust of the mandarins came to the fore. We cannot know whether the Governor-General intended to reimburse him for the transaction, but it appears unlikely. Randall explained that “Pankikoa expostulated upon his being obliged to purchase the skins, not having sold me any goods.” The arrangement violated a custom that the merchant could, at the least, offset the rarity contribution through reciprocal sales of porcelain, silk, tea, and other export products.<sup>246</sup> Moreover, it “agitated” the relationship between Randall and Poankeequa. Randall contributed to the atmosphere of mistrust when, once again, he “opposed” the porters sent to take possession of the furs, arguing that he still had not been paid. In doing so, he interfered in more than a simple transaction, but also transgressed the protocol of deference between merchants and imperial officials, between commoners and nobles, and between Han Chinese and Manchus. By obstructing the deal, he brought “great disgrace” upon a respected *hong* merchant and threatened to “insult”

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<sup>245</sup> Poankeequa the Elder had been responsible for making gifts to imperial officials on behalf of the *Cohong*. Van Dyke observes that the mandarins extended this role to his sons, as well. *Columbia* may have represented one of the first opportunities for Poankeequa II to affirm his influence with the Mandarins. Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 61.

<sup>246</sup> Whether the same custom applied in the case of “presents,” particularly in connection with the Lunar New Year, is uncertain. Garrett, *Heaven is High, the Emperor Far Away*, 77.

the Governor-General. Poankeequa described the deteriorating situation as a “kill business” that could “ruin” him, especially if his elite customers began to perceive him as incompetent.

In pressing Randall to release the furs to Governor Fu, Poankeequa articulated both a strong disincentive to further delay and a compelling incentive for compliance. In each case, he constructed the transfer of furs as an enterprise with implications for both parties.<sup>247</sup> First, Poankeequa emphasized that the Shaw & Randall partnership would also suffer “if the skins were not in the city that night, before the gates of it were shut.”<sup>248</sup> His argument suggested a potent disincentive to further delay in that, if the partnership brought undue hardship upon the *Cohong*, the *hong* merchants would do future business on less advantageous terms, if at all. In short, the merchants would compensate for higher risk by passing their expenses along to Shaw & Randall, with negative consequences for American standing, influence, and commerce in Canton.<sup>249</sup> Second, Poankeequa requested a special meeting with several *hong* merchants in order to determine a more equitable means of compensating Randall. The merchants probably gathered at the Consoo House, a location where members of the *Cohong* discussed matters of mutual

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<sup>247</sup> Many economists argue that a combination of incentives and disincentives can have a strong influence on cooperation and trust building. See Harbring, “On the Effect of Incentive Schemes on Trust and Trustworthiness,” 708.

<sup>248</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>249</sup> Harris H. Kim, “Market Uncertainty and Socially Embedded Reputation,” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 68, no. 3 (2009): 679-83.

interest, such as bankruptcies, regulations, duties, or misunderstandings.<sup>250</sup> Following a “long and passionate conversation,” Poankeequa informed Randall that Pinqua had agreed to “pay me at the price I demanded for the whole of the skins.”<sup>251</sup> The promise, however, served as an incentive for more than simple compliance, but also provided the critical mass necessary to foster a modicum of trust.<sup>252</sup> Indeed, Randall now affirmed the reputation of the *hong* merchants as men “who trusted, and were trusted by every European.” Expecting to receive payment the next morning, Randall “thought it would be impudent to hesitate longer,” and released the cargo for delivery to Governor Fu.<sup>253</sup> His compliance helped to establish mutual transparency, as well as to restore trust between the trading partners.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Hunter, *The Fan Kwae Before Treaty Days*, 23-24.

<sup>251</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38–55.

<sup>252</sup> Economists have shown that expressions of trust depend, in part, upon received information about the trustworthiness of a potential trading partner. See Fehr, “On the Economics and Biology of Trust,” 257-59.

<sup>253</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38–55.

<sup>254</sup> Economists agree that transparency is important to a culture of trust and trustworthiness between business partners. Nonetheless, there is no consensus definition of “transparency” in modern economics of business scholarship, largely because of a structural transition to the service economy in Western enterprise. Indeed, Andrew Schnackenberg and Edward Tomlinson have suggested that transparency is “the perceived quality of intentionally shared information from a sender,” although this definition is strongly connected to the modern information economy. Nonetheless, it would appear that the concept of transparency also functions in the context of eighteenth-century commerce. Here, it follows that visible (or otherwise verifiable) fulfillment of the terms of an exchange are helpful in building mutual confidence in the outcome of a transaction. Other scholars have recognized that “since ancient times,” transparency has been “a potent antidote to the mischiefs of power, such as inefficiency, fraud, and corruption.” For example, Mikkel Flyverbom, Lars Thøger Christensen, and Hans Krause Hansen emphasize that a condition of “co-presence or accessibility... make people or processes transparent,” and that

The conclusion to the *Columbia* transaction also pivoted on a failure of transparency between the *hong* merchants. Randall complained that “the next morning I applied to Pinqua for settlement” but instead faced a new demand that he should accept “four thousand dollars less than the price agreed on before.” The complication stemmed from ambiguities between *legal* and *ethical* constructions of liability. Pinqua explained that the other merchants “had promised to pay him their respective proportions of the price of the skins.”<sup>255</sup> The arrangement, which recognized the principle of collective liability among the *hong* merchants, was a common solution to bad transactions.<sup>256</sup> The *Cohong* existed, in part, to protect the community from losses large enough to trigger a bankruptcy, or worse, a series of bankruptcies. The syndicate observed the same principle in apportioning a failing member’s debts to his more prosperous colleagues.<sup>257</sup> In the

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most scholarship describes transparency “in terms of observation and information.” In the goods-driven world of Canton, then, I propose that a suitable modification of the above definition of transparency might be “the perceived quality of intentionally shared implementation from a trading partner.” See Andrew K. Schnackenberg and Edward C. Tomlinson, “Organizational Transparency: A New Perspective on managing Trust in Organization-Stakeholder Relationships,” *Journal of Management* (published online, March 10, 2014, 0149206314525202), 5-7.; Mikkel Flyverbom, Lars Thøger Christensen, and Hans Krause Hansen, “The Transparency-Power Nexus: Observational and Regularizing Control,” *Management Communication Quarterly*, 29, no. 3 (2015), 386-88, 389-92.; Irish Bohnet, Steffen Huck, Heike Harmgart and Jean-Robert Tyran, “Learning Trust,” *Journal of the European Economic Association* 3, no. 2/3, Papers and Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Congress of the European Economic Association (2005), 323, 327-29.

<sup>255</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>256</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 97.

<sup>257</sup> We cannot be certain how the merchants intended to support Pinqua. One avenue of recourse available to the merchants who suffered a loss was the Consoo Fund, a form of commercial insurance maintained by the administrators of the *Cohong*. The fund, originally established by the Poankeequa the Elder, operated in a manner similar to the maritime insurance rings common in the United States. Import and export duties supported the fund, which compensated the creditors

worst scenario, an institutional failure to control bankruptcies and satisfy creditors would result in collective punishment of the *hong* merchants.<sup>258</sup> Put simply, legal precedent defined liability in a corporate manner. According to Pinqua, however, the merchants “broke their promise” on grounds that he furnished the *Columbia* with tea and should “take the profit & loss together.” Randall did not witness the “long and passionate conversation” in which the merchants crafted the agreement, nor the circumstances under which it collapsed. Indeed, the tea transaction may not have been common knowledge until Pinqua requested *Columbia*’s “Grand Chop,” or exit permit.<sup>259</sup> Poankeequa is probably responsible for cancelling the agreement, given his interest in the rights and responsibilities of the security merchant. There was no reason, in his mind, for the group to compensate the one individual who stood to benefit from *Columbia*.<sup>260</sup> Monqua, the leading merchant, may have opposed the arrangement for other reasons—his own

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of bankrupt merchants and protected against “exactions of the government.” The agreement to compensate Pinqua probably originated at the Consoo House, home to the Consoo Fund, which would in turn suggest the application of the fund to purchase *Columbia*’s cargo. If, however, the merchants agreed to pay “their respective proportions of the price,” then the agreement probably did not utilize the fund which, of course, was already “paid” through taxes. The other possibility is that the merchants who assumed “proportions” of the cost did so against their own taxes in arrears to the Consoo Fund. It is ultimately beyond the scope of this dissertation to seek an answer to this question, but it bears consideration in light of the possible advantages to Pinqua (see note 262, below). See John Phipps, *A Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade Comprising the Commerce of Great Britain and India, Particularly Bengal and Singapore with China and the Eastern Islands* (London: William H. Allen and Company, 1836), 151-52.

<sup>258</sup> Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 54-62, 146.

<sup>259</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>260</sup> Here, we should recall Poankeequa’s “expostulation” about the injustice of “being obliged to purchase the skins” without having an opportunity to stock *Columbia*. See “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

resources were badly overextended during the 1780s.<sup>261</sup> In this regard, then, business ethics suggested a different understanding of who *ought* to be individually liable. *Columbia*'s cargo revealed that, while the merchant community bore *de jure* responsibility for her cargo, *de facto* responsibility fell entirely upon Pinqua.

Pinqua reacted with desperation to the collapse of the deal, claiming that “he should lose fifteen thousand dollars by the business” and proclaiming that Randall “must also suffer some loss.” Consequently, he demanded a discount of \$4,000 and threatened that, if not satisfied, “he would not furnish... the passport for the ship *Columbia* to depart.” The ultimatum left Randall with no alternative. Irritated at the constant “frauds and impositions,” he accepted the discounted price of \$21,400, thus bringing the *Columbia* transaction to a conclusion.<sup>262</sup> The experience left him embittered, tired, and

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<sup>261</sup> Frederic Delano Grant, Jr., *The Chinese Cornerstone of Modern Banking: The Canton Guaranty System and the Origins of Bank Deposit Insurance 1780-1933* (Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2014), 118-22.

<sup>262</sup> A number of monetary inconsistencies confound the historian. First, Pinqua claimed that he would “lose fifteen thousand dollars by the business” despite Randall reporting that the merchant paid a sum of \$21,400. There are two unsatisfactory explanations for the discrepancy—either Randall fabricated the numbers in the accounting presented to Robert Gray and Robert Howe or, alternatively, Pinqua received compensation to the tune of \$6,400 over the objections of his colleagues. A second inconsistency concerns the possibility that Pinqua benefitted from his “loss” to an incredible degree. The evidence does not state whether he claimed compensation from the Consoo Fund, as discussed above, a strategy that he might have pursued against the wishes of Poankeequa and Monqua. It is possible, though, that Pinqua leveraged the fund to recover his “loss” of \$15,000 while squeezing an additional \$4,000 from Randall. Finally, a third inconsistency concerns John Kendrick’s claim that Shaw & Randall sold the *Columbia* cargo for a sum of \$26,000, rather than the reported sum of \$21,400. Kendrick never presented the evidence that he claimed could “prove” the accusation against Randall. See “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.; “The *Columbia*’s Accounts with Messrs. Shaw & Randall,” 141.; “John Kendrick to Joseph Barrell, 28 March, 1792,” 472.

unwilling to do further business with the Columbians. Randall stated that he “often repented our accepting this consignment on the part of Capt. Gray and M. Howe.” The contract interfered with the departure of another “large Ship now loaded” as well as his own return voyage to the United States.<sup>263</sup> Furthermore, he “positively” declined to accept the consignment of *Lady Washington*’s furs.<sup>264</sup> Six months later, he articulated the lessons learned during the frustrating transaction. Randall recognized great potential in the fur trade but warned that Americans needed “Spanish dollars” and an “established factory” in order to maximize their profits in China. Spanish dollars, struck of silver, enabled traders to make purchases independent of the price of furs and, therefore, to gain “the preference of the Market.” Likewise, a factory would enable traders to store their furs and “wait the season over” in anticipation of obtaining “a good price.”<sup>265</sup> The lessons might have resonated if Randall had represented any country other than the United States. But neither was a realistic option in a cash-poor republic born under the banner of free trade. The Columbians learned different lessons.

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<sup>263</sup> “Messrs. Shaw & Randall to Joseph Barrell, 7 February 1790,” 139-140.; “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

<sup>264</sup> “Robert Gray to John Kendrick, 29 January 1790” in Howay, ed., *Voyages of the Columbia*, 133.

<sup>265</sup> “Thomas Randall to Alexander Hamilton, 14 August 1791,” 38-55.

CHAPTER V  
“THE TERRAQUEOUS GLOBE”

Following thirty-four arduous months away from home, *Columbia* returned to Boston on 9 August 1790. She arrived to great fanfare and the Columbians disembarked as heroes, having become the first Americans in the Pacific. Two days later, the *Columbian Centinel*, a leading newspaper of Boston, announced “with real pleasure” the expedition’s return “from a voyage of adventure” to the most distant quarters of the globe. Benjamin Russell, the publisher, regarded *Columbia*’s accomplishments as news of the first order. Russell stressed the national dimensions of the voyage, arguing that the “country is indebted” to the investors for establishing “a branch of commerce before unessayed by Americans.” Furthermore, he recognized the critical role of the Columbians. Russell observed that the United States was “under obligation to the intrepid Navigators who have conducted this voyage.”<sup>1</sup> The article boasted a full column of print, or one-sixteenth of the *Centinel*. Comprising almost 700 words, it compared in length to other items of national significance, including dispatches from Europe, an economics

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<sup>1</sup> “Boston, Wednesday, Aug. 11, The Columbia.” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 11 August 1790.



essay by Benjamin Franklin, and an “Act to Regulate Trade and Intercourse with the Indian Tribes.”<sup>2</sup>

**BOSTON, WEDNESDAY, AUG. 11**  
**THE COLUMBIA.**  
It is with real pleasure we announce, the safe arrival, in this port, on Monday last, of the Ship COLUMBIA, Capt. GRAY, from a voyage of adventure to the North-West Coast of America.  
This Ship, in company with the Sloop WASHINGTON, sailed on the 30th September, 1787, and the year following reached their place of destination—from whence the Columbia sailed with Furs, which she disposed of in China, on her return home.  
To Messrs. BARRELL, BROWN, BULFINCH, HATCH, DEBBY, and PINTARD, who planned the voyage, their country is indebted; for this experiment in a branch of Commerce before untried by Americans! And to their care in provid-

Figure 20. Detail of “Boston, Wednesday, Aug. 11—The Columbia,” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 11 August 1790.

<sup>2</sup> In the same issue, the *Centinel* also reported on the conflict brewing between Spain and Great Britain following the Nootka Incident. Curiously, however, the newspaper published “journal extracts” attesting to *Columbia*’s presence at Nootka during the incident, but gave no indication that the Columbians had, in fact, assisted Spanish Governor Martínez in expelling the British. The federal government received notification of their collaboration in May, 1790, but although the American public remained unaware of the matter. The *Centinel* reprinted two items pertaining to the incident. King George’s Message to Parliament gave no indication of American involvement in the Nootka Incident. Later, an “extract of a letter from on board the Supply, Capt. Colnet” claimed that “an American ship and sloop” participated in a second incident, but neglected to name *Columbia* and *Washington*. See “Bella! horrida Bella!” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 23 June 1790.; “Nootka Sound.” *Columbian Centinel*, 31 July 1790.; “Boston, Wednesday, Aug. 11, The Columbia.” *Columbian Centinel*, 11 August 1790.

Meanwhile, the Columbians returned to a nation transformed, in which patriotic news traveled quickly, far, and wide. In their absence, the United States adopted a federal constitution, erected a central government, and inaugurated its first President, George Washington. Thirteen states had become one nation in law, as well as spirit.<sup>3</sup> Newspapers across the land reprinted the article, proudly informing readers about the “first American vessels who have circumnavigated the Globe.”<sup>4</sup> The achievement placed the Columbians in the ranks of pioneering navigators such as Magellan, Drake, and Bougainville, whose circumnavigations attested to their prestige and global aspirations of Spain, England, and France.<sup>5</sup> The announcement traveled like lightning. Some newspapers, such as *Osbourne’s New-Hampshire Spy* and *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, carried the article on the same morning as the *Columbian Centinel*. Five days later, the *New-York Daily Gazette* reported *Columbia’s* accomplishments in the nation’s capital. Residents of Philadelphia, the most populous American city, learned of *Columbia* on the sixth day, when multiple newspapers printed the story. Ultimately, within a fortnight, newspapers in every state north of Mason’s and Dixon’s line reported on *Columbia*, a geographic

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 669-87.

<sup>4</sup> “Boston, Wednesday, Aug. 11, The Columbia.” *Columbian Centinel*, 11 August, 1790.

<sup>5</sup> Joyce Chaplin, *Round About the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), xvi-xix, 140-42.

distribution that closely mirrors the home ports of later expeditions to the Northwest Coast.<sup>6</sup>

During her first voyage, *Columbia* demonstrated that Americans could, within five years of a war for independence, complete an ambitious commercial enterprise in the distant Pacific Ocean. From the perspective of the mariner, shipwright, or sea worker, the expedition was an unqualified success. The Columbians could take pride in their accomplishment, which set new navigational records for the United States. The distances involved were staggering. During the years 1787-90, *Columbia* logged 48,889 miles at sea without a major accident, failure, or incident.<sup>7</sup> No previous expedition originating in the thirteen colonies or the United States dared to accumulate such mileage. Only a

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<sup>6</sup> “Boston, August 11” *Osbourne’s New-Hampshire Spy* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), 14 August 1790.; “Boston, August 11” *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, 14 August 1790.; [No Headline] *The Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal* (Boston, Massachusetts), 16 August, 1790.; “Boston, August 11” *The Connecticut Courant, and Weekly Intelligencer* (Hartford, Connecticut), 16 August 1790; [No Headline] *New-York Daily Gazette* (New York, New York), 16 August, 1790.; “By This Day’s Mail. Boston, August 11” *The Federal Gazette and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), 17 August 1790.; “Boston, August 11. The Columbia” *Gazette of the United States* (New York, New York), 18 August 1790.; “From the Columbian Centinel Dated Boston, August 11” *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), 18 August 1790.; [No Headline] *The United States Chronicle: Political, Commercial and Historical* (Providence, Rhode Island), 19 August 1790, 2.; “From the Columbian Centinel of August 11” *The Burlington Advertiser, or Agricultural and Political Intelligencer* (Burlington, New Jersey), 24 August 1790.

<sup>7</sup> Both vessels faced disaster on occasion. In 1789, *Lady Washington* struck rocks in Bucareli Bay. Similarly, *Columbia* struck rocks in the vicinity of Laredo Sound in 1792. When either vessel did sustain damage, however, the Columbians made expert repairs and returned the ship to service. See Robert Haswell, “A Voyage Round the World Onboard the Ship *Columbia Rediviva* and Sloop *Washington*,” in *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 & 1790-1793*, ed. Frederic W. Howay (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1790), 93-94.; “Robert Gray and John Hoskins to Joseph Barrell,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 479-80.; “The Columbia.” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 11 August 1790.

handful of vessels, all involved in the East Indies or China Trade, came anywhere close to matching her record.<sup>8</sup> The shipbuilder could also see much to admire. *Columbia* withstood squalls, gale winds, ice storms, sweltering heat, rocks, and shipworms for three years before returning to Boston. Although Captain Gray considered her “much out of repair,” she arrived in seaworthy condition.<sup>9</sup> From the perspective of *Columbia*’s crew, the expedition was quite safe, having sustained only four casualties during the voyage—all during the initial passage to the Northwest Coast.<sup>10</sup> Her casualty rate is exceptionally

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<sup>8</sup> *Empress of China* sailed approximately 32,000 miles from New York to Canton, and back, in 1784-85. *Grand Turk*, sailing from Salem, made an expedition of perhaps 33,000 miles.

<sup>9</sup> “Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, Canton Decemr. 18th 1789,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 128-30.

<sup>10</sup> The verified casualty rate for the first *Columbia* expedition is 8%. John Nutting, alternatively described as the “Astronomer” and “School Master,” became the expedition’s first casualty on 15 January 1788. John B. Treat described the astronomer as “being insane” and stated that he “threw himself overboard and was lost.” Captain Kendrick states only that Nutting “unfortunately drowned.” Additionally, two seamen died of scurvy aboard the *Columbia*. John Hammond perished on 19 September 1789, prior to the ship’s arrival at Nootka Sound. Hanse Lawton passed on 28 September 1789, five days after *Columbia* anchored at Friendly Cove. Haswell did not directly comment upon their deaths because he was assigned to *Lady Washington* during the passage to the Northwest Coast. Nonetheless, he identified scurvy as the cause and notes that the *Columbia*’s crew “were in an advanced state of that malignant Distemper.” The deaths of Hammond, Lawton, and Nutting are recorded without explanation in the “Ship Columbia’s Portage.” One other crewmember died in an incident of violence between the Columbians and Indians. Marco Lopez (“Marcus Lopus”), a Cabo Verdean who shipped as Gray’s servant, was killed onshore at “Murderer’s Cove” (Tillamook Bay) on 16 August 1788. Haswell explained that Lopez was murdered while attempting to recover his cutlass after Indians “took a favourable opportunity to snatch it... and then run off with it.” John Treat mentioned that a second Cabo Verdean died expedition, but no other source corroborates the presence of this crew member. See Robert Haswell, “A Voyage round the World,” 37, 41, 52; “John Kendrick to Joseph Barrell, Nootka Sound July 13th 1789,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 121; “John B. Treat to Samuel Breck, Nootka Sound July 14th 1789,” in *ibid.*, 124.; “Ship Columbia’s Portage,” in *ibid.*, 150-51.

low for the eighteenth century, exceeding even scientific voyages by captains such as James Cook.<sup>11</sup>

National leaders also recognized the transformative significance of the first American vessel to enter the Pacific, touch upon the Northwest Coast, and circumnavigate the globe. John Quincy Adams reported to his mother, Abigail, that “the principal topic of conversation this week has been the arrival of the *Columbia* from an expedition which has carried her round the world.”<sup>12</sup> His father, John Adams, a recipient of the *Columbia-Washington* medal, and Vice-President of the United States, must have appreciated the accomplishment on the part of his fellow Bostonians.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Governor John Hancock of Massachusetts prepared a Sea Letter, or maritime passport, in which he requested that foreign powers lend “aid and assistance” to *Columbia* during her second expedition.<sup>14</sup> Thomas Jefferson, the Secretary of State, took interest in her implications upon foreign policy. In 1790, he followed the eruption of the “Nootka Crisis,” an international incident in which the Spanish Governor of Nootka Sound,

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<sup>11</sup> Tony Horwitz, *Blue Latitudes: Boldly Going Where Captain Cook Has Gone Before* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2002), 204-08.

<sup>12</sup> “John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Boston, August 14th 1790,” *The Adams Papers, Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 9, *January 1790 – December 1793*, ed. C. James Taylor, Margaret A. Hogan, Karen N. Barzilay, Gregg L. Lint, Hobson Woodward, Mary T. Claffey, Robert F. Karachuk, and Sara B. Sikes. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 89–92.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Barrell, Boston, to John Adams, 24 November 1787, ALS, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>14</sup> “Sea Letter from the Governor of Massachusetts to Robert Gray,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 442.

Estevan Martínez, arrested and imprisoned the crews of two English vessels on suspicion of freebooting. According to one correspondent, *Columbia* and *Washington* were anchored at Nootka Sound during the altercation, and some rumors suggested that the ships “even seem to have been employed in a part of the operation.”<sup>15</sup> *Columbia* even commanded the attention of the most famous man in America, General George Washington. In 1788, Joseph Barrell wrote to the general, sending him a silver copy of the *Columbia-Washington* medal. Washington replied that the gift brought him “great satisfaction” and gave him confidence that “the sources of commerce shall be enlarged

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<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Captains Kendrick and Gray collaborated with the Spanish Governor of Nootka Sound, Estevan Martínez, to neutralize their British competitors on the Northwest Coast. Charged with preventing foreign merchants, settlers, or freebooters from imposing upon Spanish claims to the Northwest Coast, Martínez regarded the American presence as less threatening than that British. In fact, the governor made common cause with and showered hospitality upon the Columbians, behavior that, in the words of one historian, “contrast[s] notably with his behavior toward the English.” The Columbians, for their part, understood that their position of privilege depended upon supporting the governor against the British. They watched from the sidelines when Martínez expelled *Ifigenia Nubiana* on suspicion of freebooting. Likewise, they bore silent witness as he seized *Princess Royal* and imprisoned her crew. On 3 July 1789, however, Martínez requested and received active assistance from Kendrick in capturing the British vessel *Argonaut*. Some scholars conclude that the Columbians even contributed the leg irons used to restrain the British prisoners, although the evidence is unclear on this point. In 1790, William Short, Jefferson’s private secretary in Paris, reported the rumor that “there were two American vessels there [Nootka Sound]... which were unmolested by the Spanish commander and which even seem to have been employed in a part of the operation.” Fortunately for the United States, which could not afford another conflict with Great Britain, Short also learned that “The English Minister at this court considers the American vessels as having been forced to this against their will.” Meanwhile, he reported that “the rage for war, and desire to seize on Spanish treasures, and punish, as they express themselves, an insult to the British flag, pervade all ranks of people in London.” See Haswell, “A Voyage round the World,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 28, 85.; “John Kendrick to Don Estevan José Martínez, May 16th [1789],” in *ibid.*, 119-20.; “William Short to John Jay, Paris May the 23rd. 1790” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 16, 30 November 1789–4 July 1790, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 436-441.; “William Short to John Jay, Paris May the 11th. 1790” in *ibid.*, 425-26.; Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 151-60, 162, 167, 173-74.; George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World* (London: G.G. and J. Robinson and J. Edwards, 1798), 3:492-93.

and replenished.” Striking a patriotic note, he looked forward to a future in which “the new Constellation of this Hemisphere,” the thirteen United States, might be “hailed and respected in every quarter of the terraqueous globe!”<sup>16</sup> Washington understood that *Columbia*’s achievements mirrored the revolutionary age itself—her voyage to the Pacific reflected the new nation’s reorientation away from Europe and toward the wider world.

*Columbia*’s first expedition, however, which accomplished so much in terms of proving the feasibility of an American voyage to the Pacific, was a financial disappointment. Writing from Canton, Captain Robert Gray forewarned the principals that “our expedition Gentlemen will not be equal to your expectations.”<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Thomas Randall communicated that *Columbia*’s “funds will not admit her carrying home any other than bohea tea,” the least expensive variety.<sup>18</sup> *Lady Washington*’s status further complicated the picture. Barrell speculated that “Kendrick in the Sloop we suppose now Trading on the NW Coast,” a development that would, at the least, delay any financial returns from that branch of the enterprise. The investors cannot have relished the avalanche of bad news, but Barrell—in his usual resilient way—tried to paint the

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<sup>16</sup> “George Washington to Joseph Barrell, 8 June 1788,” in *The Papers of George Washington*, Confederation Series, vol. 6, *1 January 1788–23 September 1788*, ed. W.W. Abbot (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 316-17.

<sup>17</sup> “Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, Canton Decemr. 18th 1789” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 128-30.

