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# An Outline Sketch of the Maritime Fur Trade

## Presidential Address

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## ANNUAL MEETING

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### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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#### AN OUTLINE SKETCH OF THE MARITIME FUR TRADE

By F. W. HOWAY

The maritime fur-trade on the Northwest Coast of America was short-lived, changeable, diversified, interesting. Its forty years of life, 1785 till 1825, contain the story of the extensive and intensive pursuit and virtual extinction of the sea-otter. It is a story which includes sea-otter, sealing, surreptitious sales, sandalwood, and smuggling. It is a story whose opening chapters are of varied adventure and romance, but which in its later pages becomes as practical and drab as that of the life on any "Main Street." It is a story with all the lure of uncertainty in every phase and time, a story of increasing geographical knowledge, gathered, here a little and there a little; a story of a trade constantly changing like a kaleidoscope; and yet a story of concentrated individualism which at its close reflects the gleams of the rising sun of unification.

The Russians had from the time of Bering and Stellar followed the trail of the silver fox, the fur-seal, and the sea-otter from island to island across the Aleutian archipelago until they had reached the mainland of North America; but the furs destined for the Chinese market entered by way of Kiakhta, a town on the border between Siberia and Mongolia. In 1778 the great Captain James Cook on his third and last voyage found at Nootka sound and in Alaskan waters the sea-otter, though he scarcely knew the animal; and by an equally happy accident he found a hungry market for the skin in Canton. For buttons, bells, beads, and baubles of all kinds his men obtained at Nootka sea-otter skins which they sold in Canton, realizing as high as \$120 for the choicest. So excited were they at this rich and seemingly exhaustless mine that they were, as Captain King tells us, on the verge of mutiny in their desire to return and make their fortunes.

Gold, like murder, will out, and soon adventurers in China, India, and Europe began to look across the world towards the wild and unknown coast. In 1785, from China to the El Dorado of fur came James Hanna, the pioneer in the maritime fur-trade of the Northwest Coast. His vessel was fittingly named *Sea Otter*.

For the first three years, 1785-1787, the trading vessels were all British; thereafter some masqueraded under the flags of other nations. John Meares admits in his memorial that his ships in 1788, *Felice* and *Iphigenia*, were under the Portuguese colours, though the explanation he makes is not the true reason. Barkley and his associates, as Mrs. Barkley acknowledges in her *Reminiscences*, sailed the British ship *Loudoun* under Austrian colours with the name *Imperial Eagle*. John Henry Cox in 1789 and 1791 flew the Swedish flag on the British ship *Mercury*, calling her

*Gustavus III.* In this case the subterfuge was patent, for it occurred as soon as the brig had passed Cape Horn. The reason of this conduct carries us back to the days of the early Stuarts. In the 18th century and later there were in the Pacific ocean two great monopolies originating in the Stuart times—the South Sea Company and the East India Company. Together they closed that ocean against British effort: the former extended along the whole western coast of America from Cape Horn to the frozen north and three hundred leagues into the ocean; the latter prevented British subjects from trading east of the Cape of Good Hope. Inasmuch as sea-otter were procurable only within the monopoly area of the one and saleable to advantage only within the monopoly area of the other, British subjects who desired to enter the trade must obtain licences from both companies. This meant at the very least added expense and restriction of freedom in carrying through the venture. It needs no prophet to foresee the results. Some submitted and took licences from both, as in the case of the *King George* and *Queen Charlotte*, 1785-1788; others obtained a licence from the East India Company to cover the transactions in China, but took the chance of seizure by the moribund South Sea Company for trading within its preserve, as it appears was the case with the so-called Alder squadron: *Prince William Henry* and *Three Brothers*, 1792-1794; others again took a licence from the decrepit South Sea Company and returned with their furs to England—probably this was the course pursued by the *Jenny* on her first voyage, 1791-1793; and others simply masqueraded, as has been shown, under the flags of foreign countries. But though they might obtain a licence from the East India Company that licence only permitted under galling restrictions the sale of the furs in China; it never gave permission to purchase Oriental goods for import into England—that was a right so zealously guarded and monopolized by the company that not even the great power and influence of the Hudson's Bay Company could obtain it.

