Maritime Museum of San Diego

Mains'l Haul

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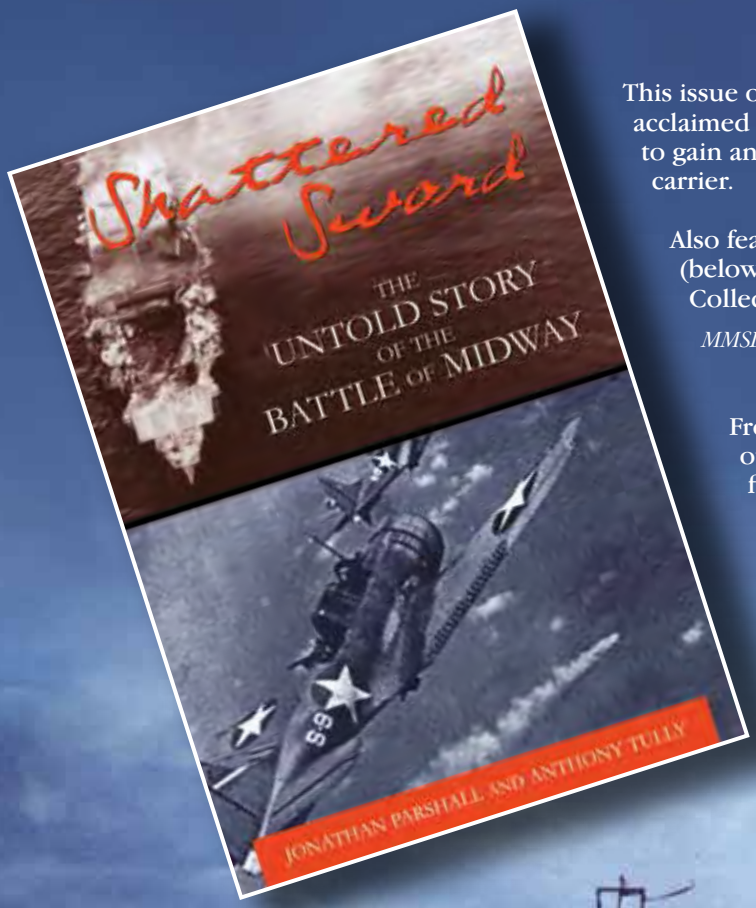
Aircraft Carriers
Historical Perspectives



This issue of ***Mains'l Haul*** gathers a select group of internationally acclaimed authors, historians and naval experts in an effort to gain an overview of the history of the development of the aircraft carrier.

Also featured in this issue are several prized World War II photos (below) from the Maritime Museum of San Diego's Steichen Collection, gifted to the museum in 1980.

MMSD Steichen Collection, P-749d, U.S. Navy photo

Front Cover: An Air Force B-2 bomber along with other aircrafts from the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps fly over the ***Kitty Hawk, Ronald Reagan*** and ***Abraham Lincoln*** Carrier Strike groups during Exercise Valiant Shield in June 2006 in the Philippine Sea. These aircraft carriers represent the peak of 90 years of development of a unique and powerful class of warship.

Courtesy U.S. Naval Institute

MAINS'L HAUL
is published quarterly,
wind and weather permitting,
aboard the ferryboat *Berkeley*.

MAINSAIL HAUL—An order
in tacking ship bidding,
"Swing the main yards."

Maritime Museum of San Diego

MAINS'L HAUL

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Aircraft Carriers — Historical Perspectives

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Our mission is to engage members and the public in the study of maritime history, while promoting scholarly research.
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FROM THE HELM

by Ray Ashley

Executive Director,
Maritime Museum of San Diego

Ships are infinitely varied in form and purpose, wide ranging, and technologically transitory. Yet despite their ephemeral nature, or perhaps because of it, they are often fixed in our understanding to specific locales in ways that enfold and coalesce object and place into archetypes and legends, something the literary sea writer John Rousmaniere calls "a few truths and an underlying structure of meaning." It is impossible to separate our collective conception of the medieval galley from Venice, the caravel from Portugal, the galleon from Spain, the East Indiamen from Amsterdam, the sleek American privateer from Baltimore, the whaler from Nantucket or the Grand Banks fishing schooner from Gloucester, even though none of those places enjoyed a monopoly on the origins, construction, and use of the types of ships linked to them. We didn't invent aircraft carriers in San Diego, nor do we build them here. Most of the aircraft carriers in existence have always been home ported elsewhere and they have always been in the minority of ships which sail from our port. But someday, in the geography of legend, we may well come to own them all, if only because the history of San Diego, above all other places, cannot be understood without also understanding the history of the aircraft carrier.

Europeans entered the Pacific and dominated it for centuries because their development and monopoly of the oceanic sailing ship gave them an unprecedented technological advantage. Despite that capability, Europeans were never successful in projecting the most potent expression of their seaborne power, battle fleets composed of ships-of-the-line, across its vast reaches. The few such attempts to do so, as in the circumnavigation of Lord Anson 1740-1744, exposed the catastrophic weaknesses inherent in the type. Instead, from Drake in the sixteenth century to the USS Essex and CSS *Shenandoah* in the nineteenth century, the projection of sea power during wartime from the Atlantic world into the Pacific proved possible only in the form of solitary raiders that moved lightly and fast, without the necessity of bases, against indigenous western merchant ships even more lightly armed. The advent of steam, steel, and shell firing guns coincided with the loss of western monopoly on the capital ship, but did not indicate that the Pacific was any more conducive to its systematic use to great distance. Indeed, if anything the very size of

the Pacific seemed to diminish the relative power of capital ships which now depended for mobility on a tenuous and convoluted line of coaling stations rather than the wind. The strange odyssey of the Russian Baltic fleet, its power diminishing mile by mile as it steamed to its doom in the Straits of Tsushima in 1905 underscored this point, as did, in an inverse way, the 1907-1909 voyage of the American Great White Fleet. When 16 battleships anchored off the Hotel del Coronado on 14 April 1908, after a four month voyage from Hampton Roads, the extraordinary spectacle drove home the point that the Pacific was hard to get to, hard to operate in, and that places like San Diego were still the objects of naval power, not the sources of it.

But just as the marriage of artillery and the sailing ship changed the political geography of the world in the sixteenth century, the marriage of combat aircraft and the steam-powered ship changed the political geography of the world in the twentieth century and continues to do so. Through a process of technological evolution that seemed to take the military planners of several nations off guard, the aircraft carrier became the capital ship of the Pacific, uniquely suited to operating over vast distances and projecting its destructive force to a range of hundreds of miles. As you will read here, many waypoints of that development took place in San Diego. Every generational advance in the development of the aircraft carrier was embodied in ships which sailed from San Diego, and every aspect of San Diego's life as a community, from the shape and depth of San Diego Bay to the social structure of the city and its surrounding communities has been built around the particular needs and demands of the aircraft carrier. It is no wonder that of the several aircraft carrier museums now operating, the USS *Midway* is the most successful, she alone reposes in surroundings that provide "the underlying structure of meaning," which give rise to legends. In 1908, the Great White Fleet anchored in Coronado Roads because it could not even get into San Diego Bay. Today, San Diego has become the strategic locus of naval power in the Pacific and projects that power to a greater potency and distance than has been the case with any other seaport in the history of the world. For that to happen one "truth" needed to prevail. San Diego and the aircraft carrier had to create each other.

1 John Rousmaniere, *After the Storm* (Camden, Maine: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 202.

Below: The USS *Langley* (CV-1) is pictured in 1934 in full-dress for Navy Days celebrations. Heralded by the *San Diego Union* upon her arrival in the 1920s as the "Deadliest Ship Afloat," *Langley* came to epitomize the interrelationship between San Diego Bay and the development of the aircraft carrier.

MMSD Collection P-10196c

Acknowledgements

This issue of *Mains'l Haul* posed some interesting challenges for the editor unfamiliar with the history of aircraft carriers. Dr. John Hattendorf, Professor of Maritime History, Chairman of the Maritime History Department, and Director of the Naval War College Museum, stood ready to assist in contacting potential authors. Despite onerous schedules, Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix (in France), and Dr. Eric Grove (in Britain), contributed their expertise to the Journal.

While Dr. Mark Peattie, author of the revered *Sunburst: The Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941,* was unable to contribute, he proffered advice and encouragement, which led to Jonathan Parshall's contribution.

The USS Midway Museum team of Scott McGaugh, Marketing Director, and Karl Zingheim, staff historian and Exhibits Manager, stepped in enthusiastically, adding their expertise and historical perspectives.

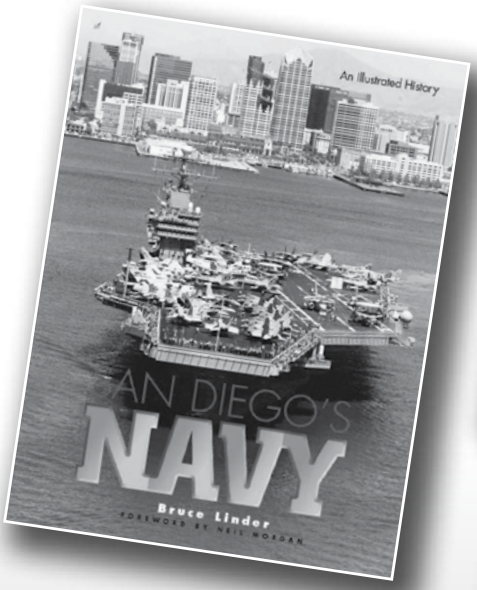
If not for Bruce Linder, retired captain in the U.S. Navy and full-time defense and technology consultant, this issue might have stalled in flight. Mr. Linder is at the ready at all times, whether assisting with the Maritime Museum's Naval Exhibit, deciphering photos, or reviewing articles; he is an indispensable asset to the Maritime Museum of San Diego.

Our volunteer library staff remain the unsung heroes. Forty-two year U.S. Navy veteran (20 yrs. active duty), now retired Quality Assurance Engineer, Computer Specialist – Gordon Sheldon – distilled volumes of historical information for the editor. Chuck Bencik (also having served in the Navy), remains the invaluable overseer of our treasured photographic collections.

With Gratitude,
Neva Sullaway, editor

Major funding provided by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.
Vibrant Culture, Vibrant City

MMSD Steichen Collection P-738d, U.S. Navy photo


An Illustrated History
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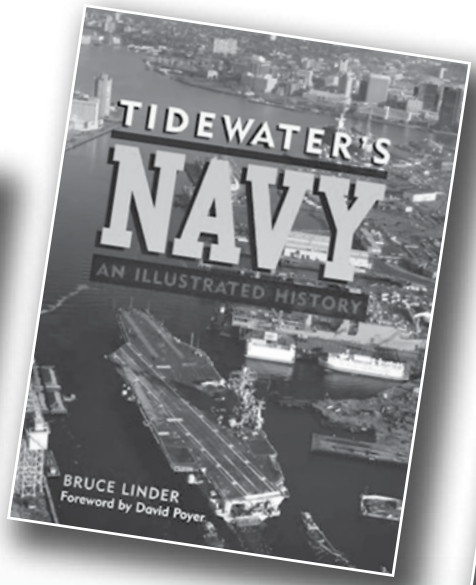
NAVY
Bruce Linder
FOREWORD BY NEIL MORGAN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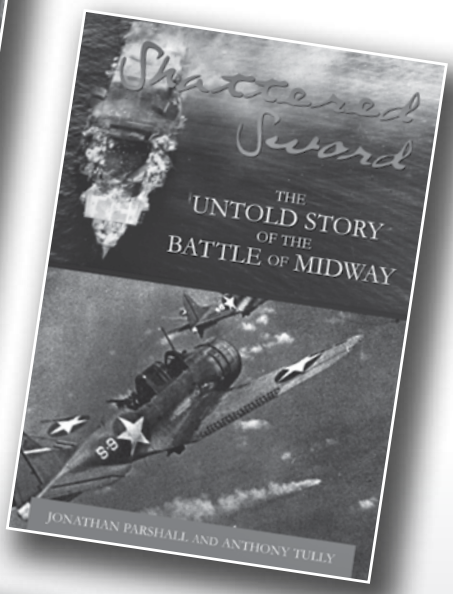
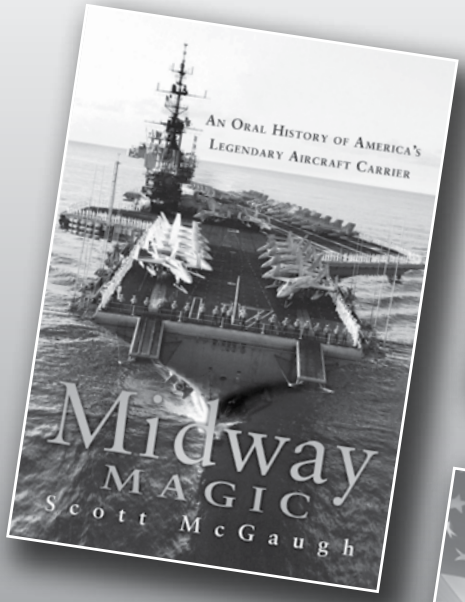

Shattered Sword
THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY
JONATHAN PARSHALL AND ANTHONY TULLY


An Oral History of America's Legendary Aircraft Carrier
Midway
MAGIC
Scott McGaugh


Histoire mondiale des
PORTE-AVIONS
des origines à nos jours
E·T·A·I

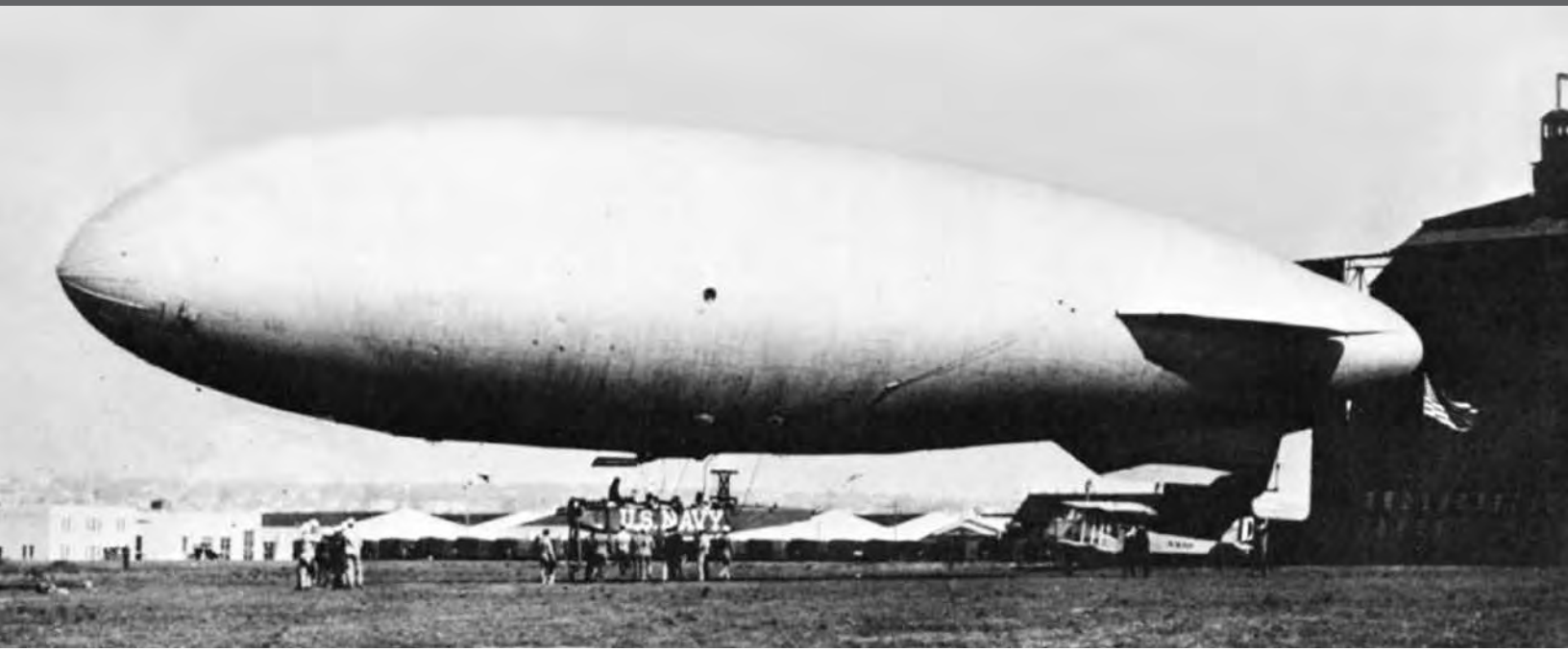

ERIC J. GROVE
THE ROYAL
NAVY


MIDWAY MEMORIES
THE OFFICIAL PHOTO COLLECTION OF THE SAN DIEGO AIRCRAFT CARRIER MUSEUM
SCOTT MCGAUGH
RUDY SHAPPEE

Power Projection Beyond the Horizon:

The Global Development of the Aircraft Carrier to WW II

By Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix, Service Historique de la Défense, Département « Marine »



The first U.S. Navy launch of the non-rigid 196-foot airship C-6 on 1 March 1920, in San Diego, California, was made in light winds and in perfect weather. With 179,000 cubic feet of hydrogen pressured in, the Lighter-Than-Air dirigible lifted-off and toured the city, and landed without incident, however, its career was brief, ending on 30 September that same year, on a flight from San Pedro to San Diego.

Courtesy National Archives

Seeing Beyond the Horizon and Above the Coastline

The Nineteenth Century to 1914

Navies always dreamed of conquering the third dimension to extend the horizon of their fleets, for both reconnaissance and fire control purposes. Balloons and kites came first, but were supplanted by seaplanes and airplanes during the Great War. Their increasingly powerful engines augmented the visual range, chased enemy aircraft and enabled aerial bombardment both ashore and at sea. Deemed at first impractical, the airplane's recovery onboard a ship was made possible by a new category of vessel, the aircraft carrier. Conceived as an auxiliary, the new platform became after the First World War, a fleet unit capable of giving the edge to the ship-of-the-line in the main battle. To prevent a naval race among the winners, the United States, the British Empire, Japan, France and Italy agreed to limit the size of their fleets at Washington, in 1922. Hulls of uncompleted ships of the line were suddenly made available for conversion into aircraft carriers, even though the new vessels were also limited in tonnage. The main naval powers remained obsessed by the perspective of a decisive battle where the battleship would be the capital ship. International crisis and colonial operations demonstrated, however, the usefulness of the new platform to project airpower ashore and influence political decisions.

Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix was born in 1963, from an American father and a French mother. He graduated from the Paris Institute of Political Science and holds a MA in History and two pre-doctoral dissertations in History and Political Science from the Sorbonne. He works for the Defense Historical Service, Naval section, located in Vincennes, outside of Paris, and lectures at the Joint Defense College. He has co-written two general histories of submarines published in 2002 and 2006, and a general history of aircraft carriers, *Histoire mondiale des Porte-Avions des origines à nos jours*, published in 2006, currently available at: www.amazon.fr

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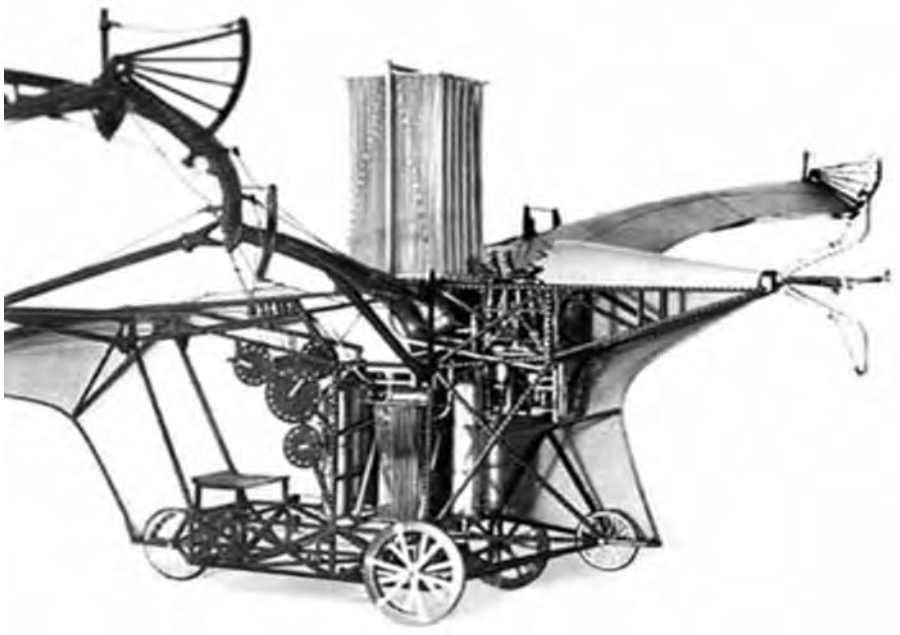
Balloons, Kites and their Carriers

Airships were deployed at sea for the first time during the Austrian campaign against Venice, in July of 1849. Carrying explosives, they were unsuccessfully launched toward the besieged city.[1] A decade later the divided states of America extended the use of balloons to naval and riverine warfare: during August, 1861, a Union steamer towed a captive balloon to observe the Confederate positions at Hampton Roads. Three months later, a barge, the *George Washington Parke Custis,* was fitted with a hydrogen generator to support Army balloons on the Potomac river. In March of 1862, Count Von Zeppelin, a young Prussian officer assigned to the Union Army, was invited by the balloonist John Steiner to observe the bombing of a Confederate fortress - Island N°10 - on the Mississippi River. On the James River, the Confederates also towed a balloon in July, to reconnoiter the enemy.[2] Other navies saw the benefit an aerostat could bring to a naval force, principally against coastal fortifications, to unmask gun batteries, or spot an enemy fleet hidden in a protected anchorage. In the open ocean, the use of captive balloons remained more problematic due to the constant rotation of the observer. Nevertheless the Imperial Japanese Navy in the 1870s, and the French and the Russian navies in the 1880s acquired a number of balloons to conduct experiments at sea. In 1894, the submarine *Gymnote* was spotted and photographed from a balloon during the main fleet exercises off Toulon. Ten years later, the Russian armored cruiser *Rossiya,* operating from Vladivostok, claimed that its balloon had permitted the capture of three Japanese cargo ships. That same year in the Baltic, Russia and Sweden had commissioned two aerostation ships, the *Rouss*, a former liner fitted with nine balloons, and the *Ballondepotfartyg N°1.* Having also deployed a balloon from the cruiser *Elba* in 1907, the Italian Navy got her own aerostation platform in 1911, to direct the guns of its battleships against Turkish positions during its conquest of Tripoli. France also experimented with kites onboard its fastest cruisers to conduct photographic reconnaissance on coastal fortifications.