<sup>18</sup> “Messrs. Shaw & Randall to Joseph Barrell, Canton Decemr. 18<sup>th</sup> 1789” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 130.

outcome in a more positive light. Writing to his brother Nathaniel, he explained that *Columbia* was expected in the summer of 1790, “and ‘tis probable that ship alone will make a good Voyage, but nothing equal to what we laughed about.”<sup>19</sup> The evidence concerning *Columbia*’s return cargo is sparse, but she probably shipped the equivalent of 220 chests, or 71,360 pounds, of tea from Canton to Boston.<sup>20</sup> We know with relative certainty that 12,213 pounds, or 17 percent, of her cargo “received damage on the Voyage,” probably during a storm somewhere between St. Helena and Boston.<sup>21</sup> The principals auctioned this portion through the houses of fellow Bostonians, Lewis Hayt and Russell & Clap.<sup>22</sup> The damaged cargo sold at a biting discount and probably represented a loss of \$1,800 to \$3,340. Accidental damage could occur on any voyage,

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph Barrell, Boston, to Nathaniel Barrell, 9 June 1790, ALS, Sandeman-Barrell Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>20</sup> In actuality, the revenue of \$11,241.51 could purchase 220.25 chests of tea—a number that suggests the presence of at least one quarter-chest. In fact, we know that a minimum of 34 half-chests and 39 quarter-chests shipped aboard *Columbia*. Previous accounts of the expedition have assumed, based on the paucity of sources, that the damaged chests constitute the entire cargo. There is no reason to believe, however, that the Columbians would have shipped fewer chests than their revenue permitted. See “Sale of *Columbia*’s Damaged Cargo” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 148-49.; “For Benefit of Insurers. On Monday next, At Eleven o’clock, Will be sold by Publick Vendue at Store, No.6, leading to Green’s wharf, Thirty-six chests—31 half chests—38 quarter chests damaged Bohea Tea, imported in the ship *Columbia*, Capt. Robert Gray, from Canton. Russell and Clap, Auctioneers.” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston Massachusetts), 21 August 1790.

<sup>21</sup> “Richard S. Howe and Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, 18 January, 1790” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 131-32.; “Sale of *Columbia*’s Damaged Cargo” in *ibid.*, 148-49.

<sup>22</sup> “To-morrow, Will be sold by Publick Vendue, at Lewis Hayt’s Office, Fifteen Chesrs damaged Bohea Tea, for the Benefit of all concerned...” *The Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal* (Boston, Massachusetts), 30 August 1790.; “For Benefit of Insurers. On Monday next,” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston Massachusetts), 21 August 1790.



anywhere in the world, but it cannot have been encouraging to investors in an experimental field of commerce.

Meanwhile, we can estimate the financial impact of *Columbia*'s undamaged teas, but in no circumstance could they salvage an unprofitable voyage. The sources are silent concerning the remaining cargo, which probably represented between 21.8 and 26.4 long tons of tea. The principals could have auctioned, retailed, or reshipped the remaining chests. Assuming that the remainder auctioned at a typical wholesale rate of 1s, or \$0.24, per pound, the principals would have sustained an overall loss of \$645 to \$2,154. By comparison, if they retailed the remainder at 2s, or \$0.58, per pound, the expedition would have realized a larger sum of \$23,426 to \$28,409. John Quincy Adams observed that "the adventurers after having their expectations raised to the highest pitch, were utterly disappointed." Indeed, even the maximum return was underwhelming when considered against the cost of the expedition. Adams further noted that "instead of the immense profits upon which they had calculated" the principals would "scarcely have their outsets refunded to them."<sup>23</sup> In reality, the owners came nowhere close to recovering the "outsets"—even the most lucrative path would recover the equivalent of £5,918, or a pitiful 12 percent of their initial investment of £49,000.

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<sup>23</sup> "John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Boston, August 14th 1790," *The Adams Papers*, Adams Family Correspondence, 89–92.

*“Sink or Swim Together”*

*Columbia*'s second expedition, from 1790-93, built upon previous experience to achieve financial success and reinforce the human relationships that sustained global trade. Failure is a powerful teacher. In August 1790, Joseph Barrell and the Columbians internalized the lessons of the first expedition and developed new strategies for success. The second voyage incorporated new relationships between the owners and officers. Financial incentives would encourage a disciplined approach to the enterprise. The expedition also adopted new methods to increase trade on the Northwest Coast and reduce the expenses of the Canton System. *Columbia* would sail with a professional furrier, the materials to construct a second vessel, and a wider range of trade goods. Meanwhile, Captain Gray prepared to engage in smuggling if legitimate business failed. Finally, upon returning to Canton, the Columbians would solicit a broker and a security merchant in a tactical manner, seeking individuals who could perform a swift and profitable transaction. *Columbia*'s first voyage had been an experiment. In contrast, her second expedition would lay the commercial foundations of an American Pacific.



Figure 21. Gilbert Stuart, *Portrait of Prominent Boston Merchant and Privateer Joseph Barrell*, 1790, oil on canvas, 66. x 53.3 cm., Private Collection.

*Columbia*'s first expedition resulted in financial failure, and the principals could have abandoned the enterprise, cut their losses, and invested elsewhere. Instead, Joseph Barrell and his partners "were again induced to fit the Ship" for a second expedition—one that could take advantage of lessons learned during *Columbia*'s first transit of the globe.<sup>24</sup> John Derby and John Pintard, both silent partners, liquidated their two-fourteenths of the enterprise, but the other investors remained committed to the voyage. Captain Robert Gray, in cooperation with Isaac Davenport and John McLean, merchants

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<sup>24</sup> John Hoskins, "Narrative of the Second Voyage of the 'Columbia'," in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 165-66.

of Orange Street, purchased the outstanding shares.<sup>25</sup> The prospects for a second “adventure” were promising. During the first expedition, the Columbians internalized key lessons about the furbearing animals, producers, and commercial geography of the Northwest Coast. Meanwhile, business continued to boom at Canton. In 1787, the British East India Company shipped goods valued at more than 845,000 silver taels. By comparison, in 1790, this sum exceeded 1,830,000 taels. Likewise, Western imports to Canton had grown to a sum exceeding seven million Spanish Dollars, a significant increase above the figures for 1787.<sup>26</sup>

The preparations for the second *Columbia* voyage demonstrated that the principals had internalized the lessons of the first expedition. First, they reinforced their relationship with the senior crewmembers in order to bolster a sense of common purpose. Robert Gray’s decision to become a shareholder showed confidence in his own ability to turn a profit at Canton.<sup>27</sup> The captain’s willingness to risk his own, lesser fortune may

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<sup>25</sup> Davenport and McLean may have invested on the recommendation of businessman John Codman. Joseph Barrell’s business office was situated on Codman’s Wharf, which extended east from Market Square into Boston Harbor. See “Ship Columbia second voyage to the N.W. Coast of America,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 465.; *Boston Directory* (Boston: John Norman, 1789), 16.; Annie Haven Thwing, *Inhabitants and estates of the town of Boston, 1630-1800: and the crooked and narrow streets of Boston 1630-1822* [CD-ROM] (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society and Massachusetts Historical Society, 2001), reference codes 23213 and 44172.; “Merchant’s Row,” Plate 3300, in Samuel Chester Clough, *Clough’s Atlas 1798: Property Owners of the Town of Boston* (c.1900), Samuel Chester Clough Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>26</sup> Morse gives the value of Western imports in 1790 as 5,069,653 兩. See Hosea Ballou Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China, 1635-1834* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926), 2:136, 201.

<sup>27</sup> “Ship Columbia second voyage to the N.W. Coast of America,” 465.

have helped convince the principals to outfit another expedition. Moreover, it welded his interests to those of the principals. Joseph Barrell recognized the symbolic importance of going “hand in hand” with Gray when he suggested that the owners would now “sink or swim together.”<sup>28</sup> The new relationship was doubly important because, by 1790, John Kendrick had neglected “those golden opportunities” to profit by the fur trade, and was considered to have absconded with *Lady Washington*.<sup>29</sup> Thus, rather than depending

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<sup>28</sup> Joseph Barrell, “Joseph Barrell’s Instructions to Robert Gray, Boston, September 25, 1790” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 446.

<sup>29</sup> John Kendrick’s reputation suffered tremendously because of his autonomous, and later independent, operation of *Lady Washington*. Kendrick made multiple cruises on the Northwest Coast and to Canton, but he eventually found himself at odds with the principal investors. His relationship with Robert Gray also grew increasingly strained, particularly after Gray became a shareholder in the enterprise—including, of course, *Lady Washington*. Kendrick’s transactions never benefitted the owners and only partially offset his own mounting debts. His other projects, however well intentioned, sidetracked him from the primary goal of turning a profit. For example, his conversion of the sloop *Lady Washington* to a brigantine was intended to improve the performance of the vessel, but he ultimately accomplished this at the expense of fur-trading cruises. Likewise, his acquisition of “lands, mines, minerals... with both the produce of land and sea” could have helped establish a base on Vancouver Island, but the pursuit of deeds constituted a similar distraction from the mission at hand. Kendrick never explained his reasons for breaking away from the *Columbia* expedition, but his offer to “take the Brig on my own account... and abide by all losses and gains” shows that, by 1792, he visualized *Lady Washington* as his personal property. When Joseph Barrell wrote, in 1793, that “I have no pleasing Acct. from Kendrick & I fear I never shall,” he understood that Kendrick had—for whatever reason—appropriated the vessel and the investment it represented. John Hoskins noted that the captain “appear’d not to have the owners interest at heart, but only to gratify his own pleasures” and believed that he “was by no means calculated for the charge of such an expedition.” Modern historians continue to debate Kendrick. Independent scholar Scott Ridley, for example, considers him a “legend and inspiration” who took tremendous risks to advance the interests of employers who mistrusted his intentions. Conversely, Frederic Howay contends that “as a commander of an expedition he was a complete failure.” The majority consensus holds that Kendrick was, at best, a bumbling captain unequal to his command, and at worst, an opportunistic parasite whose actions smacked of piracy. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, to contend with this debate in a meaningful way. See John Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 165.; U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee of Public Lands. Report No. 335 (Felch Report). 32<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Reports of the Committees of the Senate of the United States*, vol. 2. (Washington: A. Boyd Hamilton Printer, 1852), 22.; “John Kendrick to Joseph Barrell, Macoa, in China, Mar. 28, 1792” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 471. Frederic W. Howay, “John Kendrick and His Sons,” *The*

upon a “whimsical and vacillating” captain who might never return, the owners elevated Robert Gray to command the second *Columbia* expedition.<sup>30</sup> In his instructions to Gray, Barrell emphasized that the captain was “now accountable for the conduct of the present voyage” and reminded him of “the pointed manner in which every one condemns the conduct of the last.” Meanwhile, the owners introduced new incentives for good behavior. Drawing upon the privateer tradition of prize-sharing, Barrell offered the captain and officers a commission “upon the sales of the cargo in Boston.”<sup>31</sup> A successful voyage would float all boats.

Second, the principals articulated new commercial insights gained during the first round of business in China. Barrell now understood that legitimate business, carried out through the Canton System, could result in excessive tolls, port fees, and presents. Instead, he emphasized that the Columbians attempt to avoid those expenses by “selling at the mouth of the river” rather than at Canton. His instructions to Gray, therefore, included a tacit recognition that smuggling might result in a significant profit for the owners.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, Gray notified the principals of another opportunity to trim the costs of legitimate business at Canton. He explained that it might be possible to “save at least

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*Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 2, no. 4 (1922): 285-89.; Scott Ridley, *Morning of Fire: John Kendrick’s Daring American Odyssey in the Pacific* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 203.; Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, xii-xiii.

<sup>30</sup> Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, xiii.

<sup>31</sup> Barrell, “Joseph Barrell’s Instructions to Robert Gray,” 445-46.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 444.

half the duties” on *Columbia* by presenting the first expedition’s Grand Chop, or exit permit, to the customs authorities in China.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the investors prioritized the placement of a supercargo and furrier, John Hoskins, aboard *Columbia*. The decision provided the second expedition with a dedicated business manager, and Barrell instructed the officers that “in all matters of traffic on the northwest coast of America, China, or elsewhere, you will consult with Mr. John Hoskins.”<sup>34</sup> Although his presence caused friction in the chain of command, Hoskins also relieved the pressure on the other Columbians to perform as both navigators and businessmen.<sup>35</sup>

Another consideration addressed the possibility of recovering some of the expedition’s material expenses. Rather than purchasing a replacement for *Lady Washington*, the investors furnished *Columbia* with the materials necessary to build

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<sup>33</sup> Captain Gray considered the savings large enough, in fact, that upon accidentally leaving behind the Grand Chop at Boston’s customs house, he and Hoskins sent three successive letters to Joseph Barrell as reminders to “send it out to Canton by the first good safe hand.” Whether the document could actually function in this manner is questionable. Gray appears to have misunderstood the nature of the Grand Chop, which, as a comprehensive statement of the *Columbia*’s crew complement, armaments, destination, and outgoing duties paid, attested only to the particulars of the first expedition. I am unable to find any documentary evidence pertaining to the use of a Grand Chop to reduce duties, or expenses of any sort, during subsequent voyages by an individual ship. We must assume that he obtained this impression from other Westerners, perhaps either Thomas Randall or John McIntyre. See “Robert Gray and John Hoskins to Joseph Barrell, On Board the Ship *Columbia* at Sea in Latitude 5° No. Longitude 24° West, November 13<sup>th</sup> 1790,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 467.; William C. Hunter, *The Fan Kwae at Canton Before Treaty Days, 1825-1844* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, & Co., 1882), 101-02.

<sup>34</sup> Barrell, “Joseph Barrell’s Instructions to Robert Gray,” 443.

<sup>35</sup> Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, xxi.

another sloop on the Northwest Coast.<sup>36</sup> Although the “Expenditure for the Columbia’s Outfit and Cargo” makes reference to items such as “frame and plank for the Sloop” and “Blocks, etc. for the Sloop,” the majority of ordinary materials are grouped under headings such as nails, rigging, and sailcloth for the expedition at large. For this reason, we cannot know the exact cost of the unassembled sloop, but it probably did not amount to more than £500.<sup>37</sup> The Columbians assembled the sloop *Adventure* during the winter of 1790-91, and, under the command of Robert Haswell, she multiplied the second expedition’s commercial haul in the North Pacific.<sup>38</sup> The investors realized, however, that *Adventure* would be unnecessary for the full circumnavigation and, being a small vessel, could become a commercial liability in the Canton System. For this reason, Barrell authorized Captain Gray to “dispose of,” or sell, the sloop in order to recuperate her construction costs.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the captain later sold *Adventure* to Estevan Martínez, the Spanish Governor of Nootka, in exchange for 75 prime otter skins, worth perhaps \$5,000

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<sup>36</sup> The principals may have based this plan upon the prior example of John Meares, whose expedition of 1788 constructed the sloop *North West America* at Nootka Sound. Spanish Governor Estevan Martínez seized the sloop in 1789, prompting the famous “Nootka Sound Crisis” between Spain and Great Britain. See John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789 from China to the N.W. Coast of America, with an Introductory Narrative of Voyage Performed in 1786, from Bengal, in the Ship Nootka* (Logographic Press: London, 1791), 2:185-86, 208-09, 297-99, 354-57.; Barrell, “Joseph Barrell’s Instructions to Robert Gray,” 444.; “Robert Gray and Joseph Ingraham to Don Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, Nootka Sound, August 3d, 1792” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 474-79.

<sup>37</sup> “Expenditures for the Columbia’s Outfit and Cargo” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 448-454.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Haswell, “A Voyage On Discoveries in the Ship Columbia Rediviva,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 304-309.

<sup>39</sup> Barrell, “Joseph Barrell’s Instructions to Robert Gray,” 446.



at Canton.<sup>40</sup> In other words, the finished sloop fetched twice her unassembled value, if not more—a sizeable profit.

Finally, the principals gave new consideration to providing the expedition with trade goods, other than furs, that might function as a medium of exchange in China. In addition to stocking *Columbia* with metals for the Northwest Coast trade, as previously discussed, the owners also loaded her with “twenty hundred bar lead,” a material often imported at Canton.<sup>41</sup> This merchandise likely equates to 140½ pounds of “milled sheet lead” purchased from John Andrews, a merchant of Union Street, and another 2,020 pounds supplied by Benjamin Greene, Jr., of Orange Street. Unlike copper and iron, which traded as prestige commodities on the Northwest Coast, lead constituted a central ingredient in the industrial wares of China.<sup>42</sup> Since ancient times, the metal served as

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<sup>40</sup> “Robert Gray and John Hoskins to Joseph Barrell, Ship *Columbia*, Straits of de Fuca, 28 September 1792” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 486-87.

<sup>41</sup> “Certificate of the *Columbia*’s Cargo,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 443.

<sup>42</sup> The principals spent a total of £43 10s 7d (£43.5291) to equip *Columbia* with 2160.5 pounds of lead. In 1784, the *Empress of China* sold its cargo of lead for roughly ten cents per imperial pound. At this rate, the Columbians could expect to realize a moderate sum of \$216. This calculation, however, varies from actual prices at Canton in 1792-93. According to the records of the British East India Company, lead traded at 5 兩 per picul, where 1 picul is equivalent to 133.3 imperial pounds. Using this price, the second recovered £23 8s 10d, (£23.4416) or \$113. The calculation suggests that the Columbians traded at a significant loss, recovering just under 54% of the original purchase price. Like many aspects of the voyage, lead represented a financial gamble. See “Expenditures for the *Columbia*’s Outfit and Cargo,” 450-51, 461.; Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:202.; John Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s Voyage from Boston, (on a Voyage, round the Globe)” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 421.; *Boston Directory*, 5, 21.

component in Chinese pigments, cosmetics, and glasswork.<sup>43</sup> Lead also gave strength to cast-iron manufactures, bronze alloys, and coinage.<sup>44</sup> Although lead mines operated across the Qing Empire, native production was unequal to industrial demand for the material in China.<sup>45</sup> British captains had imported the metal in “considerable quantities” since the earliest days of commerce at Canton.<sup>46</sup> For the Columbians, lead might substitute in part for silver, the precious metal that oiled the wheels of commerce between East and West. The owners appear to have considered it a reasonable, if less valuable, alternative in a new republic depleted of precious metals.<sup>47</sup> Although lead could not

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<sup>43</sup> Edward H. Schafer, “The Early History of Lead Pigments and Cosmetics in China” *T’oung Pao, Second Series* 44, livr. 4/5 (1956): 413-38.

<sup>44</sup> William Rostoker, Bennet Bronson, and James Dvorak, “The Cast-Iron Bells of China,” *Technology and Culture* 25, no. 4 (1984): 751.; David Hartill, “A Study of the Metropolitan Coinage of Qian Long,” *The Numismatic Chronicle (1966-)* 151 (1991): 74, 88, 92-95.

<sup>45</sup> Robert H. Brill, Kazuo Yamasaki, I. Lynus Barnes, K.J.R. Rosman, and Migdalia Diaz, “Lead Isotopes in Some Japanese and Chinese Glasses,” *Ars Orientalis* 11 (1979): 105.; Hartill, “A Study of the Metropolitan Coinage of Qian Long,” 95-96.

<sup>46</sup> William Milburn, *Oriental Commerce; or the East India Trader’s Complete Guide; Containing a Geographical and Nautical Description of the Maritime Parts of India, China, Japan, and Neighbouring Countries, Including the Eastern Islands, and the Trading Stations on the Passage from Europe* (London: Printed for Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen, Leadenhall Street, 1825), xi-xv, 458.

<sup>47</sup> The formation of the United States federal government, in 1789, accomplished much in reversing the economic calamities that plagued the United States under the Confederation Congress. Private investment increased, new commercial institutions emerged across the country, and the nation began to retain specie. Alexander Hamilton’s Bank of the United States, in particular, through its capitalization of \$10 million in gold and silver, arrested the outflow of precious metals from United States. Nonetheless, private reserves of silver did not immediately recover, and most merchants continued to exchange in kind rather than in coin. See Paul A. Gilje, “The Rise of Capitalism in the Early Republic” in *Wages of Independence: Capitalism in the Early American Republic*, ed. Paul A. Gilje (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Ltd.,

function as hard currency in China, industry maintained a strong demand for the metal throughout the eighteenth century, and, therefore, it held a more consistent exchange value at Canton than did commodities such as woolens, cotton fabrics, and furs.<sup>48</sup> In short, lead functioned as money, if not coin.

The Columbians left behind a reliable chronology of the second expedition's activities in China, although we can reach only tentative conclusions about its transactions. For example, we know that *Columbia* entered Macao Roads on 8 December 1792. Likewise, we can be certain that she procured the usual entourage of a pilot, linguist, and comprador, and that she proceeded upriver according to the standard schedule. Finally, she reached her moorings at Whampoa Anchorage on 12 December.<sup>49</sup> From the perspective of the historian, *Columbia*'s second expedition to the Northwest Coast is far better documented than the first, with five crewmembers having chronicled her trading activities.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, the Columbians devoted only fragmentary and oblique

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2006), 2-5.; Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 98-99.

<sup>48</sup> British East India Company imports of lead at Canton increased from a value of 39,056 兩 (1784) to 53,858 兩 (1793) during the first decade of American commerce in China. This represents an increase of 37%, although the value peaked at 135,433 兩 (247%) in 1786 and at 133,338 兩 (241%) in 1790. See Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:94-95, 135-36, 184-85, 206.

<sup>49</sup> Boit, "Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*'s Voyage from Boston," 420-22.

<sup>50</sup> John Boit, John Hoskins, and Robert Haswell prepared substantial notes on the second expedition, while segments of Robert Gray's logbook attest to the first ascent of the *Columbia* River in 1792. Owen Smith, Third Mate aboard *Columbia*, also produced a journal of the operations on the Northwest Coast, but his notes do not discuss the voyage to China.

attention to their activities in China. John Boit produced the only chronicle of *Columbia's* second voyage to Canton, and his observations are unusually terse.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, the correspondence of Robert Gray and John Hoskins reveals a small number of details, but their letters cannot serve in a comprehensive fashion. For these reasons, we know little about *Columbia's* activities, trading partners, and transactions at Canton in 1792-93. A dearth of ancillary materials also places significant limitations upon our understanding of the second expedition to China. Joseph Ingraham's *Journal of the Brigantine Hope* is a notable exception, although the former Columbian comments on conditions in China during the 1791-92 season, rather than the 1792-93 season in which *Columbia* traded at Canton. Likewise, John Boit's *Log of the Union* occasionally remarks upon his prior experiences aboard *Columbia*, but his commercial observations are specific to the 1794-95 trading season. Neither of the former Columbians discusses the second expedition in meaningful terms. Further complications arise from a lack of documentation on the part of middlemen in Canton, so that our interpretation no longer rests upon the observations of a figure such as Thomas Randall. Nonetheless, the historian can draw tentative conclusions about the lessons that the Columbians learned during the first expedition, and how those lessons shaped their execution of a second voyage to China.

First, the Columbians needed to determine whether to engage in legitimate trade, or, as Barrell had suggested, to "avoid the excessive charges of going up to Canton" by

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<sup>51</sup> Boit's observations on the South China Coast, at Macao, and in Canton comprise roughly 7 percent of his chronicle of the second expedition.

smuggling the furs at Macao or Lark's Bay.<sup>52</sup> They would not have taken the decision lightly, and we can be certain that Captain Gray entertained both options. Legitimate trade at Canton required a heavy investment in the standard contractors, tolls, fees, and presents, but could result in a handsome profit. The captain needed more information in order to make an educated decision, and it was probably, in part, for this reason that he made an overnight journey to Macao. Here again, the chroniclers left no indication of what he learned there. Boit is silent except to confirm that "Capt. Gray return'd on board" and the others made no comment whatsoever.<sup>53</sup> The most accurate commercial information was available only upon ascending the river, but we can be certain that Gray obtained some indication of the price of furs from merchants in Macao. John Hoskins later commented that "furrs are very cheap and almost impossible to get rid of for money."<sup>54</sup> Writing to Joseph Barrell, he predicted that the otter pelts would not sell for more than \$40,000, which he considered "a small price for our quantity of Furrs."<sup>55</sup> Compared with the first expedition, a sale of \$40,000 would represent a clear improvement, although insufficient to make a profitable enterprise of *Columbia*. In such a

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<sup>52</sup> Barrell, "Joseph Barrell's Instructions to Robert Gray," 444.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Gray would have seen two reasons for going to Macao. First, he undoubtedly visualized the stay as a fact-finding mission. Boit confirms as much when he states that Gray returned with new information about Kendrick and *Lady Washington*. Second, Macao was the operational headquarters of the river pilots needed for an ascent to Whampoa Anchorage. See Boit, "Remarks on the Ship Columbia's Voyage from Boston," 420-21.

<sup>54</sup> "John Hoskins to Joseph Barrell, Wampoa 13 Decr. 1792," in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 487.

<sup>55</sup> "John Hoskins and Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, Ship Columbia Wompoa 22 Decr. 1792," in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 488.

scenario, the collective earnings for both voyages would reach \$60,000, versus investments and expenses of more than \$56,500—*Columbia* would just break even. Nonetheless, Hoskins remained hopeful that conditions would improve and promised that “we shall see in a few days what can be done.”<sup>56</sup>

Smuggling presented an alternative to the expenses of Canton, and, although the first expedition had engaged in legitimate trade, the Columbians also understood how to smuggle furs if needed. They probably acquired this knowledge through contact with John Kendrick, who disposed of his cargo in connivance with local smugglers during the 1789-90 season.<sup>57</sup> Some evidence for this assertion is found in Joseph Ingraham’s *Journal of the Brigantine Hope*, which chronicles his independent return to the Northwest Coast and China. Upon arriving at Macao, in December 1791, Ingraham learned from another former Columbian, Captain R. David Coolidge, that the Qianlong Emperor had declared an embargo on furs. The embargo resulted from tensions between the Qing and Russian Empires, although it also affected traders of other nationalities, as discussed below. Knowing that he could not exchange his cargo through legitimate means, Ingraham determined that his “only alternative was to go to Lark’s Bay,” a smuggling harbor crucial to the “Macao Network.”<sup>58</sup> The network dated from the earliest period of

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<sup>56</sup> John Hoskins to Joseph Barrell, Wampoa 13 Decr. 1792,” 487.

<sup>57</sup> “John Kendrick to Joseph Barrell, Macoa, in China, Mar. 28, 1792,” 470-471.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Ingraham, *Joseph Ingraham’s Journal of the Brigantine Hope on a Voyage to the Northwest Coast of North American, 1790-92*, ed. Mark D. Kaplanoff (Boston: Imprint Society, 1971), 177.

Portuguese settlement at Macao, and it operated along a shallow branch of the Pearl River known as the “Inner Passage” or “West River” (*Xi Jiang*, 西江). Characterized by a labyrinth of creeks, marshes, and tidal inlets, the Inner Passage made it possible for smugglers to avoid the imperial authorities during their passage to and from Canton.<sup>59</sup> It is noteworthy that, having remained in port with *Columbia* throughout the first expedition, Ingraham possessed the knowledge and business contacts needed to access the Macao Network. In this capacity, he relied upon Captain Coolidge and other “well informed and disinterested people” for current information about Lark’s Bay. Likewise, when preparing to move his merchandise, Ingraham activated his prior connections with John McIntyre, in Macao, and another former Columbian, John Treat, now serving aboard the snow *Fairy*.<sup>60</sup> The Columbians would have accessed similar information and

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<sup>59</sup> Paul A. Van Dyke, “Smuggling Networks of the Pearl River Delta before 1842: Implications for Macao and the American China Trade,” in *Americans and Macao: Trade, Smuggling, and Diplomacy on the South China Coast*, ed. Paul A. Van Dyke (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2012), 50-55.