In 1788 came into the maritime fur-trade the people of the recently-formed United States. To them the field was open in every direction; no musty monopolies hampered their movements. To them the trade was merely a means to an end; that is, it supplied them with a suitable medium—sea-otter skins—whereby they could obtain Oriental goods and curios for sale in their own country; and there, of course, lay the profit. But these monopolies made the fur-trade for British subjects an end in itself. The best they could hope for was, after sale of their furs in China, to obtain a charter to carry a cargo of the East India Company's Oriental goods home to England. Thus for them the last link could be no more than a mere common carrier—not a merchant importing his own goods and making the profit.

These monopolies, the almost constant state of war in Europe from 1793 to 1815—years when the maritime fur-trade was at its height—a period for the greater part of which the United States was at peace—and the natural genius of the Yankee for bargaining combined to drive the Union Jack out of the field. In effecting this result the weight of the monopolies can scarcely be over-stated: witness the fact that the energetic North West Company, which after its purchase of the Astoria venture in 1813 entered the Canton market, found itself compelled to abandon the Union Jack and conceal its trade under the Stars and Stripes. This shows decisively the impossibility of carrying on the trade without the profit that accrued in the importation of Oriental goods.

Under the combination of these influences the number of British vessels decreased rapidly. The figures are eloquent:—

1785-1794. . .	35	British vessels	15	American vessels
1795-1804. . .	9	“ “	50	“ “
1805-1814. . .	3	“ “	40	“ “

In compiling this enumeration the number of vessels of each nationality in the trade during the decade has been taken; no attention has been given to the number of years occupied by a voyage, the number of vessels on the coast in any one year, nor the number of voyages made by a vessel during any decade. The British flag may, for all practical purposes, be said to have disappeared from the trade after 1801. The three British vessels mentioned in the decade 1805-1814 require explanation. One of them, the *Forester*, was an American venture owned by John Jacob Astor and sent out during the war of 1812-1814 under the British flag, because he had failed to secure a pass for an American bottom; another, the *Otter*, seems a genuine British effort, but more research is required before any definite pronouncement can be made; and the third the *Columbia*, the first vessel of the North West Company, was more of a freighter than a trader.

Other nations entered the trade but they faltered and fell by the wayside. France sent out the ill-fated La Perouse expedition in 1785 to ascertain its opportunities. That government effort failed; the ships never returned. Nevertheless France is represented by four trading voyages to the Northwest Coast: *La Solide* in 1791; *La Flavie* in 1792; *L'Emilie* in 1793; and *Le Bordelais* in 1817-1818. The attempt of France by means of this trade to obtain territory on the western coast to balance her loss on the eastern coast came to naught by reason of the Napoleonic wars. The great gap is shown in the above dates. It is believed that all the vessels under the Portuguese flag were in reality British. The first to fly that flag on the coast: the *Felice Adventurer* and *Iphigenia* in 1788 were admittedly so. The only other vessels flying that flag are four in number: *Fenis & St. Joseph*, *Felice Adventurer*, *Florinda*, and *Iphigenia*, all in 1792. Of these it will be observed that two appear to be identical with Meares's ships. One vessel only flew the Swedish flag, the *Mercury* or *Gustavus III*; and she was beyond any question English. On the Pacific at that time there was great laxity regarding the nationality of a ship. Owners were in the habit of changing the ship's nationality in accordance with their own. Thus when the *Massachusetts*, an American ship, was sold in 1790 at Canton to the Danes, the Stars and Stripes were hauled down and the White Cross of Denmark run up in its stead; and thus they thought the nationality was changed. The same thing occurred when Cleveland sold the *Caroline* alias *Dragon*. That cutter was British, named *Dragon*; but Cleveland being an American and having "papers" for a *Caroline*, when he bought her raised the American flag and called her American. In 1799 when he sold her, her name was again *Dragon* and English colours were hoisted. And so, too, when in 1806, John DeWolf sold the *Juno* to the Russians. As part of the purchase price he received the Russian snow *Germerck*. At once he says: "I hoisted the Stars and Stripes on the *Germerck*, which had become my property." Thus easily and informally was the nationality, as they thought, changed.