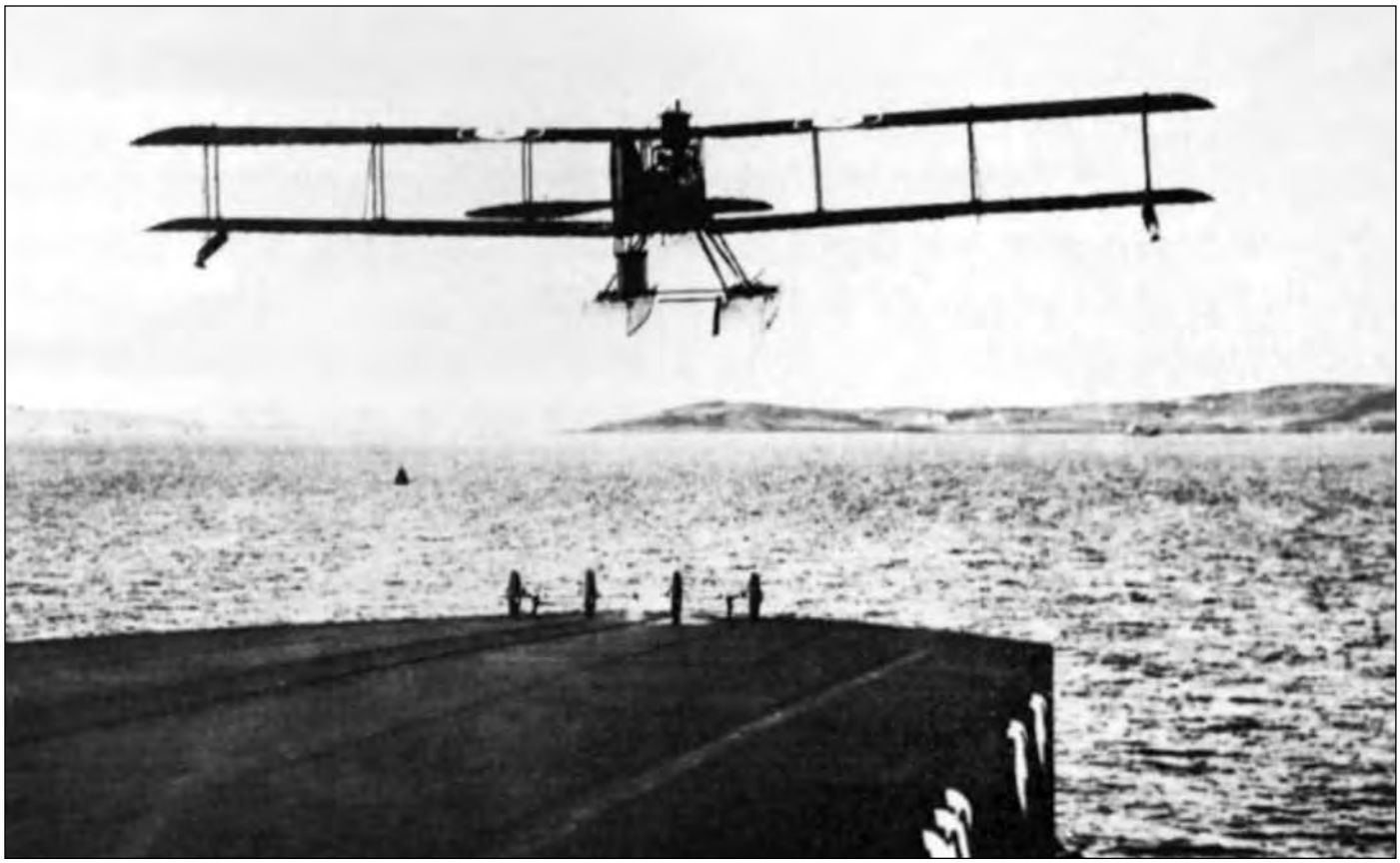
Seaplanes or Airplanes

Two sailors belong to the early days of the flying adventure. In 1857, Commander Du Temple from the French Navy patented an unmanned flying boat propelled by a steam engine. Three decades later, in 1885, Russian Rear Admiral Moujaievskiy secretly tested a similar machine. Between 1890 and 1897, the French pioneer airman Clément Ader

attempted several times to lift his aircraft without conclusive success. But in 1911, he was among the first to foresee the aircraft carrier in the third edition of his book on military aviation: ***"an aircraft-carrying ship becomes indispensable…the deck will be clear of all obstacles…the speed shall be equal at least to that of cruisers and even exceed it…the housing of the planes will necessarily be arranged below deck…."*** [3] By then, the airplane had made significant progress since the Wright brothers. Louis Blériot's crossing of the English Channel in July 1909, had demonstrated the naval potential of the new machine. In October, Engineer Matseievitch from the Imperial Russian Navy proposed a "reconnaissance ship" which could carry 25 seaplanes. They would take off from a flight deck like planes and would be recovered underway on a track. In July of 1910, a proposal was made to convert the old battleship *Admiral Lazarev* into an aircraft carrier. Ten Blériot airplanes would have been stored below the 76.5 meters (251 ft.) flight deck. The death of Matseievitch, who crashed his Farman during a demonstration, and the insufficient performances of the Blériot condemned the project.[4] The United States Navy had also decided to procure aerial means to adjust the long range firing of its new Dreadnought guns. In November of 1910 and January of 1911, the civilian pilot Eugene Ely became the first man to take off and then land on the wooden platforms which had been installed on the cruisers USS *Birmingham* and *Pennsylvania*. That same month, the French Navy minister made the decision to transform the former torpedo boats carrier *Foudre* into a seaplane tender. A more ambitious project for a conversion into an aviation ship was cancelled. Lagging behind, the Royal Navy installed successively a launching ramp onboard three cruisers and considered building the small aircraft carrier proposed by the Beardmore Company. Both the Royal Navy and its strategic partner the Imperial Japanese Navy converted respectively, a collier and a cargo ship into the seaplane tenders *Ark Royal* and *Wakamiya* in 1913. For the Central powers of Germany, Austria and Italy, the airships, designed by Count Von Zeppelin, or the land-based aircrafts seemed enough to fulfill the naval requirements for reconnaissance above restricted waters.[5]



Clément Ader claimed that while he was aboard the *Ader Eole*, he made a stem-engine powered low-level flight of approximately 160 feet on 9 October 1890, in the suburbs of Paris.



Landplanes based aboard carriers had significant performance advantages over seaplanes, but, at first, could not be recovered satisfactorily; seaplanes, however, could be recovered and were capable of being launched from platforms using a wheeled trolley.

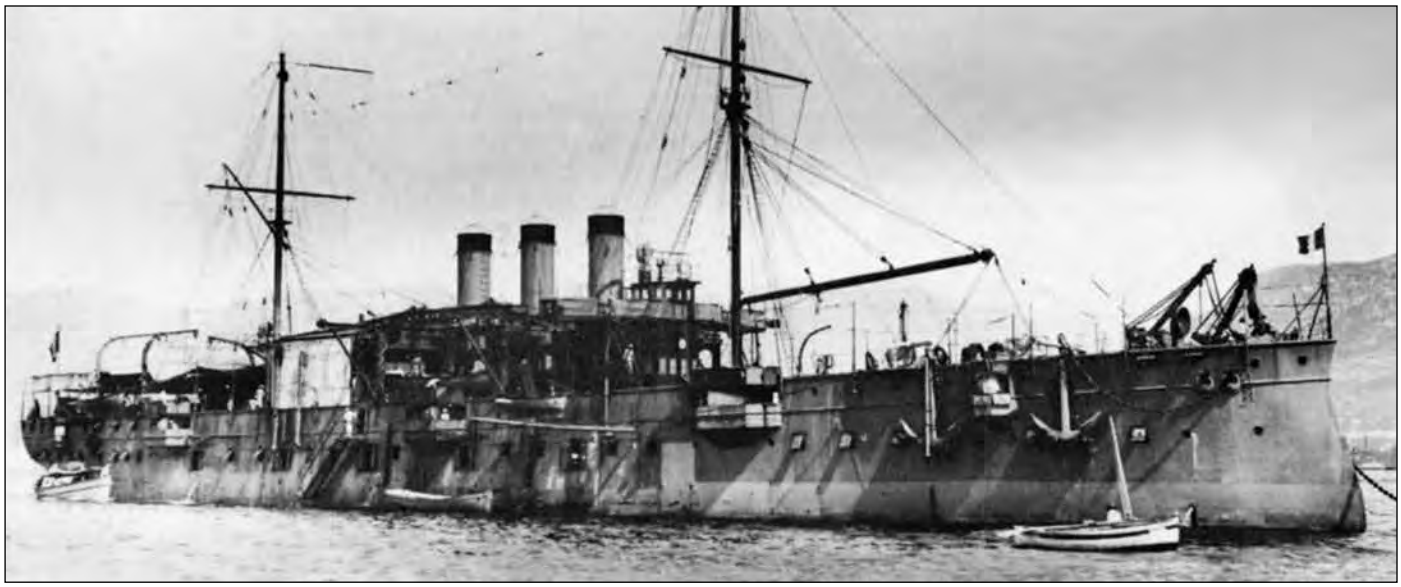
A Fairey Campania departs *Furious,* 1917.

Courtesy Fleet Air Arm Museum

The Test of War *(1914-1918)*
Conversions and Early Designs

The seaplanes were relatively easy, albeit slow to recover, but lacked sufficient power. At the onset of the Great War, the Royal Navy converted nine ferries and liners into seaplane carriers.[6] But the need for a powerful aircraft similar to the army types for reconnaissance and air defense against German zeppelins drove the Royal Navy to put small launching platforms on its battleships and cruisers, and accept the sacrifice of a crash landing into the sea, which would at least enable the pilot to survive its single flight. In all, 26 ships-of-the-line and 28 cruisers were thus modified to launch Ships Strutters, Pup and Camel fighter planes. Unhappy with this costly solution, the Royal Navy decided after 1916, to realize a platform capable of launching and recovering a land-based aircraft. Laid down as cruisers, the *Furious* and the *Vindictive* [7] were converted with one and soon two platforms to launch and recover airplanes. The death of Lt Dunning,
falling off the *Furious* into the sea onboard his Pup, made the argument for a larger flight deck. *Argus*, a former liner, became the first flattop capable of carrying 20 Camel fighters and Cuckoo torpedo planes. Ordered in July of 1917, the *Hermes* was the first aircraft carrier designed as such from the onset. But like the converted battleship *Eagle,*[8] she was commissioned after the end of the war.

France, Russia, Germany and Italy never went that far. The French Navy transformed five cargo ship, liners and trawlers into seaplane tenders.[9] The battleship *Paris* was the only French warship capable of launching a fighter in the closing months of the war. Russia converted four liners and auxiliaries to operate flying boats.[10] Five Romanian vessels were similarly transformed in that



At first a coal-burning depot ship in 1896, *Foudre* was converted to a repair ship, then a minelayer, followed by a seaplane depot ship; she was finally converted to a croiseur porte-avion in 1913.

Courtesy of Jacques Navarret

theater to rejoin the Black Sea Fleet. Germany also converted five ships into *Flugzeugmuttershchiffe* carrying four to six seaplanes,[11] but they were too slow to accompany the fleet. During the last year of the war, the high command became aware of the aircraft carrier's usefulness to spot the minefields in the North Sea and escort a squadron. The light cruiser *Stuttgart* (24 kts.) operated three seaplanes through May of 1918, while the naval staff studied the conversion of a cruiser, of two 13,000-ton cargo ships and of a liner: the latter due to receive a real flight deck with a starboard island and another two decks below to launch and recover 19 airplanes and seaplanes. Italy also carried three seaplanes onboard the cruiser *Elba*, and converted a cargo ship into the tender *Europa* for its Macchi flying boats.

Following these developments, the United States Navy studied the construction of two large 180 planes "aircraft ships" in August 1915, just before the creation of the Naval Flying Corps authorized by Congress in 1916. Catapults were fitted on a battleship and three cruisers, and when the United States rejoined the war in April of 1917, London dispatched Stanley Goodall, a naval architect, to Washington, to help design a fast aircraft carrier that would be able to bomb Germany's coasts. In June of 1918, the design evolved into a 30 kts./200 meters (656 ft.) ship which never left the drawing board.[12]

From Reconnaissance to Air Defense and Aerial Bombardment

For the allied nations, shipborne aviation had three types of missions: reconnaissance (fire control, mine and submarine detection), air defense against enemy reconnaissance (zeppelins and seaplanes), and shore bombardment. For the first two years of the war though, seaplanes only obtained mixed results. In the North Sea, the waves were too rough and their 160 hp engines were not powerful enough for long range missions. On Christmas of 1914, in May of 1915 and March of 1916, British carrier-based seaplanes, hampered by fog and heavy winds, bombed unsuccessfully five German zeppelin's stations. In the Mediterranean and in the Red Sea, however, seaplane tenders proved extremely precious. In late 1914, the *Foudre's* flying boats were lent to the Royal Navy.

They were indispensable for watching the Dardanelles, first to report on a possible sortie of the German cruisers *Goeben* and *Breslau,* and then to position Turkish coastal batteries and minefields during the allied failed landings. In August of 1915, Flight Commander Edmonds became the first pilot to conduct a successful torpedo attack from a seaplane, sinking a Turkish ammunition ship. British and French seaplane tenders and crews were then successful in disturbing the Turkish lines of communications in Syria, Lebanon, and in the Gulf of Aqaba.[13] In the Black Sea, three Russian seaplane carriers, under Admiral Koltchak, launched two bombing raids against the Bulgarian base of Varna in October of 1915 and August of 1916. Earlier in February, two of these seaplanes had sunk a Turkish collier. But the decisive action took place in the North Sea during the battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916. At 1445, Admiral Jellicoe, commanding the Grand Fleet, dispatched a seaplane from the *Engadine* to locate and assess the German fleet. One hour later, Jellicoe had a first estimate on the enemy. Shipborne aviation had proven its point to the fleet commander. That very day, the Grand Fleet was carrying a total of 40 planes which proved inadequate to provide timely reconnaissance, the seaplanes were having a hard time in the heavy seas, where the airplanes could not ditch. But in November of 1918, its battleships and cruisers were mounting more than 400 aircraft. The Pup and Camel fighters from the former Royal Naval Air Service had engines powerful enough to intercept a zeppelin below its 22,000 ft. ceiling. On 21 August 1917, cruiser *Yarmouth* spotted the L23 and launched its Pup which shot down the German airship.[14] Thereafter, Pup and Camel were regularly dispatched to intercept seaplanes and airships, which supported the German operations against the North Sea minefield. British shipborne aircrafts had, in effect, neutralized the zeppelin as an effective means of naval reconnaissance. But in 1918, London and Washington contemplated the systematic bombing of German ports with real aircraft carriers. As a premise, *Furious* launched the first successful air raid from a carrier on 19 July, destroying zeppelins L54 and L60 at their base of Tondern. In the Caspian, British forces protected the oil fields first from the Turks and then from the Bolsheviks with two White Russian seaplane tenders, while the Reds used a carrier barge on the Volga.[15]

For the Central Empires, airships and seaplanes operated mostly from the shores, but the seaplane tenders were used for locating minefields and supporting the operations on the Russian shoreline. Commanding the Baltic Fleet, *Grossadmiral* Prinz Heinrich of Prussia was himself an aviator. His shipborne flying boats bombed Russian positions on the coast of Courlande. In October of 1918, the *Santa Elena* helped capture the islands in the Gulf of Riga. The previous year, the raider *Wolf* had flown its seaplane 56 times in the Indian Ocean to locate its prey, before returning successfully to Germany. Naval aviation had demonstrated to Berlin its value for scouting missions.[16]

Lessons and the Coming to Maturity
(1918-1939)

The Bondage of the Treaties

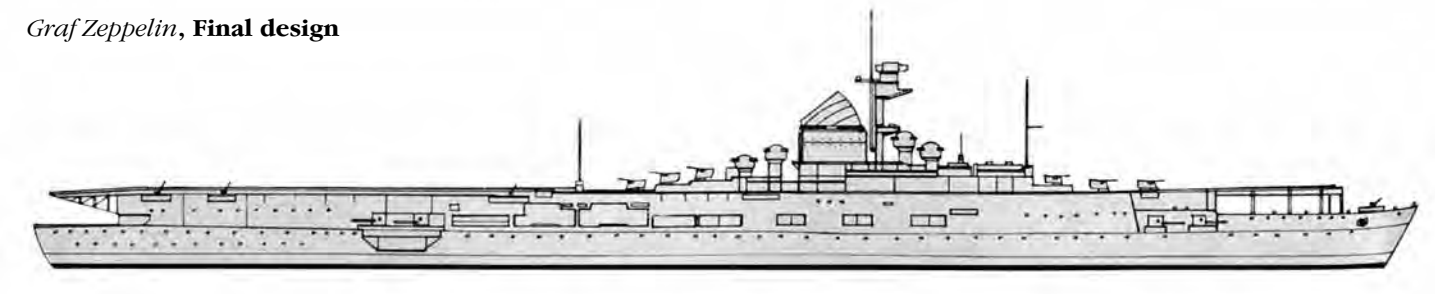
The war had shown the potential of a true fleet carrier, but seaplane tenders still had their supporters and naval architects continued to design hybrid vessels which would carry both airplanes and seaplanes. In June of 1919, the General Board of the U.S. Navy suggested the creation of a carrier aviation to accompany the fleet around the globe with one aircraft carrier for each battleship squadron. Controlling the air had become the decisive factor of a battleship engagement

and the Royal Navy seemed superior to the U.S. Navy, in speed and number of aircrafts. Moreover, the airborne torpedo could prove to be a decisive factor between two evenly matched battle fleets. Congress, however, refused new construction and only allocated the provisions for the conversion of two ferries and a cargo into seaplane tenders, and the transformation of a collier into an aircraft carrier, renamed *Langley*. Not exceeding 14 kts. the four ships were too slow to satisfy the requirements expressed by the Naval Board. Following the report from one of its pilots who had visited the British *Argus*, the French Navy proposed in 1920, to complete the 21 kts. battleship *Béarn* as a carrier.

In Italy the project to convert a battle cruiser into a seaplane carrier was rejected just like a proposal for an anti-aircraft cruiser carrying sixteen fighters. Luckier, the Spanish *Armada* managed to secure the conversion of a 10 kts. cargo ship into a hybrid seaplane and airship tender, the *Dedalo*. As last reward to its strategic partner, Great Britain dispatched to Japan a technical mission to design its first carrier, the 25 kts. *Hōshō.* On 6 February 1922, the five victors of the Great War signed a treaty in Washington to prevent a looming naval arms race, while London and Tokyo ended their 20-years-old alliance to reassure the Americans. Tonnage for battleships and aircraft carriers were restricted. The United States and Great Britain were granted 135,000 tons; Japan, 81,000 tons; and France and Italy, 60,000 tons for carriers. Individual ships were not to exceed 27, 000 tons. New constructions would be frozen for ten years and later permitted only to replace decommissioned units. For the three main naval powers, the carrier was a fleet combatant which should be as fast as possible. England completed its 25 kts. *Hermes,* while converting the 30 kts. battle cruisers *Courageous* and *Glorious* with a double hangar for 48 planes. In 1931, lack of funding prevented the construction of four 34 kts. carriers. Instead the 30 kts. and 22,000-ton *Ark Royal* was laid down in 1935, with a double hangar housing 60 aircraft. Under the direction of William Mowfett, the "air admiral," naval aviation transformed the U.S. Navy, while Admiral Sims dared to write in 1925 that a 35 kts. carrier carrying 100 aircraft was a capital ship far more powerful than a battleship.

Condemned by the treaty restrictions, the two uncompleted battle cruisers *Lexington* and *Saratoga* became at 33 kts. the fastest carriers in the world, when they joined the fleet in 1927. They carried 36 fighters, 32 torpedo bombers and 12 scout planes. With a remaining authorized tonnage of 69,000 tons, the U.S. Navy built the slower 29 kts. and smaller 14,000-ton *Ranger,* followed by the faster 20,000-ton *Yorktown/Enterprise* and 15,000-ton *Wasp,* whose construction was delayed by the Great Depression. Armor had to be sacrificed with the understanding that the best protection was to strike the enemy first. Following the same path, Japan also converted a battle cruiser and a battleship into the 32 kts. *Akagi* and 28 kts. *Kaga*. Similar to *Lexington and Saratoga*, they retained 8-inch guns to compensate for their aircraft's limited radius. Atypically, *Akagi* featured three flying decks. To keep up with the U.S. Navy, Japan spent its remaining 27,000 tons allowance on three small carriers, while building three fast support ships and two seaplane tenders, which could be easily converted in due course. Commissioned in 1928, the French *Béarn* was too slow and its 40 aircrafts were mainly used for reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare. France and Australia, like Italy, also procured a seaplane tender as an alternative to the construction of a costly aircraft carrier.[17] Aeronautical progress had been significant since 1918, augmenting radius and reliability. In 1930, the engines were twice as powerful with 700 hp. Metallic construction had made the plane more resistant. Transversal arresting wires had proven to be the best solution for

Graf Zeppelin, **Final design**

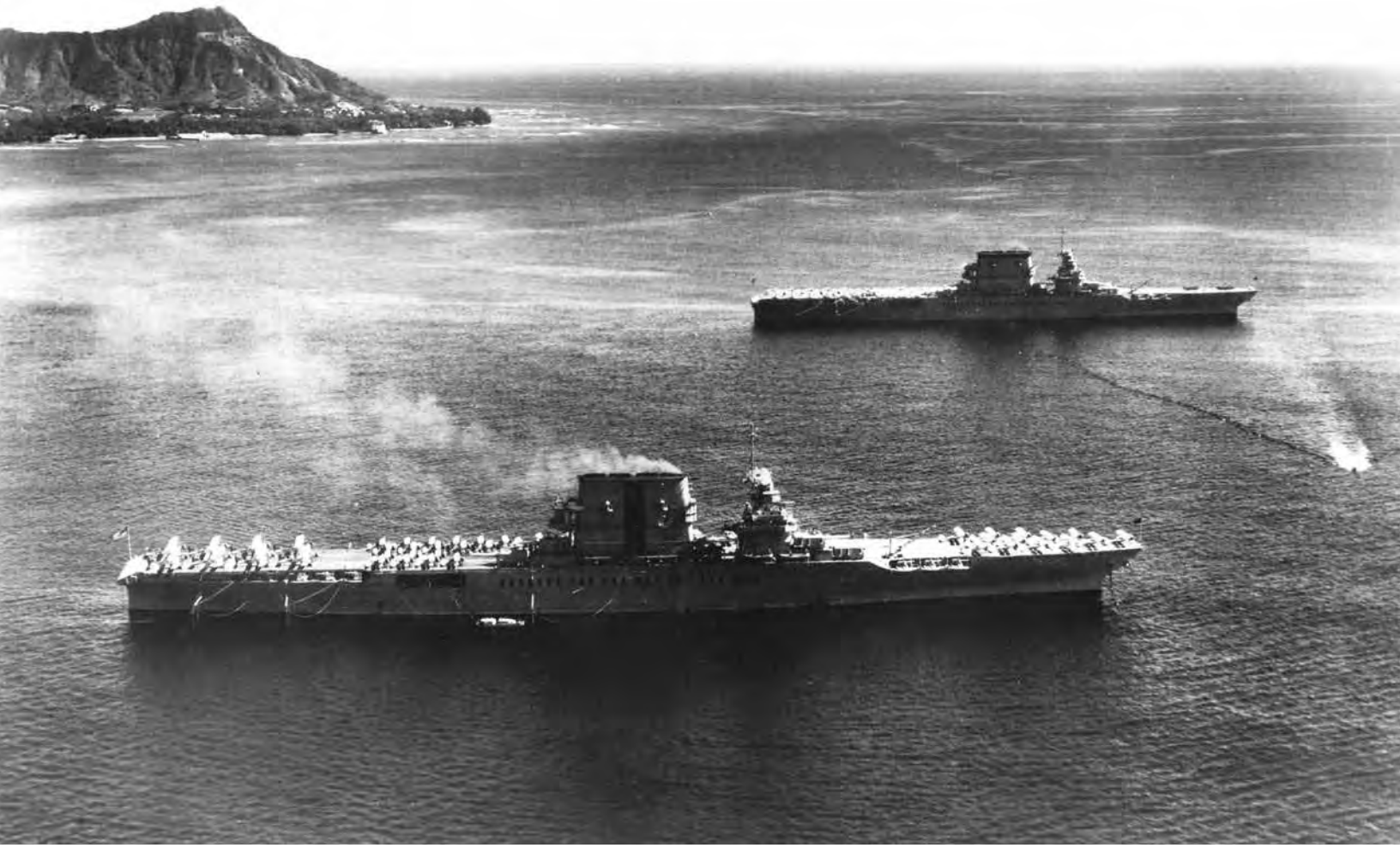


plane recovery after numerous experiments with longitudinal cables and brakes. Onboard the *Saratoga*, 40 Vought fighters could land in just 11 minutes and 20 seconds.[18] However, most navies continued to favor the biplane for carrier operations, putting naval aviators at risk when confronted with faster land-based monoplanes.