<sup>60</sup> There was no shortage of information circulating through the Macao Network during the winter of 1791-92. Owing to the embargo, an assemblage of vessels “all from the N.W. and all having furs on board” converged upon Lark’s Bay. Ingraham remarks upon no fewer than ten vessels sailing to, present in, or departing the harbor. American ships included *Hancock* (Samuel Crowell), *Hope* (Joseph Ingraham), and *Lady Washington* (John Kendrick). British vessels assembled there in even greater numbers. *Canada* (Alexander Muirhead), *Fairy* (William Rogers), *Florinda* (William Coles), *Grace* (R. David Coolidge), *Gustavus III* (Thomas Barnett), *Halcyon* (Charles Barkley), and *Nonsuch* (John Canning) comprised the British contingent at Lark’s Bay. This does not include ships, such as *La Solide* (Etienne Marchand), that smuggled furs through Macao rather than transacting business at Lark’s Bay. Furthermore, some of the captains were wanted men. Qing authorities sought John Canning on charges of conspiring with the government of British Bengal to smuggle opium, a substance outlawed in China. In 1793, rampant smuggling prompted the Superintendent of Maritime Customs to forward a memorandum “complaining of the presence of ships at Lark’s Bay, and requiring them to either come up the river and be measured, or put to sea: ‘it is well known to have been a practice for several years for small vessels laden either with Opium or Skins to lie in this Bay to avoid the heavy Port Charges.’” There is no indication that the memorandum had a significant effect upon

personal relationships had Captain Gray elected to smuggle the second expedition's furs—but he did not.



Figure 22. Gaspard Duche de Vancy, engraved by Joseph Louis Masquelier. *Vue de Macao en Chine* (View of Macao in China), 1787, copper engraving, later color, 25 x 40 cm., as reproduced in *Atlas du Voyage de la Perouse*, no. 40 (Paris, L'Imprimerie de la Republique, An v, 1787), Wallis Fine Art, Hong Kong.

Gray's decision to do business at Canton is surprising when considered against recent events in China, namely, the imperial embargo on fur imports. The embargo resulted from a constellation of diplomatic incidents, spanning two decades, that strained relations between the Qing and Russian Empires. One concern was the submission of the Turgot Mongols, dwellers along the common border, who proclaimed their allegiance to the Qing government from 1771-73. Their submission triggered protests from St.

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the business of smuggling. Ingraham, *Joseph Ingraham's Journal of the Brigantine Hope*, 175-190.; Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:199.



Petersburg, who exacted retribution in the form of provocations along the common border. From 1776-90, Russian authorities granted safe harbor to criminals, deserters, and convicts who escaped from China.<sup>61</sup> In response, the Qianlong Emperor ordered a crackdown on merchants who “dared... to smuggle Russian products, sea otter skins, [river] otter skins, and squirrel skins” and “really violated the law.”<sup>62</sup> In 1791, the crisis escalated to the brink of war. Reports indicated that Russian and Kazakh forces were preparing to invade western China, a region known as Xinjiang (“New Territories,” 新疆). Qianlong responded with economic leverage. In a calculated move against the trappers of Siberia, he declared a comprehensive embargo on foreign furs, regardless of place of origin.<sup>63</sup> The Select Committee of the British East India Company, operating in Canton, received notification about the embargo on 13 March 1791, when Monqua informed them that “a Chop had been issued by the Hoppo prohibiting the importation of Sea Otter Skins.”<sup>64</sup> The prohibition remained in force nine months later, when Joseph Ingraham

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<sup>61</sup> “36:6:17 (July 28, 1771) The Turgots Are First Suspected” in *A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations, 1644-1820*, ed. and trans. Lo-shu Fu (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1966), 253-54.; “36:6:17 (July 28, 1771) The Turgots Will Be Received Graciously,” in *ibid.*, 254-55.; “36:9:8 (Oct. 15, 1771) The Emperor Commands Submission of the Turgots,” in *ibid.*, 262-63.; “38:10:1 (Nov. 14, 1773) Three Russian Convicts Are Caught,” in *ibid.*, 271-72.; “40:11:20 (Jan. 10, 1776) Russian Soldier Escapes in Kwangtung,” in *ibid.*, 274.; “4:2:27 (April 15, 1776) China Should Settle a Frontier Case Impartially,” in *ibid.*, 275-76.; “49:10:4 (Nov. 16, 1784) Russia Refuses to Punish her Criminals,” in *ibid.*, 298-99.

<sup>62</sup> “55:11:5 (Dec. 11, 1790) Smuggled Russian Fur-skins Discovered” in *ibid.*, 308.

<sup>63</sup> “56:1:29 (March 3, 1791) Tension between China and Russia Intensified,” in *ibid.*, 309-10.; “56:3:19 (April 21, 1791), Russia is Questioned,” in *ibid.*, 311-12.; “56:4:12 (May 14, 1791) Russia Denies Any Possibility of Military Action,” in *ibid.*, 312-13.

<sup>64</sup> During the 1792-93 season, the Select Committee consisted of President Henry Browne, John Harrison, George Cumming, and Hugh Parkin. See Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India*

anchored in Macao Roads.<sup>65</sup> The embargo was but a wrinkle in commercial affairs for the Select Committee, whose trade in woolens was valued at nearly twenty-four times that of furs, but it represented a serious problem for fur traders such as Ingraham.<sup>66</sup>

The embargo resulted from Qing misconceptions about the nature of the maritime fur trade, and consequently, the embargo had a negative impact on conditions in Canton. The Select Committee attributed the blanket prohibition to “an idea” held by the imperial government that otter furs “are purchased of the Russians.”<sup>67</sup> Captain Coolidge also believed that the authorities “entertained a mistaken notion that all fur ships were in some measure concerned with the Russians.”<sup>68</sup> The explanation rings true, as Chinese literati of the eighteenth century held fuzzy views of the geography of the Pacific, and particularly

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*Company Trading to China*, 2:185.; George Macartney, “Journal of Embassy from London to China” in *Our First Ambassador to China: An Account of the Life of George, Early of Macartney, with Extracts from his Letters, and the Narrative of his Experiences in China, as Told by Himself, 1737-1806*, ed. Helen H. Robbins (London: John Murray, 1908), 376.

<sup>65</sup> Ingraham, *Joseph Ingraham’s Journal of the Brigantine Hope*, 177.

<sup>66</sup> The company’s most recent trade in furs, in 1788, was valued at 46,249 兩, compared to woolens valued at 1,107,427 兩. Woolens accounted for 23.9 times the value of furs. Put another way, woolens constituted 83.73 percent of the company’s trade at Canton, while furs represented 3.49 percent of the total. The Select Committee did not record furs exchanged through the company for any of the intervening years, 1789-91, which is probably attributable to fur traders collaborating with smugglers. This is certainly the case for the 1791-92 season, during which fur smuggling boomed at Lark’s Bay. When the company resumed selling furs, in 1793, the trade in woolens increased to 1,788,309 兩, or 83.75 percent of the total. Conversely, furs declined to a value of 16,057 兩, or a miniscule 0.75 percent of the company’s value in trade. See Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:151-52, 205-06.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:185.

<sup>68</sup> Ingraham, *Joseph Ingraham’s Journal of the Brigantine Hope*, 177.

areas such as Kamchatka, Alaska, and the Northwest Coast of America.<sup>69</sup> Mistaken or not, however, Qing geopolitical reasoning was sound—unable to know whether the maritime fur trade benefitted his adversaries, the Russians, Qianlong ordered an embargo upon all imports alike. Meanwhile, the prohibition had significant effects upon the fur trade at Canton. First and foremost, by preventing legitimate business, it compelled captains to seek alternative arrangements for their pelts. As previously discussed, smuggling provided a solution for private traders such as Ingraham and Coolidge. Some resolved to trade in other countries. John Kendrick, for example, embarked on a quixotic attempt to market his furs in Japan.<sup>70</sup> Other captains traded their furs to the chartered

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<sup>69</sup> The first accurate work of geography to address North America in the Chinese language was *Short Account of the United States of America* (*Meilike heshengguo zhilüe*, 美利謀和聲國智略), a work translated and published by Elijah Coleman Bridgman in 1837. The *Pacific World* did not receive similar treatment until 1848, when Xu Jiyu, a *jinshi* bureaucrat, published his *Short Account of the Oceans Around Us* (*Yinghuan zhilüe*, 瀛環志略). Prior to the publication of these works, however, Chinese knowledge about fur resources would have been rudimentary, at best. See R. David Arkush and Leo O. Lee, eds., *Land Without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of America from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 17-20.

<sup>70</sup> John Leo Polich argues that although “the Japanese were very friendly,” Kendrick failed to market his pelts because “the use of furs was not a custom in Japan.” This is incorrect. Japanese culture valued animal fur as an important trade commodity. Official ordinances mandated the acquisition of furs for the imperial court during the Nara Period (710-794), and Japanese merchants obtained pelts from the Ainu People of Hokkaido well into the Tokugawa Period (1603-1867). The Tokugawa regime later expanded onto Hokkaido in part to gain unfettered access to the island’s natural resources, including furs. During the eighteenth century, the shogun bestowed furs upon trade missions arriving from Korea. Meanwhile, Japanese captains delivered wine, manufactured goods, and foodstuffs to Russian trappers in exchange for the pelts of Sakhalin Island. In other words, Kendrick probably faced other problems in marketing his furs. Jim Mockford observes that the captain anchored *Lady Washington* in Kushimoto Bay, one of the warmest harbors in Japan. Local climate is dominated by a warm northeasterly current known as *Kuroshio*, or “Black Current,” which originates in the tropical South China Sea. During the twentieth century, the Japan Meteorological Agency recorded annual mean temperatures ranging from 66.7° to 70.9° Fahrenheit (19.3° to 21.6° C) at Kushimoto. The local residents had little reason to trade for Kendrick’s heavy, heat-retaining otter pelts. He would have done better to

companies, whose supercargoes assessed and stockpiled the pelts for sale in future seasons.<sup>71</sup> The storage of pelts in the factories of Canton accounts for John Hoskins' later observation that "there are a great many at market and many more expected."<sup>72</sup>

Fortunately, Qianlong rescinded the embargo on 5 May 1792, seven months prior to the arrival of *Columbia*. His decision hinged upon consultation between the Qing and

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trade his furs in cooler locations such as northern Honshu, at Hokkaido, or the Sea of Japan. Moreover, Kendrick and his crew irritated the locals by cutting timber without permission, performing cannon salutes, and shooting seabirds for sport. Their presence also violated the strict isolationist laws of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Mockford observes that "two days after he [Kendrick] sailed from Japan, military troops arrived from Wakayama to expel the barbarians." In short, the captain narrowly avoided a confrontation with a company of *Samurai*. See Leo Polich, "John Kendrick and the Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast" (MA thesis, University of Southern California, 1964), 62.; William Wayne Farris, "Trade, Money, and Merchants in Nara Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 53, no. 3 (1998): 323.; Takao Abé, "The Seventeenth Century Jesuit Missionary Reports on Hokkaido," *Journal of Asian History* 39, no. 2 (2005): 121.; Brett L. Walker, "Reappraising the 'Sakoku' Paradigm: The Ezo Trade and the Extension of Tokugawa Political Space into Hokkaidô," *Journal of Asian History* 30, no. 2 (1996): 186-88.; George M. McCune, "The Exchange of Envoys between Korea and Japan during the Tokugawa Period," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 5, no. 3, (1946): 311.; George Alexander Lensen, "Early Russo-Japanese Relations," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1950): 10.; Jim Mockford, "The *Lady Washington* at Kushimoto, Japan, in 1791," in *The Early Republic and the Sea: Essays on the Naval and Maritime History of the Early United States*, eds. William S. Dudley and Michael J Crawford (Washington: Brassey's, Inc., 2001), 88-93. Japan Meteorological Agency, "Monthly mean daily maximum temperature (° C), Shionomisaki WMO Station ID: 47778" <http://www.data.jma.go.jp> (accessed on 18 June 2016).

<sup>71</sup> Captain Étienne Marchand commanded the French commercial vessel *La Solide*, on a voyage around the world, from 1790-92. Like *Columbia*, the expedition engaged in fur trading on the Northwest Coast and in China. At Macao, Marchand noted that the prohibition upon furs "appeared impossible to be evaded" and that "a Spanish ship, which had come from Manilla with three hundred otter-skins, had been, from the impossibility that was experienced of dealing with the Chinese traders, forced to deposit her cargo in a storehouse." *La Solide* later completed the second circumnavigation of the globe under French Colors. See Étienne Marchand, *A Voyage Round the World, Performed During the Years 1790, 1791, and 1792, by Étienne Marchand, preceded by a Historical Introduction, and Illustrated by Charts, etc.*, trans. C.P. Claret Fleurieu (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1801), 2:95.

<sup>72</sup> John Hoskins and Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, Ship *Columbia Wompoa* 22 Decr. 1792," 488.

Russian Empires, which convinced imperial agents that “the Russians still respected us.” Moreover, Qianlong’s agents determined that a dissident lama had “invented this tall story” of an invasion “to cover his guilt for having escaped” from submission to the Qing.<sup>73</sup> In Canton, furs resumed their place among the other import commodities, although the release of thousands of units from the factories must have depressed the market for pelts.<sup>74</sup> The overstock, then, was probably the most important factor in a 65 percent decline in the value of furs traded by the British East India Company from 1788-93.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, it accounts for Hoskins’ estimate that *Columbia*’s cargo would not trade for more than \$40,000.<sup>76</sup> Under the circumstances, Captain Gray’s decision to trade at Canton, rather than engage in smuggling, is inexplicable. It is possible that he received information about rising fur prices, or that, as an investor in the second expedition, he preferred to avoid the legal risks of smuggling—the sources are silent on this matter. One

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<sup>73</sup> Fu, *A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations, 1644-1820*, 320-21.

<sup>74</sup> Marchand predicted the situation six months earlier when he complained that “unfavorable circumstances left little hope of trading with advantage, even in case the prohibition should happen to be taken off during the *Solide*’s stay at Macao; for the great competition of vendors must necessarily have lowered the furs to such prices that the sale would yield a loss rather than a profit.” See Marchand, *A Voyage Round the World*, 2:95-96.

<sup>75</sup> As previously noted, the company traded furs valued at 16,057 兩 in 1793, a 65.29 percent decline from the previous value of 46,249 兩, in 1788. Taken beside ample evidence that fur imports increased over time, the decrease in revenue cannot be attributed to a smaller volume of furs. See Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:151-52, 205-06.

<sup>76</sup> John Hoskins and Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, Ship *Columbia* Wompoa 22 Decr. 1792,” 488.

possibility is that, having traded at Canton once before, the captain understood that *Columbia*'s stockpile of "prime," "fine," and "good" furs would fetch reasonable prices.<sup>77</sup>

Once again, the expenses that *Columbia* incurred during her second passage, anchorage, and transaction at Canton are not known with precision, but the Columbians achieved significant savings when compared to the first expedition. Some costs, predominantly those required of all vessels trading at Canton, are documented or fall within a predictable range. For example, John Boit recorded that "a River pilot took charge for \$40 to take the Ship to Whampoa," and we can assume that a similar fee obtained a pilot for the outgoing passage, bringing the piloting cost to approximately \$80. Likewise, he recorded that *Columbia* needed "a complete overhaul from her keel to the truck" and that "this business cost 150\$." In terms of other materials and services, we know only that the Columbians purchased twenty-one piculs of iron at an expense of \$147. Boit recorded one other itemized expense—but in this case, for services *not* rendered. As usual, Captain Gray hired a comprador, but "the first of these fellows that was engag'd run away with 250\$ in our debt." Boit neglected to record the expense entailed in hiring a second comprador. Nonetheless, we can reasonably estimate that the second comprador provided around \$225 in provisions, \$500 in supplies, and \$30 in

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<sup>77</sup> Depending on the mathematical proportions used to estimate *Columbia*'s second cargo, the number of skins described as "prime," "fine," or "good" constituted around 15 percent of her merchandise. Indeed, assuming that some skins of exceptional quality went unmentioned as components of larger lots, the number could easily approach 25 percent. Under the circumstances, perhaps Captain Gray expected to sell his cargo above the average market price—especially in comparison to skins that had been in storage, and unoled, for as much as a year already.

construction labor. The chroniclers are also silent concerning *Columbia's* linguist fee, although we can assume the standard retainer of \$216. Similarly, we can include perhaps \$90 in sampan fees plus official presents valued in the neighborhood of \$25. Overall, the historian can account for approximately \$1,713 in services, provisions, and supplies. Other expenses, such as the loss of "a dozen fine hogs" that died while the expedition was anchored at Whampoa, cannot be known. Meanwhile, *Columbia's* port fees would have remained fixed at \$3,267. Taking both subtotals together, the second expedition incurred expenses in the neighborhood of \$4,980.

John Boit complained that "the Whole expence accruing to the Columbia at Canton amounted to the enormous sum of 7000 Spanish \$"<sup>78</sup> When compared against the totals above, however, his calculation leaves more than \$2000 unaccounted for. We can hazard a guess that the remainder of expenses represent commission paid to *Columbia's* broker. By eighteenth century standards, the sum certainly was "enormous"—more than ten times Captain Robert Gray's wages for the first expedition, and twenty-seven times those of regular crewmembers.<sup>79</sup> Compared with *Columbia's* expenses during the first season at Canton, \$10,163, however, the second expedition did business at a discount of roughly \$3,000. No documentary evidence exists to account for the difference, although

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<sup>78</sup> Boit, "Remarks on the Ship Columbia's Voyage from Boston," 421.

<sup>79</sup> Upon returning to Boston in 1790, Captain Robert Gray received wages at a rate of £3 6s per month, for 3 years 21 days of service, or a total of £132 1s 8 1/2d. By comparison, the lowest-paid crewmembers earned £1 10s per month. For example, Bartholomew Ballard, *Columbia's* tailor, served for 3 years 16 days, and earned a total of £54 16s. See "Ship Columbia's Portage," 150-51.

it may represent a swift transaction in which factory expenses remained low or nonexistent. John Hoskins may have documented the reason. Only nine days after arriving at Whampoa, he made reference to “delivering a part of the furs which we sold.”<sup>80</sup> The swiftness of the transaction may indicate that, during his overnight stay in Macao, Captain Gray struck a preliminary deal intended to reduce delays—and factory expenses—upon arriving at Canton. If so, his strategy represents another lesson learned during the first expedition.

We can only speculate about the possible identity of *Columbia*'s broker and security merchants, but Captain Gray appears to have chosen superb counterparts. The Columbians failed to document the second expedition's broker, but we can be almost certain that Shaw & Randall did not consign the cargo. Following the extended transaction in 1789-90, Randall “repented” his involvement with Barrell and the Columbians.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, neither Samuel Shaw nor Thomas Randall documented any contract or relationship to *Columbia* in 1792-93. In fact, the principals in Boston may have preferred that the choice of a broker to be made “on the spot.”<sup>82</sup> Barrell instructed the Columbians “to call upon Mr. McIntire, at Macao, for orders from the owners,” and to “remit the bills to Lane, Son, & Frazer, merchants in London,” but he did not designate

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<sup>80</sup> John Hoskins and Robert Gray to Joseph Barrell, Ship *Columbia* Wompoa 22 Decr. 1792,” 488.

<sup>81</sup> “Ship *Columbia*'s Portage,” 150-51.

<sup>82</sup> Joseph Barrell, “Orders Given Captain John Kendrick of the Ship *Columbia* for a voyage to the Pacific Ocean, 1787,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 111.



a preferred broker. Similarly, he designated channels of correspondence via Macao, Paris, Lisbon, and London. Again, the absence of instructions concerning a broker is notable.<sup>83</sup> John McIntyre may have brokered the transaction of *Columbia*'s cargo in 1792, and his involvement would further indicate the possibility that Captain Gray struck a deal at Macao. Ultimately, we cannot know for certain.

Likewise, the Columbians recorded little information concerning the acquisition of a security merchant. John Boit commented that the furs were “landed at Canton and D[e]l[ivere]d to the Hong Merchants,” but he did not indicate which merchant.<sup>84</sup> It is tempting to assume that the Columbians arranged a transaction with familiar persons such as Pinqua or Poankeequa, but intervening events in Canton had altered the makeup of the merchant guild. Of the six security merchants available to the first *Columbia* expedition, only four remained in 1792, as Pinqua had become “embarrassed in his affairs” and Chowqua II (or “Locqua,” Chen Junhua, 陳鈞華) proved “unable to fulfill his engagements for tea.”<sup>85</sup> Six new *hong* merchants received licenses, bringing the total to ten individuals, and the shakeup created a situation in which the Columbians had personal experience only with Poankeequa. Nonetheless, several other merchants may have come forward. In statistical terms, Shy Kinqua II (Shi Zhonghe, 石中和) is the most likely candidate for

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<sup>83</sup> Barrell, “Joseph Barrell’s Instructions to Robert Gray,” 445-46.

<sup>84</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s Voyage from Boston,” 421.

<sup>85</sup> Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:197.; Paul A. Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Politics and Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 177-78.

*Columbia*'s security merchant. During the 1792-93 season, he shipped more than 39,000 chests of tea, almost twice the volume of his nearest competitor, Poankeequa.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, circumstantial evidence suggests that the Columbians may have contracted with Monqua (Cai Wenguan, 蔡文官), the individual presiding over the *Cohong*. Indeed, during his command of the brigantine *Union*, from 1794-95, John Boit reported that he did business with "Mr. Monqua, one of the Hong merchants."<sup>87</sup> Finally, there is a possibility that Boit's reference to the "Hong Merchants" indicates a transaction with the *Cohong* at large.<sup>88</sup> Again, if no single merchant agreed to secure *Columbia*, the guild would have assumed institutional responsibility for the ship, her crew, and her cargo.<sup>89</sup> In this circumstance, Monqua would have orchestrated the transaction.

We know with certainty that the second *Columbia* expedition was a commercial success and a dramatic improvement upon the financial outcomes of the first. John Boit

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<sup>86</sup> Morse documents that Shy Kinqa held contracts for 2,200 chests of Bohea, 30,000 chests of Congo, 3,000 chests of Twankay, and 4,000 chests of Hyson, for a grand total of 39,200 chests of tea shipped. Poankeequa, by comparison, shipped 2,000 chests of Bohea, 15,000 chests of Congo, 2,000 chests of Twankay, and 2,000 chests of Hyson, or a grand total of 21,000 chests.; See Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:198.

<sup>87</sup> There is an outside chance that Boit intends "Monqua" to refer to Mowqua (Lu Guanheng, 蔡文官), one of the recent licensees admitted to the *cohong*. See John Boit, *Log of the Union: John Boit's Remarkable Voyage to the Northwest Coast and Around the World, 1794-1796*, ed. Edmund Hayes (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1981), 90.

<sup>88</sup> Boit, "Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*'s Voyage from Boston," 421.

<sup>89</sup> Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 97.

recorded that the furs sold for Spanish \$90,000, at an average of \$45 each.<sup>90</sup> This price far exceeds the sale price achieved by other American (\$5.55) and even British (\$13.88) traders, although the evidence is insufficient to determine why this might be. When corresponding in league with Captain Gray, John Hoskins reported to the owners that “we have a tolerable cargo of furs aboard”<sup>91</sup> In private, however, he complained that the second expedition “did not collect many skins.”<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, the average price would indicate that the Columbians traded approximately 2,000 skins, roughly twice the first expedition’s cargo of 1,143 otters.<sup>93</sup> *Columbia* shipped a significant number of furs, even if she might have carried more. Seen another way, the second expedition delivered a large share of the otters skins imported by Americans in 1792-93. The Select Committee of the British East India Company recorded that vessels originating in the United States imported a total of 5,425 otters during that season. Assuming that otters comprised roughly three-quarters of *Columbia*’s furs, or 1,500 skins, then her transaction accounts for almost 28 percent of the total American imports to Canton.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The sum of Spanish \$90,000 is equivalent to 64,800 兩 or £18,747. British traders sold their furs at an average price of 10 兩 during the 1792-93 season, while other Americans traded at a ruinous price of 4 兩 per pelt.

<sup>91</sup> “Robert Gray and John Hoskins to Joseph Barrell, St. Lorenzo, Nootka Sound, Augt. 21, 1792,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 479-80.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 480-85.

<sup>93</sup> “Inventory of Skins,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 125-26.

<sup>94</sup> John Boit, Robert Haswell, and John Hoskins recorded make mention of “otter furs,” “otter tails,” “prime furs,” “valuable furs,” “excellent furs,” et cetera, on a total of 106 occasions in their accounts of the second expedition. The majority of this total, however, represents the exchange of undifferentiated “furs.” I interpret “furs” to indicate otters of moderate or low value, as all three

The Columbians purchased an even more valuable return cargo. John Boit commented that *Columbia* returned to the United States with “a full Cargo of Teas and Nanken with a small proportion of Sugar and China Porcelain.”<sup>95</sup> Once again, he neglected the precise quantities of each item, but we can envision a plausible cargo profile based on contemporaneous records. For example, teas (52%) and textiles (26%) comprised the majority of all merchandise exported from Canton aboard American vessels during the 1792-93 season. Porcelain, sugar, and quicksilver constituted the remainder of exports (22%). Following a similar profile, *Columbia* would have shipped teas valued at \$71,095.<sup>96</sup> Calculated as weight, this sum is equivalent to 323,868 pounds, or almost 149 imperial tons, of tea.<sup>97</sup> Packed into 927 chests, the weight consumed more

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chroniclers took care to record all transactions resulting in an exchange of “beaver furs,” “land furs,” or “other furs.” Mention of other varieties are noted on only 10 occasions. Using their imprecise language as an indicator, then, *Columbia* shipped 10 otters per 1 land fur, or an estimated total of 1,800 of 2,000 pelts. This number, however, is probably too high, given that Boit recorded the purchase of 300 beaver skins on a single day (18 May 1792) along the Columbia River. Adjusting for this quantity, as well as other occasions when “other furs” are listed as “many” or being available “in abundance,” it would appear that the proportion is closer to 3 otters per 1 land fur, or an estimated total of 1,500 of 2,000 pelts. Nonetheless, this number represents nothing more than educated guesswork and a greater level of precision would require the discovery of additional documentation. See Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:202.

<sup>95</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s Voyage from Boston,” 422.

<sup>96</sup> This sum is equivalent to £14,810. Upon arrival in Boston, the cargo would auction in terms of English pounds, shillings, and pence.

<sup>97</sup> The British East India Company recorded that American vessels exported black teas (49.69%), wrought silks (19.54%), quicksilver (14.20%), sugar (7.21%), nankeen cloth (4.32%), green teas (2.46%), raw nankeen (2.36%), and porcelain (0.22%) in descending order of value. The profile for *Columbia* preserves the relative proportions of four categories of goods (teas, nankeen cloth, sugar, and porcelain) among her cargo, equal to 66.26 percent of the distribution of American exports in the 1792-93 season. Conversely, it eliminates those items not present in her cargo (wrought silks and quicksilver), which account for the remaining 33.74 percent of exports.

than 70% of *Columbia*'s tonnage.<sup>98</sup> Based upon grocery advertisements in Boston, the Columbians may have purchased three categories of tea.<sup>99</sup> Bohea (*wuyi*, 武夷), a black tea cultivated in the hill country of Fujian Province, ranked as the most popular tea in the United States. In order to prepare Bohea, farmers harvested its leaves between April and September, dried them in the sun, and cured the leaves over the heat of smoldering charcoal.<sup>100</sup> The category sold at reasonable prices in America and provided laborers with a stimulating morning or afternoon beverage.<sup>101</sup> Because of strong demand, Bohea

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Recognizing the weight of teas among *Columbia*'s cargo, the profile maintains a strict proportion for black teas (75%) and green teas (4%) as monetary percentages out of 100. Collectively, teas constitute a total of 148 imperial tons (70% of total tonnage). This method of calculation results in computational errors where the remaining goods are concerned. Beyond this, a strict translation of the proportions for sugar (11%), nankeens (10%), and porcelain (less than 1%) result in a cargo overload of 280 tons (maximum of 212 tons)! The proportions also contradict Boit's observation that *Columbia* shipped "a full Cargo" of teas and textiles and only a "small proportion" of Sugar and Porcelain. Instead, I propose alternate monetary proportions for nankeens (15%), sugar (5%), and porcelain (1%). Remarkably, when calculating the alternate percentages as weight, the cargo rests at precisely 212 tons, or *Columbia*'s total capacity. I must stress that this cargo profile does not represent the only possible solution. Note that the British East India Company describes a particular category of "raw silk" as "nankeens." I derive piece rates and tonnage for nankeens and porcelain from records pertaining to the *Empress of China*. See Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 2:203-04; Philip Chadwick Foster Smith, *The Empress of China* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Maritime Museum, 1984), 172-73.