By 1801 as has been stated the trade was entirely controlled by the Americans. Perhaps it should rather be said that the trade was controlled

by the city of Boston. That city was the first to enter into it (unless Captain Simon Metcalfe's voyage in the New York brig *Eleanora* from China be found, as is likely, to have preceded any expedition from Boston). At any rate Boston forged ahead at the beginning and having got the lead she retained it despite the efforts of other cities to capture the trade from her.

After the trade developed into exchange of articles having real value, that is as soon as it extended beyond the beads, buttons, and baubles stage it required much originality and initiative and "a great patience." The trade items commonly used were bars of iron, sheets of copper, knives, axes of all kinds and shapes, chisels, pots and pans, mirrors, guns and gun-powder, lead and bullets, blankets, clothing, blue cloth and (to our shame) rum. But when the Indian had been supplied with these the trader's resourcefulness was taxed to offer something that caught his changeful fancy. Whimsical always, his whimsicality increased with competition. To-day iron might be in demand; on the next visit it might be valueless. Copper was a staple but when the trader produced his sheets they might be rejected as being too thick or too thin. Ingraham in 1791 tells that on reaching the coast he found the natives plentifully supplied with clothing, implements, and culinary utensils; in his own words he saw that he had arrived "the day after the fair." Observing the fondness for ornament, bracelets and rings, he bethought himself to make iron collars for them. The smith took iron rods about half an inch in diameter, cut them into lengths sufficient to encircle the neck, twisted them together to form a collar, and polished them. The hideous contrivance, which weighed about seven pounds, caught the native's fickle fancy, and from morning till night, seven days a week he was busy fabricating iron collars. Fashionable attire is proverbially expensive; these collars cost three prime sea-otter skins each—that is \$60.00 or \$70.00. Sir Alexander Mackenzie records seeing one of such collars near the sea coast. The successful trader studied the Indian's tastes and strove to meet and gratify them. To his ceremonial dress the native loves to attach bears' teeth, bears' claws, and deer's hoofs to give a musical accompaniment to his motions. A resourceful trader saw in this his opportunity; thousands and thousands of thimbles were imported to be hung like little bells upon the fringes of these ceremonial garments. Another observant trader saw the Indian's fondness for ermine skin as a part of his attire on ceremonial occasions. He purchased some 5,000 of these skins in New England and disposed of them on the Northwest Coast at the rate of three ermine skins for one sea-otter skin—\$1.50 in exchange for \$30. Certainly from the trader's view point this was a satisfactory reward for thus seemingly carrying coals to Newcastle. From this it was but a step to that of supplying one part of the coast with the products of another part. One of the first of these to be so utilized was the clamons or tanned elk skins so frequently referred to as "armour." It is said that, folded, they would resist an arrow. Such skins were plentiful on the Columbia river and in great demand at Queen Charlotte Islands. This is the material referred to in Simon Fraser's Journal in the entry of July 1, 1808, in which he says: "The chief made me a present of a coat of mail to make shoes." The traders visited the Columbia expressly for this armour. At certain periods the Nass river has great shoals of a small fish called by the natives, shrou and by the whites, oolachon or candle-fish. The oil extracted from this tiny fish is eagerly sought by the Indians of Queen Charlotte Islands. The

traders regularly visited Nass river to obtain this oil or shrowton to exchange for furs at those islands. Slavery existed amongst the Indians of the coast. The trader was not averse to trafficking in human flesh—buying slaves in one section and selling them in another.

In the early days of the trade the vessels sailed along the shore, fired a gun to attract attention, hove to and waited for the Indians to paddle a mile or even eight or nine miles out to them. Competition brought the ships right into the small harbours and in touch with the villages. In 1786 Dixon traded during a season and never visited an Indian village; five years later Ingraham anchored near an Indian village and stayed for a week or more trading steadily. At the commencement, too, the trade was carried on from along side. The canoes surrounded the ship and dealt at arm's length, so to speak. Then no one was allowed on board except the chiefs or great men. The pressure of competition caused the trader to depart from this salutary rule and in order to ingratiate himself to allow the whole tribe freely on board whilst trading. In the end the natives felt that they had a vested right to be on board while arranging the sale of their peltry.