In 1934, Japan, followed by Italy, denounced the Washington limitations, while Germany exited the Versailles Treaty restrictions to rearm. The Imperial Japanese Navy rebuilt all its carriers and laid down the 34 kts. and 30,000-ton *Shōkaku*, an armored version of the earlier 34 kts. and 19,000-ton *Sōryū*. When commissioned in 1941, the *Shōkaku* seemed to be the best carrier ever designed. In Germany, the defeat of 1918 was blamed on its insufficient naval power. Its 1934 shipbuilding plan called for two 19,000-ton aircraft carriers, while new battleships and cruisers were to carry seaplanes for "strategic reconnaissance." The successes of the *Wolf* had been remembered. Laid down in 1936, the carrier *Graf Zeppelin* was launched by Hitler in 1938.[19] England reacted by introducing the armored flight deck on the *Illustrious* and on the larger *Implacable* to withstand the attacks of land-based bombers in the European theater. France started the construction of the first of two 33.5 kts. *Joffre* (18,000 tons), while the United States ordered a third *Yorktown*. And the USSR tried unsuccessfully to obtain *Graf Zeppelin*'s blueprints while negotiating the German-Soviet non-aggression pact.[20]

Power projection from Morocco to China

Colonial operations and international crises soon demonstrated the new platform's usefulness both as a political and military instrument to project airpower ashore, and intimidate the foreign capitals and the seditious. In September of 1922, London dispatched *Argus* to the Dardanelles during a crisis with Turkey over Iraq, while the Spanish *Dedalo* spent 65 days at sea off the coast of Morocco. Her Macchi seaplanes mapped the Riff and tracked Abd el-Krim's horsemen. Three years later, on 6 May 1925, her Macchi bombed Alhucemas, while 20,000 soldiers were being landed in the second amphibious assault supported by a carrier vessel.[21] In 1926, *Hermes'* air group chased pirates off Hong Kong, preceding *Argus* and *Vindictive* sent to protect the British colony against Tchang Kai-shek's approaching troops. During August of 1929, *Courageous* flew her planes to Gaza where they supported Jewish settlements harassed by their Arab neighbors. Three months later, the same planes drew a crescent above Istanbul during *Courageous*' port visit.[22] Meanwhile, the *Béarn* called at Agadir, deploying her planes against dissenters in the Moroccan south. In January 1932, Japanese forces in Shanghai took the pretext of an incident to order *Kaga* and *Hōshō* to bomb Chinese positions around the city. Robert Short, an American volunteer with the Chinese air force, shot down the Japanese squadron leader before being killed. The Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, and the Spanish Civil War the



U.S. Naval aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga* **(CV-3) with USS** *Lexington* **(CV-2) at anchor off Honolulu**

Courtesy U.S. Naval Institute

following year, again saw the carrier being used both as a military tool and as a deterrent. *Miraglia*, *Courageous* and *Glorious* were dispatched to Eritrea and Egypt where they disembarked their aircrafts. London contemplated action. Commanding the *Glorious*, Lister planned the night air raid against the Italian naval base of Taranto, which was successfully conducted five years later.[23] To address the Spanish tragedy, Paris tasked an emptied *Commandant Teste* to evacuate civilians from Barcelona. When Nazi Germany dispatched a squadron, *Béarn* rejoined the French battleships in the Atlantic. Later she returned to the Mediterranean where the French Navy coordinated its operations with the Royal Navy and its carriers *Courageous* and *Glorious.*[24] Less active on the international arena, the U.S. Navy experimented with new tactics and simulated successful air raids against the Panama Canal (1924, 1929),[25] and Pearl Harbor (1928, 1932).[26] This was certainly not lost on Captain Yamamoto, the Japanese naval attaché in Washington and future father of the 7 December 1941 attack. Upon his return to Tokyo, he commanded the first carrier division in 1933 and the Bureau of Aeronautics in 1935. Japan was about to use the aircraft carrier to project air power against China. Beginning in August of 1937, *Kaga*, *Ryūjō and Hōshō* attacked Shanghai and Nankin, meeting fierce resistance in the skies where the Chinese Curtiss fighters shot down the less capable Mitsubishi naval bombers. After the fall of these two cities, the shipborne aviation was transferred ashore and the carriers returned to Japan.[27] In 1938, the *Saratoga* had just launched another successful mock attack against Pearl Harbor from a point 100 miles off Oahu.[28]

In less than two decades aircraft carriers had fulfilled the initial expectations, becoming an indispensable escort for the fleet. With the ending of the naval holidays in 1936, shipbuilders were no longer constrained by tonnage restrictions to build the vessels of the coming war. England introduced the armored flight deck to enable its carriers to operate within range of the land-based bombers. Yet without real carrier combat experience the United States and Japan kept their flight decks as an unprotected superstructure, considering that the immensity of the Pacific would not expose them to land-based aviation. France and Germany acknowledged the requirement for speed imposed by their faster battleships. On the international scene the carrier had already performed all the functions that would be later associated with American super carriers: as a military tool to manage low to high intensity conflicts and support amphibious operations; as a humanitarian platform to evacuate civilian refugees; and last but not least, as a political instrument to pressure foreign capitals. Despite the preeminence of the battleship in naval thinking, and the lesser performance of carrier-based aircrafts versus land-based aircrafts, the new vessel was about to change naval warfare in 1939, and bring naval combat beyond visual range. The yet to come "surprise" attacks against Taranto and Pearl Harbor had been planned by the Royal Navy, or staged by the U.S. Navy, the latter providing the inspiration for Japan, their future attacker.

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7 ex-*Cavendish*
8 ex-Chilean *Cochrane*
9 the *Campinas, Nord, Pas de Calais, Dorade* and *Normandie*
10 *Orlitsa* in the Baltic and *Imperator Nikolai I, Imperator Alexandr I* and *Almaz* in the Black Sea
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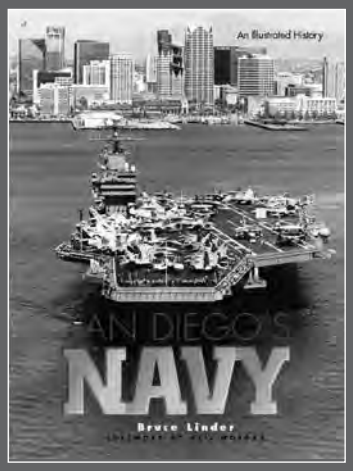
The Origins of Carrier Airpower in San Diego, 1924-1928

By Bruce Linder

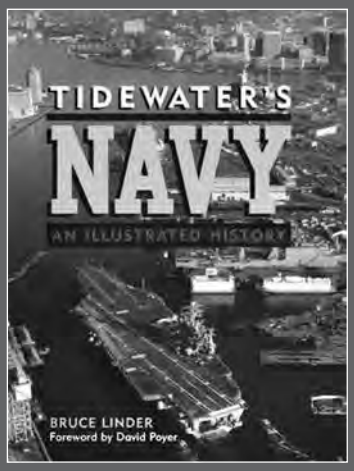
With *Langley* based at North Island, nearby to her assigned aircraft squadrons, she became a common sight on San Diego Bay, as she was underway on a daily basis for pilot carrier qualifications and testing of new and more powerful aircraft. This photo was taken one afternoon in November, 1924, as she returned up the San Diego channel.

Courtesy of the National Archives

On 12 October 1925, Captain Joseph Mason Reeves arrived at the gangway of USS *Langley* (CV-1) while she was moored for repairs at Mare Island Navy Yard in Vallejo, California. More ungainly than imposing and much more an oddity than an inspiring warship, the U.S. Navy's first aircraft carrier would certainly have drawn inquisitive stares from anyone, but for Reeves it was a homecoming of sorts, as he had commanded her before her conversion from collier to carrier. His seaman's eye would have quickly recognized the familiar taper of the hull, deck and superstructure, but would have paused to study the thirteen erector-set steel trusses that vaulted



Bruce Linder is a widely published author and historian in naval and national security affairs with more than 40 articles published in the United States, Europe, and Japan, in such publications as the *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Naval History, Traditions, Jane's Navy International, Military History, Surface Warfare, Naval Forces* and *Shipmate*. He has written two books of naval history: his first, on the history of the Navy in San Diego (entitled *San Diego's Navy*) was published by the Naval Institute Press and won the San Diego Book Award for best nonfiction book of 2001. His latest book, *Tidewater's Navy*, explores the history of the Navy in Norfolk and was published in the Fall of 2005. He is working on a third book, a pictorial look at 150 years of San Diego naval history. Bruce is also the guest curator of the Navy exhibit for the Maritime Museum of San Diego.



the 523-foot flight deck high above the rest of the hull. To most, *Langley* was sure to look more like an unfinished Manhattan skyscraper than the next great step forward in naval architecture.

Reeves, at fifty-two, was an imposing presence – as polished as *Langley* was awkward. Just over six feet tall, thin as a rail, with a carefully trimmed white beard and a no-nonsense aristocratic air, he projected a concentrated self-assurance and vigor that easily matched a voice of firm timbre. Although he soon would be indelibly linked with the navy's first aviation ship, Reeves' past reputation was that of a member of the navy's "gun club." He had commanded four different battleships and believed, like most, in the virtue of long-range guns and thick armor. In his two years of studying tactics and war-gaming at the Naval War College, though, Reeves had been exposed to the evolving potential of aircraft to shape naval tactics and had volunteered to take training as a Naval Aviator Observer, the minimum prerequisite for holding aviation commands. Fresh from that training, he had been ordered to San Diego as Commander, Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet with *Langley* as his flagship.

As Reeves mounted the brow and raised his hand in salute to both the quarterdeck and the national ensign, no one fully realized that both the United States Navy and the quiet California city of San Diego had just reached a fortuitous alignment of destiny – and to this relatively enigmatic captain named Reeves would fall the means to change the history of both.

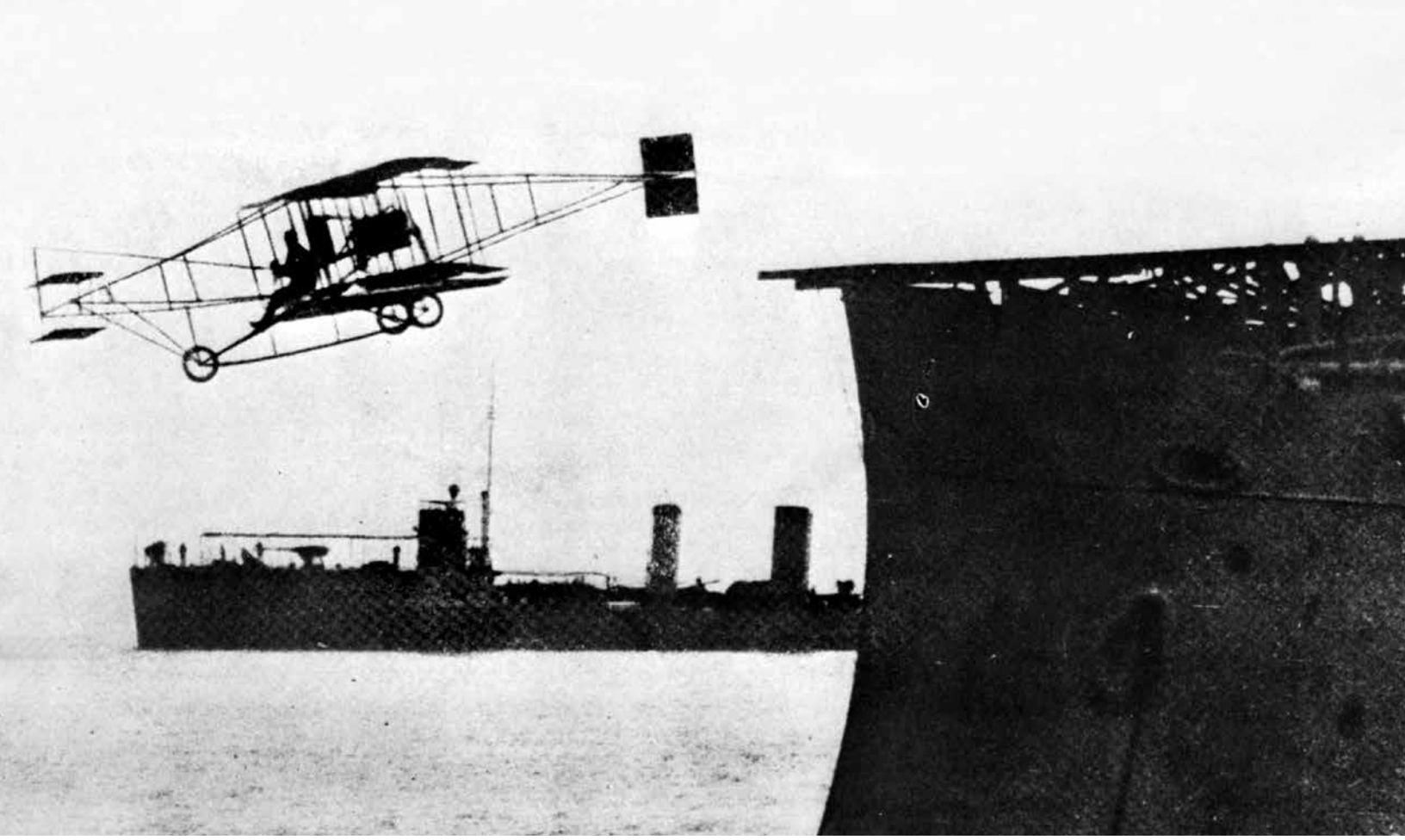
Although the U.S. Navy had been the first to launch a plane from a ship (in 1910), and the first to land aboard a platform deck (aboard armored cruiser *Pennsylvania)*, its primary aviation interest before World War I was with floatplanes. Pioneered by Glenn Curtiss – largely with experiments in San Diego Bay during 1911 and 1912 – the navy's first aviators and first aircraft squadrons were dedicated to this style of aviation. Naval aviators flew seaplanes from shore bases, or were awkwardly catapulted from armored cruisers or battleships, for scouting or artillery spotting missions.

The first American interest in construction of a "carrier" for aircraft was an outgrowth of close American and British naval cooperation during World War I. American naval observers in Europe closely followed the Royal Navy's first carriers and noted the advantages of carrier-operated wheeled airplanes over clumsy pontoon-equipped floatplanes and the viability of carriers in weather that would have made floatplane operations impossible.

The U.S. Navy's General Board performed much of the navy's strategic planning at the time and tested new technological concepts through analysis and war gaming. Aware of the success of aviation in the land campaigns of

Rear Admiral Joseph Reeves, shown here in 1928, at Naval Air Station San Diego, helped "operationalize" nearly every facet of carrier flight operations during his tenure as the Commander of Battle Fleet Aircraft Squadrons. His vigor and tenacity created a no-nonsense environment that took carrier aviation in the U.S. Navy from an "experiment" to an important tactical element of the U.S. Fleet.

Courtesy Naval Historical Center



On December 14, 1910, the Curtiss-trained pilot, Eugene Ely, attempted the first take-off from a ship, the USS *Birmingham*.

Courtesy Naval Historical Center

World War I and its introduction into maritime forces, the General Board had directed the Naval War College to specifically test aviation concepts in several landmark war games. When the gaming data showed decisive advantages for airpower in scouting and spotting, the General Board recommended the addition of four carriers to the navy's construction plan for 1920, and three in 1921.[1]

To move ahead with these audacious plans and to solidify the design requirements for new carriers, the navy aimed first to construct a small "experimental" carrier by rapidly converting an existing ship. In 1920, the large collier *Jupiter* was identified for conversion into an aircraft carrier to be named *Langley*.

Jupiter was one of three of the navy's largest colliers, a valuable vessel in her own right as the majority of the navy on distant stations was still powered by coal. Each of these three colliers had been built with different experimental propulsion systems, as a test for use in later warships with *Jupiter* fitted with the navy's first turboelectric drive where a turbine engine generated electricity that ran motor-driven propellers. As a result, *Jupiter* was decidedly underpowered with her advertised top speed of 12 knots almost never achieved and speeds of 6-9 knots much more likely.

In the early planning for *Langley*, no one was exactly sure what aviators wanted in their experimental carrier beyond the obvious need for a landing deck. As a result, *Langley* represented a hodge-podge of ideas and designs. *Langley's* bridge was *underneath* the flying deck and masts and stacks were either hinged or retractable to be lowered during flight operations. The ship had no hangar deck, only a single rickety elevator and although she had one (later two) flight-deck catapults, no one could guess at their correct size or use. *Langley* also had large cranes to service seaplanes alongside, as it was thought

that any "aviation ship" must also act as a depot for battleship floatplanes.[2]

After two years of trials in the Atlantic where only the fundamentals of carrier operations were undertaken, *Langley* was ordered to the West Coast in late 1924, and assumed flagship duties for Commander, Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet at North Island.

By 1921, the entire Pacific Fleet air force was based on North Island— consisting of thirty-six aircraft, an assortment of seaplanes, torpedo planes and a single land-based bomber. **North Island was prized by the navy as "the only place in Southern California where level ground exists close enough to a deep water harbor to permit the direct interchange of aircraft, stores and personnel between ships and air base, and where seaplanes and landplanes can operate from the same base."[3]**

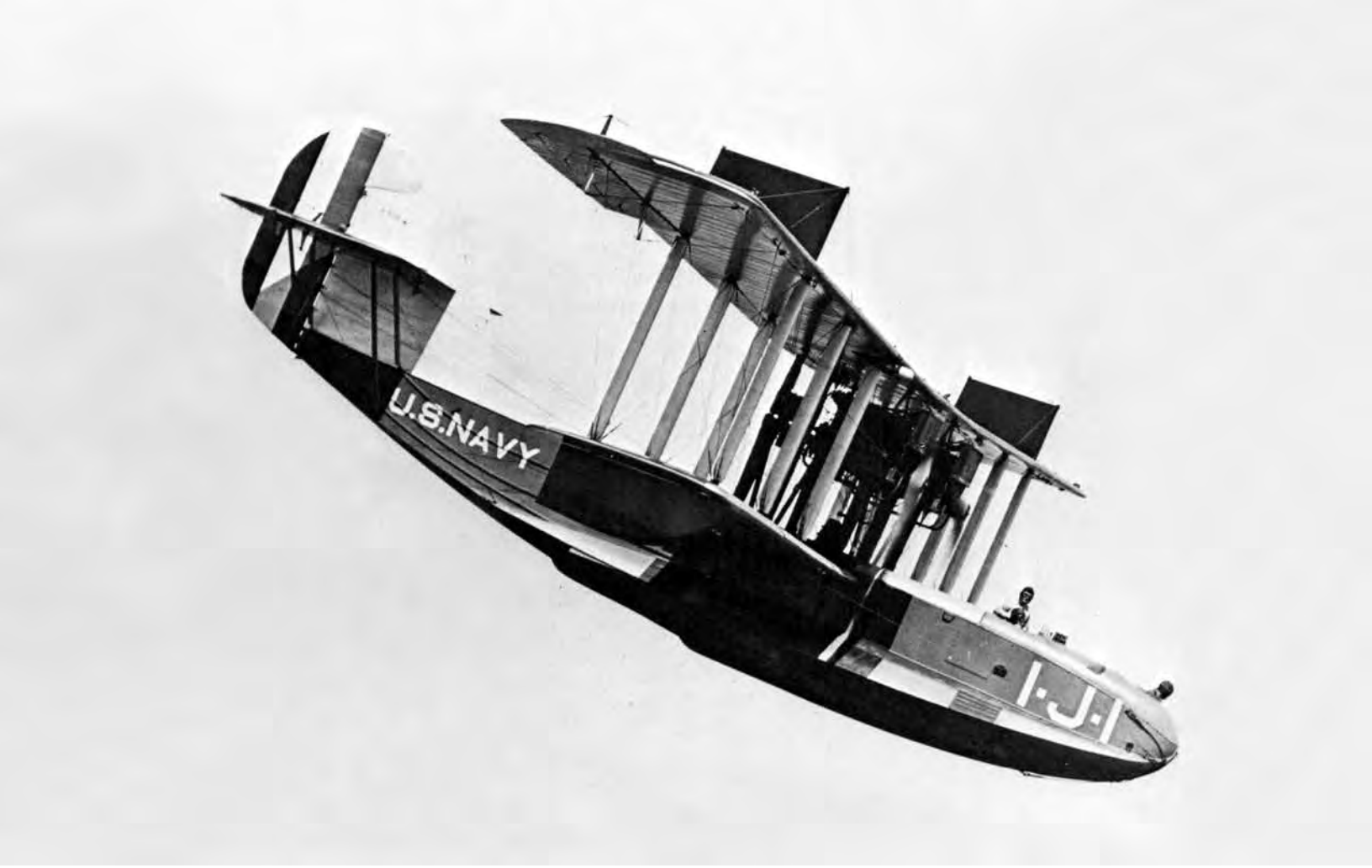
Navy test pilot Lt. Ely prepared to take-off from and land on the cruiser *Pennsylvania* **on January 18, 1911. Close inspection reveals bicycle inner tubes as the mainstays of his life preserver.**

Courtesy Naval Historical Center

Floatplanes were everywhere in evidence, "anchored" off their hangars or taking off from Spanish Bight or San Diego Bay. Before *Langley*, long-range patrol seaplanes were the pacing technology in naval aviation and San Diego stood at the peak of that activity. On 30 December 1920, for instance, San Diego had captured international headlines when twelve F-5-L and two NC flying boats left San Diego on a 7000-mile round-trip flight to Panama that set the record for the longest flight ever made by a squadron of aircraft.[4]

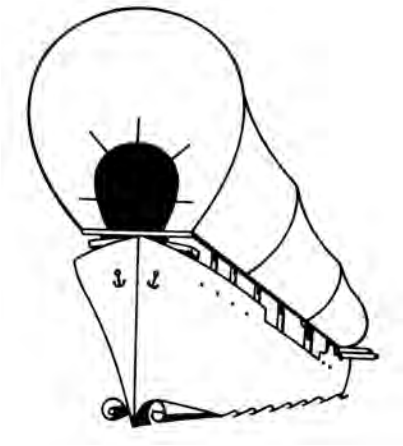
San Diego was the national focus of another aviation breakthrough on 10 October 1924, when the navy's massive *Shenandoah,* the first Zeppelin-sized airship in America and the first rigid airship ever seen on the West Coast, reached North Island after a transcontinental trip. As large as a battleship looming in brilliant floodlights during her evening arrival, *Shenandoah* immediately captivated San Diegans and for six days hosted crowds of sightseers who swarmed to North Island.[5]

Six weeks after *Shenandoah's* departure, the look of San Diego's waterfront changed forever with the arrival of *Langley* at North Island's pier. The headlines of the day trumpeted "**Deadliest Ship Afloat Arrives Here**" to mark the occasion but, enthusiastic media metaphor notwithstanding, most who viewed *Langley* from across the bay that day would have voiced less complimentary descriptions. Aptly and universally known as the "Covered Wagon" and later described as "unpopular, unlovely, unusual and ugly," the nation's first aircraft carrier was enthusiastically received in San Diego as both evidence of the navy's desire to make the harbor a permanent base and as another sign of San Diego's importance in the rise of aviation.