<sup>98</sup> Chest sizes for black teas (Bohea: 360 lbs.) and green teas (Hyson: 320 lbs.) derived from records pertaining to the *Empress of China*. Smith, *The Empress of China*, 172-73.

<sup>99</sup> "Prices Current at the Quay at Boston, August 9, 1793." *American Apollo* (Boston, Massachusetts), 9 August 1793.

<sup>100</sup> Frederick Pigou, "An Account of the Tea Tree" in *A Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade: Concerning the Commerce of Great Britain and India, Particularly Bengal and Singapore, with China and the Eastern Islands including Much Useful Information and Many Interesting Particulars Relative Thereto*, ed. John Phipps (London: William H. Allen and Co., 1836), 43-45.

<sup>101</sup> Maxine Berg, "Consumption in Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Britain," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Vol. 1: Industrialisation*, eds. Roderick Floud and Paul

accounted for perhaps two-thirds of *Columbia*'s cargo by weight, or 145 tons. By comparison, Hyson (*xi chun*, 熙春), a green tea harvested in Anhui Province, ranked as a distant second in American tastes and shipped in smaller quantities. The Columbians may have also purchased a third category known as Souchong (*xiao zhong*, 小種), another black tea that circulated among the wealthier households of the United States.<sup>102</sup> Using the same cargo profile, the remainder of *Columbia*'s cargo included perhaps 14,256 pieces of nankeen cloth, 1,380 pieces of porcelain, and thirty-nine tons of sugar. Because she did not export wrought silk, rhubarb, and quicksilver, her cargo more closely resembled that of a British East Indiaman than other American ships sailing from Canton.<sup>103</sup>

The Columbians learned hard lessons during their first expedition. During the second voyage to China, however, they achieved a significant reversal of fortune due to monetary savings, new business expertise, and wise choices in local counterparts.

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Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 365.; T.H. Breen, "Baubles of Britain: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 119 (1988): 83-84.; Mark Koyama, "The Transformation of Labor Supply in the Pre-Industrial World," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 81 (2012): 516-17.

<sup>102</sup> "Prices Current at the Quay at Boston, August 9, 1793." *American Apollo* (Boston, Massachusetts), 9 August 1793.

<sup>103</sup> During the years 1790-94, the British East India Company exported a distribution of goods including tea (3,575,409 兩) at 88.8%, raw silk (274,460 兩) at 6.8%, nankeens (34,580 兩) at 0.9%, and "Chinaware & Others" (4,025,092 兩) at 3.5%. See "Table 2.7 The total value and relative importance of different merchandise articles exported from Canton by the EIC, 1765-1833 (taels, annual average value)" in Simon Yang-Chien Tsai, "Trading for Tea: A Study for the English East India Company's Tea Trade with China and the Related Financial Issues, 1760-1833" (PhD dissertation, University of Leicester, 2003), 82.

*Columbia* suffered debilitating expenses in 1789, but her officers saved more than \$3,000 in 1792. Likewise, the Columbians internalized the costs and benefits of doing legitimate business through the Canton System and chose a profitable means of marketing their furs under the circumstances. Their selection of local counterparts, including a broker and a security merchant, eased a transaction worth \$90,000. *Columbia* would return to Massachusetts with a substantial cargo of valuable, exotic goods. When the ship “unmoor’d and stood down the river” on 2 February 1793, her officers and crew could take satisfaction in a job well done.<sup>104</sup>

“*A Saving Voyage*”

*Columbia* proved the feasibility of a commercial route between Boston, the Northwest Coast, and China. Indeed, her profitable second expedition compensated for the financial losses of the first, enabling the venture to break even. Following the second voyage, her owners recovered their investments and walked away with pride in their accomplishment, if not riches. Similarly, the Columbians applied their trading and navigational experiences to new spheres of enterprise on land and sea. Most importantly, their success set the stage for future Bostonian, New England, and United States engagement in the Pacific World.

In 1792, while *Columbia* continued her second expedition, Joseph Barrell undertook another, more personal project—the construction of a new residence that he

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<sup>104</sup> Boit, “Remarks on the Ship *Columbia*’s Voyage from Boston,” 424.

named “Pleasant Hill.” Barrell envisioned his new home as the “seat” of a country gentleman, an embodiment of his “taste for the fine arts,” and a place to comfortably grow old.<sup>105</sup> Situated on Cobble Hill in Charlestown, on more than two hundred acres of pastoral land, Pleasant Hill would become a lavish residence.<sup>106</sup> Barrell commissioned his young friend Charles Bulfinch, a silent partner in the *Columbia* expeditions and an aspiring architect, to draft the plans. Bulfinch, who admired the “many good houses” and “wonders of Architecture” of Europe, delivered plans for a mansion in the French Neoclassical style.<sup>107</sup> The grounds would feature stables, dovecotes, terraces and fountains, and an ornamental fish pond.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, Barrell intended his new residence to reflect a cosmopolitan taste for “the Chinese manner... mixed with the European,” including a number of “paintings, engravings, & representations in clay from China.”<sup>109</sup> By 1793, though, the mounting costs of construction began to strain his finances. Writing

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<sup>105</sup> “Died, at his seat, Pleasant Hill, Saturday morning last, very suddenly, Joseph Barrell, Esq.: in the 65<sup>th</sup> year of his age.” *New England Palladium* (Boston, Massachusetts), 13 October 1804. *Early American Imprints, Series II, 1801-1819*, Ralph R. Shaw and Richard R., contributors (microfiche), no. 6166.

<sup>106</sup> Nina Fletcher Little, “Early Buildings of the Asylum at Charlestown, 1795-1846, Now McLean Hospital for the Mentally Ill, Belmont, Massachusetts,” *Old-Time New England* 59, no. 2 (1968): Serial No. 214, 29.

<sup>107</sup> Charles Bulfinch, “Portion of Autobiography,” quoted in *The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch with Other Family Papers*, ed. Ellen Susan Bulfinch (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1896), 40-43.; “Charles Bulfinch to Mrs. Thomas Bulfinch, Marseilles, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1786,” in *ibid.*, 51-55.

<sup>108</sup> Little, “Early Buildings of the Asylum at Charlestown, 1795-1846,” 30-31.

<sup>109</sup> William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D.S., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts*, vol. 1, *April, 1784-December, 1792* (Salem: The Essex Institute, 1905), 264.



to his brother, Colburn Barrell, he expressed relief that “the ship *Columbia* is expected in July” and “I have reason to expect the property I have there will extricate me from my present need.”<sup>110</sup> *Columbia* enabled him to complete Pleasant Hill, and he moved from Boston to Charlestown in 1795.<sup>111</sup>

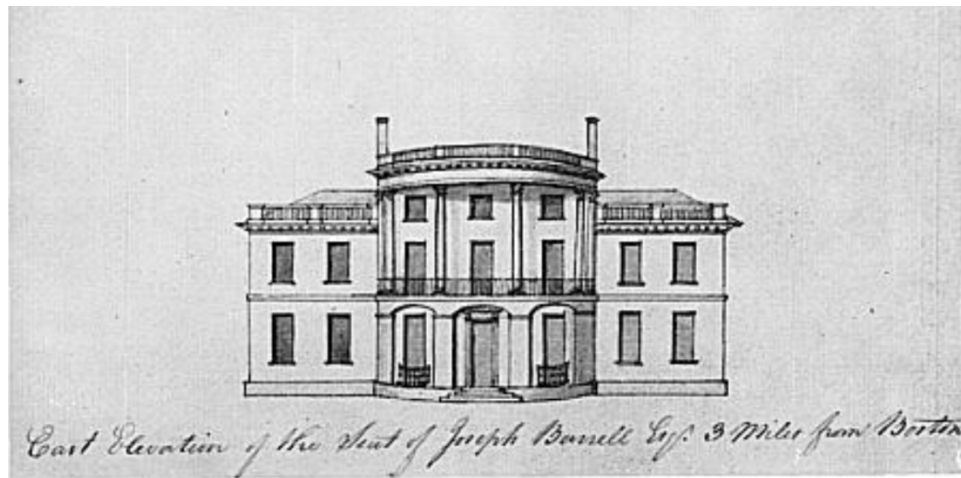


Figure 23. Charles Bulfinch, *East Elevation of the Seat of Joseph Barrell Esq. 3 miles from Boston*, c.1792, pen and ink wash, 5.4 x 9.8 cm., Boston Athenaeum, Boston.

*Columbia*'s second expedition not only duplicated the logistical achievements of the first voyage, but also proved that Americans could profitably exploit the economic potential of the Pacific. *Columbia* returned to Boston on 25 July 1793, bearing a rich cargo of black and green tea, sugar, nankeens, and porcelain—a vast improvement over the outcome of the first expedition. Despite the success, Joseph Barrell complained that

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<sup>110</sup> Joseph Barrell, Charlestown, to Colburn Barrell, London, 25 May 1793, ALS, Joseph Barrell Letterbook, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>111</sup> Little, “Early Buildings of the Asylum at Charlestown, 1795-1846,” 30-31.

“the Columbia is arrived, she has done nothing to what we expected, but through the vigilance of M Hoskins she had made a saving voyage of some profit.”<sup>112</sup> Barrell understood that *Columbia*’s second expedition needed to be extraordinarily profitable in order to overcome the disappointment of the first—indeed, for the venture to break even. The principals had fronted significant sums in pounds sterling—a hard currency—toward the enterprise, and all needed to recover their initial investment. Meanwhile, another factor complicated the financial picture to an even greater degree. Barrell complained that “from Kendrick we have rec’d nothing since the last return of the Columbia,” despite prior correspondence in which the errant captain proposed to purchase *Lady Washington*. Nonetheless, Barrell continued to hope that “Kendrick will yet turn out an honest man.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Hoskins should be credited with three implicit contributions to the success of the expedition. First, he purchased the finest furs available on the Northwest Coast, thus ensuring an optimal trade in China. Second, at Canton, he selected an assortment of merchandise for the return cargo, a practice that hedged against uncertain prices in Boston. Third, before leaving China, he assured the proper packaging of perishable and fragile items, a measure that prevented damage of the sort that troubled *Columbia*’s first expedition. See Joseph Barrell, Charlestown, to John Webb, 3 February 1794, ALS, Joseph Barrell Letterbook, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>113</sup> The distances and time involved in corresponding between Boston and the Pacific formed the greatest obstacles to a negotiated settlement between Barrell and Kendrick. Barrell’s letter to John M. Pintard, an investor in the first expedition, gives some indication of his frustration at delays in communication: “We had a proposal from him [Kendrick] two years ago, to pay so much for a discharge, & we acceded to so far as this, if he would send us to any part of the Continent 400 Chests Bohea Tea of the best quality, he paying present, but was running the Risque we would discharge him, when our Letter arrived he was gone to the N.W. Coast & we have again renewed the offer & tis probable by some of the ships this season from China we shall know the result.—I place no dependence on this matter, but am told can procure the Tea, if he wishes it.” See Joseph Barrell, Charlestown, to J.M. Pintard, New York, 13 March 1795, ALS, Joseph Barrell Letterbook, Massachusetts Historical Society.

The financial outcome, however, depended most on market conditions in the United States. Valued at \$90,000 upon purchase in Canton, *Columbia's* cargo undoubtedly sold at a significant markup upon auction at Boston. Evidence does not attest to the sale value of her nankeens or porcelain, and, in fact, porcelain often sold at a loss in America.<sup>114</sup> By contrast, *Columbia's* teas probably auctioned at a modest profit, perhaps in the neighborhood of \$36,500. The most profitable component of *Columbia's* return cargo, however, may have been loaf sugar, a commodity that comprised perhaps 86,400 pounds, or 5 percent, of her cargo tonnage. Sugar sold at approximately five cents per pound in Canton. In Boston, whose residents lost access to Caribbean sugar after independence from Great Britain, sugar retailed at a much higher price—roughly \$4.90 per pound. *Columbia's* sugar probably auctioned at an intermediate rate, perhaps \$2.50, although this price would still generate a dazzling profit of \$207,000. Overall, the second expedition may have realized a total of \$243,500.<sup>115</sup> Combined with the first voyage, the second expedition enabled the principals to break even and recover their initial investments. Seen as an individual voyage, her second expedition represented a triumphant financial success.

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<sup>114</sup> Porcelain often served as ballast for shipments of tea, a much lighter commodity, regardless of the profit margin on the dishware. See James R. Fichter, *So Great a Proffit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 209.

<sup>115</sup> This figure represents sales revenue less the costs of trade goods in Boston, furs on the Northwest Coast, and Chinese goods at Canton.

*Columbia* forged new, transnational linkages between the commercial centers of Boston, the Northwest Coast, and China, and accelerated the integration of those locations into a global trade circuit. During her second expedition, she demonstrated the potential to build American commerce around a series of transactions that historian Frederic Howay deemed the “golden round.” The golden round consisted of a succession of transnational trades—between the United States, the Northwest Coast, and China—in which each exchange compounded the profits of previous deals.<sup>116</sup> For example, the Columbians benefitted from an unusually high profit margin when trading inexpensive goods such as iron, copper, or woolens for otters on the Northwest Coast. They exchanged Spanish \$6,360 in metals and textiles for \$90,000 in furs, a profit margin of 1,315 percent.<sup>117</sup> Likewise, the Columbians repeated the process at Canton, where they traded exceptional furs for common items such as tea, sugar, porcelain, and nankeens. The inventory of \$90,000 in furs, therefore, fetched a return cargo worth perhaps \$280,779 in Boston, or a profit margin of 212 percent. While each transnational segment of the *Columbia*’s voyage turned a profit, the global dimensions of the “golden round”

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<sup>116</sup> Frederic W. Howay quoted in James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 56-58.

<sup>117</sup> In 1790, *Columbia* embarked with a total of £1,324 14s 3d (£1,324.71) in trade goods. These goods included sheet copper, bar iron, chisels, shoes and boots, colored duffel, nails, trousers, jackets, coats, yarn, buttons, colored thread, brass thimbles, boxes of soap, tin kettles, sheet tin, bullet and shot molds, muskets, knives, grindstones, and a verity of other items. The expenditures in cargo are equivalent to a total of Spanish \$6,359.54. See “Expenditures for the *Columbia*’s Outfit and Cargo,” 460-64.

explain her stunning success as a commercial model. In sum, taking into account all three segments of the expedition, she realized a staggering profit margin of 4,315 percent.

*Columbia*'s second expedition, and the financial solvency it provided, enabled Joseph Barrell to undertake a number of private goals that secured his reputation as a gentleman. First and foremost, the "saving voyage" permitted him to move forward with the construction of Pleasant Hill. During 1794-95, Barrell meticulously curated the chairs, tapestries, and carpets that adorned his new residence.<sup>118</sup> He lavished attention upon his "Oval room," where he labored to obtain a carpet of suitable dimensions, the previous having been "by no means conformable to my directions, although it is very handsome." Moreover, he contrived to heat the oval room with imported register stoves, each concealed behind a polished marble fireplace.<sup>119</sup> Barrell looked forward to entertaining visitors at Pleasant Hill, although its construction caused him to fall behind in correspondence with friends and family.<sup>120</sup> The architectural splendors of the mansion, combined with its vast assemblage of imported goods, helped to establish his position as a gentleman of superior social acumen.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, *Columbia*'s success enabled

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<sup>118</sup> Joseph Barrell, Charleston, to N. Barrett, New York, 29 Sept 1793, ALS, Joseph Barrell Letterbook, Massachusetts Historical Society.; Joseph Barrell, Charlestown, to John Joy, Esq. 2 December 1794, ALS, Joseph Barrell Letterbook, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>119</sup> Joseph Barrell to John Joy, Esq. 2 December 1794.; Joseph Barrell, Charlestown, to Colburn Barrell, London, 25 May 1793.; Joseph Barrell, Charlestown, to Mr Jno. Atkinson, 1 March 1795, ALS, Joseph Barrell Letterbook Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>120</sup> Joseph Barrell, Charlestown, to John Webb, 3 February 1794.

<sup>121</sup> Harold Francis Pfister, "Burlingtonian Architectural Theory in England and America," *Winterthur Portfolio* 11 (1976): 145-51.; Linzy A. Brekke, "The 'Scourge of Fashion': Political

Barrell to dabble in the sort of agronomical experimentation that distinguished other gentleman-scientists such as Thomas Jefferson and George Washington.<sup>122</sup> He took special pride in the cultivation of fruit trees, mostly unsuited to the New England winter, within the warm confines of “my greenhouse.” Barrell planted dozens of pear, peach, nectarine, apricot, and plum trees inside the structure. Meanwhile, he thanked William Pringle, an English horticulturalist, for “hints with respect to the growing of the pears” and requested information concerning “any experiments you may make in Agriculture or gardening.” Certainly, the practice of agriculture as a “fashion,” rather than a subsistence activity, marked him as a gentleman of means.<sup>123</sup> Barrell also dabbled in meteorology. From 1792-1801, he assembled rainfall records for Charlestown, using a precision rain gauge capable of measurements to one one-thousandth of an inch. Similarly, he recorded snowfalls but noted that “I have no way to measure the snow.”<sup>124</sup> Following these

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Economy and the Politics of Consumption in the Early Republic,” *Early American Studies* 3, no. 1 (2005): 111-19.

<sup>122</sup> M.L. Wilson, “Thomas Jefferson—Farmer,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 87, no. 3, Bicentennial of Thomas Jefferson (1943): 216-22.; Cecil Wall, “George Washington: Country Gentleman,” *Agricultural History* 43, no. 1 (1969): 5-6.; Harold B. Gill, Jr., “Wheat Culture in Colonial Virginia,” *Agricultural History* 52, no. 3 (1978): 380-393.

<sup>123</sup> Joseph Barrell, Charleston, to N. Barrett, New York, 29 Sept 1793.; Joseph Barrell, Charlestown, to William Pringle, 19 December 1793, ALS, Joseph Barrell Letterbook, Massachusetts Historical Society.; Joseph Barrell, Charlestown, to William Pringle, Sydenham in Kent—by Capt. Scott, 29 November 1794, ALS, Joseph Barrell Letterbook, Massachusetts Historical Society.; Rodney C. Loehr, “The Influence of English Agriculture on American Agriculture, 1775-1825,” *Agricultural History* 11, no. 1 (1937): 3-15.; T.L. Senn, “Farm and Garden: Landscape Architecture and Horticulture in Eighteenth-Century America,” *Agricultural History*, 43, no. 1 (1969): 149-58.

<sup>124</sup> Joseph Barrell, “Account of Rain, &C. That Fell at Charlestown, Massachusetts, in Ten Years.” *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 3, no. 1 (1809): 104-106.

scientific interests, and in part to entertain guests, Barrell collected a range of scientific instruments, such as barometers, thermometers, prisms, electrical conduits, refracting and reflecting telescopes, and an “artificial eye in brass to exemplify the nature of vision.”<sup>125</sup>

Similarly, the “saving voyage” also permitted Barrell to participate in several public initiatives that affirmed his status as a leading citizen of the United States. One personal goal involved the reclamation of marginal plots of land in Boston. For example, Barrell hoped to drain an “unpromising bit of the South End,” a quagmire that he previously developed as a fish pond.<sup>126</sup> During the 1790s, Boston began to experience a high rate of population growth, expanding from 18,038 (1790) to 24,937 (1800) persons. Demographic pressure upon the peninsular geography of Boston, then, prompted entrepreneurs to invest in the improvement of profitable new plots.<sup>127</sup> Following the successful return of *Columbia*, Barrell invested in efforts to transform the morass, located between Milk Street and Summer Street—his old address—into a residential neighborhood to be known as “Franklin Place.”<sup>128</sup> *Columbia*’s second expedition also enabled him to participate in debt speculation on the national stage. During the American

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<sup>125</sup> Joseph Barrell, Charlestown, to Colburn Barrell, London, 6 February 1795, ALS, Joseph Barrell Letterbook, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>126</sup> Walter Muir Whitehill and Lawrence W. Kennedy, *Boston: A Topographical History, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Enlarged* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 53.

<sup>127</sup> Carole Shammas, “The Space Problem in Early United States Cities,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2000), 505-11, 514, 516-18, 521-23.

<sup>128</sup> Whitehill and Kennedy, *Boston: A Topographical History*, 53.; *Boston Directory*, 10.

Revolution, the thirteen states accepted foreign and domestic loans in order to fund their war against Great Britain. Thereafter, their respective debts constituted an economic drain and destabilizing force upon the United States. In 1790, the federal government acted to assume, consolidate, and retire the debts through public subscriptions at 6 percent annual interest. Barrell subscribed a total of \$29,002 of securities originating in North Carolina, placing him among the largest speculators in Massachusetts.<sup>129</sup> If held for a duration of two decades, the subscription would yield \$68,919, a 138 percent profit.<sup>130</sup> Likewise, *Columbia* permitted him to invest in the nation's premier financial institution, the Bank of the United States. Chartered in 1791, the bank established a uniform national currency, raised federal revenue, and paid interest on the domestic debt. Barrell became a principal stockholder in the bank and perhaps the chief subscriber in Massachusetts. In 1792, he championed the creation of a branch location in Boston and lobbied for it to possess a robust share, \$350,000, or 27 percent, of the institution's branch capital.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Whitney K. Bates, "Northern Speculators and Southern State Debts: 1790," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1962): 31-35.

<sup>130</sup> "An Act making provision for the Debt of the United States" (1 August, 1790) provided for all subscriptions to be divided into three certificates, each carrying a different proportion of the principal, rate of return, and activation date. The first certificate included 4/9 of the principal at 6% interest per annum, to become active in 1792. The second certificate held a proportion of 3/9 of the principal and also became active in 1792, but at a rate of 3% interest. The final certificate, weighted at 2/9 of the principal, carried a 6% rate of interest but did not activate until 1800. As it happens, Joseph Barrell died in 1804, when his subscription would have been valued at \$48,345. See U.S. Congress. House of Representatives, *The Public Statutes of the United States of America*, vol. 1 (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1850), 138-44.

<sup>131</sup> James O. Wettereau, "New Light on the First Bank of the United States," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 61, no. 3 (1937): 270-71, 274, 281.



*Columbia*'s expeditions also helped catapult Crowell Hatch, a respected sea captain in prior years, into the realm of politics. Before 1793, his civic activities were limited to a modest subscription for improvements to Boston Common.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, there is reason to suspect that he remained a working captain even after investing in *Columbia*.<sup>133</sup> In fact, his involvement with the expedition may have represented a financial hardship until her successful return in 1793. Thereafter, perhaps because the expedition broke even, he launched himself into the expensive world of politics. In 1795, Hatch served on the committee of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, a position that extended his professional relationships among the merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans of the town.<sup>134</sup> Later, in 1803, he fronted a successful campaign for the Massachusetts House of Representatives from the County of Norfolk.<sup>135</sup> Meanwhile, Hatch continued to

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<sup>132</sup> "Improvements on the Common, to John Lucas and Oliver Smith, *Cr.* By the Subscriptions of," *Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 2 April 1785.

<sup>133</sup> The evidence, lists of port entries at Boston from 1786-87, is unclear about the identity of the captain listed as "Hatch." Another captain, David Hatch, made the news during the time period as a prominent castaway. Circumstantial evidence suggests, however, that the captain listed in *The Massachusetts Centinel* is, in fact, Crowell Hatch. First, in 1786, a captain named Hatch is registered as entering Boston Port in command of a brig named *Don Galvez*, arriving from Dutch Suriname. Curiously, this name matches that of a ship owned by Samuel Brown, and it would not be unreasonable to view this vessel as another Brown-Hatch collaboration. Later, another captain Hatch is registered as the commander of the brig *General Washington*, also arriving from Suriname. See "Entries since our last" *Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 8 July 1786.; "Naval-Office. Entered since our last." *Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 13 October 1787.

<sup>134</sup> "Committee of the Boston Chamber of Commerce for the month of September," *Massachusetts Mercury* (Boston, Massachusetts), 1 September 1795.

<sup>135</sup> "List of Representatives" *New England Palladium* (Boston: Massachusetts), 27 May 1803.; "House of Representatives." *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, Massachusetts), 4 June 1804.

engage in business. He experimented with estate management in Jamaica Plain, offering, for example, “100 acres of land... most of which is of an excellent soil” and “a pew, in the Rev. Mr. Gray’s Meeting-house.”<sup>136</sup> Nonetheless, he remained a sea captain by training, and imported “Sugar, Logwood, &c to Boston” aboard his ship *Argo*.<sup>137</sup>

Considered a newcomer to Boston in 1789, Samuel Brown became a respected citizen, businessman, and philanthropist following the success of *Columbia*. Indeed, he appears to have gained notoriety from his involvement in the “experiment in a branch of Commerce before unessayed by Americans.”<sup>138</sup> Brown turned his attention toward the improvement of his adopted town. In 1793, at the onset of the French Revolutionary Wars, he served on a “very full and respectable meeting of the Merchants and others concerned in Trade” in order to prevent “any privateers or other armed vessels, being fitted out or managed by American citizens” in Boston.<sup>139</sup> Despite the federal government’s declaration of neutrality in European wars, however, Brown worked to organize a “civic festival” to “celebrate the successes of our French Allies, against the

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<sup>136</sup> “Valuable Estate.” *Columbian Centinel & Massachusetts Federalist* (Boston, Massachusetts), 21 March 1804.

<sup>137</sup> “Arrived on Wednesday, Ship *Argo*, Davis, 25 days from havana, with a cargo of Sugar Logwood, &c to Crowell hatch—no late ship news.” *The Democrat* (Boston, Massachusetts), 24 August 1805.

<sup>138</sup> “Boston, Wednesday, Aug. 11, The *Columbia*.” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 11 August 1790.

<sup>139</sup> “At a Very Full and Respectable Meeting of the Merchants and Others Concerned in Trade” *American Apollo* (Boston, Massachusetts), 26 July 1793.

combined despots of Europe.”<sup>140</sup> Although he upheld the national prohibition on privateers, he helped to overturn a statewide ban on theatrical entertainment—a relic of Puritan New England—and, in 1794, became a trustee of the new Federal Street Theater.<sup>141</sup> Later, hoping to enhance the town’s reputation abroad, he helped establish the Massachusetts Society for the aid of Emigrants.<sup>142</sup> In 1797, Brown collaborated with Crowell Hatch and fellow Bostonian Andrew Dexter to convince the town to charter “a building on an extensive plan, containing an Exchange, a Coffee-house, and different apartments for other uses, which will be conducive to public accommodation.” The structure, known as the Boston Exchange Coffee-House, cost more than \$500,000 and became the first “proper hotel” erected in the United States. Completed in 1806, the institution welcomed guests for more than a decade until, in 1818, an attic fire reduced the building to ashes.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> “Civic Festival” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 19 March 1794.

<sup>141</sup> “Notification. The subscribers to the Boston Theatre are notified that Mr. Joseph Russell is appointed, by their Trustees, to receive the monies to be paid at the several instalments.” *American Apollo* (Boston, Massachusetts), 12 April 1793.; T.A. Milford, “Boston’s Theater Controversy and Liberal Notions of Advantage,” *The New England Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (1999): 61-63, 74, 87-88.

<sup>142</sup> “Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same...” *Courier* (Boston, Massachusetts), 22 August 1795.