Very few of the vessels and very few of their masters made more than three voyages. And even in these rare instances of continuity the masters were seldom in command of the same ship. The trade was one of individual effort and constant change. From this there naturally resulted a policy of seizing the present advantage regardless of its effect on subsequent relations. A master, who did not expect to return or who even if he did return would not likely be upon the same vessel, allowed himself to commit actions of which doubtless under other conditions he would not have been guilty. On the evidence of the traders themselves they did not hesitate to force the natives to trade. One master (Ingraham) tells us that having rescued some members of a tribe and brought them home he found that the villagers would nevertheless not trade as they were holding their furs for a certain vessel. He enticed their chiefs on board and held them in confinement till the people did trade. Kendrick admitted that the Indians having stolen clothing from his ship he seized their chiefs and placing them before his guns threatened to blow them to pieces unless the stolen articles were returned. This was done—but even then he would not free the chiefs until the natives brought in all their furs which he says he bought at a fair price. Another trader (Nye) does not hesitate to acknowledge that some slaves he had bought having escaped and the natives not returning them, he stole their canoes and goods and sold them. Another trader (Gray) because the Indians had stolen articles from his ship whilst in winter quarters waited calmly until he was leaving in the spring and then deliberately destroyed their village. These are not mere isolated instances. Many more could be given—all on the evidence of the traders themselves. The difference between such conduct and that of the land traders is plain and the reason just as plain: the constant change in the maritime trade, the continuity in the land trade. In such high-handed acts of the traders lies the root of the so-called unprovoked attacks. The wrong had been done the Indians by one vessel and with their doctrine of vicarious responsibility they took revenge upon the next one that happened to visit them, if the opportunity arose—if not they waited patiently until it did.

Out of this came the attacks and captures of a number of the traders: the *Atahualpa*, *Boston*, *Otter*, *Tonquin*, and many others.

During the early years, say the first ten—1785-1794—the custom was for the ships to spend the season, May to September, trading on the coast and then to sail for the Hawaiian Islands where the winter was spent in those “summer isles of Eden.” Sometimes, of course, a vessel might be successful to such an extent that instead of wintering at “the islands” she would at the end of the season sail for China; there transmute her furs into Oriental goods: teas, silks, nankeens, chinaware, etc., and sail home to New England. But that was in the first decade of the trade. With the stress of competition and probably with a better knowledge of the climatic conditions of the coast the custom changed and the traders wintered in some snug cove in the vicinity of the trading ground. So matters went along for nearly a decade; then, about 1806 or 1808, another change occurred: the vessels remained on the coast, but instead of going into winter quarters they continued trading throughout the year, fitting from Indian village to Indian village, through rain and sleet, hail and snow and fog. The manuscript journals of the traders show that they disposed of large quantities of bread, and rice, and molasses. It was found that the winter offered a good market for these foods. Thus as in the land trade similar conditions are found to produce similar effects.

But though the trading ships ceased to winter at the Hawaiian Islands they learned more and more to lean upon those islands as sources of supply. Indeed it is difficult to see how the Northwest trade could have been carried on without the assistance obtained from those islands. The coast yielded nothing but the raw furs and skins with, as has been shown, some native products for barter. The islands supplied hogs, plantains, sweet potatoes, yams, taro, coconuts, salt, and rope. But above all these refreshments the inhabitants of “the islands” were a sturdy, intelligent race, who made excellent seamen. Many a trader owed her safety and success to the efforts of the “Kanakas” as the natives of “the islands” were called—the word being their own word for “people.” It is believed that no trading ship from Europe or America failed to resort to the Hawaiian Islands for some form of refreshment.