The F-5-L, 1921

Courtesy Naval Historical Center

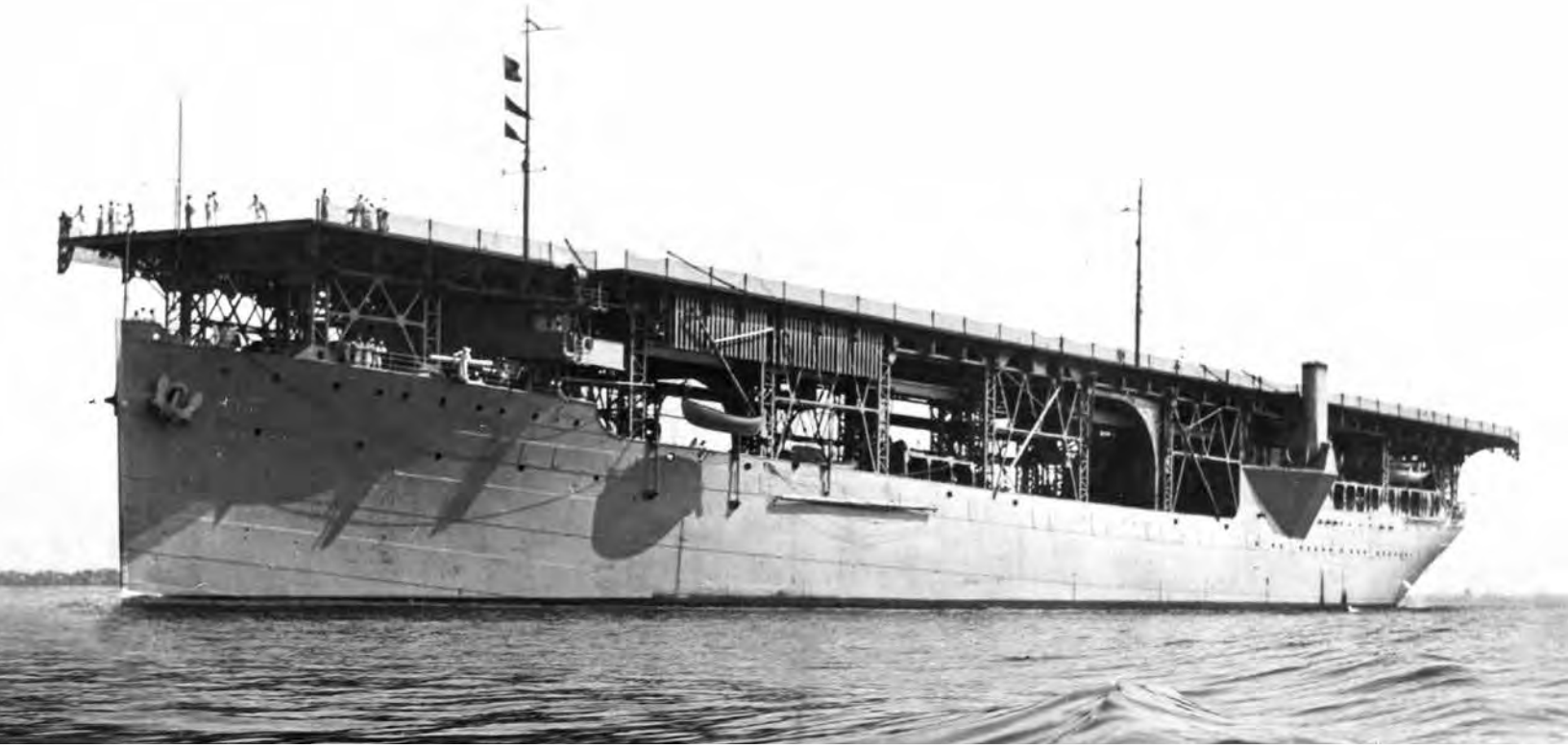


Langley's "Covered Wagon" insignia

In preparation for *Langley's* arrival, a practice carrier-landing platform about the size of the carrier's deck had been constructed of three-inch thick wooden planks in the center of an open field on North Island. In addition, a wide paved roadway had been built to link the carrier pier to the rest of the airbase, and a crude set of aircraft catapults had risen on North Island's shore (surprising many watermen as they dodged out of the way of ungainly biplanes flinging across the bay).[6]

Langley's operating tempo quickly became comfortably familiar with San Diegans. Usually she would be underway with the first light of morning and, once clear of the channel, would begin a busy day of pilot qualifications usually within clear sight of Coronado Beach, or the crest of Point Loma. By late afternoon the "Covered Wagon" would be back in the channel plodding forward at a speed that would leave nary a wake. In reading *Langley's* log, nearly all of the ship's operations during 1925 were involved in pilot familiarization and training, in proofing new modifications to the ship, and in testing a variety of new aircraft being considered by the navy for carrier service – including many simply provided by different manufacturers keen to catch the navy's attention.

"Firsts" came quickly for *Langley* in 1925. On 22 January, Fighting Squadron TWO (VF-2) became the first navy squadron certified to operate from a carrier.[7] On 2 April, Lieutenant Commander Charles Mason demonstrated the first-ever, flush-deck catapult launch of a wheeled plane (catapulting off *Langley's* deck while *moored* to her berth at North Island).[8] A week later off Point Loma, Lieutenant John Price accomplished the navy's first nighttime carrier landing.[9]



Langley's **as-built configuration circa 1924.**
Courtesy National Archives

With Commodore Reeves' arrival on board *Langley* late in the year, things quickly moved into higher gear. His first take on *Langley* air operations was not positive; he noted that the carrier was operating only eight aircraft, when twelve were authorized. Reeves had his sights on thirty or more and started to press the pilots for more, despite stiff protests of handling and operating safety.

In his first meeting with squadron officers, Reeves surprised all with the comment: "from what I have seen, this command lacks a coordinated set of tactics and has no conception of the capabilities and limitations of the air force." He then posed a series of questions to the audience: *what formations should be used in certain attacks, what was the most effective way to scout, how should a torpedo attack be made,* and the like. This straight-forward challenge quickly became known as "Reeves' Thousand and One Questions." Mimeographed and bound into a pamphlet, Reeves efforts formed the foundation for all follow-on carrier training and became a legend within naval aviation.[10]

At sea, Reeves methodically clocked all launches and recoveries, pitting one squadron against another and challenged his aviators to get the maximum number of aircraft aloft. He fine-tuned cyclic carrier operations to discover the optimum tempo for landings and takeoffs and experimented with bombing tactics against a host of different targets and fighter tactics against opposing aircraft. Later, working with Commander John Towers, Reeves organized the deck handling crews into small groups of specialists wearing specifically colored shirts, blue for plane pushers, brown for crew chiefs, purple for fuelers. Week after week, the intensity of

Langley's original design even included an elaborate fantail pigeon house. As radios were still rudimentary, most cross-country aviators had carrier pigeons in case of emergency. The attempt to train pigeons to return to a moving ship was a great failure though, and the bird's "quarters" was later converted into the executive officer's quarters, encouraging all nature of tongue-in-cheek humor.

This striking photo (circa 1933) contrasts the newer carrier USS *Saratoga* CV-3, at anchor in San Diego Bay, with *Langley* at the North Island pier. In the years to come Spanish Bight would be filled-in and Coronado connected by landfill to North Island.

Courtesy National Archives

operations increased in operations off Point Loma as squadron commanders aimed at "Thousand and One" challenges and drilled their pilots in carrier basics.[11]

In February-March of 1926, *Langley* participated for the first time in the navy's annual Battle Fleet-wide maneuvers – normally the stuff of battle lines, massed destroyer torpedo attacks and force-on-force tactics. Reeves wanted to showcase the potential for aviation in naval warfare and pressed his squadrons to convert their intense training into operational success. As Fleet Problem VI began off the coast of Panama, Reeves ordered his squadrons aloft to assist the battle line in a surprise dawn bombardment of the Panama Canal's defenses and then had *Langley* conduct flight operations for five consecutive days, a new record.[12]

Back in San Diego after Fleet Problem VI, Reeves pressed *Langley* and his squadrons even more energetically, particularly in perfecting new tactics in aerial attack – the most important was with dive-bombing. It was during this time that dive-bombing tactics, which would play so vital a role in the effectiveness of American naval airpower in the skies of the Pacific during the coming war, were perfected, in large part, in and around San Diego.

Aerial attacks on ships at first featured low-level bombing runs that most pilots considered risky and inaccurate. During the summer of 1926, Lieutenant Commander Frank D. Wagner, hoping to improve on the dismal strafing

accuracy of his squadron, pressed his pilots to approach their targets from successively higher altitudes. He practiced in the backcountry of San Diego County working on new formations, attack coordination and timing, and dives of steeper and steeper angle. Soon, dives were being performed nearly vertical to the target with dramatically improved results.[13]

After watching Wagner's new tactics during a milestone demonstration in the middle of the North Island field and now confident that Wagner was onto something, Commodore Reeves arranged for the squadron to test its new attacks on the Battle Fleet as it got underway from San Pedro. Spotting the Battle Fleet flagship, battleship *California*, Wagner's section roared down from 12,000 feet, coming in so swiftly that the battleship could neither maneuver out of the way nor man its battle stations.[14] It was a moment of clear theater as battleship officers looked skyward, arms folded in futility and disgust, while gun crews scrambled for helmets and jackets. As the screams of each succeeding bomber overcame the clang of the ship's gong, a moment in history was passing and a powerful weapon had been added to the Fleet's arsenal.[15]

Reeves then set out to fully integrate dive bombing into a newly conceived doctrine of aerial offensive power. For Fleet Problem VII, held March 1927, again in Panama, Reeves proposed coordinated naval aerial operations with deckloads of *Langley* aircraft for the first time, rather than isolated spotting and reconnaissance missions and, in an opening gambit during the first hour of the exercise, launched a record twenty planes from *Langley* in a successful attack against army airfields. In the 1928, Fleet Problem VIII in the Hawaiian Islands, Rear Admiral Reeves proposed operating *Langley* independently of the battle line rather than in a specific formation station. The carrier's need to turn into the wind for aircraft operations made station keeping difficult but, more practically, she would be harder for an enemy to spot and target if separated from a large fleet formation – an operating concept that was the genesis for the independent fast carrier formations of World War II.[16]

By the end of Fleet Problem VIII, the navy's new carriers, *Lexington* and *Saratoga* were joining the Battle Fleet on the West Coast, and *Langley* squadrons and operating expertise were quickly integrated into the new warships. The number of aircraft squadrons at North Island increased to fourteen as did San Diego's swelling pride as a national center of aviation.

As the twenties progressed, San Diego added further noteworthy aviation milestones to its lengthening list including the first nonstop coast-to-coast flight, the first mid-air refueling, the construction of Charles Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis* at the Ryan factory near Dutch Flats and the first regularly scheduled year-round airline route (linking Los Angeles and San Diego). On 16 August 1927, a Navy crew in a PN-10 seaplane set a world flight endurance record of 1,569 miles and 20 hours 45 minutes by circling a San Diego County course 101 times. Pioneer aviators had been among the first to capture San Diegan's fascination with the navy and, in the 1920s and 1930s, the aircraft carrier helped consolidate that appeal.[17]

Rear Admiral Reeves capped this series of aviation accomplishments in San Diego by organizing a mass flyover of more than 120 aircraft on 21 July 1928. To most San Diegans he was "Bull" Reeves, a nickname surviving from Academy football days, and warm relations with both civic and business leaders marked his stay in San Diego. His renown as a superb and knowledgeable speaker served him well and for years he was the most sought-after Navy spokesman in San Diego. On 16 August 1928, it was Reeves himself who stood at the public

Langley **(circa 1928) showing the great increase in planes that Reeves was finally able to get aboard her for fleet operations. Nearly every facet of modern-day U.S. aircraft carrier operations was initially tested and implemented into doctrine based on experiments aboard** *Langley,* **while she was based in San Diego during the 1920s and 1930s.**

Courtesy National Archives

address system during the dedication of San Diego's Lindbergh Field and broadcast a running commentary during an air show that included a flyover of over 200 planes and various displays of aeronautical verve.

When Admiral Reeves was relieved in early 1929, he was bid farewell by a delegation of naval officers, civic officials and members of the Chamber of Commerce at San Diego's Santa Fe Station with a flyby of 150 naval aircraft. The editorial in the *San Diego Union* that day praised his positive impact on both the navy and the community saying, "he gave literally thousands of San Diegans a new insight into the Navy's workings, its objectives, its methods, its place in the general scheme of world armament."[18]

Epilogue

Langley's legacy in San Diego is immense. Her arrival in San Diego Bay and the broad advance of carrier aviation that she initiated influenced the city's sense of self in a way that no mere dollars and cents measurement can attest. In nearly every aerial photograph of San Diego harbor since 1924, at least one aircraft carrier can be seen. Every city event on the waterfront has for its backdrop the imposing gray slab sides of an aircraft carrier; every harbor tour includes their description, every visitor arriving into Lindbergh Field spies a carrier even before touching down. The carrier is to San Diego as San Diego is to the navy—prominent and inseparable.

The aircraft carrier boosted San Diego to the highest tier of American naval bases. Beginning with *Langley*, most of the navy's airpower tactics, which proved so dominant during the Second World War, were developed in the waters off San Diego. During the inter-war period, naval aviation became the hub of the naval experience in San Diego. The San Diego Air & Space Museum estimates that over 115 different aircraft carriers have moored in San Diego since the arrival of *Langley*. No other naval base has been so central to carrier aviation; no other American city can take as much pride in its accomplishments as can San Diego.

During the decade that *Langley* called San Diego home, both she and San Diego shared nearly every advance in carrier operating doctrine that American naval aviation would employ. As important, the flower of young naval aviation that would walk her decks would likewise call San Diego home. Marc Mitscher would be *Langley's* air operations officer and later her executive officer, Jack Towers would act as executive officer and later commanding officer. Jerry Bogan, Duke Ramsey, Arthur Radford, Wu Duncan, Afred M. Pride, Miles Browning, Put Storrs, Aubrey Fitch, Thomas Sprague, William V. Davis, Jock Clark and Frank McCrary would all help perfect aircraft operations from her deck.

Historian Norman Friedman has written: "**Throughout her history the aircraft carrier has exerted considerable influence on the structure and even on the missions of the U.S. Navy, far beyond the expectations of her proponents.**"[19] With *Saratoga* and *Lexington* joining *Langley* in full scale exercises along the West Coast in the late 1920's, previously unsuspected war fighting

potential was revealed that helped immensely to win over any remaining doubters as to the value of the carrier in future naval operations. The sheer size and speed of the new carriers (the largest and fastest in the world) was well adapted to rapidly evolving aircraft designs and allowed American aircraft carrier design to leapfrog that of the Europeans to become the powerhouse it was during World War II.

Awkward, disarming and eccentric as she was, it stood to *Langley* to start a rolling momentum of innovation as a single concentration point for complex and revolutionary changes in airplane and engine design; torpedo, machine gun and bomb development; carrier operating doctrine; aviation tactics; naval institutional customs and naval aviator training.

Most who would have viewed *Langley* getting underway from North Island in the haze of early morning and inelegantly plodding past Ballast Point and Point Loma, would never fully realize that she would represent more to the navy and nation than any flashy destroyer or powerful battleship. And the overblown 1924 headline announcing the arrival of the "**Deadliest Ship Afloat**" in San Diego, now stands as far more prophetic than any newspaper editor would have ever intended.

On 25 October 1936, *Langley* put into the Mare Island Navy Yard for conversion to a seaplane tender as total fleet tonnage for aircraft carriers was limited by law and as new carriers were commissioned, older ones had to be retired. *Langley's* conversion included the removal of the forward 40 percent of her flight deck, the addition of support equipment for two squadrons of seaplanes, and reclassification as AV-3. She subsequently operated from Seattle, Sitka, Pearl Harbor, and San Diego before a brief Atlantic Fleet deployment in 1939. At the outbreak of World War II, *Langley* was anchored off the naval base at Cavite, Philippines, and sailed for Darwin, Australia, on 8 December. On 27 February 1942, she and escorts *Whipple* and *Edsall* were attacked by Japanese aircraft while enroute to Tjilatjap, Java, to deliver a deckload of P-40 fighters to help blunt the Japanese advance into the Dutch East Indies. Nearly defenseless and with no fighter cover, *Langley* sustained five bomb hits that penetrated her deck and set fires among her cargo aircraft. With a ten-degree list to port and dead in the water, the crew abandoned ship and *Langley* went down about 75 miles south of Tjilatjap with a loss of 16.[20]

Admiral Joseph Reeves served on the Navy's General Board from 1929 to 1930, and in June 1933, he became Commander, Battleships, Battle Force with the rank of vice admiral and then Commander, Battle Force, U.S. Fleet, with the rank of admiral. On 26 February 1934, Admiral Reeves relieved as Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet, and held this command until June 1936, when he retired with forty years of service. Retirement, though, was short-lived and he was recalled to active duty 13 May 1940, and served in the Office of the Secretary of the Navy until December 1946. He then retired a second time, and spent his last years living in Maryland. He died at the Bethesda Naval Medical Center on 25 March 1948.

NOTES

1 Norman Friedman, *U. S. Aircraft Carriers: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1983), 35-36.

2 Friedman, U.S. *Aircraft Carriers*, 36. *Langley's* original design even included an elaborate fantail pigeon house. As radios were still rudimentary, most cross-country aviators carried carrier pigeons in case of emergency. The attempt to train pigeons to return to a moving ship was a great failure, though, and the bird "quarters" was later converted into the executive officer's quarters, encouraging all nature of tongue-in-cheek humor.

3 Bureau of Aeronautics, *History of the Use of North Island, San Diego, Cal. For Flying Activities of the Army and Navy* (Washington, D. C.: Department of the Navy, 1932), 2.

4 "Huge Planes to Fly to Balboa," *San Diego Union*, 30 December 1920, 1.

5 Junius B. Wood, "Seeing America from the Shenandoah," *National Geographic* (January 1925), 37.

6 Jeffrey Charles Brown, *An Historical Geographical Study of North Island*, (unp., California State University Long Beach), 33.

7 John Fry, *USS Saratoga CV-3*. (Atglen, PA: Schifer Publishing, 1996), 10.

8 Mason also was involved in another San Diego first, when he commanded the division of F-5-L seaplanes in their record-breaking 7,000-mile Canal Zone flight in 1921.

9 The first night landing was actually accidental and occurred in February 1925, when an aircraft stalled during a practice night approach.

10 Thomas Wildenberg, *All the Factors of Victory* (Washington, D. C.: Brassey's Inc., 2003), 127.

11 Clark G. Reynolds, *Admiral John H. Towers* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 200. In aircraft carrier parlance, "cyclic" operations are built around "cycles" where aircraft sorties are grouped together to allow the carrier to spot aircraft on deck, turn into the wind, launch and recover aircraft and then return to base course.

12 Wildenberg, *All the Factors of Victory*, 132-34.

13 Bruce Linder, *San Diego's Navy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 87-89.

14 Thomas Wildenberg, *Destined for Glory* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 10.

15 Linder, *San Diego's Navy,* 88; Wildenberg, *All the Factors of Victory*, 142. Later in 1927, Wagner's squadron continued to perfect new tactics by screaming down in near-vertical dives at Ream Field, much to the displeasure of a few nearby neighbors. In the 1930s, dive-bombing was practiced against the radio-controlled target battleship ex-*Utah* in the waters between North Island and the Coronado Islands.

16 Wildenberg, *All the Factors of Victory,* 161.

17 Elretta Sudsbury, ed., *Jackrabbits to Jets: The History of NAS North Island, San Diego, California* (San Diego: San Diego Publishing, 1967, 1992), 122.

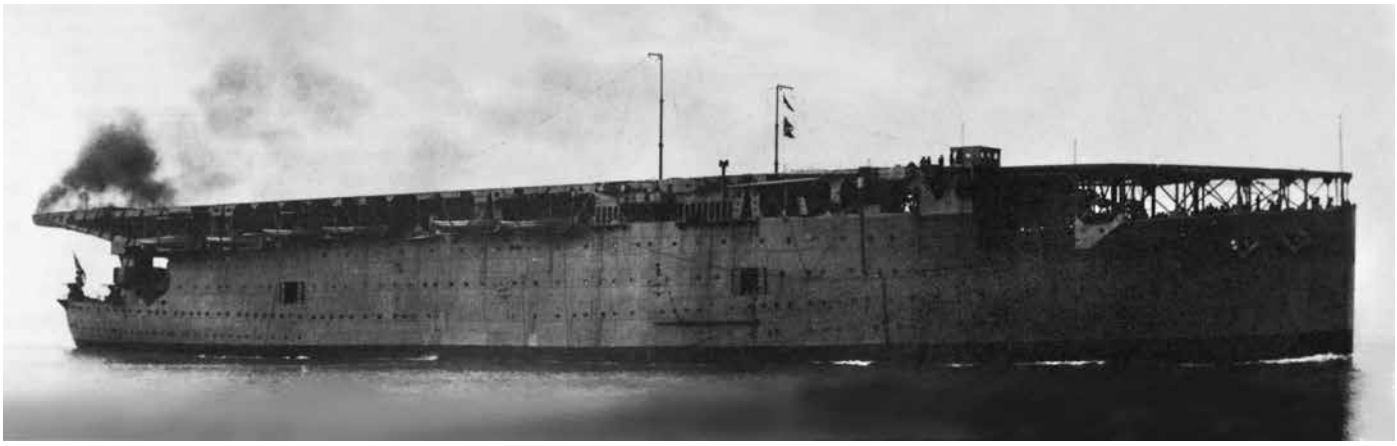
18 Quoted in Wildenberg *All the Factors of Victory*, 199.

19 Friedman, *U. S. Aircraft Carriers*, 7.

20 *Dictionary of American Fighting Ships*, 8 vols., (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), *Langley* CV-1.

Out of their Depth?