<sup>143</sup> A.K. Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 27.; A.K. Sandoval-Strausz, “A Public House for a New Republic: The Architecture of Accommodation and the American State, 1789-1809,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 9, Constructing Image, Identity, and Place (2003): 55-58.

Charles Bulfinch did not need the “saving voyage” to proceed with his architectural career, although financial remuneration probably eased his investment in several projects. From 1793-95, he supervised the transformation of Barrell’s swamplands into the neighborhood of Franklin Place. The reclamation was successful, although the second phase—the ambitious construction of the Tontine Crescent—required constant infusions of cash and threatened to bankrupt Bulfinch. Conceived as “a number of convenient, elegant houses,” the Tontine Crescent represented a beautiful but costly experiment in urban renewal.<sup>144</sup> Bulfinch orchestrated the work at Franklin Place in tandem with another redevelopment program on Beacon Hill, where he built a number of imposing mansions.<sup>145</sup> Despite his financial overextension, the buildings secured his reputation as an imaginative and hardworking architect. In 1798, Bulfinch delivered plans for the Old State House in Hartford, Connecticut, and the Massachusetts State House above Boston Common. Beginning in 1805, he remodeled and enlarged Faneuil Hall, a Boston landmark associated with figures such as Samuel Adams, James Otis, Jr., and the Sons of Liberty. In 1818, Bulfinch embarked upon his most enduring contribution to American culture, the renovation of the ruined United States Capitol, in Washington City.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> “The public are hereby informed” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 6 August 1793.; Whitehill and Kennedy, *Boston: A Topographical History*, 53.

<sup>145</sup> Jeffrey Klee, “Civic Order on Beacon Hill,” *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 15 (2008): 43-46.

<sup>146</sup> British forces burned the Capitol during their occupation of Washington in 1814. Ellen Susan Bulfinch, ed., *The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch*, 92, 111-13, 119-21, 233-36.

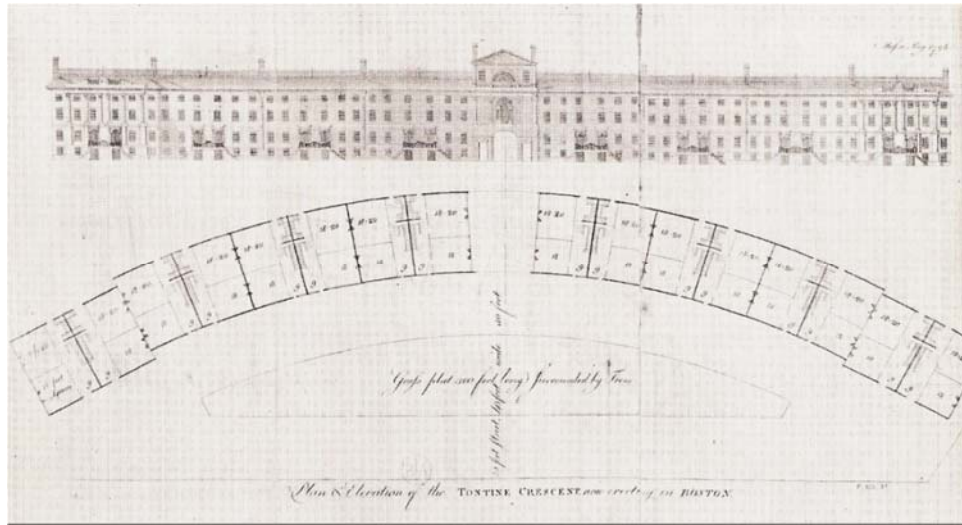


Figure 24. Charles Bulfinch, engraving by Samuel Hill, “Plan of Elevation of the Tontine Crescent now erecting in Boston,” in *Massachusetts Magazine* 6 (February 1794), page facing p. 67.

*Columbia*'s second expedition, like her first, held strategic and commercial implications of interest to national leaders. In 1793, John Kendrick corresponded with Thomas Jefferson concerning Spanish assistance rendered to the expedition in the Juan Fernandez Islands.<sup>147</sup> Similarly, after purchasing land on Vancouver Island, he forwarded “Copies of several Deeds” to Jefferson in order to “secure the property of these purchases to me, and the government thereof to the United States.”<sup>148</sup> Meanwhile, Robert Gray established a United States claim to the “Great River of the West,” a development of great significance to Jefferson. Gray navigated a hundred miles up “Columbia’s River,”

<sup>147</sup> “John Kendrick to Thomas Jefferson, On Board the Ship Lady Washington, Harbor of Mawwin-na, St. Clair’s Island, North-west coast of America (June, 1793),” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 154-57.

<sup>148</sup> “John Kendrick to Thomas Jefferson, Port Independence, on the Island of Heong-Kong, March 1st. 1793,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 25, 1 January–10 May 1793, ed. John Catanzariti, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 307–308.

as he called it, but the full geographic significance of the river remained unknown. In 1803, President Jefferson would instruct Meriwether Lewis and the Corps of Discovery to treat Point Adams, at the mouth of the Columbia, as the final destination in their search for “the most practicable water communication across this continent.”<sup>149</sup> Finally, Joseph Barrell continued to promote the economic potential of the maritime fur trade. In 1793, he once again corresponded with George Washington, now President of the United States. Included with the letter, Barrell offered “the only intire Sea Otter Skin, brought to this country, which was procured by the Columbia & Washington” and requested that the president “accept it as a seat for your Sadle.”<sup>150</sup> In short, the gift not only represented *Columbia’s* signature accomplishment, it made the prospects of the fur trade tangible to the Chief Executive.

Finally, the expeditions punctuated the lives of the Columbians, common mariners who performed the uncommon task of establishing an American presence in the Pacific World. Some leveraged their experiences to achieve great success. Upon returning to Boston, John Box Hoskins extended his relationship with Joseph Barrell,

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<sup>149</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “IV. Instructions for Meriwether Lewis, 20 June 1803,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 40, *4 March 1803–10 July 1803*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 176–83.; Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 54.

<sup>150</sup> “Joseph Barrell to George Washington, Pleasant Hill Charlestown, state Massts, Nov. 25th 1793,” in *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, vol. 14, *1 September–31 December 1793*, ed. David R. Hoth (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 433.

becoming, in effect, his accountant, purchasing agent, and professional successor.<sup>151</sup> In 1794, Barrell “resigned” his business to a partnership between his son, Joseph, Jr., and Hoskins, who “now propose carrying it on, under the firm of Barrell and Hoskins.”<sup>152</sup> Thereafter, Hoskins developed an international network of contacts, with particular emphasis upon the port of Bordeaux, France.<sup>153</sup> Meanwhile, in 1793, John Boit completed his own circumnavigation as captain of *Union*, a brigantine owned by his brother-in-law, Crowell Hatch.<sup>154</sup> In 1796, he assumed command of the snow *George* on a voyage to Mauritius. During a tempestuous passage the Cape of Good Hope, Boit ordered “all hands fore and aft at both pumps to keep the vessel from going to Davy Jones’ Locker,” a decision that saved the *George* from certain destruction. At Mauritius, he recruited a Chinese servant, known as “Chou Mandarien,” who returned with him and sailed aboard other Bostonian ships. Boit later reflected on his nautical career in verse,

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<sup>151</sup> The relationship ran deeper than business. John Hoskins’s father died in 1786, leaving his mother with nine children to support upon “but a small remnant of their early fortune.” In recognition of the hardship, Joseph Barrell accepted financial responsibility for raising the boy and “strove to fill... the place of a father.” Thereafter, Hoskins availed himself of opportunities to learn the merchant trade in Barrell’s counting house, in the company of other young men such as Charles Bulfinch. See Lucius B. Marsh and Harrier F. Parker, eds., *Bronsdon and Box Families* (Lynn: The Nichols Press, 1902), 227

<sup>152</sup> “Boston, Joseph Barrell, Esq. the father of our Joseph Barrell Jun. having retired from business, has resigned it to us, who now propose carrying it on, under the firm of Barrell and Hoskins.” (Boston, 1794) *Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1679-1800*, Charles Evans and Roger P. Bristol, contributors (microfiche), no. 46978.

<sup>153</sup> Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, xxii.; Marsh and Parker, *Bronsdon and Box Families*, 236-38.

<sup>154</sup> Boit, *Log of the Union*, xxx-xxxvi.

penning poems such as “Epitaph, on a Sailor,” in which he bade farewell to a mariner “Free from the Storms, and Gusts of human life, Free from the squalls of passion and of strife.”<sup>155</sup> Perhaps his compositions stood as memorials to missing Columbians.

For other Columbians, the oceans that made them famous also swallowed them whole. Robert Haswell returned to sea immediately following *Columbia*’s second expedition and, from 1793-98, commanded the vessels *Hannah* and *John Jay* on commercial voyages to the East Indies. In 1799, during the Quasi-War against France, he enlisted as a first lieutenant aboard the frigate USS *Boston*. In this capacity, he enhanced his reputation as a navigator by returning with the prize corvettes *Two Angels* and *Le Berceau*.<sup>156</sup> Thereafter, Haswell assumed command of the ship *Louisa* on another expedition to the Northwest Coast. The vessel disappeared, and, in 1805, newspapers reported him “lately to have been lost” at sea.<sup>157</sup> Likewise, Joseph Ingraham assumed command of the brigantine *Hope* on an expedition to the Northwest Coast from 1790-93. The voyage, concurrent with *Columbia*’s second expedition, witnessed the first American

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<sup>155</sup> Robert Apthorp Boit, *Chronicles of the Boit Family and their Descendants and of other Allied Families* (Boston: S.J. Parkhill & Company, 1915), 17, 29-30, 32-33, 41.

<sup>156</sup> “A letter from Lt. Haswell of the Boston frigate, to the Secretary of the Navy, dated Newport, Feb. 15 1800, informs:” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 5 March 1800.; “Boston, Monday, November 17th, 1800. Important Capture.” *Boston Gazette* (Boston, Massachusetts), 17 November 1800.

<sup>157</sup> The notice of his disappearance is found in his father’s obituary. See “Died. At Yorkshire, in England, William Haswell, Esq. Æ. 73.” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 28 August 1805.



exploration of the Marquesas Islands, but otherwise ended in financial failure.<sup>158</sup> In 1799, during the Quasi-War, Ingraham enlisted as sailing master aboard the USS *Pickering*, a 14-gun brig, on a commerce raiding mission in the Caribbean Sea.<sup>159</sup> Following a victorious cruise, in which she “took four French privateers, retook 12 American vessels, and liberated 300 American prisoners from the French prisons,” *Pickering* vanished without a trace. Ingraham was never seen again.<sup>160</sup>

Captains John Kendrick and Robert Gray also perished while sailing the unpredictable oceans of the world. Kendrick, *Columbia*’s original captain, never returned to the United States, nor did the principals realize a profit from his increasingly autonomous command of *Lady Washington*. Rumors of his activities did, however, trickle back to Boston. In 1791, he attempted to trade at Japan, becoming the first American navigator to anchor in that country’s waters. A few months later, he struck an agreement to purchase furbearing lands—or perhaps easements to that land—on Vancouver Island. Whether Kendrick undertook the purchase on his own behalf, or that of the investors, remains a subject of debate.<sup>161</sup> Later, he became involved in the power politics of the Sandwich Islands, where he established an alliance with Chief Kaeo of Kaua‘i and

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<sup>158</sup> Joseph Ingraham, *Journal of the Brigantine “Hope,”* 43-64.

<sup>159</sup> Christopher McKee, *Edward Preble: A Naval Biography* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 58-63.

<sup>160</sup> “Charleston, July 16.” *Philadelphia Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), 4 August 1800.

<sup>161</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate, Report No. 335 (Felch Report), 20-25.

attempted to counteract British influence on Maui.<sup>162</sup> On 12 December 1794, Kendrick attended a celebration following a battle at Aiea, a village above Pearl Harbor. In a terrible oversight, a British cannonade fired “in consequence of this victory”—and accidentally loaded—blasted him with grapeshot. Kendrick sustained mortal wounds and died several hours later.<sup>163</sup>

In 1793, Robert Gray returned to his home on Back Street, in Boston, presumably with adventure stories to tell. He fathered five children, including one son and four daughters, from 1794-1801.<sup>164</sup> Gray also participated in the Quasi-War. In 1798, he assumed command of the brigantine *Alert*, of Salem, Massachusetts, under instructions to return to the Northwest Coast and Canton. The expedition failed, however, when he lost a naval engagement to the French privateer *La Républicaine*, whose captain seized *Alert* as a prize. Gray briefly became a prisoner-of-war before obtaining release at Montevideo, in

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<sup>162</sup> Ridley, *Morning of Fire*, 317-33, 345-52.

<sup>163</sup> Scott Ridley, the principal biographer of John Kendrick, disagrees with this view. In his telling, the cannonade may have been deliberately loaded by a British rival, William Brown, whom Kendrick had outmaneuvered in the political landscape of the Northwest Coast and Hawaii. Ridley suggests that “the appearance of the *Washington*” prior to the Battle of Aiea “would have provoked Brown’s deep-seated hostility toward the Americans, and especially toward Kendrick.” In the aftermath of the grapeshot blast, he explains, “Brown claimed it was an accident.” See Frederic W. Howay, “John Kendrick and His Sons,” *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 23, no. 4 (1922): 292-95.; Ridley, *Morning of Fire*, 350-53.; Abraham Fornander, *An Account of the Polynesian Race, its Origins and Migrations and the Ancient History of the Hawaiian People to the Times of Kamehameha I, Vol. II* (London: Trübner & Co., 1880), 265-66.

<sup>164</sup> Some sources suggest that he relocated a few blocks away to Snowhill Street in 1798. See Frederic W. Howay and Albert Matthews, “Some Notes Upon Captain Robert Gray,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1930): 8-12.

Spanish South America.<sup>165</sup> The following year, he commanded the privateer *Lucy*, a vessel comparable to *Columbia* in terms of dimensions and armaments.<sup>166</sup> In 1800, following the cessation of hostilities with France, he embarked upon a longer voyage to New South Wales, and possibly onward to Russian America and Canton.<sup>167</sup> According to one descendant, between 1806 and 1809, he “died of yellow fever on one of his voyages from South Carolina and was probably buried at sea.”<sup>168</sup> Thus passed the first captain to circumnavigate the globe for the United States of America.

*Columbia*'s success in establishing a global trade route opened profitable new horizons for imitators across the United States. A new generation of adventurers, including Ebenezer Dorr and Sons, Thomas Handasyd Perkins, Jonathan and Nathan Winship, and William Sturgis, soon followed in her wake. Indeed, Bostonians charted the course for the United States to become the dominant power in the nineteenth-century

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<sup>165</sup> Union of American Republics. *Bulletin of the Pan American Union* 47, July-December, 1918 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1918), 709-10.

<sup>166</sup> Howay and Matthews, “Some Notes Upon Captain Robert Gray,” 10.

<sup>167</sup> The specifics of this voyage are unknown, outside of orders issues from Stephen Codman to Robert Gray on 31 October, 1800. Codman designated him captain of a schooner bound for Australia, and ultimately tasked with purchasing a cargo of seal skins for exchange at Canton. Assuming Gray traded for seals, he probably would have done so in Russian Alaska, perhaps at Sitka or Kodiak Island. If, on the other hand, Gray undertook his own sealing, this phase of the expedition may have occurred in the Kerguelen Islands, an archipelago of the Southern Ocean, while *en route* to New South Wales. According to J. Richard Nokes, the letter remains in the possession of William Twombly, a descendant of the captain's wife, Martha Gray. See J. Richard Nokes, *Columbia's River: The Voyages of Robert Gray, 1787-1793* (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1991), 274-75.

<sup>168</sup> Howay and Matthews, “Some Notes Upon Captain Robert Gray,” 12.

Pacific. *Columbia*'s expeditions set the stage for the ocean hemisphere to become a "Mar  
Columbiana," or American Sea.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Arrell Morgan Gibson, *Yankees in Paradise: The Pacific Basin Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 100, 108.

CHAPTER VI  
“MAR COLUMBIANA”

On 24 August, 1793, a short advertisement appeared in the *Columbian Centinel*. “On Thursday next,” the item explained, “will positively be sold, to the highest bidder... the good, well found, and fast sailing ship COLUMBIA.” Lewis Hayt, the Bostonian auctioneer, would supervise the sale of the ship, her inventory, and armaments.<sup>1</sup> After breaking even, Joseph Barrell and his partners decided to pursue other interests, and the Columbians disbanded to seek other work. *Columbia* would not return to the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> Despite her sudden departure from the historical record, however, her accomplishments resonated throughout Boston, New England, and the United States.

During six years at sea, *Columbia* established a permanent United States presence in the Pacific and launched the transformation of the region to a “Mar Columbiana,” or

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<sup>1</sup> “On Thursday Next,” *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, Massachusetts), 24 August 1793.

<sup>2</sup> *Columbia’s* fate, like so much about her, cannot be known with certainty. No evidence attests to who purchased her or what tasks she performed in later years. Documentary evidence reveals nothing of her service record from 1793-1801. Tradition holds that she was “ripped to pieces,” or scrapped, in 1801. See Frederic W. Howay, ed., *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 & 1790-1793* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), x.

American Sea.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, she inspired a new generation of investors, imitators, and innovators to follow in her wake. In later decades, American navigators came to control the maritime fur trade of the Northwest Coast, developed new business models in Polynesia, and accelerated United States involvement in China. Prior to *Columbia*, European powers dominated the Pacific. After her expeditions, however, American business eclipsed European activities throughout the ocean hemisphere. *Columbia* sailed under American colors, and an independent republic followed her into the Pacific. A commercial empire was born.

*Columbia* proved that American commerce in the Pacific could be profitable, and, in doing so, she inspired other fur-trading expeditions from Boston, Philadelphia, Providence, and New York. Throughout the three decades following *Columbia*'s first voyage, 141 American vessels embarked for the Pacific Ocean on fur-trading missions, and 112 are known to have engaged in the trade of the Northwest Coast. Entrepreneurs across the United States rushed to repeat and innovate upon *Columbia*'s accomplishments. During the first decade, 1791-1800, a total of thirty-three American ships traded along the Northwest Coast. Several expeditions, including those of *Hancock*, *Jefferson*, and *Hazard*, overwintered on the coast in order to jumpstart a second trading season. Two voyages, those of *Margaret* and *Jefferson*, augmented their trading capacity

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<sup>3</sup> Arrell Gibson, *Yankees in Paradise: The Pacific Basin Frontier* (Santa Fe: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 8.

through construction of companion vessels in the Pacific. In doing so, Americans emulated the Columbians.<sup>4</sup> The second decade, 1801-1810, saw another forty-four American ships participate in the maritime fur trade. The early years saw a dramatic increase in the number of American trading vessels on the coast, with twenty ships present in 1801, and fifteen in 1802. Some vessels traded for years on end—*Atahualpa*, *Guatimozin*, *Mercury*, *O’Cain* and *Vancouver* each cruised the coast in at least half the summers of the decade.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, as indigenous peoples hunted an increasing number

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<sup>4</sup> In this respect, the Columbians emulated British trader John Meares, who became the first navigator to overwinter and build a sloop on the Northwest Coast. Meares, however, cannot be said to have succeeded in either strategy. He remained on the coast during the winter of 1786-87, but only because “the bad weather had set in, with continual gales of wind, accompanied by sleet and snow.” Nathaniel Portlock and George Dixon rescued his disintegrating crew, now struggling against scurvy and subsisting almost entirely upon alcohol, the following spring. Similarly, *North West America*, the sloop he constructed at Nootka Sound, later became a prize of Spanish Governor Estevan Martínez. See John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789 from China to the N.W. Coast of America, with an Introductory Narrative of Voyage Performed in 1786, from Bengal, in the Ship Nootka, Vol. I* (Logographic Press: London, 1791), xxi-xxii.; George Dixon, *A Voyage Round the World but more Particularly to the North-West Coast of America: Performed in 1785, 1786, 1787, and 1788; in the King George and Queen Charlotte* (London: George Goulding, 1789), 157.; “Robert Gray and Joseph Ingraham to Don Juan Francesco de la Bodega y Quadra, Nootka Sound, August 3d, 1792” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 474-79.

<sup>5</sup> I adapt these figures from Frederic W. Howay. Although I later cite numbers from Dick Wilson, Howay’s compilation is useful in determining the port of origin and activities of American vessels on the Northwest Coast. The numbers above include only those vessels known to have participated in fur trading on the Northwest Coast of America. I omit vessels lost, captured, or wrecked *en route* to the coast, those devoted to the Hawaiian trade, those engaged strictly in the provision of Russian settlements in Alaska, those sold to foreign owners prior to arriving on the coast, and voyages described as “improbable,” “doubtful,” or “apocryphal.” I also omit the ship *Mary*, reported on the coast in 1806, which is probably a misprint for the ship *Mercury*. Conversely, the figures include those vessels purchased from foreign owners and relaunched under American ownership. See Frederic W. Howay, *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-1825*, ed. Richard A. Pierce (Kingston, ON: The Limestone Press, 1973), 10-24, 27-57, 64-102, 107-31, 138-44.

of sea otters, the furbearing population entered a steep decline.<sup>6</sup> Undeterred, Americans launched another thirty-five vessels to the Northwest Coast from 1811-20. Diminishing otter resources, however, forced many expeditions to diversify their commercial activities to include sealing, poaching, the sandalwood trade, and the provisions trade.<sup>7</sup> One vessel, *O’Cain*, under the principal command of Jonathan Winship, Jr., demonstrates the range, scope, and intensity of American shipping in the Pacific. From 1803-1816, she completed an unprecedented eleven seasons on the Northwest Coast and participated in all forms of commerce. Furthermore, she did business in numerous locations, including the Northwest Coast, Alaska, California, the Hawaiian Islands, and Canton. Finally, in a cruise that illustrates the determination of Americans to dominate the ocean hemisphere, *O’Cain* performed a record eight-year expedition from 1809-16.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, *Columbia* extended Bostonian commerce beyond the Atlantic World and established the town as the first “Pacific” port in the United States. Bostonian vessels traded on the Northwest Coast each season from 1791-1820, and, during seven summers,

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<sup>6</sup> David Igler, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 107-11.

<sup>7</sup> Howay, *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade*, 10-24, 27-57, 64-102, 107-31, 138-44.

<sup>8</sup> *O’Cain*’s eight-year odyssey is attributable to the outbreak of war between the United States and Great Britain in 1812. American vessels would be forced to run a dangerous gauntlet in the Atlantic Ocean when returning to the United States. Winship made a virtue of necessity by remaining in the Pacific, but he also profited handsomely as the most active captain in the region. See Howay, *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade*, 55, 57, 70, 75, 82, 86, 91, 95, 100, 110, 115.



they comprised the full contingent from the United States. During that period, Boston launched a total of seventy-three vessels, or 67 percent of American vessels engaged in fur-trading on the Northwest Coast. Put another way, the town is responsible for 74 percent of national trading, in terms of ship-seasons, on the coast. Other ports became involved in a far less intensive manner. For example, New York dispatched fifteen ships (13%) and accounts for 11 percent of trading. Philadelphia ranked third in launches, with five vessels (4%), while Providence ranked third in trading, with seven seasons (3%). Other small contributors to the fur trade included Salem, Newport and Bristol (Rhode Island), Norwich (Connecticut), Baltimore, and Portsmouth (Virginia).<sup>9</sup> Some Bostonians, such as Thomas Handasyd Perkins, profited handsomely by launching concurrent voyages to the Pacific, East Indies, and China.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, merchantmen such as *Alert*, *Pearl*, and *Atahualpa* realized profits worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. From 1790-1800, the commerce of the Pacific World became a decisive factor in Boston's renaissance as an emporium to the world.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> American shipwrights also constructed five fur-trading vessels in the Pacific—at Clayoquot Sound, Nootka Sound, Astoria, in the Hawaiian Islands, and the Marquesas. Together, they conducted eight ship-seasons of trading in the ocean hemisphere. By this reckoning, the Pacific World rivals Philadelphia as a contributor of vessels to the fur trade, and ranks third in trading after Boston and New York.

<sup>10</sup> R.G.F. Candage, "Boston Ships, Past and Present," Proceedings of the Bostonian Society at the Annual Meeting, January 8, 1901 (Boston: Bostonian Society, 1901), 29-35.; Carl Seaburg and Stanley Paterson, *Merchant Prince of Boston: Colonel T.H. Perkins, 1764-1854* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 49-55, 144-66.

<sup>11</sup> Boston Port Authority, *Boston Looks Seaward: The Story of the Port, 1630-1940* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, Inc., 1941) 71, 78-79, 83-86.

European observers responded to *Columbia*'s achievements with a mixture of frustration, disbelief, and foreboding. John Meares, a British adventurer on the Northwest Coast, promoted the wealth of the Pacific, which he believed might "not only become new sources of commercial advantage to this kingdom" but also a means of "increasing her maritime strength; and thereby aggrandizing, in the most ample manner, the power of the British empire."<sup>12</sup> Tempering his view, however, was the unwelcome presence of *Columbia* and *Washington*. Meares complained that both ships received favorable treatment from the Spanish governor of Nootka Sound, Estevan Martínez, whereas the governor had impounded British vessels.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, he noted that *Columbia* and *Washington* called at Canton in 1790, along with thirteen other vessels originating in the United States, a total second only to Great Britain. Meares undoubtedly considered their presence a threat to British control of the region.<sup>14</sup> George Macartney, the British ambassador to the Qing Empire, thought otherwise. In 1794, he dismissed American trade with China as being "so much declined, and so likely in a few years to be almost annihilated, that it is the less necessary for me to dwell upon the subject." Indeed, he considered Canton such a difficult market that even "the Americans, with all their

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<sup>12</sup> Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, 281, 286-87, 290.

<sup>13</sup> Meares, "Appendix No. 1. Copy of the Memorial Presented to the House of Commons, May 13, 1790:—Containing every Particular respecting the Capture of Vessels in Nootka Sound," in *ibid.*, 392-94.

<sup>14</sup> Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, 281, 317-18.

contrivances and industry, are not likely... to pursue it with much advantage.”<sup>15</sup> The ambassador, however, had little actual interaction with Americans in Canton. Instead, he would have done well to consult George Vancouver, a British navigator who witnessed American activity throughout the Pacific. During his expedition of 1791-95, Vancouver encountered Americans in every corner of the ocean, including the crews of *Eleanora*, *Fair American*, *Hope*, and *Nancy*, in addition to *Columbia* and *Washington*.<sup>16</sup> Having interviewed their captains, he knew that “the vessels employed in commercial pursuits... found their adventures to answer their expectation: many were contented with the cargo of furs they had collected.”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, he noted the emergence of parallel fields of commerce. Americans spearheaded the new trade in pearls, sandalwood, firearms, and even served as mercenaries.<sup>18</sup> Vancouver cannot have helped but recognize American success in the Pacific, whatever its implications for Great Britain.

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<sup>15</sup> George Macartney, “Government, Justice and Property, Science, Trade, etc.,” in *Our First Ambassador to China: An Account of the Life of George, Early of Macartney, with Extracts from his Letters, and the Narrative of his Experiences in China, as Told by Himself, 1737-1806*, ed. Helen H. Robbins (London: John Murray, 1908), 410-11.

<sup>16</sup> George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World*, 3 vols. (London: G.G. and J. Robinson and J. Edwards, 1798), 1:173, 157, 172, 213.; *Ibid.*, 2:95, 135-45.; *Ibid.*, 3:9, 79.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:408.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:172, 186-87, 348-49.; 2:493.; 3:74-75.



Figure 25. William Beechey, *Portrait of John Meares*, as reproduced in John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789, from China to the North-West Coast of America* (London: Logographic Press, 1790).