The first traders came from China and India. Leaving their home ports early in the spring they spent the summer on the coast, and returned in the autumn. This was much the plan recommended by Captain King. No such expedition could be expected in the case of the ships that came from the Atlantic; some of them were, indeed, fortunate enough to secure a cargo in one season, but that rare happening occurred only in the early days of the trade when sea-otter skins were, as Falstaff said of reasons, “as plentiful as blackberries”. With increasing competition, improved means of destruction, and lengthened trading seasons sea-otter became scarcer and more scarce; by 1802 it was rarely indeed that a vessel obtained a cargo in less than two seasons—thus making her absence from home three years or more. This is in marked contrast with the first years, when the *Despatch* made the complete voyage in twenty months; the *Union* in twenty-three months; and the *Alert* in nineteen months—Boston to the coast, China, and return.

At the outset this was an unique trade—a trade in the skin of one animal—the sea-otter; of course other skins were not refused, but the sea-otter was that which was primarily sought. So much so that for many years it was known at the Sea Otter Trade. The unregulated, indiscriminate slaughter had its natural result: the animal became scarcer and

scarcer and other skins were eagerly sought in its stead. Thus the individuality of the maritime trade gradually disappeared. This move was quite natural for from about 1793 the traders or some of them had concluded to reap not only the harvest of the coast but also of the intervening ocean. Long before the sea-otter showed any signs of diminution the traders (or some of them) added sealing to the barter for the prized sea-otter skin. Staten Land, Masa fuera, Mas a tierra (Juan Fernandez), St. Ambrose, and St. Felix, and other islands and islets were frequented by great herds of fur-seal; the trading vessels were passing within hailing distance; a few weeks' delay would produce 10,000 or 15,000 of these seal-skins, which although selling for but fifty cents each at that time would in the total make a respectable sum.

Captain King in his plan for the fur-trade recommended two vessels of about 200 tons and 150 tons. Many of the first ventures followed his suggestion: *Captain Cook* and *Experiment*; *King Gorge* and *Queen Charlotte*; *Prince of Wales* and *Princess Royal*; *Felice* and *Iphigenia*; *Eleanora* and *Fair American*; and *Columbia* and *Washington*. The English clung rather closely to Captain King's tonnage, but the Americans gave themselves more latitude. In some cases: *Hancock* in 1791; *Margaret* and *Columbia* in 1792; and *Jefferson* in 1793 they built small auxiliary craft on the coast or after leaving Boston. By the first decade of the nineteenth century the two-ship plan had been dropped and small ships usually about 200 tons took their place.

There is little information for the first ten years as to the values of the cargoes, outward and return. But between 1798 and 1802 some figures are available as follows:—

1798— <i>Alert</i> . . . . .	outward cargo	\$13,000
<i>Alexander</i> . . . . .		7,507
<i>Jenny</i> . . . . .		17,650
1799— <i>Eliza</i> . . . . .		14,000
<i>Ulysses</i> . . . . .		14,000
1801— <i>Atahualpa</i> . . . . .		18,750
<i>Caroline</i> . . . . .		18,500
<i>Despatch</i> . . . . .		19,681
<i>Globe</i> . . . . .		29,253
<i>Guatimozin</i> . . . . .		18,036
<i>Lucy</i> . . . . .		9,718
<i>Pegasus</i> . . . . .		150,000
<i>Polly</i> . . . . .		10,631
1802— <i>Alert</i> . . . . .		28,001

The large amount in the case of the *Pegasus* indicates that she was not a Northwest trading vessel, though she cleared for that coast, but was intended to smuggle her cargo ashore on the coasts of Spanish America or dispose of it by surreptitious sales. Leaving the *Pegasus* aside the other vessels show the ordinary capital invested in the trading goods on a Northwest Coast voyage. Exact information as to returns is meagre; many vague statements and generalizations are encountered but rarely is anything specific found. The *Margaret* is believed to have returned to her owners from her voyage of 1791-1794 about \$10,000 for each one-eighth share; the *Jefferson* is said to have been less successful in her voyage of 1791-1795; the *Caroline* in her voyage of 1801-1803 is said to have made for her owners the net profit of \$73,034; and the *Pearl* in 1807-1810, \$206,650.