Britain's Problems with Carrier Warfare Against the Japanese, 1941-1945



Laid down in 1914, HMS *Argus* became the world's first flush-decked carrier.
Courtesy the Fleet Air Arm Museum

Britain pioneered the aircraft carrier during the First World War. The pioneering HMS *Argus*, a converted passenger liner hull, joined the fleet just before the war's end. The first carrier to be laid down as such was HMS *Hermes*, begun on 15 January 1918. During the inter-war period, however, the British Empire lost its lead in carrier airpower to the United States and Japan. The reason was simple. The advent of the bomber aircraft had made Britain into a continental power. No longer could investment in a superior fleet provide sufficient protection for the homeland. Britain had to provide herself with a "strategic" air force as a major priority, indeed as her top priority given contemporary fears of a "knock out blow" from the air. Such were the dynamics of 1930s rearmament. Indeed, ever since 1918, the United Kingdom's force structure had reflected the new strategic realities with a unified Royal Air Force being placed in charge of all Britain's air assets. Inevitably, the latter stressed deterrent bombers and, later, national air defence in its force posture rather than the support of the two "surface" arms.

This was a problem for the Royal Navy, as it fully recognised the key roles aircraft played in contemporary naval warfare. The Admiralty was unwilling to allow capabilities crucial to its fighting efficiency to be in the hands of a separate service, and after much Whitehall warfare, obtained in 1924 a special portion of the RAF, the "Fleet Air Arm" manned by both Royal Air Force and Royal Navy personnel and paid for by the Admiralty for its specifically naval purposes.

For a time, the system worked quite well (in the fleet, if not in Whitehall where wrangling continued). Britain maintained her lead in total carrier capability in the 1920s. Full conversions of the three light battle cruisers *Furious, Courageous* and *Glorious* more than doubled carrier tonnage when added to *Argus, Hermes* and the converted battleship, *Eagle.* The capacity of the earlier ships was limited to about twenty aircraft: *Furious* could carry 36, and *Glorious* and *Courageous* up to 48. Both the other major naval powers built a small converted trials carrier like *Argus* and two large converted capital ships that would otherwise have been scrapped under the

The converted fleet collier USS *Langley* (pictured, possibly during 1926 or 1927 Fleet maneuvers off the coast of Panama), exemplified the American practice of cramming as many aircraft on board as possible.

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Washington Treaty. These larger ships had higher individual aircraft capacities than the British ships. Japan's *Hōshō* carried 26 aircraft and *Akagi* and *Kaga* sixty each. The U.S.A. had the converted fleet collier *Langley* and the converted battle cruisers *Lexington* and *Saratoga*. The Americans soon began the practice of cramming as many aircraft as possible on board, and trying to solve the operational problems thus created. The pioneering USS *Langley* carried 36 aircraft on only 14,000 tons.

The two larger ships had normal capacities similar to the converted Japanese capital ships, but these could be enlarged if required. Thus the seeds were sown for the gap in capability between British ships and those of the Pacific navies as they worked out the techniques of operating large numbers of aircraft, numbers the British long thought unrealistic.

In the 1930s, both Japan and the U.S.A. neither with a serious strategic air threat to consider, poured their "air power" money into the Navy and Army which used the resources to build up large modern carrier arms. The U.S.A.

Completed in 1941, *Indomitable,* with extra hangar space, had improved fighting capability compared to other British carriers.

Courtesy Fleet Air Arm Museum

was spending about twice the amount per ship compared to the Admiralty. The U.S.N. commissioned three carriers in the 1930s, the small *Ranger* which, despite its otherwise unsatisfactory features, could still carry 76 aircraft on less than 15,000 tons, and the 20,000-ton *Yorktown* and *Enterprise* with capacities of almost 100 aircraft each. Japan rebuilt *Akagi* and *Kaga* to give them a similar aircraft capacity to the "Yorktowns," as well as two 16,000 to 17, 000-ton ships, *Sōryū* and *Hiryū* with a capacity to operate over sixty aircraft each. There was also the light carrier *Ryūjō* which could operate about 40 aircraft on only 8,000 tons.

Britain built the large and impressive *Ark Royal,* completed at the end of 1938. Despite some design weaknesses, she was probably intrinsically the best carrier of her time, but she never carried more than just over two-thirds her full complement of 72 aircraft. Britain's resources available for aircraft production, both financial and material, were being poured into the R.A.F., Britain's top rearmament priority. There was little left over for the Fleet Air Arm, which the Admiralty had to sustain on the limited naval budget it received, once the R.A.F. needs had been met. Despite the clear recognition within the Admiralty of the importance of aircraft to contemporary naval warfare, it was constrained in the numbers of aircraft it could procure. It seemed logical therefore to make these of multipurpose types to obtain the most from them, and this inevitably produced machines that were lower in performance than more specialist aircraft.

This did not matter to a Naval Staff that contained few if any pilots and whose members, if they were airmen at all, were observers, a role monopolized by the Royal Navy. By the rearmament period of the late 1930s, the consensus in the British Naval Staff was that aircraft built to operate over the sea were inevitably of lower performance than the latest land-based types. This confirmed the predilection for relatively slow 2-3 seat types which the Air Ministry reluctantly developed. Anti-air warfare capabilities suffered severely, as the role of the fighter was limited to shooting down the enemy's

spotter reconnaissance aircraft. Without radar to direct them, fighters were deemed to be of little use against modern fast bombers. These were to be left to anti-aircraft guns, whose effectiveness was rather over estimated. It was not that British conceptions for the use of aircraft were much different from those of the Japanese or the Americans; it was more that the greater resources of the Pacific navies allowed them to develop air arms of greater inherent potential. Notably, both of them continued to deploy high performance single seat fighters built for carrier operations. The Royal Navy takeover of complete control of the FAA, decided on in 1937, and implemented in 1939, was almost irrelevant to this situation. The main problem that had forced this development was the arrangements for manning an enlarged FAA. Aircraft procurement remained unchanged.

British ideas on fleet carriers were demonstrated by the three 23,000-ton ships *Illustrious*, *Victorious* and *Formidable* laid down in 1937, and completed in 1940-1941. Their aircraft capacity was limited to 36 aircraft, possibly all torpedo bomber-spotter-reconnaissance (TSR) aircraft of the Swordfish type, a biplane that, despite its famously antiquated appearance, had come into service only a year before the ships had been laid down. These carriers were defended not by fighters but by their armoured hangars and their heavy AA armaments of 4.5-in and 40-mm AA guns.

The fourth carrier laid down in 1937, *Indomitable*, completed in late 1941, had an extra half hangar to increase capacity to 45 aircraft. The next two ships *Implacable* and *Indefatigable,* laid down in 1939, but not completed until 1944, had provision for 60 aircraft with double hangars, but this was at the cost of 14-foot-high spaces that limited the types of aircraft carried.

In contrast, Japan and the U.S.A. continued to concentrate on unprotected hangars to optimize the size of their air groups. *Shōkaku* and *Zuikaku,* both commissioned in 1941, could operate 72 aircraft each on almost 26,000 tons, while the small USS *Wasp* of 1940, and the larger *Hornet* of 1941, could operate 76 and 98 aircraft respectively. By the end 1941, and the outbreak of war with Japan, Britain's carriers had become sadly depleted because of the war with Germany. The older carriers of potentially higher capacity, *Courageous, Glorious* and *Ark Royal* had all been sunk. *Illustrious* and *Formidable* were licking their wounds because of war damage incurred in the Mediterranean. *Victorious* was with the Home Fleet. Only the brand new *Indomitable* was available to be sent to join the reinforced Eastern fleet, but given the need for work–up, it could not be there in time to work with the capital ships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* before the latter were sunk by land-based Japanese Navy torpedo bombers.

Indomitable, with her extra hangar space, had an improved fighter capability compared to the other British carriers. Nine Sea Hurricanes, conversions of the land-based single seater fighter design, were carried in addition to the normal twelve slow Fulmar two seat fighter-reconnaissance machines. In addition, *Indomitable* carried twenty-four Albacore dive/torpedo bomber reconnaissance aircraft. The latter were still biplanes, despite the adoption of monoplane designs for similar roles by both the Americans and the Japanese. *Indomitable* spent her early days ferrying aircraft before joining the resuscitated Eastern Fleet based at Addu Atoll in the Maldives. This was composed of five battleships, four of them old and un-modernized, and three carriers: *Indomitable,* the recently repaired *Formidable* with eighteen Martlets (U.S. built Wildcats modified for British use) and 21 Albacores, and the old *Hermes* with twelve Swordfish.

At the beginning of April, against this force was deployed the formidable

strength of the Japanese First Air Fleet, the "Kidō Butai" (Striking Force) that had devastated Pearl Harbor. *Kaga* was hors de combat, but the other five carriers, *Akagi, Hiryū*, *Sōryū*, *Shōkaku* and *Zuikaku* still deployed over three hundred Zero fighters, Val dive bombers and Kate attack aircraft that were vastly superior to the British in both numbers and quality. The British were assisted by the secrecy of their base and the prudence of their commander, Admiral Somerville, who sensibly kept out of range of the Japanese carriers by day, hoping for an attack in darkness, when the unique night flying training and skills of the crews of his biplanes might be decisive. The Japanese had to be content with raiding the known Ceylon bases of Colombo and Trincomalee. *Hermes* was caught having been detached for maintenance at Trincomalee and was sunk, without aircraft embarked, 65 miles off the port in a massive dive bomber attack.

It was lucky for the British that the Japanese were committed to the war against the Americans in the Pacific otherwise the Eastern Fleet would probably have suffered a massive defeat, one that might have been decisive for Britain's imperial position. As it was the carriers, reinforced by a repaired *Illustrious* were involved in the invasion of Madagascar. *Formidable* provided distant cover, while *Illustrious* and *Indomitable* supported the landings.

During 1942, first *Indomitable* and then *Formidable* were called back to European waters, leaving *Illustrious* whose 36 aircraft—eighteen Swordfish, twelve Martlets and six Fulmars—could do little except support the completion of the taking of Madagascar in September. She was not strong enough for the diversionary attacks requested by the Americans against the Andaman Islands or the Burma coast. She eventually returned home at the beginning of 1943 for refit, after which she joined the Home Fleet.

With the steady losses to U.S. carriers in 1942, the Americans asked for reinforcement, especially at the end of 1942, after the U.S.N. was down to a single operational ship, USS *Enterprise*, following the loss of *Wasp* and *Hornet* and damage to *Saratoga* in the heavy fighting around Guadalcanal (*Ranger* was deemed unsuitable for Pacific operations and was the U.S.N. sole fleet carrier in the Atlantic). It was eventually decided to transfer *Victorious* from the Home Fleet, but it took until May 1943, before she was fully worked-up with American aircraft, procedures and doctrine, so that she could play in the "first division" of carrier warfare. Some forty-five aircraft were crammed onto her with the help of the adoption of the U.S. concept of a deck park. Some thirty Wildcats, combined with new techniques of radar,

The USS *Wasp* (CV-7) sustained a fatal hit on 15 September 1942. In near proximity but not pictured, the USS *O'Brien* DD-415 was also hit but survived the impact. The two ships were escorting supplies to the Solomon Islands.

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directed fighter direction (something which the British, as well as the Americans, had developed), provided an anti-air warfare capability pre-war British planners would have thought impossible. At last, fifteen Grumman Avengers provided a modern torpedo bombing capability. *Victorious* served three months in the South Pacific, from May to July, working with the repaired USS *Saratoga* covering landings in the Solomons. Her fighters were not required as the Japanese Navy had also suffered grievous damage in the previous period's fighting and was in no position to put in an appearance, but the Avengers were used for bombing missions ashore, at one point, reinforcing *Saratoga's* larger air group. With the first of the American Essex and Independence class carriers becoming available, *Victorious* was released and was home by mid-September 1943. She had, however, introduced U.S. carrier practice to the Royal Navy, a key development in greatly enhancing British carrier potential.

The progress of the war in Europe allowed fleet carriers to be redeployed eastwards once more and *Illustrious* reappeared at Colombo in late January 1944. A large scale FAA infrastructure was built-up in Ceylon and southern India with further growth in mind. *Illustrious* was carrying a powerful air group compared to the one she had deployed before, again using both American technology and methods. She was carrying 49 aircraft, 28 Corsairs (an advanced American fighter type, not yet cleared by the U.S.N. for carrier operations, but passed for such use by the hard-pressed British), and 21 Barracudas (a monoplane replacement for the Albacore that had entered service the previous year.). In order to more rapidly mount an offensive, the Americans lent the Eastern Fleet the old *Saratoga* with her 27 Hellcat fighters, 24 Dauntless scout/dive bombers and 18 Avengers. The capabilities of the two navies were getting closer.

The combined pair struck the harbour of Sabang on 19 April, and then the aviation fuel store at Surabaja. For this latter raid, *Illustrious* replaced her Barracudas with longer ranged Avengers intended for use from escort carriers. Results were disappointing. *Saratoga* returned home and the Barracudas were back for a solo raid by *Illustrious* on the Andamans in June, again with comparatively little result. Greater force appeared in July, in the shape of *Victorious* with a similar air group to *Illustrious*. Admiral Somerville planned another raid on Sabang. This was carried out by a surface force including three battleships with the carriers providing air cover and gunnery spotting as well as limited strikes. *Illustrious* replaced her Barracudas with a third squadron of Corsairs. Damage was much greater than with the previous air strikes alone.

Indomitable also appeared with 24 Hellcats (that suited her hangar layout) and 24 Barracudas and, together with *Victorious* (*Illustrious* being in refit), carried out a series of strikes against targets in Sumatra in August and September that again showed up deficiencies in strike capability, much to the disgust of Admiral Fraser, the new Fleet Commander, who knew he would soon have to take these assets as the core capabilities of a new British Pacific Fleet to fight alongside the Americans as they closed in on Japan. It had been decided at the Cairo conference the previous year, much against Churchill's will, that Britain would make her major effort against Japan directly against the home islands rather than in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia. An intensive course of training was undertaken to improve the striking efficiency of the air groups and the Barracudas were replaced by Avengers. Offensive operations continued in the Indian Ocean and British confidence grew. *Illustrious* returned and the newly completed *Indefatigable* arrived with a large air group of over 70 aircraft. The only problem was that her low hangars forced the operation of British built Seafire and Firefly fighter types. The former was a never fully satisfactory fragile conversion of the famous land-based Seafire, and the latter, one of the last of the slow multi-purpose two seaters.

The British Pacific Fleet sailed for its new station in January 1945, the four fleet carriers carrying between them: 28 Hellcats, 56 Corsairs, 40 Seafires, 12 Fireflies and 84 Avengers. This amounted to 220 aircraft in all, still not as many as the numbers of Japanese aircraft faced in the Indian Ocean in 1942, but now aircraft qualitatively equal, if not in some cases superior, to those they would encounter. On the way the carriers executed highly successful strikes against the oil installations around Palembang, in Sumatra, cutting production by over a third. This was a clear demonstration of the new found power of the British carrier force, although it was still significantly below that of a single U.S. carrier group, of which the main U.S. fleet had four.

Given full Task Force status for political reasons, the British Pacific Fleet sailed in support of the U.S. invasion of Okinawa. Its task was the sealing off of the main islands by attacking the airfields in the Sakishima Gunto group between Okinawa and Taiwan. An idea of the U.S. perception of the capabilities of the British was that the British ships were relieved by a U.S.N. escort carrier Task Group, but the latter proved less equal to the task than the British Fleet carriers. The latter also had a great advantage, as was demonstrated when the Japanese Kamikaze offensive began on 1 April. One suicide aircraft struck

Indefatigable's armoured deck with little effect. Unlike the impact of such a hit on an unprotected American deck, the British ship was back in action in about an hour. Less lucky, however, was *Illustrious,* which suffered a glancing blow by another kamikaze, whose bomb exploded in the water alongside the ship. The effects of this compounded the impact of the damage the ship had received in the Mediterranean. She sailed for home, being replaced by *Formidable* with a similar Corsair/Avenger air group.

The British Pacific Fleet kept up the pressure both on Sakishima Gunto and Taiwan, suffering a second wave of Kamikaze attacks on 4 May. Both *Indomitable* and *Formidable* were hit, the latter more seriously, but she was still back in action before the day was out. On 9 May, *Formidable* was hit again and *Victorious* twice, but again both ships were soon back in action. The ability of the armoured carriers to absorb this new form of missile attack was a great asset at this stage of the Pacific war, but the price that had been paid in fighting potential was significant. Indeed the Admiralty had already abandoned the concept. Its 1942 wartime carrier programme planned to follow three larger 37,000-ton armoured Eagles, with four even larger 47,000-ton Malta class carriers that would dispense with armour, so that 81 or more aircraft could be operated effectively, and massed strikes carried out with aircraft warmed-up in the more open hangars. The Maltas were never even laid down, although two of the others, *Eagle* and *Ark Royal* had significant careers after being completed post-war.

The armoured fleet carriers, their capabilities stretched to the utmost, contributed to operations off the coast of Japan as the allied forces closed in. *Implacable*, carrying over eighty aircraft had joined the fleet to provide welcome reinforcement as *Indomitable* was in need of refit. In the final raids on Japan, the British effectively provided a replacement carrier task group to Admiral Halsey, replacing the U.S.N. ships badly damaged by the Kamikazes. The Americans were, however, careful to keep the British away from finishing off the major units of the Japanese Fleet.

On their way east at the end of the war were the first four of the Colossus class light fleet carriers built quickly in mercantile yards as the other part of the 1942 programme. Although only just over 13,000 tons, these ships could carry more aircraft (39, a mix of Corsairs and Barracudas) than the original air group of an Illustrious class ship. Economical ships to operate, the light fleets were to be the basis of Britain's carrier force in the immediate post-war years.

The carrier fleet suffered a remarkable collapse in size and capability. Soon there were only a couple of light fleet carriers in full commission, each with perhaps a couple of dozen or so Seafires and Fireflies. The reason was that the carrier capability built-up during the war had not only been based on American ideas of carrier operation, but it had been paid for by American lend-lease money, both in terms of most of its aircraft and much of its training. The U.S. aircraft used in the war had to be quickly disposed of, often over the side, as they could not be maintained with the end of lend-lease.

Given its strategic predicament, Britain had never been able to support from its own resources a truly first class carrier navy. That the Royal Navy was, with massive U.S. assistance, able to improvise at last a force that was not "out of its depth" in the hottest kinds of Pacific air-sea battle was, however, not an inconsiderable achievement. By this time, the four ships of the deployed British carrier fleet could have taken on the "Kidō Butai" on more or less even terms. The British armoured carriers had also pointed the way forward to Japan, who built the impressive 29,000-ton *Taiho*, thrown away at the Battle of the Philippine Sea, and to the Americans, who in 1943-1944 laid down three armoured CVBs of the Midway class, albeit at a displacement of almost 50,000 tons and with the aim of operating almost 140 aircraft each. Even with armoured carriers, the focus of American carrier design remained on the fighting capability that had defeated the Japanese Navy before the British arrived.

NOTES

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Opposite Left: With its angled deck and deck-edge lift (reflecting American design influences), *Ark Royal* was completed in 1955, twelve years after her keel had been laid.

Courtesy of the Ministry of Defence, Royal Navy

Japanese Carrier Operations in the Second World War

By Jonathan Parshall

At the opening of hostilities in the Pacific, the Japanese Navy possessed the finest naval aviation force in the world. And yet the technical and doctrinal details of how the Japanese operated their carriers and air groups has remained almost completely unknown for the past sixty years. This article presents an overview of this force, and attempts to paint a clearer picture of its rise, its strengths and weaknesses, and the reasons for its eventual demise at the hands of the U.S. Navy.

An Avid Beginning

The Imperial Japanese Navy became interested in aviation technology around 1909, at the same time as several of the world's other major navies. The Imperial Navy had just won a major war with the Russians, including a stunning demonstration of its prowess at the Battle of Tsushima in 1905. Yet, although Japan's fleet was emerging as a major naval power in its own right, it was still heavily reliant on foreign suppliers (chiefly Great Britain) for much of its naval technology. Not surprisingly, it was Britain that received the first order from the Japanese Navy for seaplane aircraft, which were quickly mated with an indigenous seaplane tender, the *Wakamiya Maru*. Japan was now a naval air power.

Throughout the 1920s the Japanese moved aggressively to develop this new mode of warfare. Japan at first purchased foreign aircraft, and then transitioned into licensing foreign technology as it began nurturing its own domestic aviation

Hōshō, **in her early configuration circa 1922, was the Imperial Navy's first full-decked carrier.**
Courtesy of Ray Burt

Jonathan Parshall's interest in the Imperial Japanese Navy developed in childhood. He has written for the U.S. Naval War College *Review*, Naval Institute *Proceedings*, *Naval History*, and *World War II* magazine, and has contributed to several books on the topic. He is also an Adjunct Lecturer at the U.S. Naval War College. In 1995, Jon founded www.combinedfleet.com, the foremost Internet site on the Imperial Navy, which currently attracts more than 50,000 visitors monthly. He was a member of a 1999 expedition by Nauticos Corporation and the Naval Oceanographic Office that discovered wreckage from the carrier *Kaga*, sunk at Midway. A graduate of Carleton College and the Carlson School of Management, he works in senior management for a Minnesota software company. He lives in Minneapolis with his wife Margaret, children Anna and Derek, and cats Hiryu and Soryu.

industry. The Navy also utilized British know-how to get its naval aviator cadre established, and then moved towards developing its own pilot training programs and air doctrine. Naval air bases were established throughout the country. In 1922, the Navy took delivery of one of the world's first aircraft carriers, the *Hōshō*, upon whose decks it would experiment with air operations throughout the 1920s, much as the U.S. and Royal navies were using their *Langley* and *Hermes*.

By the 1930s, the Imperial Navy was operating two of the largest carriers in the world—*Akagi* and *Kaga*—and was increasingly independent in aircraft production. It was also developing a body of doctrinal thought around how to use those assets. Aboard their carriers, the Japanese overcame the same problems that the U.S. and Royal navies grappled with—how to launch and land aircraft rapidly, how to stow them below in the hangars, and how to arm and utilize them in the attack. Likewise, the same tensions between aspiring carrier aviation enthusiasts on the one hand, and old-school battleship advocates on the other, were also present. Despite these bureaucratic obstacles, as the decade progressed the Japanese Navy made substantial investments in carriers, and grew quite proficient in their operations.[1]

The character of the Japanese carrier force as it emerged was almost wholly offensive. Japanese flattops carried large air groups, but at the cost of weakened defensive arrangements for the ships themselves. There were no armored flight decks, for instance, as in the Royal Navy, nor were damage control arrangements given much thought. Japanese aircraft, too, were designed for payload, maneuverability, and attacking the enemy at long range. But this was achieved at the expense of defensive factors such as self-sealing fuel tanks and cockpit armor. These design trade-offs would deliver stunning combat results during the first part of the Pacific War, but would become counterproductive as the Japanese began facing more capable opponents armed with comparable weapons.