French and Spanish observers, too, reflected on the growing presence of Americans in the wake of *Columbia*. Captain Étienne Marchand, who circumnavigated the globe from 1790-92, noted with approval that “the Americans of the United States” had “seized with ardour” the commerce of the Pacific World. Marchand attributed American success “to their industry” and a laudable “want of enriching themselves in order to pay the public debt.” By comparison to Europeans, he concluded that “they are become formidable competitors” and added that “their activity is by no means inferior to

that of the English.”<sup>19</sup> Conversely, Spanish officers feared the presence of Americans in the Pacific. Manuel Antonio Flores, the Spanish Viceroy in New Spain, worried that “the English colonies of America, republican and independent,” might attempt to develop a “safe port on the South Sea... [which] might be expected of an active nation that bases all its hopes and resources on navigation and commerce.” He concluded that the United States “would obtain the richest trade of Great China and India,” perhaps at the expense of Spain, “if it were to succeed in establishing a colony on the West Coast of America.”<sup>20</sup> José Mariano Moziño, a naturalist, regretted that Captain Kendrick had exchanged firearms for otters out of “self-interest or rivalry with the English.” Moziño was alarmed that Kendrick “gave Maquinna a swivel gun” and “furnished Wickinanish with more than two hundred guns, two barrels of powder, and a considerable portion of shot.” In his opinion, the burgeoning American arms trade could become “harmful to all humanity,” and, at the very least, undermined Spanish authority in the Pacific.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The *Solide* expedition of 1790-92, under the command of Étienne Marchand, completed the second French circumnavigation of the globe. Unlike the prior expedition under Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1766-69), a scientific voyage, the *Solide* expedition intended to test French commercial potential in the maritime fur trade. An intermediate voyage under the command of Jean-François Galaup, comte de Lapérouse, failed to circumnavigate the globe after wrecking the in the Solomon Islands. See Étienne Marchand, *Voyage Round the World, Performed during the Years 1790, 1791, and 1792 by Étienne Marchand, Preceded by an Historical Introduction and Illustrated by Charts, etc., Vol. II*, trans. C.P. Claret de Fleurieu, (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, Paternoster-Row; and T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, in the Strand, 1801), 115-16.

<sup>20</sup> “Flores to Valdés, December 23, 1788,” quoted in Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 130.

<sup>21</sup> José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka: An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792*, ed. and trans. Iris Higbie Wilson, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), 71.

Following the *Columbia* expeditions, Americans established a permanent presence along the Northwest Coast. Americans cruised the coast in such numbers that, beginning in 1800, fur-trading vessels from the United States usually outnumbered ships hailing from all other nations, combined. The trend was especially pronounced from 1800-03, and again in 1810-13, when Russian adventurers provided the only serious competition to traders from the United States.<sup>22</sup> The involvement of American sealing, smuggling, and supply ships also contributed to a preponderance of vessels originating in the United States.<sup>23</sup> John Jacob Astor, an American entrepreneur, even attempted to establish a permanent base of operations on the Northwest Coast. In 1811, his Pacific Fur Company founded a trading post, known as Fort Astoria, on the Columbia River. Misadventure plagued Astoria from the beginning. Within months, Clayoquot Indians attacked and captured the settlement's main trading vessel, *Tonquin*. One surviving

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<sup>22</sup> Frederic Howay and James R. Gibson previously produced lists of trading vessels on the Northwest Coast, but Dick Wilson has observed that both authors' work contained "a few omissions and errors." By comparison, he synthesized a number of sources in order to create the most comprehensive list currently known. Wilson considers the "Northwest Coast" to extend from California to Alaska. Using this definition, Russian traders represented the closest competition to commercial vessels from the United States. Russian commercial vessels performed 219 ship-seasons in the North Pacific, versus 291 American ship-seasons. When including Russian warships that participated in or supported the fur trade, the Russian total expands to 258 ship-seasons. After 1800, Russian vessels outnumbered their American counterparts in the North Pacific in 1804, 1808-10, 1815, and 1821. The Russian total includes those vessels purchased from Americans and Britons. Likewise, the American total includes vessels sold to Russian traders. In a small percentage of cases, then, individual vessels contribute to both the American and Russian totals for a single season. In general, I consider Alaska to be separate from the Northwest Coast. See Dick A. Wilson, "King George's Men: British Ships and Sailors in the Pacific Northwest-China Trade, 1785-1821" (PhD Dissertation, University of Idaho, 2004), 377-97.

<sup>23</sup> James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods* (Tacoma: University of Washington Press, 1999), 252-53, 258-65.

crewmember retaliated by lighting the ship's magazine—the explosion destroyed the vessel and killed hundreds of Indians. In 1813, following the outbreak of war between the United States and Great Britain, British fur traders captured the fort itself. In the aftermath, beleaguered managers sold Astoria to the British Northwest Company.<sup>24</sup> Despite such disasters, however, American fur traders continued to cruise the Northwest Coast through the 1820s.

The Columbians also charted the course for an American presence in Polynesia. The Hawaiian archipelago, where John Kendrick and others traded, politicked, and warred during the 1790s, became a site of strategic importance to American commerce. Situated in the Central Pacific, the islands lay astride multiple transpacific trade routes—the old silver route extending from Mexico to the Philippines, the established fur route between the Northwest Coast and China, and a new whaling route between Cape Horn and the North Pacific.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the islands offered a range of agricultural products of vital interest to mariners, including fish, chicken, and pork (protein), pineapple (an antiscorbutic), as well as breadfruit, coconut, banana, sweet potato, sugar, and taro (carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals).<sup>26</sup> Local rulers, such as Kamehameha, used

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<sup>24</sup> Wickaninnish ordered the attack on *Tonquin* in response to disrespectful behavior on the part of Captain Jonathan Thorn. James P. Ronda, *Astoria and Empire* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 236-37, 243-76.; Valerie Sherer Mathes, "Wickaninnish, a Clayoquot Chief, as Recorded by Early Travelers," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (1979): 119.

<sup>25</sup> Harold Whitman Bradley, "The Hawaiian Islands and the Pacific Fur Trade, 1785-1813," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1939): 275-299.; Nicholas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 74-80.

<sup>26</sup> This list does not include exotic biota introduced by Europeans during the early years of contact, such as boar, cattle, and oranges. See D.E. Yen, "The Origins of Oceanic Agriculture,"

geography and agriculture to their advantage, becoming suppliers to Western vessels in exchange for weapons, manufactured goods, ships, and political assistance.<sup>27</sup> The Marquesas, an archipelago explored by Joseph Ingraham, also witnessed interaction between Americans and indigenous societies. In 1813, Captain David Porter established “Madisonville,” the first American naval base in the Pacific, on the island of Nuku Hiva. Operating from Madisonville, Porter undertook commerce raiding missions against British ships in the Pacific. Meanwhile, he also supported the indigenous Te l’i tribe in a proxy war against the rival Tai pi people, allies of Great Britain.<sup>28</sup>

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*Archaeology & Physical Anthropology in Oceania* 8, no. 1 (1973): 68-85.; Ross H. Cordy, “The Effects of European Contact on Hawaiian Agricultural Systems – 1778-1819,” *Ethnohistory* 19, no. 4 (1972): 395-97.

<sup>27</sup> Peter R. Mills, “Neo in Oceania: Foreign Vessels Owned by Hawaiian Chiefs before 1830,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 38, no. 1 (2003): 53-67.; Jenny Newell, “Exotic Possessions: Polynesians and their Eighteenth-Century Collecting,” *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 17, Pacific Ethnography, Politics and Museums (2005): 75-88.; Thomas Bargatzky, “Beachcombers and Castaways and Innovators,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 15, no. 2 (1980): 93-102.

<sup>28</sup> Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 31-37.; Thomas, *Islanders*, 60-72. Gibson, *Yankees in Paradise*, 314-17.



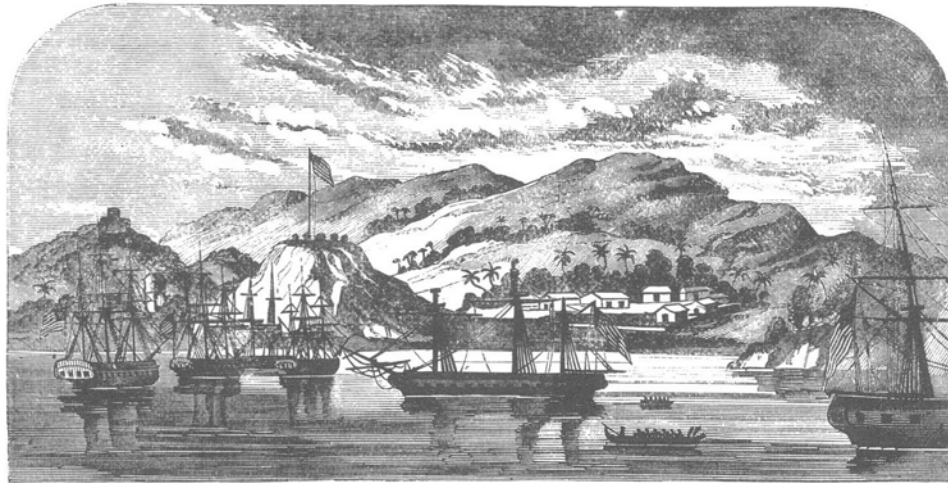


Figure 26. David Porter, “Madisonville,” ink on paper, as reproduced in David Porter, *Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean* (1815), ed. R.D. Madison (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1986), 400.

Meanwhile, *Columbia* accelerated the expansion of American business in Canton. The Columbians were not the first Americans to do business in Canton, a distinction that belongs to Samuel Shaw and Thomas Randall of the *Empress of China*. Rather, their contributions to the Pacific fur trade complemented and intensified the nascent American China Trade.<sup>29</sup> Bostonian vessels often followed *Columbia*'s transpacific route from the Northwest Coast to Canton. In China, they encountered Salem merchantmen, including *Astrea*, *Light Horse*, and *Three Sisters*, arriving via the Indian Ocean. Together, Boston and Salem launched expeditions that made Massachusetts a dominant force in the American China Trade, and enabled the United States to embrace the globe. By 1814,

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<sup>29</sup> James R. Fichter, *So Great a Proffit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 203-16.

more than six hundred American vessels did business in Canton.<sup>30</sup> During the first decade of the nineteenth century, Americans managed eight trading firms in Canton, some of which, such as Perkins & Co. and the Blight Company, saw uninterrupted operation well into the 1830s.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, American merchant-captains such as Stephen Girard experimented with the smuggling of opium into China. Similarly, American scavenger Oliver Slater sold valuable products of the South Pacific, including sandalwood and bêche-de-mer, at Canton. Americans tourists, such as Harriet Low, also disembarked to explore the Portuguese city of Macao.<sup>32</sup>

In global terms, the Columbians and their successors helped transform an ocean once deemed a “Spanish Lake” into a “Mar Columbiana,” or American Sea. Indeed, the decline of the Spanish Empire coincided with the development of the maritime fur trade and the *Columbia* expeditions. During the 1780s, Madrid responded to British and Russian interlopers in the Pacific by launching naval missions to the Northwest Coast and

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<sup>30</sup> Iglar, *The Great Ocean*, 31-33.

<sup>31</sup> Many of these companies existed under one name for a few years before “rebranding” under the influence of new investors. The Blight Company is a prime example. In 1801, James Oliver established a firm on behalf of Peter Blight, a merchant of Philadelphia. In later decades, however, it passed to a number of relatives including George Blight, Charles Blight, and James H. Blight. See Jacques M. Downs, *The Golden Ghetto: The American Commercial Community at Canton and the Shaping of American China Policy, 1784-1844* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1997), 145, 146-150.

<sup>32</sup> The Chinese prized sandalwood for its aromatic properties, and valued bêche-de-mer (sea slug)—often deemed “sea ginseng”—as a savory ingredient in soup. See Jonathan Goldstein, “A Clash of Civilizations in the Pearl River Delta: Stephen Girard’s Trade with China, 1787-1824,” in *Americans and Macao: Trade, Smuggling, and Diplomacy on the South China Coast*, ed. Paul A. Van Dyke (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 22-28.; Eric Jay Dolin, *When America First Met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail* (New York: Liverlight, 2012), 112-155, 161-63, 178-82.

constructing a fort at Nootka Sound. From 1788-96, New Spain bolstered its defenses on the coast with warships, reaching a maximum contingent of eight vessels during the “Nootka Crisis” of 1790-92. Following the Nootka Conventions, which resolved the dispute between London and Madrid, Spain’s presence diminished on the Northwest Coast. Spain dispatched its final expedition north of California in 1796. Meanwhile, British ships also diminished in number along the coast, yielding momentum in the fur trade to Americans in the following year, 1797.<sup>33</sup>

Continental events also affected the development of a “Mar Columbiana.” Following the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, New Spain moved to defend its borders against the pressures of an expanding republic, the United States. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark demonstrated that Americans could traverse the continent, unhindered, to the Pacific, despite two attempts by Mexico City to intercept the Corps of Discovery.<sup>34</sup> Spanish California, connected to the metropolis only by tenuous roads, trails, and sea lanes, drifted into the autonomous status of a quasi-state on the fringe of empire.

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<sup>33</sup> Again, Wilson’s list informs my analysis. Spanish commercial vessels and warships completed a grand total of 45 ship-seasons of trading on the Northwest Coast from 1785-1821. Their participation declined after the decade 1786-96, with only six ship-seasons in later years. British commercial vessels completed 102 ship-seasons on the Northwest Coast during the period, and maintained a presence there in all but six years. After 1796, however, British trading vessels never exceeded their American competitors in number. I exclude George Vancouver’s seven exploratory ship-seasons on the coast. Spanish and British numbers pale in comparison to the American presence in the wake of *Columbia*. During the period, American commercial vessels performed a whopping 291 ship-seasons of trade on the Northwest Coast. In all cases, I include only vessels known or suspected to have traded on the coast. See Wilson, “King George’s Men,” 377-97.

<sup>34</sup> Abraham P. Nasatir, “The Shifting Borderlands,” *Pacific Historical Review* 34, no. 1 (1965): 13-16.

Bostonian smugglers did business with the Indians and Franciscans of Alta California, trading manufactured goods, textiles, and sacramental wine in exchange for otter skins at San Diego, Monterey, and San Francisco.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, Spain also found the transpacific silver trade unsuitable to new economic realities. In 1815, following the industrial revolution in Europe, competition from the Royal Philippine Company, and separatist revolts at Acapulco, King Ferdinand VII terminated the Manila Galleons. In doing so, he ceded transpacific trade to the United States, just as American commerce in the Pacific rebounded from the War of 1812.<sup>36</sup> During this period, Madrid struggled to overcome the parallel problems of freebooters originating in the United States and rebellions across New Spain. In 1819, Spain attempted to forestall American expansion in the Southwest through the instrument of the Adams-Onís Treaty, an agreement that recognized American claims to the “Columbia Territory,” also known as the Oregon Country. Finally, in 1821, armed separatists captured Mexico City and declared independence, creating an impoverished and weak “Empire of Mexico.”<sup>37</sup> Spanish power withered in the Pacific Ocean, permitting the region to fall under the influence of the United States.

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<sup>35</sup> Magdalen Coughlin, “Boston Smugglers on the Coast (1797-1821): An Insight into the American Acquisition of California,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1967): 99-120.; William J. Barger, “Furs, Hides, and a Little Larceny: Smuggling and Its Role in Early California’s Economy,” *Southern California Quarterly* 85, no. 4 (2003): 381-412.; Julia G. Costello, “Purchasing Patterns of the California Missions in ca. 1805,” *Historica Archaeology* 26, no. 1, *The Archaeology of the Spanish Colonial and Mexican Republican Periods* (1992): 62-65.

<sup>36</sup> Benito Legarda, Jr., “Two and a Half Centuries of the Galleon Trade,” *Philippine Studies* 3, no. 4 (1955): 363-64.

<sup>37</sup> Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr. and Gene A. Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 32-60, 61-81. Ed Bradley, “Fighting for Texas: Filibuster James Long, the Adams-Onís Treaty, and the Monroe

Throughout the Pacific, American whaleships and sealers began to exploit the ocean hemisphere on an industrial scale. Whales provided the industrializing world with a number of useful materials, including whale oil, spermaceti, whale bone, and ambergris. In 1791, seven whaleships hailing from Nantucket and New Bedford, Massachusetts, followed *Columbia* into the Pacific.<sup>38</sup> Global considerations shaped the decision to trawl a distant ocean. First, the Pacific offered ample resources for the harvest. Modern estimates suggest that over 1.8 million whales swam the Pacific, versus 544,000 in the Indian Ocean and 346,000 in the Atlantic. Second, because of government interference and the territorial jurisdiction of the chartered monopolies, especially the South Sea Company, the British whaling industry entered a steep decline in the 1790s. Meanwhile, American whalers expanded their operations to meet a growing demand for whale products in Great Britain and the United States.<sup>39</sup> Thereafter, American whaleships did their gruesome business in waters familiar to the Columbians. They harpooned gray whales and humpbacks along the Northwest Coast, pursued sperm whales in the

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Administration,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 102, no. 3 (1999): 322-342.; David E. Narrett, “Liberation and Conquest: John Hamilton Robinson and U.S. Adventurism toward Mexico, 1806-1819,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2009): 23-50.; Philip Coolidge Brooks, “The Pacific Coast’s First International Boundary Delineation, 1816-1819,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 3, no. 1 (1934): 62-79.; Michael C. Meyer and William L. Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 285-97.

<sup>38</sup> Six whaleships hailed from Nantucket and one from New Bedford, towns which became nineteenth-century leaders in the whaling industry. See Walter S. Tower, *A History of the American Whale Fishery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1907), 93-97.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Lloyd Webb, *On the Northwest: Commercial Whaling in the Pacific Northwest, 1790-1967* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 5-15, 35-36.; Iglar, *The Great Ocean*, 118.

Marquesas, and stalked fin whales in the fisheries off Japan. Between seasons, whaleships often refitted and replenished at ports in the Hawaiian Islands, particularly Honolulu and Lahaina.<sup>40</sup> The whaling industry reached its peak in 1845, when 500 New England whaleships, 68 percent of whalers originating in the United States, and 56 percent of the world's total, cruised the Pacific Ocean. Whaling became so important to the economy of Nantucket that it negotiated a separate peace with Great Britain in 1814, in order to preserve its whaleships from capture or destruction on the high seas.<sup>41</sup>

*Columbia's* exploitation of sea otters also set a precedent for the unhindered harvest of other sea mammals. In subsequent decades, Americans wrought enormous destruction upon whale populations in the Pacific. For example, the population of gray whales is estimated to have fallen from around 96,000 individuals in the late eighteenth century, to 50,000 in 1851, 10,000 in 1874, and almost none in 1900.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, American sealing vessels also followed *Columbia* into the Pacific. Sealers hunted the fur seal, an animal whose pelt characteristics resembled that of the sea otter. Consequently,

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<sup>40</sup> Nicholas J. Lee, "A Brief History of Pacific Coast Whaling" (Jenner, CA: Fort Ross Conservancy Library, n.d.), 5-9.; Rhys Richards, "Pacific Whaling 1820 to 1840: Port Visits, 'Shipping Arrivals and Departures' Comparisons, and Sources," *The Great Circle* 24, no. 1 (2002): 26-30.

<sup>41</sup> Reginald Horsman, "Nantucket's Peace Treaty with England in 1814," *The New England Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (1981): 182-84, 185-87, 196-98.

<sup>42</sup> S. Elizabeth Alter, Eric Rynes, and Stephen R. Palumbi, "DNA Evidence for Historic Population Size and past Ecosystem Impacts of Gray Whales," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 104, no. 38 (2007): 15162-15167.

sealing expeditions became more frequent after the decline in otter populations.<sup>43</sup> In hunting fur seals, Americans expanded upon a preexisting industry on the part of the Russian-American Company, an operation that exported more than 2,300,000 skins from 1743-1823. American sealing soon extended to other places known to the Columbians, such as the Juan Fernández Islands and Northern California. Between the 1790s and 1820s, when seal populations collapsed throughout the Pacific, Americans and Europeans clubbed perhaps ten million animals.<sup>44</sup> *Columbia* inaugurated an era of intense commercialization in the Pacific Ocean, and marine species could not withstand the impact of industrialized hunting—like sea otters in prior decades, whales and fur seals soon faced possible extinction.

Finally, *Columbia*'s landmark expeditions helped establish a “New Constellation” of American political, diplomatic, and military interests across the Pacific World. The United States government followed in the footsteps of Captain John Kendrick in the Sandwich Islands, later known as the Kingdom of Hawaii. In 1820, the State Department appointed its first consul to the kingdom, John Coffin Jones, Jr., a Massachusetts merchant who traded manufactured goods in the islands. Jones received a mandate to protect American commerce and missionaries, and to counterbalance the influence of

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<sup>43</sup> Kurk Dorsey, “Putting a Ceiling on Sealing: Conservation and Cooperation in the International Arena, 1909-1911,” *Environmental History Review* 15, no. 3 (1991): 28-30.

<sup>44</sup> Iglar, *The Great Ocean*, 112-17.

British agents in the archipelago.<sup>45</sup> In 1826, the United States cemented its position through “articles of arrangement” negotiated between Commander Thomas ap Catesby Jones, U.S. Navy, and Kamehameha III of Hawaii. The articles, which functioned as a treaty of “peace and friendship,” extended American recognition to the monarchy, promoted commerce, addressed maritime salvage and deserters, and secured protection for United States citizens in Hawaii. Moreover, the agreement made the kingdom a “neutral state” and undermined its status as a nominal protectorate of Great Britain.<sup>46</sup> Thereafter, the islands became an advance base for the United States Pacific Squadron and U.S. Exploring Expedition.<sup>47</sup>

The United States government also pursued a position of dominance in the Oregon Country, a region familiar to the Columbians. In 1805-06, the Corps of Discovery completed its transcontinental crossing of North America, an accomplishment that strengthened Captain Robert Gray’s territorial claim to the Columbia River Valley. The construction of Astoria in 1813, combined with overland settlement via the Oregon Trail

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<sup>45</sup> Donald D. Johnson, *The United States in the Pacific: Private Interests and Public Policies, 1784-1889* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 59, 81.; Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The American Consul: A History of the United States Consular Service, 1776-1914* (Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2015), 106.

<sup>46</sup> Robert H. Stauffer, “The Hawai’i-United States Treaty of 1826,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 17 (1983): 43-53.

<sup>47</sup> Nathaniel Philbrick, *Sea of Glory: America’s Voyage of Discovery, The U.S. Exploring Expedition* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 233-58. Jeremy M. Black, *Fighting for America: The Struggle for Mastery in North America, 1519-1871* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 223-24.



after 1832, substantiated the national claim by merit of “improvement” of the land.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, John Floyd, a Virginian representative to Congress, argued that American possession of Oregon would eliminate a point of contention with Great Britain, support the whaling industry, and encourage the China Trade. Promoters described Oregon as a “New Eden,” an agrarian paradise ripe for settlement, and convinced thousands of Americans to travel overland to the Willamette Valley.<sup>49</sup> Following upon the heels of settlement, the United States government extended formal control over the region—the U.S. Exploring Expedition surveyed the coastline of Oregon, the U.S. Army supervised the deportation of native peoples to Indian Reservations, and the State Department secured American sovereignty in Oregon.<sup>50</sup> Following the acquisition of Oregon, President James K. Polk looked toward the acquisition of additional Pacific territory in

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<sup>48</sup> Regardless of the short duration of the initial experiment at Astoria, it demonstrated that Americans could establish and provision permanent settlements on the Pacific slope. In this sense, the trading post represented a giant leap for a new republic with continental ambitions. In 1818, following the cessation of hostilities between the United States and Great Britain, the Northwest Company returned Astoria to American jurisdiction. See Charles H. Ambler, “The Oregon Country, 1810-1830: A Chapter in Territorial Expansion,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 30, no. 1 (1943): 4-5.; H. Neilson Barry, “Agriculture in the Oregon Country in 1795-1844,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1929): 161, 162-66.; Michael Golay, *The Tide of Empire: America’s March to the Pacific* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 65-66.

<sup>49</sup> Ambler, “The Oregon Country,” 7-9, 11, 18.; William G. Robbins, “Western Voices: Willamette Eden: The Ambiguous Legacy,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (1998): 189-97.

<sup>50</sup> Philbrick, *Sea of Glory*, 262-63.; Ronald Spores, “Too Small a Place: The Removal of the Willamette Valley Indians, 1850-1856,” *American Indian Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (1993): 171-191.; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 714-22.

California, at the expense of Mexico.<sup>51</sup> Once again, government followed in *Columbia's* wake to consolidate an American presence in places of strategic interest.

The Far East represented the most remote theater of United States government activity in the decades following the *Columbia* expeditions. Beginning with Samuel Shaw, in 1786, the Confederation Congress—and later, the State Department—commissioned consuls to represent American commercial and diplomatic interests at Canton. United States Consuls worked to maintain good relations with the Governor-General, settle financial disputes between American and Chinese merchants, and ensure smooth coexistence with Europeans.<sup>52</sup> During the 1820s, consuls also assumed responsibility for the diplomatic support of Protestant missions in China, as well as the protection of American citizens who fell afoul of Chinese law—areas in which the consuls achieved mixed success, at best.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, American participation in opium

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<sup>51</sup> The American conquest of Mexican California, from 1846-48, and the subsequent gold rush in 1849, are both significant topics of interest to an historian of the Pacific World. Nonetheless, *Columbia* had little direct interaction with California beyond its landfall in modern Del Norte County, and the impact of smugglers upon a remote province of Spain (and later Mexico) is outlined above. For these reasons, an account of the American presence in California is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>52</sup> In some cases, where financial disputes could not be resolved on the spot. Hong merchants perused litigation against debtors in the United States through American intermediaries. The most famous example is that of Consequa, who attempted to recover debts from Philadelphians Edward Dunant and Joshua and Thomas Gilpin, in 1808. See Fichter, *So Great a Proffit*, 45-47.; Kennedy, *The American Consul*, 110-12.; Frederick D. Grant, Jr., “Hong Merchant Litigation in the American Courts,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Third Series* 99 (1987): 44-62.

<sup>53</sup> Kennedy, *The American Consul*, 130-32; Teemu Ruskola, “Canton is Not Boston: The Invention of American Imperial Sovereignty,” *American Quarterly* 57, no. 3, Legal Borderlands: Law and the Construction of American Borders (2005): 862-866.

smuggling, which increased as fur and sandalwood profits declined, became a significant bone of contention between the United States and Qing Empire. By 1830, American firms smuggled hundreds of thousands of pounds of opium each year, and annual profits exceeded \$1,000,000.<sup>54</sup>



Figure 27. Attributed to Lamqua, *View of Foreign Factories, Canton*, oil on canvas, 57.2 x 81.2 cm., 1825-1835, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

The federal government also worked to secure new commercial advantages in the Far East, particularly in the aftermath of the Opium War. In 1839, when a commercial conflict over contraband opium erupted into hostilities between Great Britain and the

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<sup>54</sup> Charles C. Stelle, "American Trade in Opium to China, Prior to 1820," *Pacific Historical Review* 9, no. 4 (1940): 428-29, 31, 440-42.; Idem., "American Trade in Opium, 1821-39" *Pacific Historical Review* 10, no. 1 (1941): 63-65, 72.; Dolin, *When America First Met China*, 122-23, 154-55.