One of the earliest moves was, as in the case of the land trade, for the trader to become a hunter. One region there was, almost virgin—the coast



of New Spain. So long as sea-otter were plentiful the trader recognized the territorial rights of Spain; but as competition became keen, envious eyes were cast upon the islands and islets of the Californian coast, the habitats of fur-seal, the homes of sea-otter. Here was a rich opportunity poorly guarded by few and indolent coast guards. The temptation was too strong. The *O'Cain* in 1803-1805 was probably the first to succumb. She took Aleut hunters with their baidarkas to the shores of New Spain, its rocks, islets, and islands to hunt these animals on shares. This was, of course, poaching pure and simple; but the furs were there and Spain was weak. Like Iago the traders believed in putting money in their purse, especially where that money was only protected by a mere legal and practically unenforceable right. The Russian Baranoff joined in this poaching game and supplied the hunters on the basis of equal division after expenses paid. Between 1809 and 1812 he made, at least, six such contracts with the ships *O'Cain*, *Albatross*, *Isabella*, *Amethyst*, *Catherine*, and *Charon*; but his half seems to have dwindled: it only amounted to about 8,000 sea-otter skins.

Out of the unprotected coast line of New Spain came another addition to the maritime fur-trade: the quiet and unostentatious smuggling of American manufactures into Spanish territory. Spain at this time was still intensely jealous of the presence of any foreigners within her borders; foreign ships got short shrift. The *Betsy* led the van in 1800; the *Alexander* followed in 1803; thereafter, many. Under the guise of obtaining wood and water, shelter and repairs, they entered the Spanish ports; at first they were pitied and permitted to stay; but the Dons soon perceived the deceit and realized that the claims upon humanity were but a cover for illegal trading. Driven ignominiously out of the Spanish ports the Yankee skippers just went around the corner to the first convenient harbour and resumed their smuggling. If some inquisitive coast guard sought them out the Yankees, as in the case of the *Dromo*, did not hesitate to open fire and fight it out in private war. Not content with illicit trade as an adjunct they made it in some instances an end in itself. The ordinary cargo of a genuine Northwest trader rarely exceeded \$20,000 or \$30,000; yet vessels cleared for the "Northwest Coast and Canton" with cargoes valued at as much as \$450,000. Plainly such vessels had no intention of trading with the Indians; their object was to smuggle the cargo ashore wherever possible on the Spanish coast from Chili to Mexico. Cleveland in *In the Forecastle* (or *The Voyages and Commercial Adventures of the Sons of New England*), New York, 1855, p. 155, says quite openly that the peace of Amiens in 1801 greatly increased the dangers of his proposed voyage to the Pacific coast because of "the increased number and vigilance of the *guardacostas* hitherto confined to their ports by the presence of a superior hostile force." The disturbed political situation in Spanish America in the early 1800s was not overlooked. Many traders saw and took the opportunity to increase their profits by carrying illicit trade one step farther by disposing of contraband of war in the affected regions. The story of this illegal trading can be spelled out between the lines of the dry-as-dust records of the so-called Spanish Spoliation Claims, in the State Department, Washington, D.C.

In fact the traders paid little attention to Spanish claims, Spanish territorial rights, or Spanish power. They pursued their own courses direct or devious and took their chances of Spanish interference or capture. In 1796, for example, Ebenezer Dorr the master of the Boston ship, *Otter*, had convicts from Botany Bay on board and wishing to be rid of them he simply landed them on the Spanish coast, the objections of Spanish officers

notwithstanding. In 1802 William Shaler and R. J. Cleveland trading illegally on the Californian coast have a boat's crew of the *Lelia Byrd* entrapped and taken prisoners; by force and arms they overpower the captors, release the prisoners, and make off. These acts reached their climax in the case of the brig *Cossack*. That notorious law-breaker was captured in 1818 for illegal trading on the coast of California; a Spanish crew was placed aboard and so matters went along for some four years; finally in 1822 the Boston schooner *Eagle* came boldly into the harbour of San Blas recaptured the brig, and put the Spanish crew gently but firmly ashore. These samples will show the stamp of man engaged in this trade and how little regard was paid to Spain's rights. They could have sung, with necessary alterations, the words of Kipling:

"But I've six thousands skins below, and Yeddow Port to see,  
And there's never a law of God or man runs north of Fifty-three."