Creating a Naval Revolution

Through its experiences in the war in China beginning in 1937, the Imperial Navy had reached the conclusion that bombing aircraft had to be used *en masse* in order to achieve decisive results. Given that, and the fact that the Japanese had briefly used two of its carrier divisions in concert at the beginning of that conflict, it is perhaps unsurprising that the airpower advocates within the Navy should eventually move to the notion of using its carriers *en masse* as well. This notion of tactical concentration of carriers was apparently conceived by Genda Minoru, who had seen a brief newsreel clip of America's four fleet carriers (*Ranger*, *Saratoga*, *Lexington*, and *Yorktown*) parading in a box formation. Genda reasoned that such a configuration could be used for much more than making a good-looking film reel. While potentially vulnerable, a group of carriers would find it easier to coordinate offensive firepower, and might be able to get away with using a smaller combat air patrol to cover more ships simultaneously. Genda began militating for the creation of an "Air Fleet" built around these principles, and shortly thereafter was joined in his efforts by admirals Ozawa Jisaburo and Ōnishi Takajiro. Eventually, Admiral Yamamoto, the Commander in Chief of Combined Fleet, authorized the creation of First Air Fleet, which was formally established in April 1941.[2]

First Air Fleet was a truly revolutionary development in naval warfare. For the first time in history, a naval aviation force existed that could create strategically meaningful results on the battlefield. This was the result of several factors. The Japanese now possessed a corps of large, fast fleet carriers capable of operating similarly large air groups. They possessed high-quality aircraft in each of the primary roles (torpedo/level bomber, dive-bomber, and fighter), which were manned by superbly trained aviators. Lastly, all of these assets were united by an air doctrine

Below: Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku (Family name comes first in Japanese tradition) was commander of the Japanese Navy's Combined Fleet and the architect of the attack on Pearl Harbor. At Midway, he also commanded the Main Body (First Fleet). He planned to occupy Midway, which he believed would subsequently result in the annihilation of the U.S. Fleet. His aircraft was shot down by Guadalcanal-based USAAF P-38 Lightnings on 18 April 1943.

Courtesy of the U.S. Naval Institute, Special Collections

that, while still evolving, was at least workable, and was focused on the goal of bringing the maximum amount of coordinated firepower to bear against the enemy.

However, it would be incorrect to think that this doctrine came together in a fully-formed fashion. Rather, recent research has indicated that many facets of Japanese carrier doctrine were evolving right up to the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor.[3] Two hallmarks of their operational technique—deckload strikes, and supra-divisional air groups—were apparently hammered out and incorporated into the "game plan" for the upcoming Pearl Harbor attack as late as October/November 1941. Deckload strikes were a Japanese practice wherein each carrier contributed a strike group composed of one of its attack groups (either torpedo aircraft or dive-bombers) along with an escort fighter contingent, while keeping the other half of its airpower in reserve for a second strike wave. In the context of a carrier strike force composed of both large (*Akagi* and *Kaga*) and medium-sized flight decks (such as *Hiryū* and *Sōryū*), deckload strikes provided a mechanism that created uniform "building blocks" of airpower for a strike planner to use, and also streamlined deck operations. This was a fundamental component of the Japanese ability to launch and assemble air groups of more than a hundred aircraft within fifteen minutes of the signal to begin launching—a level of sophistication the U.S. Navy would not be able to replicate until the end of 1943.

Similarly, the Japanese developed the notion of uniting their carrier aircraft at both the divisional (two carrier) and even supra-divisional (whole strike force) level. By the time of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese routinely created groups of attack aircraft wherein *all* the force's dive-bombers, for instance, might be controlled by a senior dive-bomber aviator, without regard for which carrier he happened to be from. This allowed the creation of specialized air groups such as the one that attacked Pearl Harbor, wherein the Japanese simultaneously employed fighters, dive-bombers, level bombers, and torpedo bombers to assault the various American targets on Oahu.

Taken together, it is safe to say that as a result of these doctrinal innovations and the high quality of its aircraft and aviators that no other Navy in the world in late 1941 had the capability to execute, or even envision, a mission of the scale and complexity of Pearl Harbor. Only the Japanese possessed all the requisite pieces of the puzzle. It is this fact, coupled with the pre-war disdain with which the Western navies generally viewed the supposedly backward and derivative Imperial fleet, which made the terrible psychological impact of their early-war carrier operations so profound.

Initial Operations

In the early morning hours of 7 December, 1941, the six carriers of Admiral Nagumo's First Mobile Striking Force (*Kidō Butai*) launched two attack waves of 183 and 167 aircraft against the American military installations on Oahu. The results were devastating for the U.S. Pacific Fleet and Army Air Corps. Six battleships were sunk (two permanently), American air power was largely annihilated, and more than 2,000 American servicemen were killed. The ferocious Japanese aerial assault on Oahu demolished any misconceptions regarding the sophistication of Japanese carrier operations. The fact that the Imperial fleet was able to attack a major naval base in broad daylight, and cripple both its air and naval power to such an extent that it was incapable of any meaningful response, was a stunning accomplishment.

This captured Japanese photo was taken during the attack on Pearl Harbor 7 December 1941.

Courtesy of the U.S. Naval Institute, Special Collections

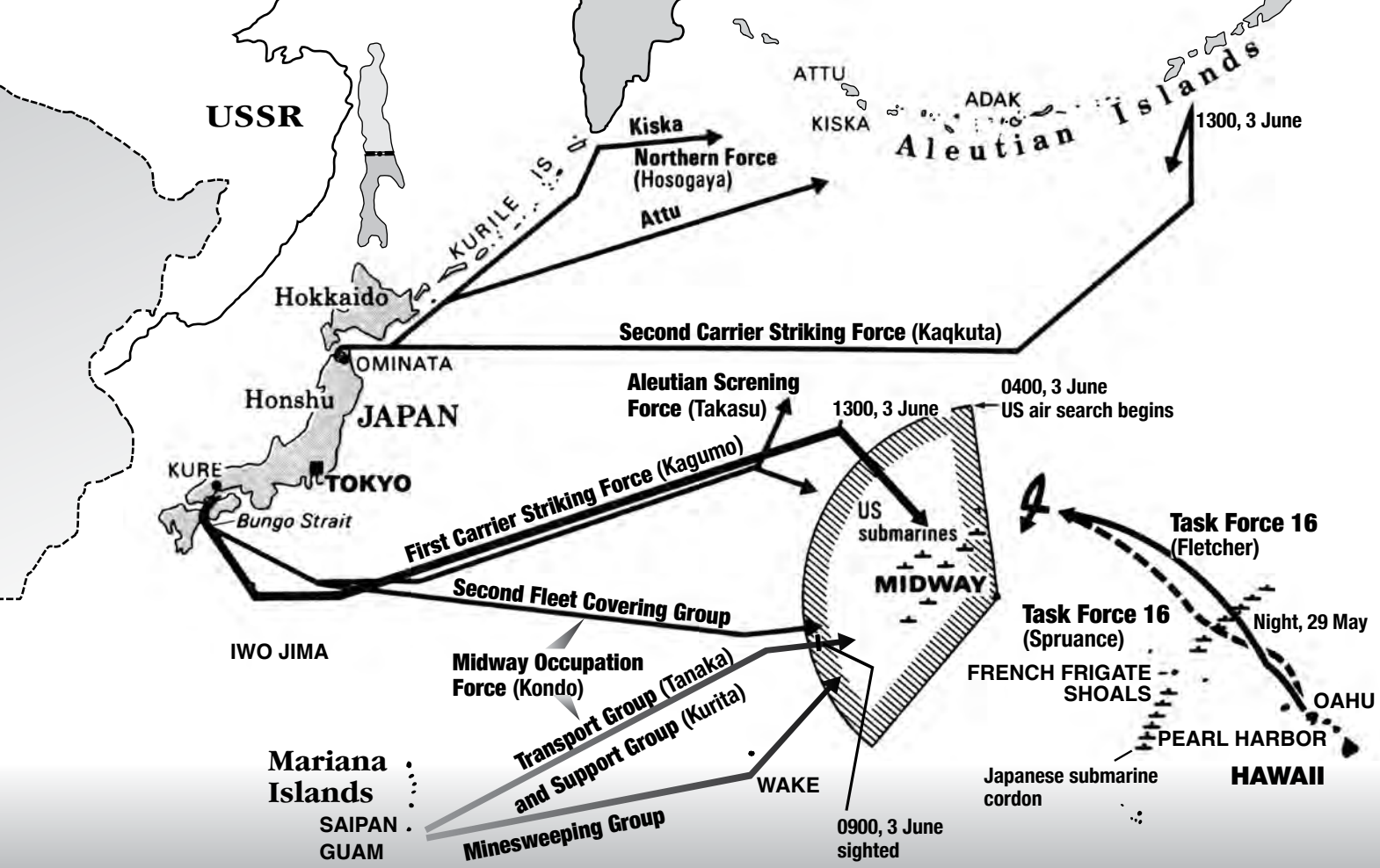
This pattern continued during the first six months of the Pacific War. Japanese carriers supported operations across the breadth of the Pacific—Wake Island, Singapore, Java and Borneo, northern Australia, and into the Indian Ocean. During the time of their ascendancy, Admiral Nagumo's carriers roamed the Pacific like a pack of killer whales, repeatedly destroying their opposition in one-sided fashion. With the Japanese ability to bring more and better aircraft to the point of attack, the Allied defenders at locations like Port Darwin and Trincomalee had absolutely no ability to respond effectively. Japan's carrier force appeared unbeatable.

Following Hawaiian tradition, sailors honored the men killed during the Japanese attack on NAS Kaneohe.

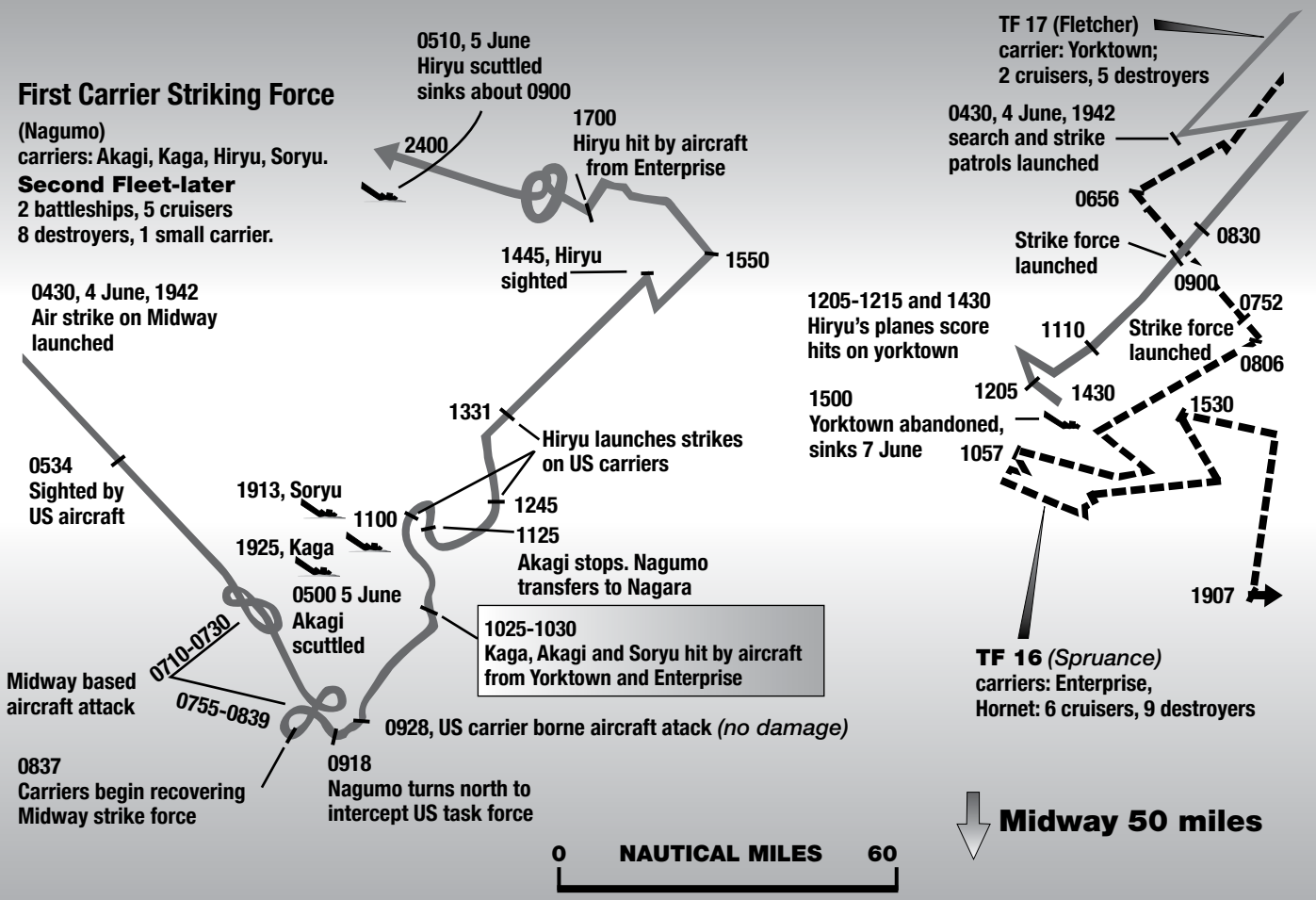
Courtesy of the U.S. Naval Institute, Special Collections

The Battles of 1942

Japanese superiority, though, was already ebbing. The Imperial Navy had actually started the Pacific War in a tenuous condition in terms of both war materiel and aviators. Indeed, Pearl Harbor had in many ways been the high-water mark of their strength, as they had stripped all available air units to beef



Japanese Forces Sail Between 25-28 May *(Dates Are Those at Midway)*



Opposite Left: Diagrams reflect the pivotal actions in late May and early June, leading up to the Battle of Midway on 6 June 1942.
Courtesy U.S. Navy

up Nagumo's attack force for his maximum effort over Oahu. Even despite the easy victories that came in early 1942, Japan's aviation industry was not keeping up with wartime production demands. Likewise, shortages of training aircraft, fuel, and experienced instructors meant that Japan wasn't able to train enough new aviators (in peacetime, aviators had been required to spend up to eight years in training). More importantly, Japan began attempting to do too much in too many places with too few carriers.

The Battle of Coral Sea (7-8 May, 1942) found two Japanese carriers (*Shōkaku* and *Zuikaku*) charged with supporting the proposed Japanese landings against Port Moresby in New Guinea. Unfortunately for the Japanese, this force encountered a force of two American carriers (*Lexington* and *Yorktown*) sent to contest Japan's moves in the area. The ensuing battle resulted in the destruction of *Lexington*, but left both Japanese carriers badly enough damaged that they could not participate as planned in the upcoming operation against Midway Island.

The Battle of Midway (6 June1942) marked the first unequivocal loss for the Imperial Navy's carrier fleet. In the waters northwest of Midway, the Japanese carrier force of *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Sōryū* and *Hiryū* was ambushed and destroyed by an American force of three carriers (*Yorktown*, *Enterprise*, and *Hornet*) for the loss of only *Yorktown*. The reasons for this catastrophic defeat were manifold: poor planning and overconfidence on the part of the Japanese, a porous search plan, poor fleet air defense and damage control practices, not to mention vastly superior strategic intelligence and not a little good luck on the part of the Americans. The result was that the Japanese numerical superiority in flight decks was demolished at a stroke. The Japanese now had to fight out the remainder of 1942 on the basis of parity. And it was here that the weaknesses of the Japanese force came increasingly into evidence.

The two subsequent carrier battles of the Eastern Solomons (23-25 August, 1942) and Santa Cruz (25-27 October, 1942) demonstrated that despite the very high caliber of Japan's aviators, without their earlier numerical superiority, the Imperial Navy was seemingly unable to translate tactical success into strategic victory. Despite having placed the U.S. carrier force in very bad circumstances (particularly in the latter contest), it was unable to "close out the deal," usually because its own exertions left its carrier air groups without sufficient remaining airpower to vigorously pursue its enemies, and/or follow-up with conclusive strikes against the American air presence at Guadalcanal. By the end of 1942, Japan was clearly behind the U.S. Navy in several key areas—air defense, damage control, and aircraft, aviator and ship production. From this point on it would always be reacting to American offensive moves, but usually a day late and a dollar short.

1943: A Hiatus

Both navies largely withdrew their carriers from battle during 1943, as both forces had been badly depleted by the ferocious combat in the Solomons. The U.S. and Japan subsequently used 1943 as a time to refit and repair, in order to prepare for the renewed carrier struggle both knew was coming. However, whereas the Americans used this "half-time" in the Pacific War to monumental good effect, the Japanese suffered from a number of deficiencies, some of them self-inflicted, which left their carrier force in only marginally better shape when the carrier contest was renewed in early 1944.

The first problem centered on Japan's inability to replenish its carrier air groups. The Battle of Santa Cruz had witnessed the elimination of the last cadres of the elite pre-war carrier aviators. After this point, due in no small part to a pre-war pilot-training program that was insufficiently scaled to fight a global war, the quality of Japan's aviators began to decline precipitously. Furthermore, even as the Navy's carriers began regaining their strength, their air groups were transferred on three separate occasions to Rabaul (in April, July, and again in November 1943), to participate in what were hoped to be decisive air operations against the Americans in the Solomons. In the event they only succeeded in decimating the carrier air groups over and over again, meaning that their overall level of group training and cohesiveness never approached that of the pre-war squadrons.

Secondarily, the Japanese were having difficulty in delivering quality second-generation carrier aircraft to the fleet. The newest Allied fighter types, for instance, had by this time surpassed the Zero. Yet Japan's aircraft industry was unable to produce a reliable follow-on carrier fighter, meaning the Zero would remain the carrier force's primary fighter until war's end. This was disastrous, because by

The Japanese carrier *Zuihō* under attack during the Battle off Cape Engaño, Leyte Campaign, 25 October 1944.

MMSD collections, Worthington photos, P-15532 U.S. Navy

1943 both navies had realized that fighters were the most important component of a carrier air group, since they were essential for both offensive and defensive operations. Without a worthy successor to the Zero, produced in large quantities, Japan's carriers would fight at a marked disadvantage.

Technologically and doctrinally as well, the Japanese fleet was falling further behind its adversary. Despite the fitting of air-warning radar aboard its carriers, the Japanese never made the conceptual leap towards centralizing the collection and dissemination of the data that radar provided (i.e. the Combat Information Center). Thus, this new technology never delivered the benefits of better vectoring of the fleet's fighters, and hence better fleet air defense. Instead, the Japanese initially attempted to compensate for their weaknesses in this area by developing fleet formations that thrust battleship and cruiser guard formations ahead of the carrier force, both to provide early warning capabilities as well as for soaking up enemy air attacks.[4] Later, they would fall back on large batteries of light AA and a reliance on maneuvering ships when under aerial attack. It is indicative of the gap that was opening between the two Pacific navies that the Japanese were forced to fall back on passive defensive measures like dispersed fleet formations, while the Americans were coming to rely increasingly on modern radar, vectored fighters, and massive AA firepower as the keys to fleet air defense.

Battle of the Philippine Sea

The Imperial Navy's carrier fleet had regained at least enough of its strength, and had grown desperate enough, that it felt compelled to offer battle once more when the U.S. Navy attacked the Marianas Islands in June 1944. The

Navy had now rebuilt its strength to 3 fleet and 6 light carriers, which carried 471 carrier aircraft—the largest naval aviation force the Imperial Navy would ever field. Unfortunately, by this time American naval air power could field even larger forces, as they brought 15 fleet and light carriers and just short of a thousand aircraft to the battle. Not only that, but the U.S. carrier fleet had been completely transformed in terms of its effectiveness. The combination of an advanced carrier fighter (the F6F Hellcat), the CIC, and solid fighter vectoring, coupled with radar fire-control and proximity-fuzed ammunition for the fleet's heavy AA weapons, and an enormous increase in the numbers of light and medium AA as well, meant that the defensive strength of American task forces utterly eclipsed its early war dimensions. Attacking an American task group was now tantamount to committing suicide, and the outcome of the ensuing battle drove this point home, as the Japanese aviation force was practically annihilated, and Japan lost three flattops with three more damaged. For all intents and purposes, Japan's carrier fleet was destroyed, this time for good. Although Japanese carriers would sail again to the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines in October 1944, their air groups were so decimated that the carriers were used merely as bait.

What has been lost behind the outward appearance of a U.S. walkover at Philippine Sea was the fact that Japan's carriers had actually fought the battle with more doctrinal sophistication than they had ever exhibited. The fleet carriers had dedicated scouting, attack, and fleet defense duties to specific flight decks (making them "functionalized" in modern parlance). Likewise, the Japanese reconnaissance procedures used to locate the American fleet were both complex and refined in conception. What was missing, however, was both the material strength and the experienced aviators to implement the new doctrinal tenets. However, Japan's pilots were inexperienced, and badly overmatched by their more seasoned American opponents, who were flying better aircraft. Likewise, even if their aviators had been up to the game, Japan's carriers had too few aircraft with which to win such a battle. Thus, while the Imperial Navy had demonstrated that it had grown in certain respects, by 1944 it no longer had the means to implement its doctrinal tenets and wrest control of the battlefield away from the Americans, even temporarily.

Perspectives

In the final analysis, the Imperial Navy needs to be given more credit than it typically has been given in the West, for having created as powerful and professional a naval aviation force as it did. Japanese technological and operational practices kept pace with, and in many respects superseded those of the western navies. Japan's ability to create large, coordinated strike groups using some of the most advanced aircraft in the world was unmatched in 1941. And it was Japan's carrier striking force that first demonstrated the possibilities of what massed naval airpower could deliver in terms of battlefield results. No other navy had a carrier force nearly as powerful at the outbreak of the Pacific War.

Yet this same force, even at its height, was never more than a raiding formation. More importantly, it wasn't backed by the depth of technological and industrial infrastructure that would allow it to be improved and strengthened in the course of a war with an opponent like the U.S. Ultimately, *Kidō Butai* was but a foreshadowing of what the U.S. Navy would field beginning in 1944—the first true carrier task forces. These next generation carrier formations were able not just to raid an enemy target, but to stand offshore almost indefinitely in the face of the fiercest resistance, and beat their objectives into submission through the sustained application of seemingly limitless force. It was the U.S. Navy alone that had the expertise, the ability to assess and master the lessons of war, and most importantly the industrial power needed to transform the material basis of the naval conflict in the Pacific. Its ability to marry first-rate combat power, sophisticated underway replenishment techniques, and vast logistical resources allowed it to translate its vision of global naval supremacy into reality. Japanese carrier men could only watch in horror in 1944-1945, as the military implements they had helped pioneer were used against them on a scale they could have scarcely imagined in 1941, leading to the final, irrevocable destruction of not only Japan's naval aviation force, but the Imperial Navy as a whole.

NOTES

1 For information on the genesis and pre-war development of Japanese naval aviation, Mark Peattie's *Sunburst: the Rise of Japanese Naval Airpower, 1909-1941* remains the best work available in English

2 *Sunburst*, pp. 151-152.

3 *The author has been privileged to review advance manuscripts of Michael Wenger, Robert Cressman, and John DiVirgilio's forthcoming landmark work on the attack on Pearl Harbor, which contains previously unseen information on the Japanese side of the attack.*

4 *Senshi Sōsho, vol. 49, Nantōhōmen Kaigun Sakusen, 1 Gato Dakkai Sakusen Kaishimade*. (Southwest Area Naval Operations, 1, To the Beginning of Operations to Recapture Guadalcanal), a section of which was translated by RADM Edwin T. Layton USN (Ret.).

Revisiting the Steichen Collection

Captain Edward Steichen

Past Issues of *Mains'l Haul* (Vols. 17, 31 and 38) have previewed the War photographs from the Maritime Museum's treasured Steichen Collection. During World War II, Captain Edward Steichen directed a team of eight photographers over a period of four years to document life aboard aircraft carriers throughout the vast Pacific war zone.