Qing Empire, the United States government remained neutral. Americans did, however, see potential advantages when London imposed its commercial will upon Beijing. The Treaty of Nanjing, signed in 1842, stipulated a number of concessions such as extraterritorial status and residence rights for British subjects in five “treaty ports” in China.<sup>55</sup> Thereafter, the federal government rushed to acquire similar concessions for Americans. In 1844, Caleb Cushing, the U.S. Ambassador to China, negotiated the Treaty of Wangxia, an agreement that permitted American citizens the same commercial and residence rights gained by Britons at Nanjing.<sup>56</sup> Later, in 1853-54, Commodore Matthew C. Perry extracted a similar agreement—using threat of force—from the isolationist government of Japan. Fearing the bombardment of their capital, Edo, Japanese negotiators signed the Convention of Kanagawa. The document granted American

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<sup>55</sup> Because of its coercive and one-sided nature, the Treaty of Nanjing is regarded as the first of many “unequal treaties” imposed upon China during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It stipulated: permission for British subjects to reside and conduct business in five “treaty ports,” including Guangzhou (Canton), Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai; extraterritorial status for British subjects on Chinese soil; the right to station British consuls in the “treaty ports” and to communicate directly with Chinese officials; release of all British prisoners-of-war; amnesty for Chinese convicted of collaboration with great Britain in wartime; abolition of the authority of the *Cohong*; fixed tariffs on imports and exports through the “treaty ports”; \$6,000,000 in compensation to British merchants for opium destroyed at Canton in 1839, \$3,000,000 in debts due to British subjects by *hong* merchants, and \$12,000,000 in war reparations; and cession of the island of Hong Kong to Great Britain, for purposes of development as a naval base. The treaty, however, did not address the proximate cause of the conflict—opium smuggling in contravention of Qing law—and therefore planted the seeds of a Second Opium War. See Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840-1842* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 361-62.

<sup>56</sup> In a gesture of friendship and good will, the United States prohibited its citizens from participating in the smuggling of opium into China. Nonetheless, the U.S. Pacific Squadron was inadequate to patrol the entire ocean hemisphere, and the measure proved difficult to enforce. See Richard E. Welch, Jr., “Caleb Cushing’s Chinese Mission and the Treaty of Wanghia: A Review,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 58, no. 4 (1957): 328-357.

commercial, residency, and naval access to two treaty ports at Shimoda and Hakodate.<sup>57</sup> Two generations after the *Columbia* expeditions, then, American businessmen and diplomats resided in the “International Settlement” of Shanghai, while the U.S. Pacific Squadron patrolled from stations in Japan. In short, the Stars and Stripes followed American commerce into the Pacific.

When *Columbia* first sailed into the Pacific, in 1788, her principal investors, captains, and crewmembers intended to test a promising new business model. They hoped to demonstrate a profitable new avenue for the United States in the China Trade. *Columbia* was, in the words of John Hoskins, “a novel undertaking” on the part of a “country but so lately emerg’d from the ravages of a long, inhuman, and bloody war.”<sup>58</sup> From 1787-93, *Columbia* embarked upon two expeditions fraught with logistical challenges, commercial uncertainty, and danger. Nonetheless, the Columbians recognized that “the trade to China from the N.W. being lucrative and in its infancy, it was not to be long neglected.”<sup>59</sup> In circumnavigating the globe, they intended to “extend their trade and commerce under the influence of peace, to foreign climes, and regions to them before

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<sup>57</sup> George Feifer, *Breaking Open Japan: Commodore Perry, Lord Abe, and American Imperialism in 1853* (New York: Smithsonian Books, 2006), 27-49, 138, 233-58.; Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 274-79.

<sup>58</sup> John Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” in *Voyages of the Columbia*, 161-62.

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Ingraham, *Voyage of the Brigantine “Hope” on a Voyage to the Northwest Coast of North America, 1790-1792*, ed. Mark D. Kaplanoff (Barre, MA: Imprint Society, 1971), 1.

unknown.”<sup>60</sup> *Columbia* achieved success in all respects—but none could have foreseen that she would lay the foundations of an American empire in the Pacific.

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<sup>60</sup> Hoskins, “Narrative of the Second Voyage of the ‘Columbia’,” 161-62.

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## APPENDIX A

### ESTIMATE OF PORT FEES FOR SHIP COLUMBIA REDIVIVA

The commercial success or failure of ships trading in Canton depended on a combination of many factors, including goods, prices, consignment, and timely transactions. In addition to these variables, one important consideration was the assortment of port fees the Superintendent of Maritime Customs (*Yuehai guanbu*, 粵海關部), assessed against all foreign vessels arriving at Whampoa Anchorage. None of the chroniclers of the *Columbia* expeditions recorded the port fees paid at Canton. They are probably included among \$8,558 for the ship's "Bill of disbursements and Factory expenses," but further differentiation is needed in order to reconstruct the full financial profile of the voyage.<sup>1</sup> This was not unusual for "private" ships trading outside the institutional structures of the chartered European companies. Indeed, these enterprises did not depend upon or report to a corporate bureaucracy, captains felt less inclined to keep detailed personnel, ship, trade, or management records. Meanwhile, those captains who preserved documents often chose to "throw them in a box without any organization."<sup>2</sup> *Columbia's* financial records, which are lost, probably experienced a similar fate during

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<sup>1</sup> "The *Columbia's* Accounts with Messrs. Shaw and Randall," in *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 & 1790-1793*, ed. Frederic W. Howay (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), 141.

<sup>2</sup> Paul A. Van Dyke, "Bookkeeping as a Window into Efficiencies of Early Modern Trade: Europeans, Americans, and Others in China Compared, 1700-1842" in *Narratives of Free Trade: The Commercial Cultures of Early US-China Relations*, ed. Kendall Johnson (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 24.

or immediately after the voyages. Nonetheless, the historian can estimate the port fees assessed against *Columbia*. Doing so depends upon a calculation of the length and stern dimensions of her cargo hold, according to Cantonese methods. Because *Columbia*'s full specifications do not survive, however, some sleuthing is needed to estimate her cargo space. Frederic Howay quotes her basic dimensions as 83'6" (1,002 inches) long and 24'2 (290 inches) stern, starting figures that can be considered reliable.<sup>3</sup>

The *Hoppo*'s first calculation concerned the length of *Columbia*'s cargo hold. Van Dyke observes, however, that the method for calculating the cargo space was related to the actual cargo dimensions, but rather with a "length measurement taken between the foremast and the mizzenmast (or rear-most mast)."<sup>4</sup> The calculation, therefore, requires an estimate of the unknown distance between the *Columbia*'s masts. W.J. Thompson states in *Wooden Shipbuilding* that "the rule in the United States for masting ships is doubtless the most variable on the globe." Nonetheless, he contends that the strongest results "have been gained from several of the best proportioned, double-decked freighting ships," and my estimate applies their proportions to *Columbia*. Thompson contends that a ship's length should be divided into 760 equal parts, with the distance between foremast

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<sup>3</sup> Frederic W. Howay, *Voyages of the Columbia*, vi.

<sup>4</sup> Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 2005), 19-20, 26.

and mizzenmast totaling 475/760 parts, or 62.5 percent of the overall length.<sup>5</sup> Using these proportions for *Columbia*, the distance between masts is 626.25 inches, or just over 52 feet.

The second calculation, which concerns the width of *Columbia*'s hold, is far simpler to reconstruct. According to Van Dyke, "the width measurement was taken aft of the mainmast (uppermost full-deck) between the port and starboard taffrails," or the widest portion of the ship.<sup>6</sup> Here, the *Hoppo*'s measurement would reflect the simple dimension of 24'2 stern, as stated above. According to the Cantonese method, then, the *Columbia*'s cargo hold was approximately 626.25 x 290 inches in area.

In order to proceed, we must convert British imperial inches into a Chinese unit of measure. Cantonese officials measured short lengths in units known as *covids*, sometimes transliterated in English as "cubits." Samuel Wells Williams, author of *A Chinese Commercial Guide*, states that the *covid* as "used by tradesmen at Canton varies from 14.625 to 14.81 inches." For these purposes, then, I assume a median value of 14.7175 inches per Cantonese *covid*.<sup>7</sup> The conversion yields basic dimensions of 43.5514 x 19.7044 *covids*, or 838.5409 square *covids*, for *Columbia*'s cargo hold. The method of

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<sup>5</sup> W.J. Thompson, *Wooden Shipbuilding: A Comprehensive Manual for Wooden Shipbuilders to Which is Added a Mast and Rigging Guide* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Company, 1918), 184-86.

<sup>6</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 26.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Wells Williams, *A Chinese Commercial Guide, Consisting of a Collection of Details and Regulations Respecting Foreign Trade with China, Sailing Directions, Tables, &c., Fourth Edition* (Canton: Office of the Chinese Repository, 1856), 300-301.

calculation reduced this value to a manageable size by applying a divisor of 10, leading the *Columbia* to have a taxable cargo space of 83.8541.

Finally, each ship received an initial measurage fee according its classification as first, second, or third-rate. William Milburn gives the qualifications for each class in *Oriental Commerce*. Class qualification, unlike the measurement of cargo space, took a ship's overall "bow-to-stern" length into account. Ships measuring between "65 to 71 cubits long, and 20 to 23 broad," received the classification of "third rate." For ease of calculation, customs officials also classified smaller vessels, such as *Columbia*, in this category.<sup>8</sup> Officials assessed third-rate ships at a rate of five silver taels (*liang*, 兩) per unit of cargo space. The final estimate of *Columbia*'s initial measurement fee is, therefore, equal to 83.8541 x 5 兩, or 419.2255 兩 (\$582.26). Put another way, where *Columbia* is recorded at 212.0842 tons, the final estimate equates to fees of 11.0905 兩 (\$15.40) per ton.

Using the initial fee, the *Hoppo* applied a complex series of adjustments in order to calculate a final fee. Their first consideration was the "Emperor's Discount," a feature intended to represent the goodwill of the government in Beijing, and to provide a practical incentive to foreign trade. The discount automatically reduced the initial measurage fee by a stunning 20 percent. Meanwhile, the Emperor's Discount more than

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<sup>8</sup> William Milburn, *Oriental Commerce; or the East India Trader's Complete Guide; Containing a Geographical and Nautical Description of the Maritime Parts of India, China, Japan, and Neighbouring Countries, Including the Eastern Islands, and the Trading Stations on the Passage from Europe* (London: Printed for Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen, Leadenhall Street, 1825), 468.

compensated for commissions paid to customs officials, as well as adjustments related to exchange rates. Commissions served as contributions to the income of imperial customs officials, especially the Superintendent, whose official salaries reflected the fiscal conservatism of the Qing Dynasty. The *Hoppo* received a commission of 10 percent of the initial measurement fee, meaning that he collected handsomely from each incoming vessel. Meanwhile, his servants shared a gratuity of 2 percent. Next, the officials imposed an additional surcharge intended to adjust for differences in silver content between the Cantonese *sycee* (*yuanbao*, 元寶), or silver ingot, and Spanish Dollars. Imperial officials reckoned the difference in silver content at 7 percent. *Columbia's* final measurage fee, then, including all adjustments is estimated to have totaled 402.12 兩 (Spanish \$558.50)

In completing the process, customs officials also assessed a fixed fee of 1,950 兩 (\$2,708.33) known as the “Emperor’s Present.” The present represented a formal act of gratitude on the part of merchant-captains for their privilege of trading in China. In fact, it served as a tariff for the exclusive support of the imperial household in Beijing. One implication of the fixed fee was that small vessels spent a larger proportion of their operating funds on the Emperor’s Present. The inclusion of the present brings *Columbia's* estimated port fees to a grand total of 2,352.12 兩 (\$3,266.83).

Table 7. Estimated Port Fees Assessed on Ship *Columbia*, 1789.

COMPONENT	PERCENTAGE	SUM ( <i>liang</i> , 兩)	SUM (\$)
INITIAL MEASURAGE FEE		419.23	582.26
EMPEROR'S DISCOUNT	(-20%)	(-83.85)	(-116.45)
<i>Subtotal A</i>		335.38	465.81
HOPPO'S COMMISSION		33.54	46.58
<i>Subtotal B</i>		368.92	512.39
SYCEE DIFFERENCE IN ALLOY	7%	25.82	35.87
HOPPO'S SERVANTS' COMMISSION	2%	7.38	10.25
FINAL MEASURAGE FEE		402.12	558.50
EMPEROR'S PRESENT		1950.00	2708.33
TOTAL PORT FEES		2352.12	3266.83

APPENDIX B  
ESTIMATED SPECIFICATIONS AND HYPOTHETICAL PORT FEES  
FOR SLOOP LADY WASHINGTON

The historian faces a dearth of reliable information about *Lady Washington*, as her exact provenance, specifications, and deed are lost. Neither her owners, captains, nor crew discussed the remarkable little vessel in detail. We can, however, make some educated guesses about her dimensions based upon period renderings and comparable ships.

In 1989, Gray's Harbor Historic Seaport Authority, a historic preservation nonprofit in Aberdeen, Washington, constructed an operational replica of *Lady Washington*. The vessel makes regular tour cruises along the coast and is recognized as the official ship of Washington State.<sup>1</sup> It would be tempting to consider the replica's dimensions as a starting point for thinking about her historical namesake. She was designed by naval architect Ray Wallace, now deceased, whose prior work includes the "Sailing Ship *Columbia*" at Disneyland.<sup>2</sup> David Cottrell, a seaport board member, was generous enough to communicate with me concerning the replica. According to Cottrell, Wallace relied heavily upon Howard Chapelle's book, *The Search for Speed Under Sail, 1700-1855*, considered an important reference work about eighteenth-century

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<sup>1</sup> Gray's Harbor Historic Seaport Authority, <http://historicalseaport.org> (Accessed 6 April 2016)

<sup>2</sup> Richard Francaviglia, "Walt Disney's Frontierland as an Allegorical Map of the American West" *Western Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1999): 173, 178.



shipbuilding. Moreover, his design for *Lady Washington* preserves a number of features common to HMS *Sultana*, a well-documented schooner of the period.<sup>3</sup> The replica measures 67' (804 inches) in length, 22' (264 inches) in beam, and is rated at 99 tons.<sup>4</sup> *Lady Washington* is not, however, a sloop. Wallace's two-masted replica reflects John Kendrick's decision to "rig our sloop into a brig" on the Northwest Coast.<sup>5</sup> This consideration invalidates the replica as a facsimile.

Instead, the historian can turn to the sloop *Union*, a vessel that replicated *Columbia's* expedition to the Pacific, Northwest Coast, and Canton in 1794-96. Launched at Providence, Rhode Island, *Union* represented another venture on the part of Crowell Hatch, a principal investor in *Columbia*.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, she sailed under the command of *Columbia's* former fifth mate, John Boit, whose prior exploits had proven him to be "a most competent navigator, perhaps even an outstanding one." According to maritime scholar Hewitt R. Jackson, *Union* was "so close to the *Lady Washington* in dimension

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<sup>3</sup> David Cottrell, personal communication, 28 January, 2016.; Howard Irving Chapelle, *The Search for Speed Under Sail, 1700-1855* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1967).; Karl Heinz Marquardt, *The Global Schooner: Origins, Development, Design & Construction, 1695-1845* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 2003), 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> Gray's Harbor Historic Seaport Authority, <http://historicalseaport.org/about-us/our-vessels/lady-washington> (Accessed 6 April 2016)

<sup>5</sup> Robert Haswell, "A Voyage Round the World Onboard the Ship *Columbia Rediviva* and Sloop *Washington*" in *Voyages of the Columbia to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 & 1790-1793*, ed. Frederic W. Howay (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1990), 55.

<sup>6</sup> John Boit, *Log of the Union: John Boit's Remarkable Voyage to the Northwest Coast and Around the World, 1794-1796*, ed. Edmund Hayes (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1981), xxviii-xxx.

and tonnage that a direct comparison is possible.” Moreover, their “spar and rigging details would be much the same” such that “the sail plan, as a whole, coincides with that of the *Lady Washington*.”<sup>7</sup> Edmund Hayes, the principal historian of the *Union*, gives her specifications as 94 tons, with a length of 65’6 and beam of 19’9”.<sup>8</sup> The figures serve, therefore, as a reasonable facsimile for *Washington*’s dimensions.

Once again, dimensions are key to estimating the port fees, but, as a sloop, *Washington* demanded a different method of calculation. In 1789-90, she still possessed but one mast. Van Dyke observes that “taking the length measurement between two masts only worked, of course, with ships that had at least two masts.” Under the circumstances, “the length measurement was taken between the mast and the rudder head,” a location aft of the main hull and beneath the quarter deck.<sup>9</sup> My calculation depends upon knowing the position of *Washington*’s mast. For an American sloop, W.J. Thompson gives the “station of the mast” at “three-fourths (3/4) of the breadth from the forward part of the deck.”<sup>10</sup> Using this guideline, the distance between the *Washington*’s mast and rudder head would be approximately 49’ 1” (589 inches). In contrast, Robert Haswell’s drawing of the *Columbia* and *Washington* suggests different proportions. His

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<sup>7</sup> Hewitt R. Jackson, “Research on the Sloop Union” in *ibid.*, 127-32.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, xxviii-xxx.

<sup>9</sup> Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong King University Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>10</sup> W.J. Thompson, *Wooden Shipbuilding: A Comprehensive Manuel for Wooden Shipbuilders to Which is Added a Mastng and Rigging Guide* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Company, 1918), 187.

sketch, presumably rendered from direct observation, appears to place *Lady Washington*'s mast at a position one-third the length of the deck. The design resembles the first ship commissioned to the Continental Navy, the sloop USS *Providence*.<sup>11</sup> Some interpretive ambiguity results from the fact that Haswell was not a trained artist—his drawing of *Lady Washington* does not clearly distinguish between the vessel's deck and head.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the *Columbia and Washington Medal*, which includes the other known representation of the sloop, corroborates his placement.<sup>13</sup> While the variation in dimensions appears insignificant, it translates to an approximate mast-to rudder distance of 43'7" (523 inches), or a difference of 5'6".

*Lady Washington* never traded in Canton. Nonetheless, we can hypothesize about the port fees that awaited a ship of her specifications. Using the Chinese method, *Lady Washington*'s cargo dimensions would have been roughly 557 x 237 inches. Translated into *covids*, her dimensions would be 37.85 x 16.10, or 609.45 square *covids*. Customs officials would reduce this number by a factor of ten, in order derive a taxable cargo space of 60.9446. Meanwhile, *Lady Washington* would have been classified as a "third rate" vessel subject to fees of five silver taels (*liang*, 兩) per unit of cargo space. *Lady Washington*'s initial measurage fee would, therefore, calculate to 60.9446 x 5, or 304.72

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<sup>11</sup> Paul H. Silverstone, *The Sailing Navy, 1775-1854* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7.

<sup>12</sup> Haswell, "A Voyage Round the World," 3.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Barrell and Joseph Callender, *Columbia and Washington medal, 1787, obverse and reverse in silver*, ex Appleton. Massachusetts Historical Society.

兩 (Spanish \$423.23).<sup>14</sup> Discounts, commissions, adjustments, and the “Emperor’s Present” would increase the port fees to a hypothetical grand total of 2242.29 兩 (Spanish \$3114.29). Put another way, where *Washington* is estimated at 94 tons, the grand total equates to fees of 23.8542 兩 (Spanish \$22.94) per ton.<sup>15</sup> Compared with *Columbia*, her fee-to-tonnage was exorbitant, being 115% higher.<sup>16</sup>

Table 8. Hypothetical Port Fees for Sloop *Lady Washington*, 1790.

COMPONENT	PERCENTAGE	SUM ( <i>liang</i> , 兩)	SUM (\$)
INITIAL MEASURAGE FEE		304.72	423.23
EMPEROR’S DISCOUNT	(-20%)	(-60.94)	(-84.65)
<i>Subtotal A</i>		243.78	338.58
HOPPO’S COMMISSION		24.38	33.86
<i>Subtotal B</i>		268.16	372.44
SYCEE DIFFERENCE IN ALLOY	7%	18.77	26.07
HOPPO’S SERVANTS’ COMMISSION	2%	5.36	7.45
FINAL MEASURAGE FEE		292.29	405.96
EMPEROR’S PRESENT		1950.00	2708.33
TOTAL PORT FEES		2242.29	3114.29

<sup>14</sup> Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 26.

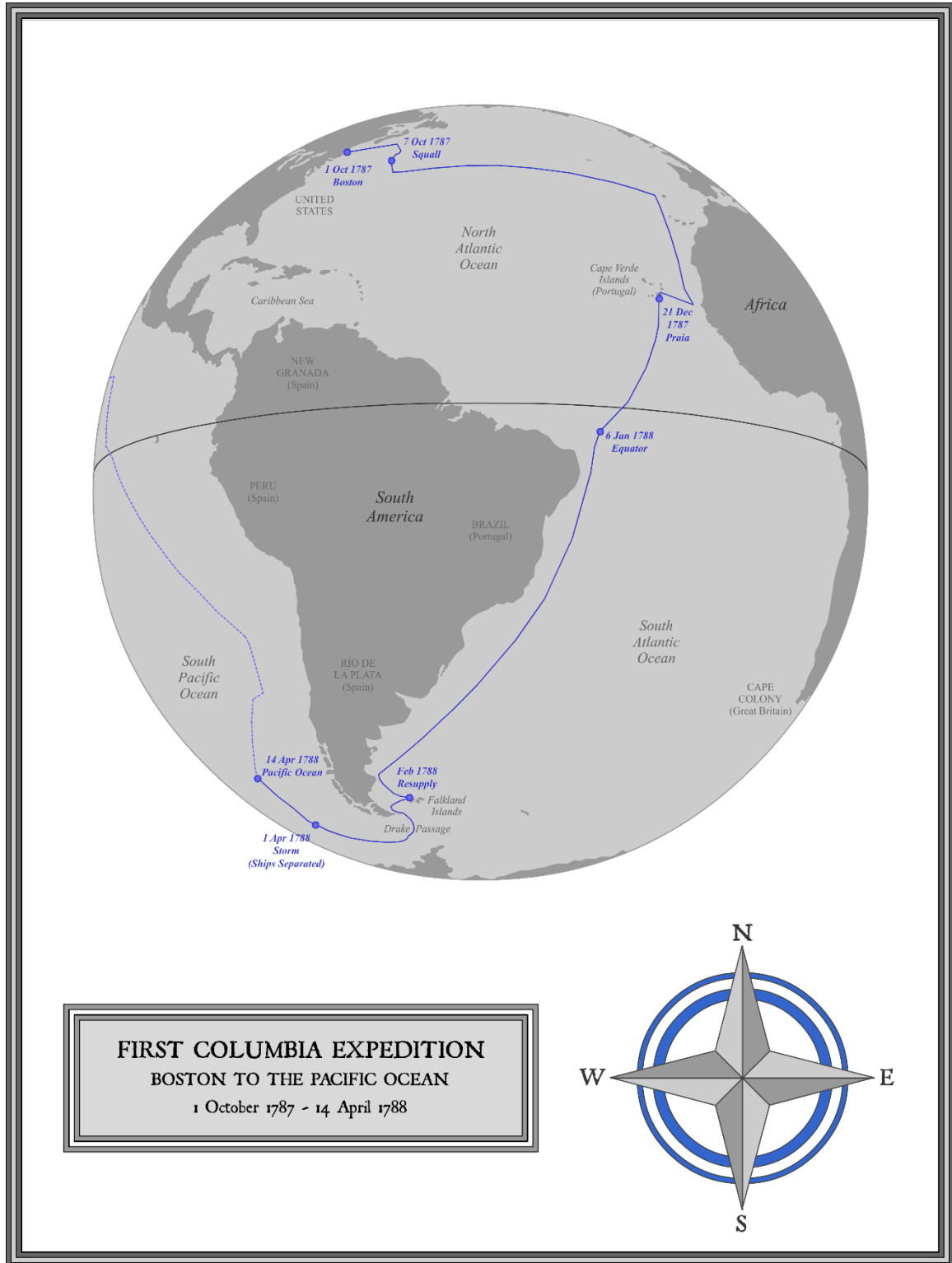
<sup>15</sup> The fee-to-tonnage ratio becomes even more prohibitive if we use the 99-ton figure cited for the replica of *Lady Washington*. Using this model, she would have paid fees of 22.8618 兩 (Spanish \$31.75) per ton.

<sup>16</sup> For a more comprehensive explanation of fee calculations, please see Appendix A: Estimate of Port Fees for the Ship *Columbia Rediviva*.