Sandalwood had early, that is about 1790, attracted the attention of John Kendrick the commander of the first American trading venture from Boston—the *Columbia* and the *Lady Washington*. About the same time William Douglas, master of the schooner *Grace*, also put men ashore to collect this wood as Kendrick had done. Both efforts ended in failure—Douglas's owing to his untimely death and Kendrick's owing to his constant mutability. However, about the end of the first decade of the 1800s the sandalwood trade became an adjunct to the sea otter trade. This very readily came about as the trading vessels invariably visited the Hawaiian Islands, the centre of the sandalwood industry, at some stage in their voyages. The Fiji, Marquesas, and other islands of the South sea yielded sandalwood; the result was that sandalwood rose in the decade between 1810 and 1820 to such importance that ships devoted themselves entirely to that trade. Nevertheless the maritime fur-traders resorting continually to the Hawaiian Islands were always ready to buy sandalwood or to carry it on freight to China, its great market.

The Russians in Alaska were the competitors for furs but not for many years competitors in Canton. Russian furs destined for China entered through Kiakhta; all Russian fur trade with China was carried on through that town. In the development of the maritime fur trade the vessels resorted more and more to Sitka the Russian centre in Alaska; it was the only spot on the coast where the traders came into contact with civilization; for as has been pointed out, Spain was very jealous of the presence of foreigners in her territory and moreover the conduct of the American traders had practically barred access to the ports of New Spain. In Alaska the traders saw a possible market. There were Russian settlements requiring the products of civilization and yet separated by half the world from the centres of Russian produce and manufacture. The traders soon sought to add another adjunct to the sea-otter trade by bringing goods for sale in Alaska. This had been done in a small way for years until John Jacob Astor sent out the *Enterprise* in 1809. The Astor Papers now in the Baker Library, Soldiers' Field, Boston, show that she sold to Baranoff the head of the Russian American Company in July, 1810, goods to the value of \$26,883.92 including as one might expect 684 gallons of rum, 419 gallons of gin, and 908 gallons of brandy. These were paid for it is interesting to note in furs, beaver, sealskins, and sea-otter. It is probable that Astor's other vessels, *Pedler* and *Forester* also traded

extensively with the Russians. The vessels were also willing to carry goods on freight: the *Enterprise* carried a cargo of Russian furs to Canton; the *Pedler* probably, a cargo of provisions to Fort Ross, on the Californian coast.

To conclude: the maritime fur trade began in 1785; it reached its zenith in 1801 when it included about twenty-three vessels; from that date it gradually declined, but the adjuncts which have been mentioned prolonged its life, though at the same time cogent evidence of its approaching end; the war of 1812-1814 dealt it a hard blow and shook the American control; the arrival of the North West Company and later of the Hudson's Bay Company created an intensive and aggressive all-the-year-round competition, which slowly brought the end. As Dr. S. E. Morison says: "Between 1821 and 1830 the vessels annually engaged in the Northwest trade declined from about thirteen to two . . . But by 1837 the old Northwest fur trade, Boston's high school of commerce for forty years, was a thing of the past." But after 1825 it had become so diversified that it can scarcely be called the "Northwest Trade."

Though this ephemeral and strangely diversified trade was, in reality, merely a looting of the coast, it was not entirely devoid of collateral results. The maritime traders, it is true, never attempted to make any settlement—any permanent habitation. They sometimes dreamed dreams of such occupation, but it all ended in dream. This trade established the earliest direct commercial relations between the coast and Hawaii and oldest East; it gave America the first Oriental laborers—only temporarily be it admitted, but yet an important event as being the first meeting of races which centuries before had separated on the table-lands of Asia; it found the Northwest Coast an empty space on the map, save for two points: Cape Flattery and Nootka Sound, but within seven years—that is even before Vancouver arrived the outlines and main features had been roughly filled in; and it gave to eastern lands a fleeting vision of the wondrous wealth of this western world. As the maritime traders pass off the stage of history we realize that they utterly failed to take advantage of their opportunities, or to leave one mark of civilization, save perhaps its vices upon the coast—in a word leaving it the worse and the poorer for their presence there.