After being published in several U.S. Navy books during the war years; the bulk of the images fell into relative obscurity until the 1980s, when Christopher Phillips' 1981 book *Steichen at War,* brought the images back into prominent view.

In 1980, in honor of the one hundredth anniversary of Steichen's birth, his photographs were allocated to several museums nationwide.
The Maritime Museum of San Diego received over seventy of these prints, which remain an invaluable record of the war years, replete with its horrors, gut-wrenching losses and moments of sheer heroism.

Below: The launch crewman signals a Curtiss "Helldiver" SB2C for take-off. The "Helldiver" dive-bomber provided the high-level angle of attack for the carrier forces during the Pacific campaign.

MMSD Steichen Collection, P-736d, U.S. Navy photo

Above: This stunning portrait from the Steichen Collection captures more than a moment in time. An entire lifetime of service and dedication is evinced in the intensity of Marc Mitscher's concentrated stare. In 1944, Rear Admiral Mitscher would maintain a pivotal role as Task Force 58 Commander in the Pacific campaign.

MMSD Steichen collection, P-826d, U.S. Navy photo

Right: Pictured in his earlier years (circa 1919), Commander Marc Mitscher was ordered to North Island, San Diego, to help establish Air Detachment Pacific Fleet. Mitscher would later be considered one of the "Fathers of Naval Aviation."

Courtesy U.S. Navy photo

The following sequence of newly discovered photos from the Maritime Museum archives with the carrier identified as the U.S.S. *Franklin* **(CV-13), shows the horrendous damage sustained during an attack fifty miles off the Japanese mainland, 19 March 1945, by a single enemy plane with two semi-armor piercing bombs. The casualties totaled 724 killed with 265 wounded. One hundred and six officers and 604 enlisted men voluntarily remained onboard saving their ship and many more lives.**

MMSD collection, P-15538d, P-15537d, P-15536d respectively, U.S. Navy photos

TBM Avenger flies over Mt. Suribachi after Iwo Jima was secured in March of 1945.

MMSD Steichen Collection, P-819d, U.S. Navy photo

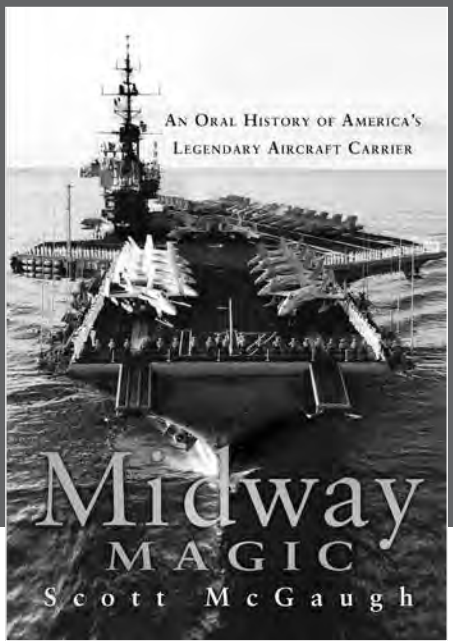
The Magical Odyssey of the USS *Midway*

by Scott McGaugh

All photos compiled by Scott McGaugh and Courtesy of the USS *Midway* Museum

The USS *Midway* was christened on 20 March 1945, only seventeen months after her keel was laid.

Scott McGaugh **is currently the Marketing Director of the USS Midway Museum, for eight years he was the architect of the nationally acclaimed public relations program that played a key role in bringing the *Midway* to San Diego. This article is based on more than three years of research that led to his two books, *Midway Magic* and *Midway Memories*, both in their second editions. A former newspaper publisher and public relations agency owner, he is a San Diego native and resides in San Diego.**



Imagine a ship that once embarked on a forty-seven-year odyssey. An odyssey spanning the end of World War II and Operation Desert Storm shared by 225,000 American sailors whose average age was 20. It was an odyssey that carried the aircraft carrier into the crosscurrent of nearly every international crisis in the latter half of the twentieth century. No other United States Navy carrier can match the unparalleled odyssey of the USS *Midway*—the longest serving aircraft carrier in U.S. Naval history. Today, the USS Midway Museum continues on its unique odyssey.

Elevating Naval Aviation

The namesake of the Midway aircraft carrier class, the USS *Midway's* innovative design concept was developed prior to the outbreak of World War II. President Roosevelt's Midway construction decision on 29 December 1942, ended a military debate of whether the Navy would be better served by building several small carriers of limited capability, or fewer massive carriers featuring firepower far beyond anything at sea. The USS *Midway* would dwarf every ship afloat and become the largest ship in the world for a decade.

Midway's keel was laid on 27 October 1943. In a race to enter the war, Newport News Shipbuilding worked around the clock. Incredibly, the carrier was christened only seventeen months later, on 20 March 1945. Named for the pivotal American victory at the Battle of Midway, the USS *Midway* was an engineering marvel.

Its overall length was 968 feet on a hull that carried 60,000 tons. Midway was the first ship too large for the Panama Canal (too wide by five feet) at a time when the U.S. was planning to dig a second, larger canal. The carrier was a floating steel honeycomb of an unprecedented 1,750 compartments (the engineering power plants were divided into 26 watertight compartments to lessen flooding potential and improve survivability). *Midway* was the Navy's first carrier to feature an armored flight deck, comprised of 196,000 pieces of steel, 3 ½ inches thick.

The crew of 4,500 made the USS *Midway* a floating city at sea. More than 13,000 meals were prepared daily; the coffeemakers could brew 10,500 cups at a time; 240,000 gallons of fresh water were produced daily; and more than 40,000 pounds of laundry were washed weekly. The supply and logistical implications of a warship that burned more than 260 gallons of fuel per mile were equally immense.

Sailing off the coast of Labrador and Greenland in 1946, the USS *Midway's* flight deck personnel developed inventive methods of keeping aircraft in flying condition as the snow flurried.

The USS *Midway* quickly began setting new standards of naval aviation. In 1946, the *Midway* was the first American carrier to operate extensively in the mid-winter, sub-Arctic. Sailing off the coast of Greenland and Labrador in March, the *Midway's* flight deck personnel developed inventive methods of keeping aircraft in flying condition as the snow flew. Campfires were built under aircraft engine cowling to keep motor oil warm and fuel unfrozen. Gasoline was used as antifreeze in engine

Midway's **launch of the V-2 rocket in 1947, marked the dawn of naval missile warfare.**

oil. Conditions were so brutal some *Midway* sailors suffered permanent tear duct frostbite damage from working on the flight deck. Yet they taught the rest of the U.S. Navy how to fly among the icebergs.

Only a year later, the USS *Midway* steamed off the coast of Bermuda carrying German V-2 rockets captured in the final hours of WWII. With its entire air wing aloft, a V-2 rocket was launched off the flight deck, proving that ships would not sink under the thrust of rockets (to that point, all V-2 launches in WWII had been land-based). *Midway's* success marked the dawn of naval missile warfare, when *Midway* sailors successfully recovered their air wing shortly after the rocket had been launched on 6 September 1947.

Far less known was the carrier's nuclear capability. The USS *Midway* was the first American carrier to transport nuclear weapons. Eight of the first

ninety nuclear weapons built by America were sent to *Midway's* specialists and top-secret magazines. In *Midway's* early years, it was capable of launching aircraft with nuclear weapons, but too small to recover those planes. Had the call come, it would have been a one-way trip for those *Midway* aviators.

Given its nuclear-strike capability, *Midway* patrolled the Mediterranean underbelly of NATO in the early days of the Cold War, pausing on Christmas Day to host orphans for dinner from war-ravaged ports in France and Italy. Those port calls began a humanitarian tradition that continued after the USS *Midway* completed its seventh deployment to the Mediterranean and the joined the Pacific Fleet in 1954.

Cold War Warrior

At dawn on 6 February 1955, *Midway* sailed into the crosshairs of a Sino-American crisis. The carrier's sailors were amazed when they saw the USS *Midway* join a massive U.S. Navy armada off the Chinese coast. *Midway* had just completed a 22,000-mile, around-the-world voyage to join Task Force 77 and evacuate 24,000 refugees from contested islands off the communist Chinese coast. It marked the start of thirty-seven years of western Pacific and Indian Ocean presence by the USS *Midway*.

The *Midway* had to been modernized. After only ten years' service, the USS *Midway* was decommissioned from 1955 to 1957, for what would become a sixty-five million dollar overhaul, principally to accommodate accelerating advances in jet naval aircraft. Nearly the entire aircraft carrier was rebuilt around the original, 12-boiler power plant complex that produced 212,000 horsepower (enough power at top speed to enable a sailor to ski behind the *Midway*).

Most significantly, an angled deck was added to the USS *Midway's* straight deck configuration. The angled deck enabled recovery of aircraft to take place as aircraft-launch operations *simultaneously* took place on the bow. Aviators could now land on the angle deck without the prospect of crashing into fueled aircraft on the bow. The angle deck—a British innovation—revolutionized flight ops aboard the USS *Midway* and throughout the Navy.

After visiting San Diego for the first time on 11 January 1962, *Midway* set another new standard in the evolution of naval aviation. In mid-1963, off the coast of California, a *Midway* pilot successfully landed aboard *Midway* using "hands off" technology and production-line equipment. The daring feat culminated ten years of research and proved the viability of automatic piloting technology, later crucial to the space shuttle program.

After nearly twenty years of Cold War patrols, the USS *Midway* sailed into combat when it arrived on station off the coast of Vietnam on 10 April 1965. Thrice-a-day strike ops began almost immediately. Two months later, *Midway* pilots scored the first confirmed MiG kill of the Vietnam War. Only three days later, *Midway* pilots flying the lumbering, prop-driven Skyraider, remarkably shot down a high-powered, Russian-built MiG jet even though the *Midway* aviators were outnumbered 2-to-1.

With victories came gut-wrenching losses. Over the course of seven months and 11,900 combat missions on its first deployment into a war zone, twenty-two *Midway* aircraft were lost. Five pilots became POWs and eleven others were killed outright. USS *Midway* sailors tasted their blood in combat for the first time.

Tip of the Sword

After twenty years of near-constant sea duty, the USS *Midway* required another major overhaul in the late 1960s. Unexpected delays pushed the cost from an estimated eighty-seven million to $202 million, creating a national controversy that ultimately scuttled other Midway-class ships' overhaul plans. But the modernization produced twenty-one years of additional service by the WWII-era aircraft carrier.

In the early 1970s, the USS *Midway* returned to Vietnam. More milestones followed, including the downing of two MiGs in less than five minutes by a pair of aviators who still live in San Diego today–Ronald "Mugs" McKeown and Jack Ensch. (Ensch later was shot down on his 285th mission and became a POW). A *Midway* aviator also shot down the last MiG of the war on 12 January 1973. Only three days later, a ceasefire was declared and the USS *Midway* became the last carrier to leave the combat zone.

A few months later, *Midway* set still another standard for the U.S. Navy. On 5 October 1973, it became the first carrier home-ported in a foreign country when it steamed into Yokosuka, Japan. That greatly improved U.S. Navy response to any international crisis in the Middle East. The USS *Midway* would repeatedly deploy into the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf over the next two decades.

Only two years after the Paris Peace Accords were signed in 1973**,** the USS *Midway* was back at Yankee Station off the coast of Vietnam, this time to rescue fleeing South Vietnamese. When Saigon finally fell, the USS *Midway* played a central role in Operation Frequent Wind. In less than two days beginning on 29 April 1975, more than 3,000 refugees were ferried aboard by an endless stream of helicopters. Hundreds of USS *Midway* sailors voluntarily gave up their berths so evacuee families could stay together on the first day of a journey into the unknown.

After Saigon fell in 1975, *Midway* played a central role in transporting more than 3,000 refugees onboard via helicopter, in less than two days.

Marathon deployments into the Indian Ocean followed as the epicenter of international tension and turmoil shifted to the Middle East. The *Midway's* deployment in Japan often made it the first responder to a new international flash point, or the first relief when another carrier broke down and returned to port. It was in the 1970's when the phrase *Midway Magic* began to take root, based largely on the thirty-year-old carrier's steadfast reliability. The crew preferred a different moniker – the "USS *Neverdock"*.

Even though it had become the oldest and smallest carrier in the U.S. Navy fleet in 1991, the USS *Midway* measured up to its reputation in Operation Desert Storm. The carrier was the first flattop on station following the invasion of Kuwait. Admiral Dan March had chosen *Midway* as his flagship for Persian Gulf operations, even though it would be retired the following year. His faith was well-placed. The USS *Midway* flew more missions per aircraft than any other carrier in Operation Desert Storm and was the only carrier not to lose an aviator.

The Final Mission

The USS *Midway* arrived in San Diego for the last time in December, 2003. It had been more than eleven years since the carrier had been decommissioned at NAS North Island on 11 April 1992, a few months after its crew had rescued 1,800 Air Force personnel fleeing the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines. After spending less than one-tenth of its forty-seven years of service to America in open combat, *Midway's* final active-duty mission had been humanitarian — Operation Fiery Vigil.

The *Midway's* "final mission" as a naval aviation museum began on 7 June 2004, following a twelve year community effort to secure necessary approvals and then a frantic six-month "retrofit" by hundreds of volunteers. Tons of debris was removed; civilian-style stairs replacing ship's ladders had been custom designed and installed; and women's restrooms were carved out of aviation workspaces. A self-guided audio tour, featuring *Midway* sailors who lived and worked in soon-to-be-open public spaces, was produced. A ticket office, gift shop, administrative offices, flight simulators, fantail café, and wheel chair-accessible elevators were built. It became a delicate balancing act of preservation, restoration, and modernized conversion.

Today, the U.S.S. *Midway* is the most-visited floating ship museum in the world, and plans to regularly expand the museum and its air wing annually over the next ten years.

Over the course of more than six decades, the USS *Midway* has evolved to represent the American ideals of liberty, freedom and peace. From humanitarian missions to a stalwart projection of American power and purpose, *Midway Magic* continues on its new mission as a museum, education center, tribute, and visitor destination alongside the Navy Pier in downtown San Diego.

Below: The USS *Midway* flew more missions per aircraft than any other carrier in Operation Desert Storm and was the only carrier not to lose an aviator.

Midway Moments

The USS *Midway*'s 4.02-acre flight deck thundered with hundreds of thousands of launches and recoveries over 47 years. It was the first American aircraft carrier to feature a steel flight deck. Thousands of sailors participated in a "flight deck ballet" of specialists who primarily communicated with hand signals in the 30-knot wind required for flight operations. The actual launch area was only 75 yards long and pilots had to launch inside an area comparable to a tennis court.

Top: The moment of launch when a pilot will rocket from 0 to nearly 150 miles per hour in about two seconds to get airborne.

Above: Clear hand signals are all that stand between a safe, tightly choreographed recovery or launch and disaster that could cost dozens of sailors their lives.

Right: Vietnamese refugees head for the *Midway's* island after fleeing from Saigon. *Midway's* 1975 rescue mission became known as "The Night of the Helicopters."

Top Left: A *Midway* sailor stands ready to tie aircraft down to the flight deck, a crucial procedure for a carrier nicknamed by some sailors the "USS *Rock & Roll*."

Top Right: Sailors had to learn to write backwards to maintain the status board in Primary Flight Control high in the island.

Above Middle: A sailor signals the start of an UNREP, the dangerous process of re-supplying *Midway* every 3-4 days at sea.

Left: Navigation was critical to the USS *Midway*. In 1980, a Panamanian freighter collided with the carrier, killing several sailors.

Above: *Midway* **was known as a "wet ship." Sometimes aircraft launches had to be timed to coincide with high seas wave crests.**

Left: *Midway* **officers take a close look at the captured German V-2 rocket whose 1947 launch would mark the dawn of naval missile warfare.**

Midway Moments/cont'd

Landing signal officers keep a close eye on every approach, ready to press their "pickle switch" to wave off a pilot if he's not lined up properly for recovery.

Below: Two *Midway* jets make a photo-op pass of Mt. Fuji . The USS *Midway* was the first American carrier homeported in a foreign country. For 18 years *Midway* sailors call Yokosuka, Japan, home.


DIRECTOR

Midway Moments

Above: A *Midway* pilot takes control of his aircraft a split second after it breaks free of the catapult with nothing but an expanse of ocean only 50 feet below him.

Opposite Left: Teamwork is crucial to preparing a 35,000-pound aircraft for launch. Sailors in color-coded jerseys each have a specific responsibility for getting an aircraft up to the catapult and primed for launch.

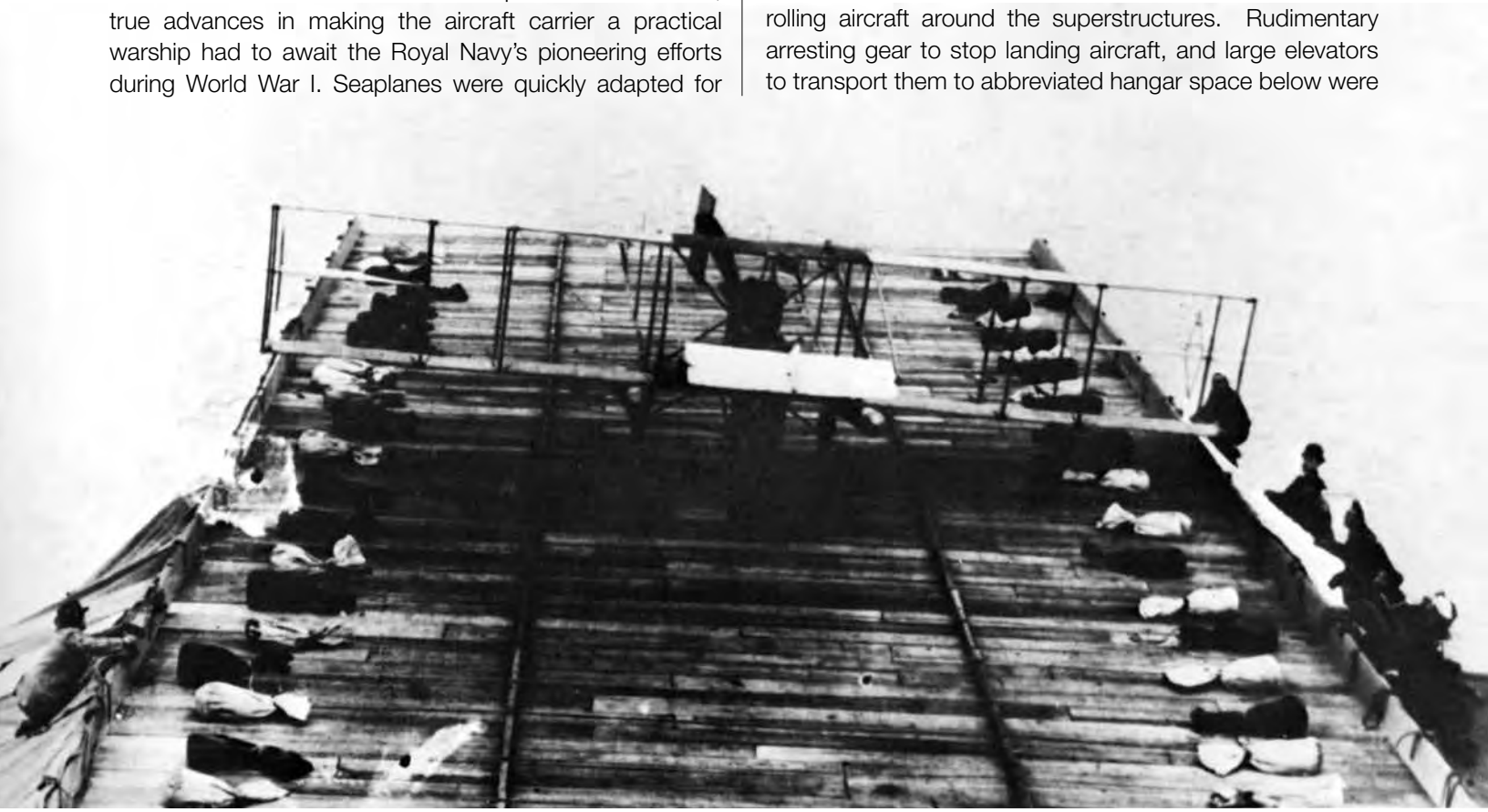
CARRIER TECHNOLOGY
A Century of Innovation

by Karl Zingheim

A 1986 graduate of the Naval Academy, Karl Zingheim is staff historian and Exhibits Manager for the USS *Midway* Museum and currently writing several books on naval warfare in the Pacific.

1900s The aircraft carrier was the only major twentieth century warship developed without any precedent. Since they arose from the invention of the airplane, early carriers were all adaptations of other ship types modified to accommodate the flimsy aircraft of the day. Although American aviator Eugene Ely demonstrated that a heavier-than-air craft could indeed take off and land aboard a ship in 1910 and 1911, true advances in making the aircraft carrier a practical warship had to await the Royal Navy's pioneering efforts during World War I. Seaplanes were quickly adapted for shipboard use, but the higher performance offered by aircraft unencumbered by floats drove the British to employ ships with flight decks.

Initial efforts involved converting warships that could be spared from the war effort like the large cruiser *Furious* and the new light cruiser *Vindictive*. These vessels retained their funnels and bridge structures on the centerline and featured partial flight decks fore and aft with narrow platforms for rolling aircraft around the superstructures. Rudimentary arresting gear to stop landing aircraft, and large elevators to transport them to abbreviated hangar space below were



Eugene Ely's precarious landing onboard the wooden platform of the USS *Pennsylvania* in 1911, with arresting gear comprised of seabags of sand tied to ropes, demonstrated the seminal relationship between aircraft and landing onboard a ship.

introduced. Though aircraft could only just be flown at sea, the superstructure turbulence and funnel gasses made the prospect hazardous.

A breakthrough came in September 1918, with the conversion of a small ocean liner into the HMS *Argus*, the first carrier to feature an uninterrupted flight deck. Promptly nicknamed "The Flatiron," the *Argus* would represent basic carrier design for the next 35 years. In addition to the innovative flight deck, the *Argus* capitalized on a large hangar deck and ample magazine and parts stowage. Though too slow to keep pace with the battle fleet, she could operate aircraft with few restrictions.

The USS *Langley* **(CV-1), moored at North Island Naval Air Station, San Diego, circa 1925, provided an indispensable training platform during the early development of carrier flight operations.**

MMSD collections P-10874c

1920s

After the war, the Royal Navy continued development of aircraft carriers by modifying two more large cruisers, the *Courageous* and *Glorious*, as well as a battleship hull originally intended for Chile, the *Eagle*. The first purpose-built carrier, HMS *Hermes*, was started in 1918, but construction delays led to Japan's *Hōshō* being the first such carrier to go into commission in 1922. By this time, the U.S. Navy returned to shipboard aviation with the USS *Langley*, a converted collier. Fears of another naval arms race, which helped ignite the First World War, prompted the Washington Naval Conference to lay down severe restrictions on warship tonnage, particularly with capital ships. The resulting agreement allowed Britain to retain all her carriers afloat and continue building them, while granting Japan and the United States each the option to convert two battle cruisers under construction into large carriers (damage from the great earthquake of 1923 obliged Japan to substitute a battleship). The four ships that eventually emerged from this process, *Akagi, Kaga, Lexington,* and *Saratoga*, would all play prominent roles in the Pacific War.