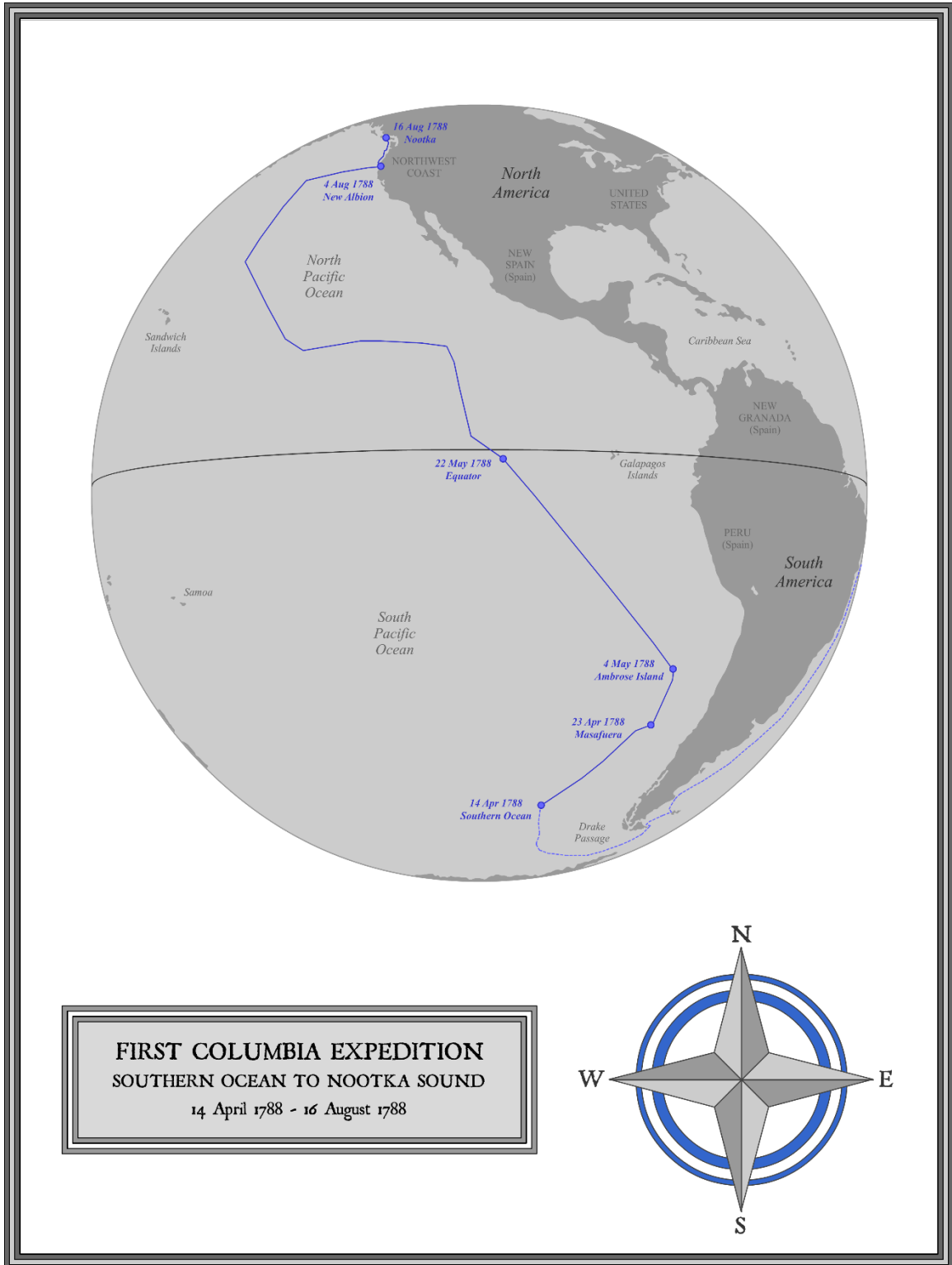
APPENDIX C

MAPS

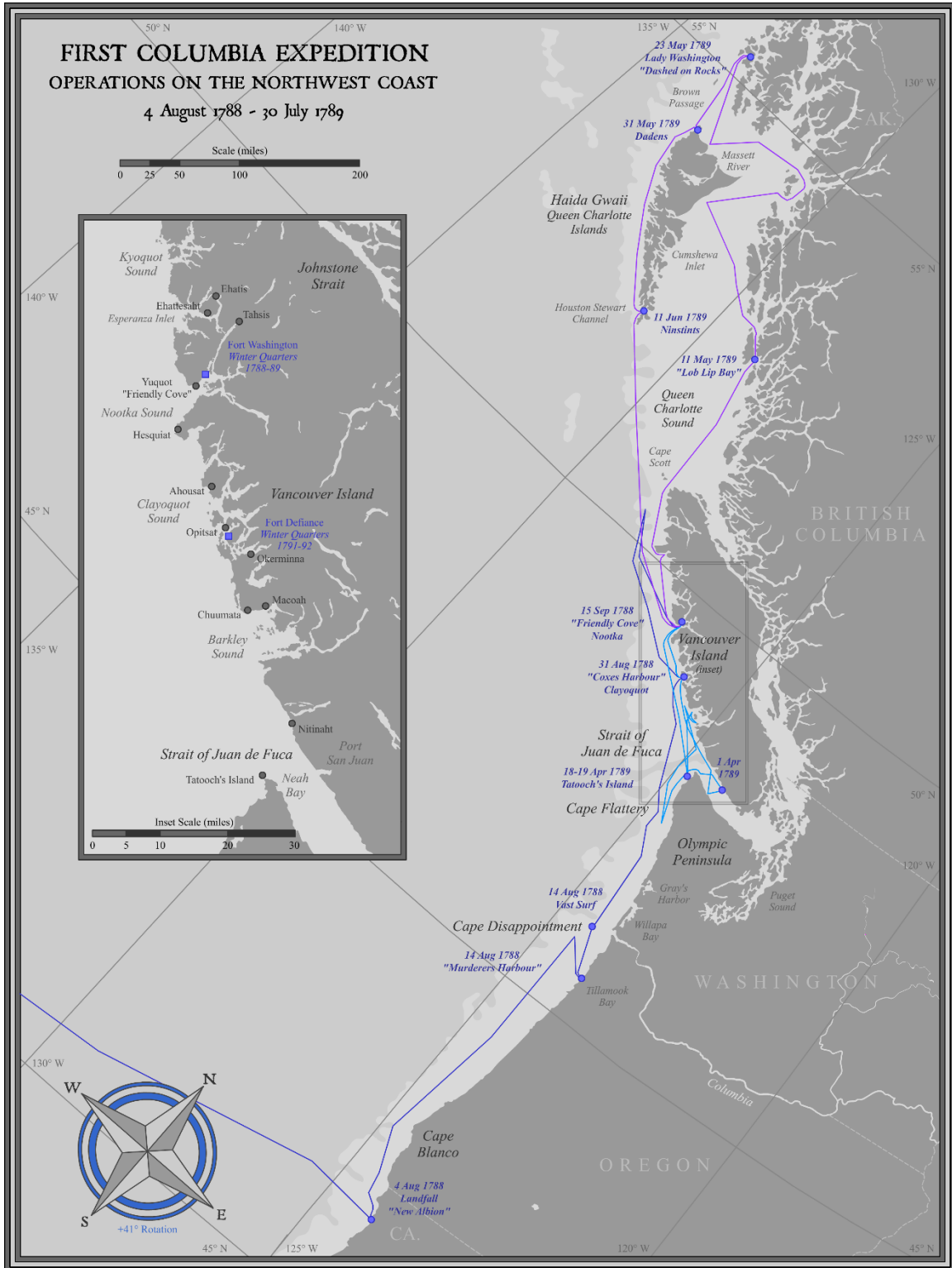
Map 1. First *Columbia* Expedition: Boston to the Pacific Ocean.



Map 2. First *Columbia* Expedition: Southern Ocean to Nootka Sound.

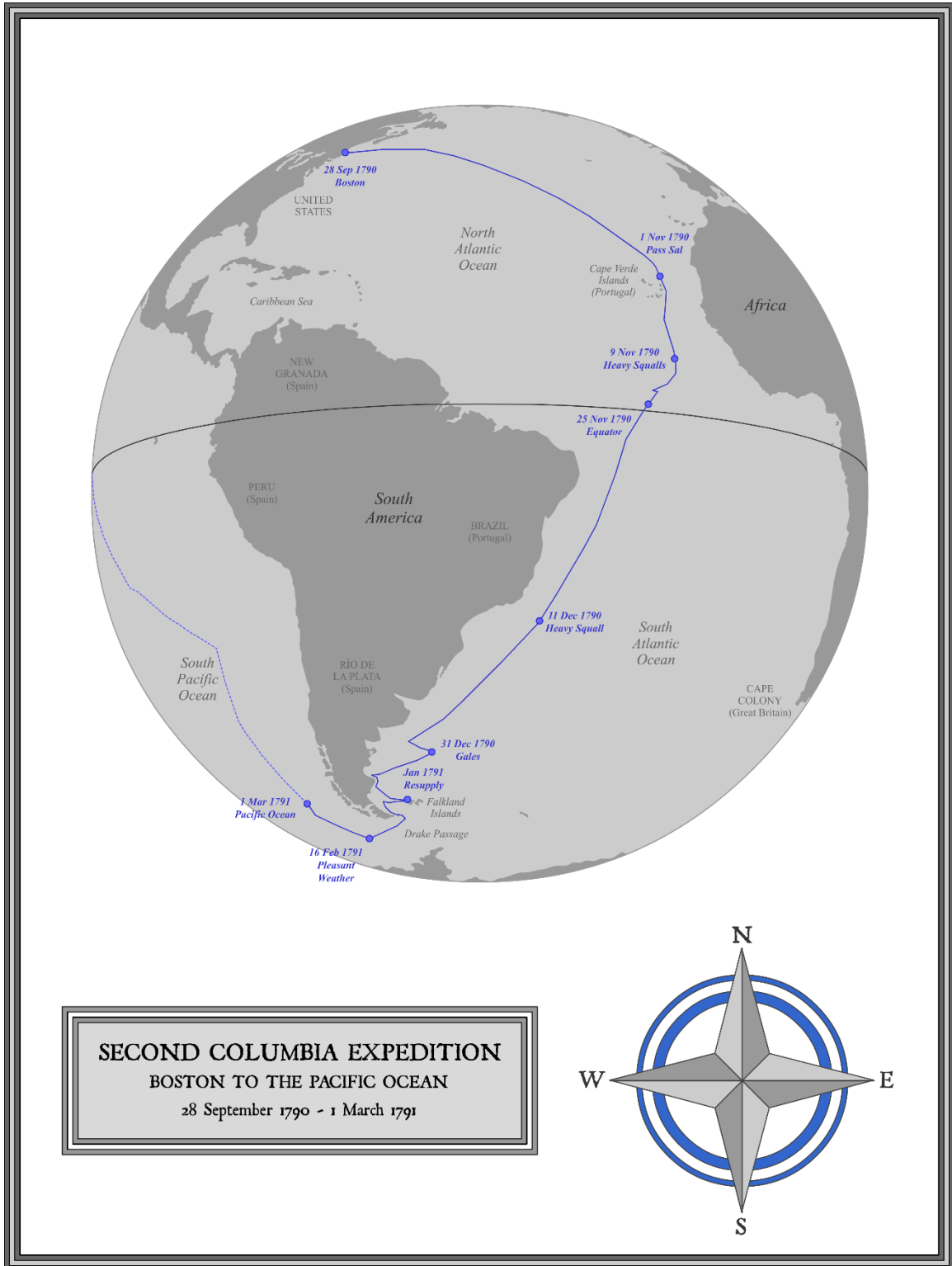


Map 3. First *Columbia* Expedition: Operations on the Northwest Coast.

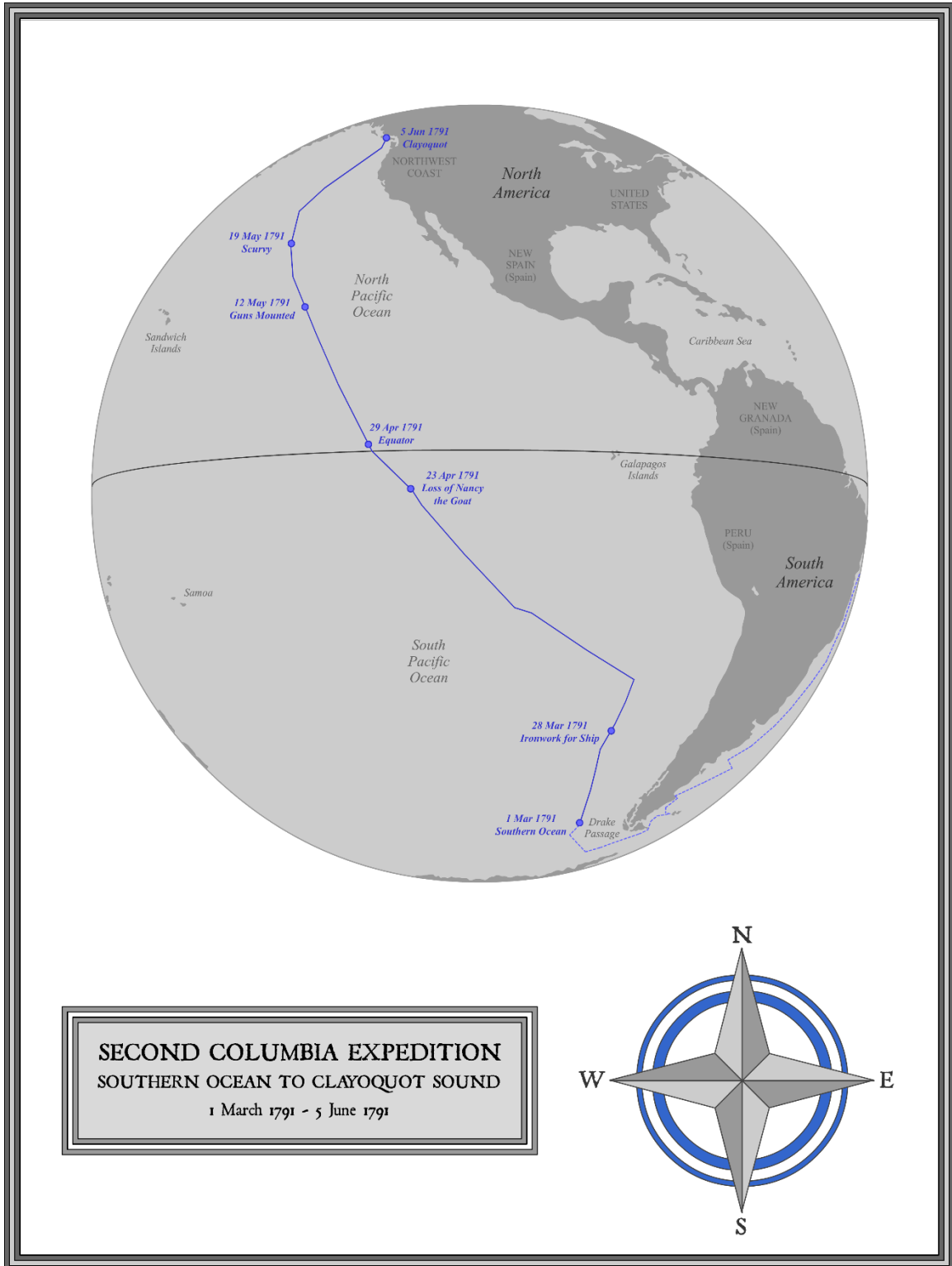




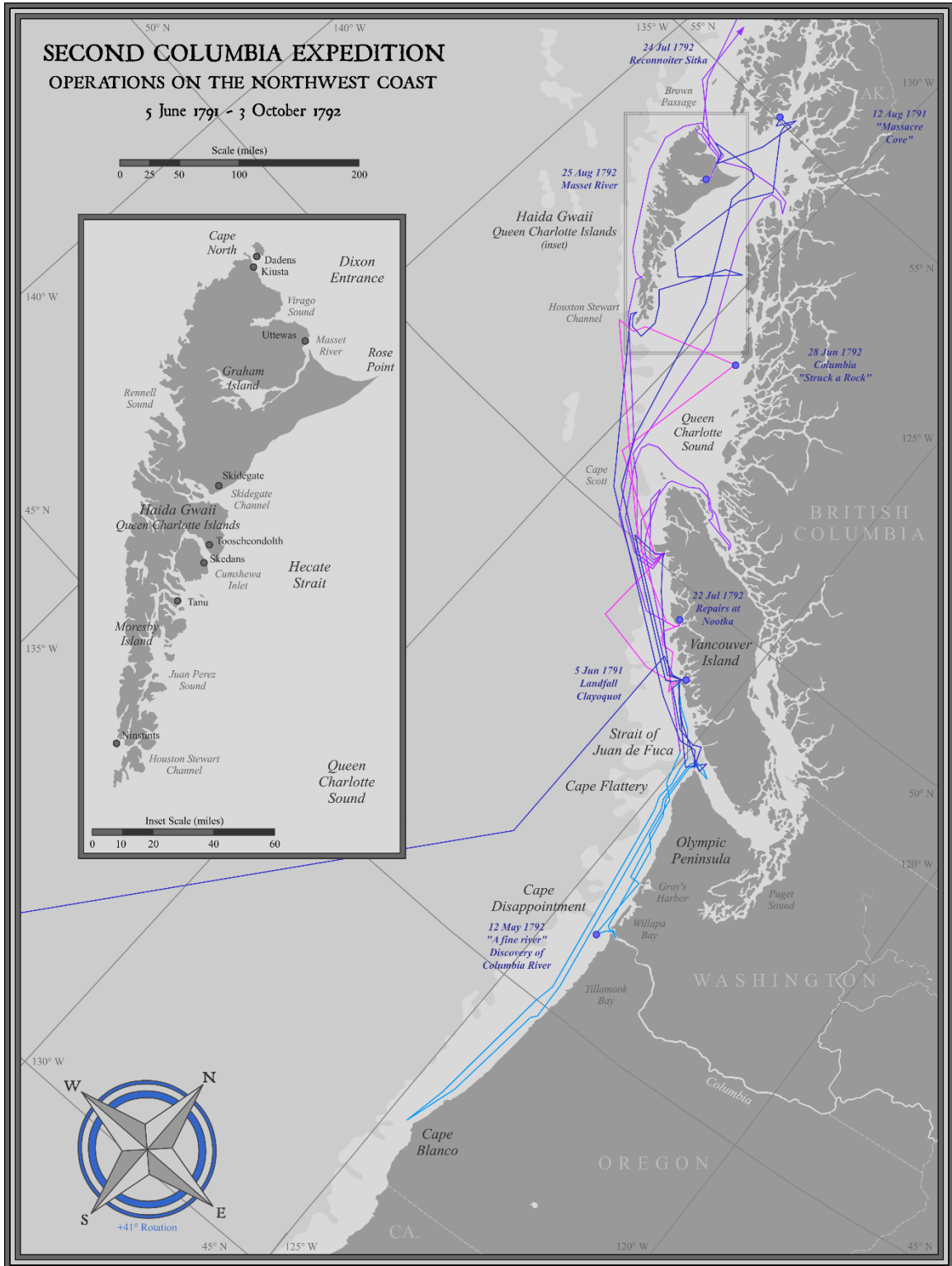
Map 4. Second *Columbia* Expedition: Boston to the Pacific Ocean.



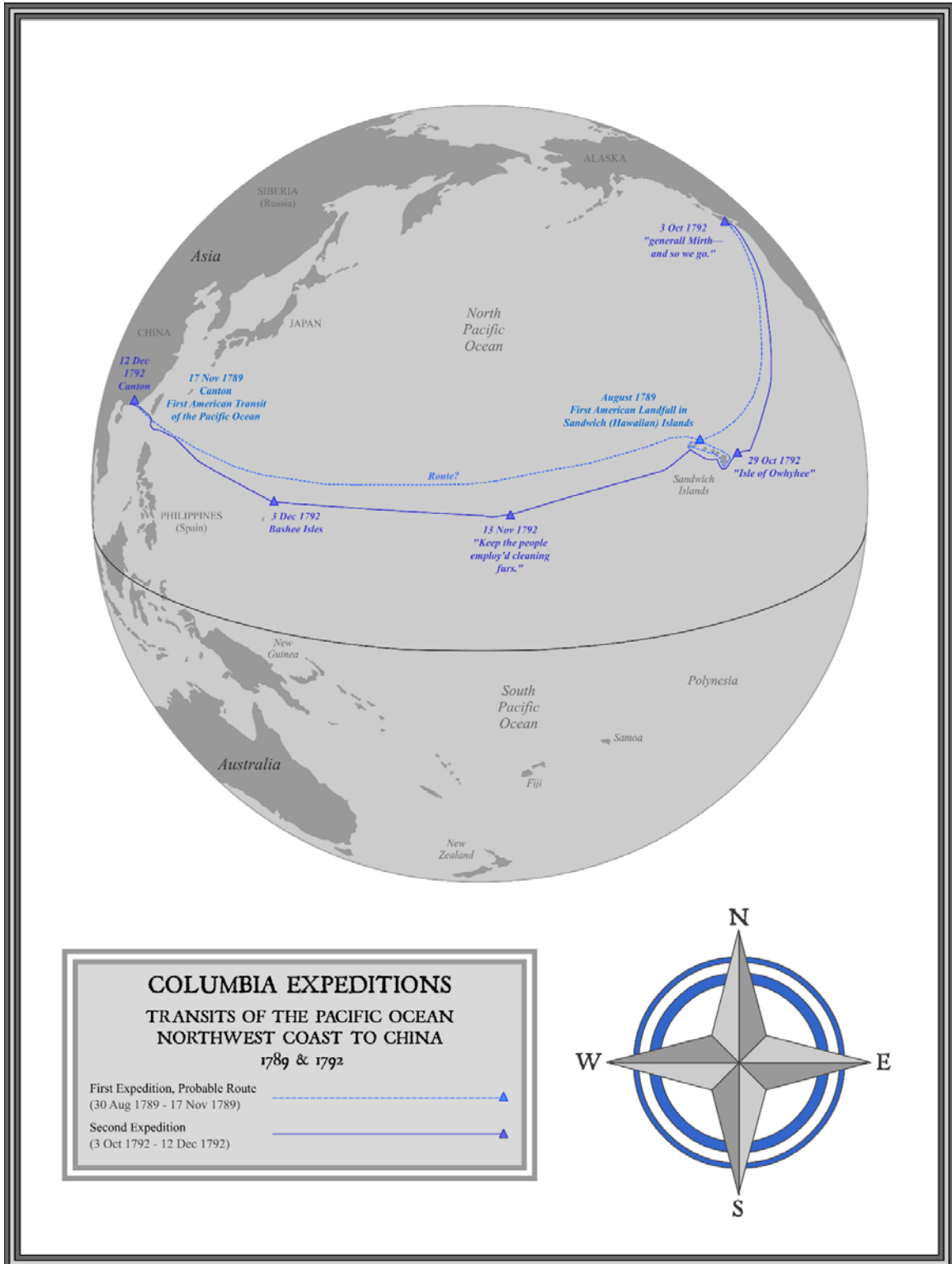
Map 5. Second *Columbia* Expedition: Southern Ocean to Clayoquot Sound.



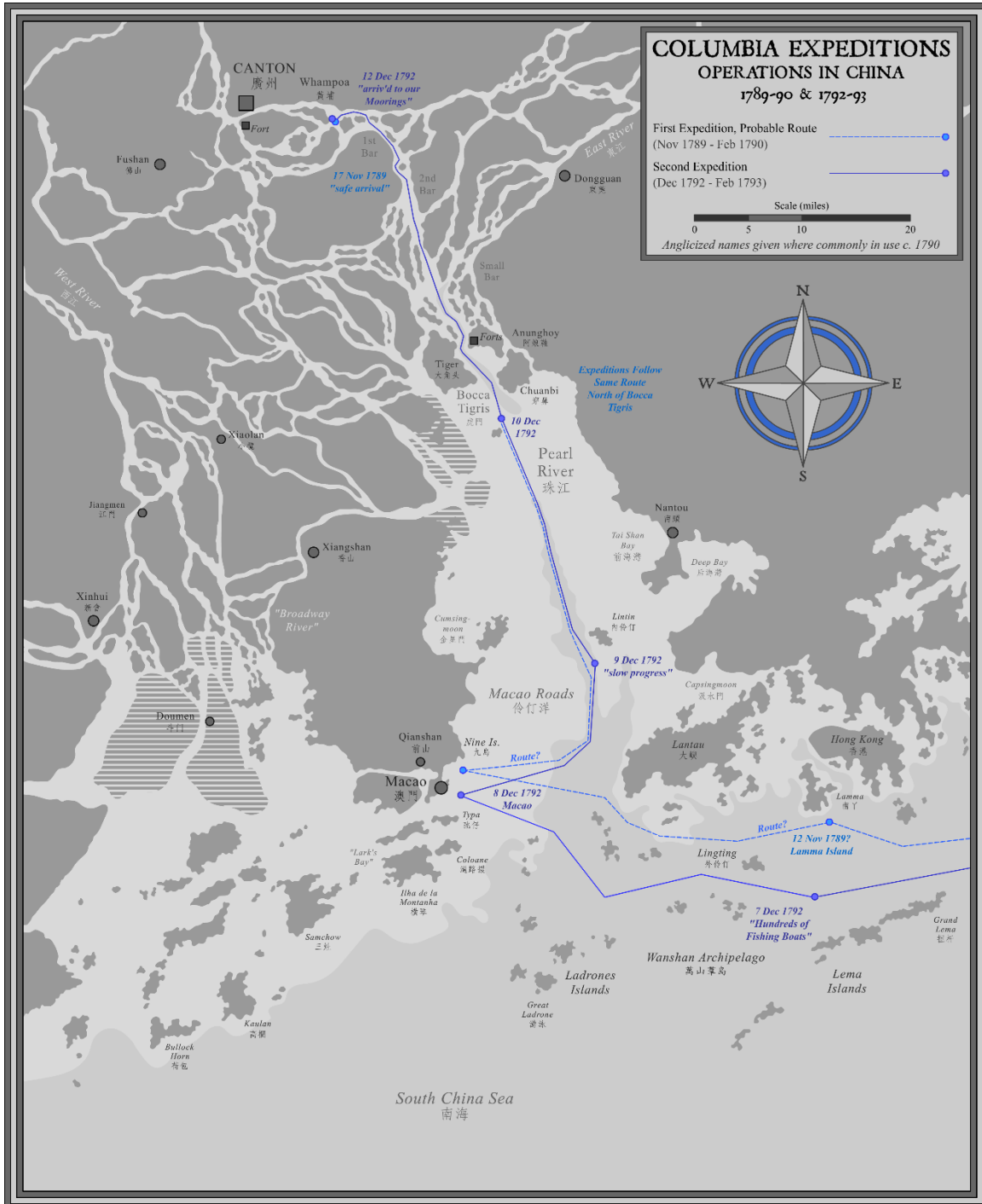
Map 6. Second *Columbia* Expedition: Operations on the Northwest Coast.



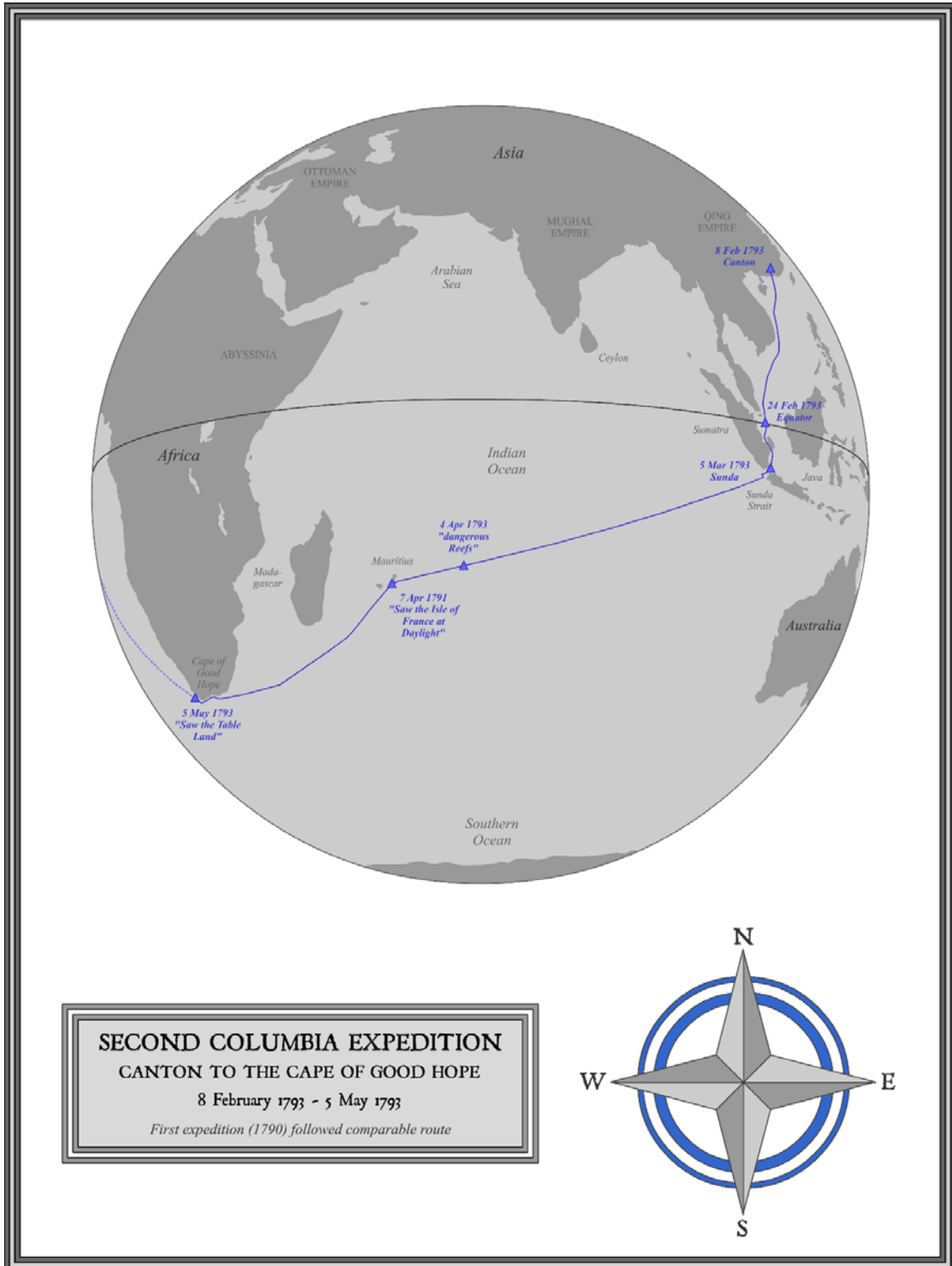
Map 7. *Columbia* Expeditions: Transits of the Pacific Ocean.



Map 8. *Columbia* Expeditions: Operations in China.



Map 9. *Columbia* Expeditions: Canton to the Cape of Good Hope.



Map 10. *Columbia* Expeditions: Cape of Good Hope to Boston.