USS *Saratoga* **(CV-3) was commissioned in 1927. She exemplified the international design proclivity for large, fast fleet carriers.**

Courtesy U.S. Naval Institute

1930s

Freed from the pressures of war, designers developed strange innovations for the new warship type. Britain and Japan experimented with stacked flight decks on their large carriers, while cruiser-caliber gun armament found its way onto the *Lexington, Saratoga*, *Akagi*, and *Kaga*. Despite these foibles, once commissioned, these large and fast ships helped to rapidly advance carrier tactics throughout the 1930s.

As carrier aircraft technology evolved, so did the carrier. Heavier aircraft designs, higher landing speeds, and enlarged performance envelopes led to improvements in arresting gear, catapults, and simplified flight decks. By 1941, the stacked flight deck was extinct and smaller but more efficient carrier designs had taken to the water. Japan and the United States both produced a series of purpose-built carriers: *Ryūjō, Sōryū, Hiryū, Shōkaku, Zuikaku; Ranger*, *Yorktown, Enterprise, Wasp,* and *Hornet,* all tended toward progressively larger air groups to launch powerful attacks.

For the Royal Navy, the domination of its air arm by the Royal Air Force stunted carrier aircraft development, forcing British designers to consider passive means of protecting its carriers in European waters where the land-based air threat was considerable. Their solution was the armored flight deck (previous carrier designs elsewhere favored wooden flight decks because of the top weight), which was introduced on the *Ark Royal* of 1937, and developed more extensively in the subsequent Illustrious class. Though enjoying much better protection than their foreign contemporaries, the price was a smaller air group, often only two-thirds the size of Japanese and American designs.

The U.S. Powerhouses of the Pacific: the USS *Wasp* (foreground), USS *Yorktown*, USS *Hornet*, USS *Hancock*, USS *Ticonderoga,* and USS *Lexington,* anchored at Ulithi anchorage before a strike on Japan.

U.S. Navy photo

1940s

By 1941, carriers had proven invaluable in the Atlantic and Mediterranean and devastatingly effective at Pearl Harbor. Every warring navy realized it needed many more carriers (even the Germans and Italians attempted carrier construction), and labored mightily to produce them. For Japan, losses at Midway in 1942 prompted a crash conversion program to supplement the limited new construction her industrial base could manage. The British extended the *Illustrious* class into two sub-types and even started a scaled down light carrier version in the Colossus class.

The unrivaled production potential of the United States led to twenty-four of the powerful Essex class, and eleven light carriers built on cruiser hulls being commissioned, most of which saw combat in the Pacific. No longer fettered by treaty restrictions, American carrier designers even produced an armored flight deck carrier large enough to operate a hundred-plus plane air group, the long-lived Midway class, immediately after the war. However, it was in the unforeseen role of convoy escort that the greatest number of carriers were completed. By swiftly adapting merchant hull designs, American and British yards turned out 130 escort carriers, which played a major role in subduing the U-boat and covering amphibious assaults in the Pacific.

However, victory for the Allies in 1945 brought not only steep reductions in carrier strength, but the difficult challenge of adapting to jet aviation. This new aircraft type brought penalties in weight, fuel consumption, mandatory catapult launching, and above all, a high landing speed. This last aspect made carrier aviation in the early jet age problematic, but the pressures of a new Cold War and a desperate conflict over Korea ensured that carrier aviation had at least a limited future.

1950s-1970s

A string of technical breakthroughs prompted by the Royal Navy in the early 1950s not only saved carrier aviation, but permitted it to flourish for the balance of the century. The first was

the development of the steam catapult. The mounting weights and increasing take off speeds of jet aircraft strained hydraulic catapult technology to its limit. Such designs could run more than a quarter of the flight deck's length, and worse, required vast amounts of volatile oil. Fumes from such a system detonated aboard the USS *Bennington* in 1954, killed 138 men. Just four years earlier, a steam catapult prototype was developed aboard the HMS *Perseus*. This new system provided ample power reserves to get an aircraft airborne in a few hundred feet without explosive oil components. It was ironic that the first U.S. carrier to employ steam catapults, the USS *Hancock*, debuted the new system just weeks after the *Bennington* tragedy.

A second British innovation was the angled deck. From the beginning, carrier flight decks ran down the ship's centerline. This simple arrangement, however, prohibited simultaneous take-offs and landings, and required aircraft which missed the arresting wires (known as a "bolter"), to crash into a wire barrier in the hope it would not careen into parked aircraft ahead. Jets, with their higher landing speeds and kinetic energy, were especially dangerous in this landing arrangement. However, by offsetting the landing area to port a few degrees, approaching aircraft would have the way ahead clear in case of a bolter, while still permitting launches over the bow. Tests on the HMS *Triumph* confirmed the theory and the HMS *Centaurus* put to sea in 1953 with a new angled deck, though the USS *Antietam* would beat her by a few months.

A crucial development occurred about this time with the introduction of an optical landing system. Increasingly higher landing speeds of successive jet designs and the lag in throttle response from the early engines made responses to hand signals from the Landing Signal Officer (LSO) difficult to implement in a timely manner. However, if a pilot had a continual visual reference that accurately showed his relative approach, slight changes could be made to ensure a safe landing, or "trap."

The first optical landing system employed a bright reference light reflected back to a pilot via a large mirror. Based on the pilot's approach angle relative to the light, the reflection would appear at certain spots on the mirror. Small adjustments to the throttle were sufficient to correct any deviation, allowing consistent traps on the same spot of the flight deck. The newly repaired USS *Bennington* featured the new mirror landing system in 1955. Just a few years later the system was refined by employing a column of Fresnel lenses to project light at very specific angles to give a clearer indication of relative approach altitude.

These changes arrived just as a new generation of high performance aircraft brought carrier aviation into the supersonic age. Within a few years, several older American and British carriers were modified to accommodate these improvements, allowing them to remain viable warships well into the 1970s. For the U.S. Navy, however, modifying existing carriers was at best a stop-gap measure. Tactical aircraft were certain to grow larger and heavier as technology advanced, and carrier design had to keep pace if a viable naval air arm were to survive. The plan to produce a carrier large enough to operate new generations of jet aircraft, and particularly, aircraft large enough to deploy bulky atomic weaponry of the day placed the service in a fierce postwar clash with the rival Air Force.

Long before the end of World War II, naval designers sought an optimum carrier completely unfettered by treaty restrictions which placed a premium on aircraft handling without any ship characteristic compromises. What eventually emerged in the late 1940's was a behemoth nearly 1100 feet long with a displacement of 79,000 tons. Aside from its sheer size, the design also dispensed with an island superstructure. This radical departure (from American practice) was intended to permit the operation of large span twin engine bombers to conduct very long range bombing and atomic attacks.

In keeping with the naming convention of the day where carriers often bore the names of famous vessels of the sailing navy, the moniker USS *United States* was assigned to this wonder design. Unfortunately for the Navy, the death of Franklin Roosevelt in April 1945 brought an end to decades of presidential favoritism. The new Truman administration was not enthusiastic about naval aviation modernization, particularly in the face of postwar service drawdowns and the rise of a newly-independent Air Force with its global atomic bomber fleet. Economizing was the order of the day, and Truman's Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, reflected his chief's outlook and zealously cut programs and budgets, particularly for the Navy. On April 23, 1949, he cancelled the *United States*.

The furor over the cancellation brought about the resignations of the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, and several others, which led to the so-called "revolt of the admirals." Though these political developments embarrassed the Truman administration, it was the outbreak of the Korean War shortly thereafter which exposed Air Force limitations and the renewed usefulness

Opposite Left: USS *Forrestal* **(CV-59) commissioned on 1 October 1955, is shown with the cruiser** *Des Moines* **and fleet oiler, during underway replenishment.** *Forrestal* **was the first U.S. carrier to have the flight deck built as an integral member of the hull structure, as well as innovations in launching capabilities and armament.**

MMSD Steichen collection P-756d

of carrier aviation. However, despite the demonstrated tactical utility and the aforementioned carrier improvements, the U.S. Navy still lacked a carrier worthy of the next generation of carrier aircraft.

The onset of the Korean War forced the foes of the *United States* project to reverse themselves, and in 1950, work resumed on a new carrier design. By this time the Navy had second thoughts on large, long-range nuclear bombers and opted for large air groups with many high performance tactical jets. An island superstructure was therefore not prohibitive (though it would be one of the last features added to the production design), and the recent advances in the steam catapult, angled deck, and optical landing system were adopted from the outset. Funds were assigned for fiscal year 1952, and work on the very first super carrier was begun.

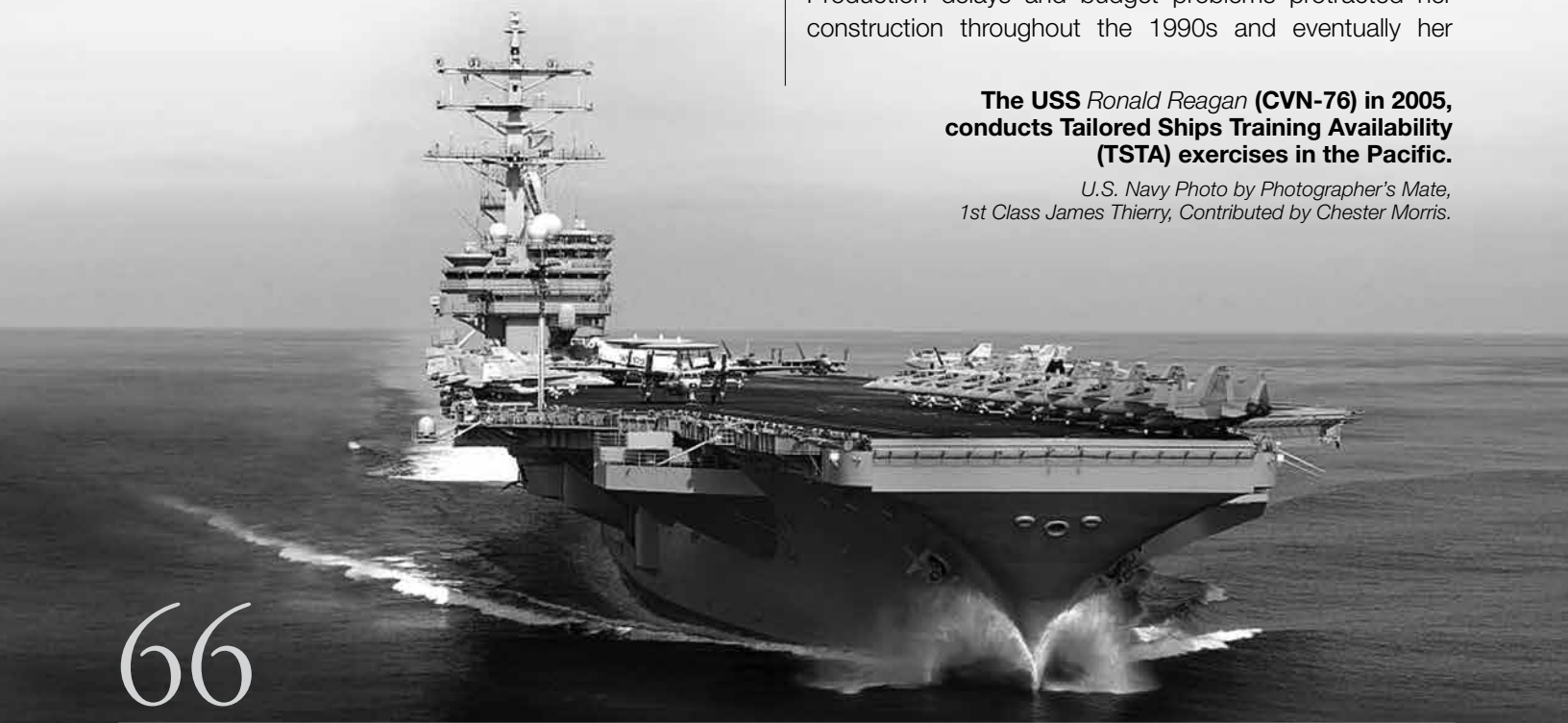
Commissioned on 1 October 1955, the USS *Forrestal* was only marginally smaller than the proposed *United States*. She could operate nearly 80 aircraft and carried a complement of close to 5,000 men. The *Forrestal* defined American carrier design for the rest of the century – nineteen large carriers emerged from her basic design, the only significant alteration being the adoption of nuclear power in the *Enterprise* of 1961, and the all-nuclear Nimitz class of 1975.

While the U.S. carrier fleet evolved and grew, the Royal Navy's slid beyond its habitual neglect into near extinction. Faced with budgets that shrank faster than the Empire, the Royal Navy could not afford any carriers that could operate conventional jet aircraft past the late 1970s. A compromise was found in the "through-deck" cruiser concept, which produced ships able to operate helicopters and the Harrier vertical take off/landing (VTOL) tactical jet. To assist a fully-laden Harrier in its take off, an innovative angled platform, nicknamed "ski ramp", was added on the forward flight deck. In addition to helping VTOL aircraft get aloft, other carrier aircraft can also employ it, eliminating costly and complex catapult equipment. For these reasons, the ski ramp is widely employed on other European and Asian carriers.

1980s-2000

The surprise Argentine occupation of the Falklands Islands in 1982 forced the Royal Navy to operate the "cruiser" *Invincible* as a carrier alongside the HMS *Hermes*, Britain's last conventional carrier, although she also operated Harriers. The circumstances of the Falklands War, and decisive role of the Royal Navy's improvised carrier power, underscored the short-sightedness of dispensing with carriers. Although only one additional ship was subsequently added to the Invincible class (*Ark Royal*), and despite manning difficulties, the Royal Navy has turned back to more capable large carriers for the twenty-first century in its upcoming Queen Elizabeth class due in the next decade.

The French Navy employed transferred British and American surplus carriers after World War II, but eventually commissioned two, the *Clemenceau* and *Foch,* in 1961 and 1963 respectively. By the 1980s, a replacement was desired, and in 1989 the keel was laid for France's first (and the only non-U.S.) nuclear carrier named *Richelieu*. Production delays and budget problems protracted her construction throughout the 1990s and eventually her



The USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN-76) in 2005, conducts Tailored Ships Training Availability (TSTA) exercises in the Pacific.

U.S. Navy Photo by Photographer's Mate, 1st Class James Thierry, Contributed by Chester Morris.

original name was changed to *Charles De Gaulle.* With the *Clemenceau* stricken in 1997, and the *Foch* sold to Brazil in 2000, the new carrier entered service that same year, but promptly suffered a broken propeller which delayed her return for several months.

The aircraft carrier was the last major combatant to enter service in the Soviet Navy. Although hybrid cruiser-carrier vessels, capable of operating helicopters and VTOL jets (the Moskva and Kiev classes), were introduced in the mid-sixties and seventies; it was not until 1985 that work began on a more conventional aircraft carrier. Eventually, commissioned in 1995, the *Admiral Kuznetsov* featured a ski ramp bow, but could operate modified versions of the latest Russian tactical aircraft such as the Su-25, Su-33, and MiG-29. A sister-ship, *Varyag*, was started, but work was suspended by the Ukranian Republic and the hulk was eventually bought by China in 2000. Protracted negotiations with Turkey finally allowed her transit through the Dardanelles in late 2001, and after an epic tow, arrived at Dalien in 2002. Although the Chinese have not yet completed the ship, they appear to be examining the design with an eye toward producing an indigenous carrier to supplement their present naval expansion.

Scheduled to begin construction in 2007, CVN-78 is slated to be commissioned in 2014. With a projected displacement of approximately 100,000 tons, 2 nuclear reactors, speed capabilities over 30 kts., an Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) and Advanced Aircraft Recovery System (AARS); CVN-78 will lead the way in next-generation carrier technology.

A model of the carrier of the future, *Gerald R. Ford,* **is on exhibit at the USS** *Midway* **Museum.**

MMSD photo by Maggie Piatt Walton

The Twenty-First Century

Today the aircraft carrier is in use with several nations including those in North and South America, western Europe, India, and someday, China and perhaps Japan. However, aviation is entering new frontiers, particularly regarding Remotely Piloted Vehicles (RPV's) and semi-autonomous electronics, and so carrier technology must grow. To this end, the U.S. Navy is about to construct its first significantly new carrier design in five decades.

Known as the CVN-21 program, the new carrier will employ massive magnetic catapults, diagnostic aircraft computer terminals, pre-set maintenance bays (inspired by professional racing's pit stops), and arresting gear able to trap both manned tactical aircraft and RPV's. A higher degree of automation will also permit smaller crews. The first such carrier, tentatively named *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN-78), is scheduled to enter service in 2015, and will see the aircraft carrier through the rest of the twenty-first century.

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Eighth Maritime Heritage Conference

October 9 – 12, 2007
Maritime Museum of San Diego, California

Preparations are now well under way for the **Eighth Maritime Heritage Conference** to be held in San Diego, California, October 9–12, 2007. Conference sessions will take place on board the vessels of the **Maritime Museum of San Diego** and the **San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum Midway**.

Participating organizations include: The American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee, the Council of American Maritime Museums, the Historic Naval Ships Association, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Maritime Historical Society, the Museum Small Craft Association, the National Park Service, the Naval Historical Foundation, the North American Society for Oceanic History, the Nautical Research Guild, the U.S. Life-Saving Service Heritage Association, and the U.S. Lighthouse Society. Given its historic location and the breadth of its focus, this conference will offer an extraordinary opportunity to celebrate the continuing importance of maritime heritage.

Keynote speakers for the conference will be Ian Toll and Alex Roland. **Ian W. Toll** is author of *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy*, published by W.W. Norton & Company in 2006. As a first book, Six Frigates has received much deserved praise, described by the *New York Times Review of Books* as "A superb history of the founding of America's Navy…" This is a story thoroughly researched and lucidly written. Ian's keynote address, officially opening the conference on the morning of October 10th, will be given on the flight deck of the USS *Midway*.

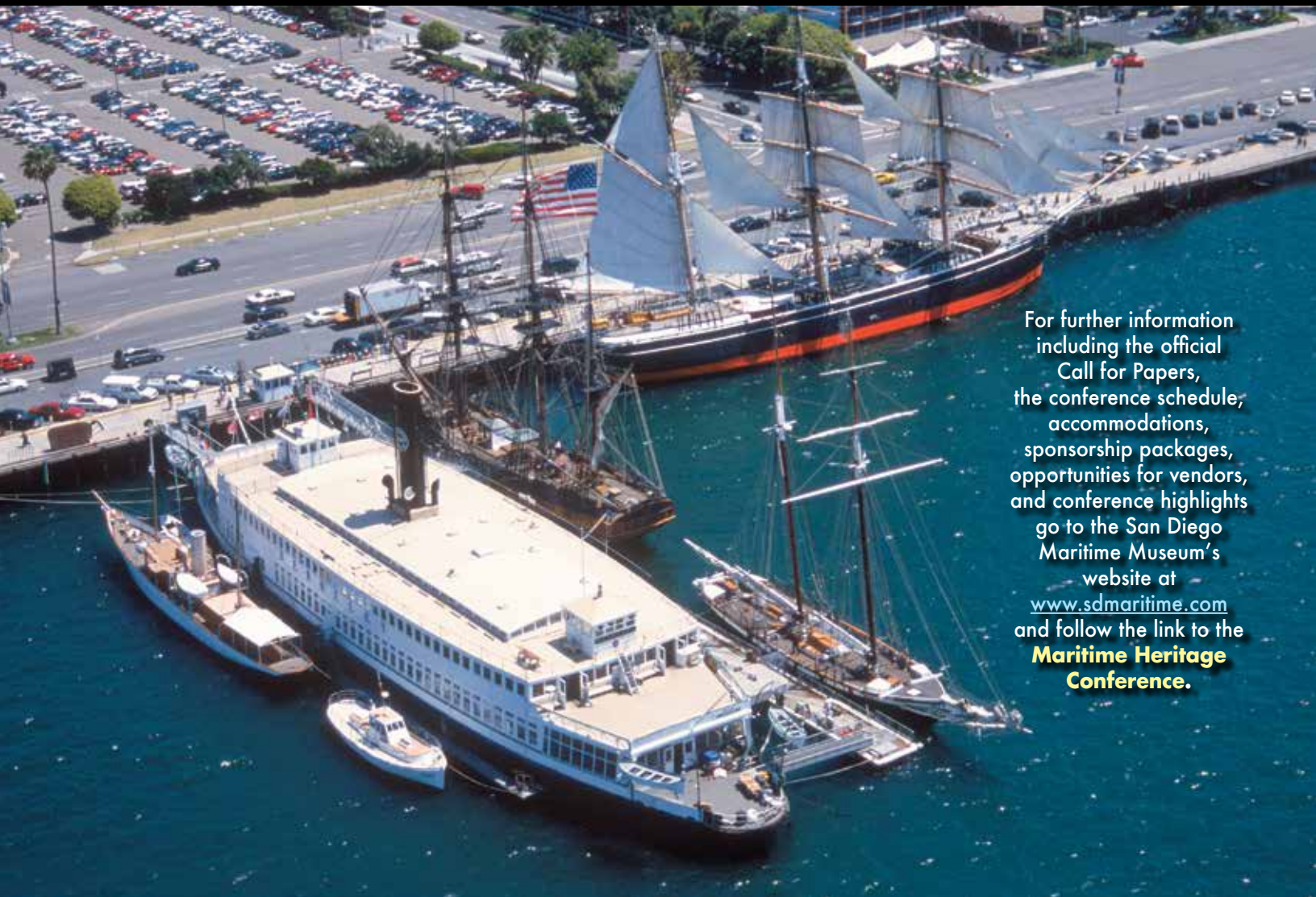
Dr. Alex Roland, professor of History at Duke University, will deliver the second keynote address of the conference during the formal conference banquet and twilight cruise on San Diego's Big Bay, to be held on the evening of October 12th. An accomplished author, Dr. Roland is one of the nation's leading historians of technology. His wide-ranging and imaginative research focuses upon the relationship between science, technology and warfare in the Western experience. Prior to teaching at Duke University, he worked for nearly a decade as historian with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. He is currently editor and lead writer for the American Maritime History project.

A number of participating organizations have already gathered conference presenters into potential panels. Among these are the Museum Small Craft Association, and the American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is also planning a series of panels, reflecting that organization's celebration of the bicentenary of its foundation. Conference organizers are also hoping to form panels reflecting the history of maritime endeavor around the Pacific Rim. Members of participating organizations interested in presenting a paper at the conference should contact their respective organizations for further advice. The conference organizers will also entertain submissions from individual presenters. Where possible, such papers will be organized within panels of similarly related themes.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE CALL FOR PAPERS IS JUNE 1, 2007

Inquiries concerning all panels and papers should be directed to the Conference Program Chair, Kevin Sheehan, at librarian@sdmaritime.org; (619) 234-9153 ext. 118

Conference Coordinator is Robyn Wilner at rwilner@sdmaritime.org; (619) 234-9153 ext. 106.



For further information including the official Call for Papers, the conference schedule, accommodations, sponsorship packages, opportunities for vendors, and conference highlights go to the San Diego Maritime Museum's website at www.sdmaritime.com and follow the link to the **Maritime Heritage Conference.**

Join us for the 8th Maritime Heritage Conference October 9-12, 2007

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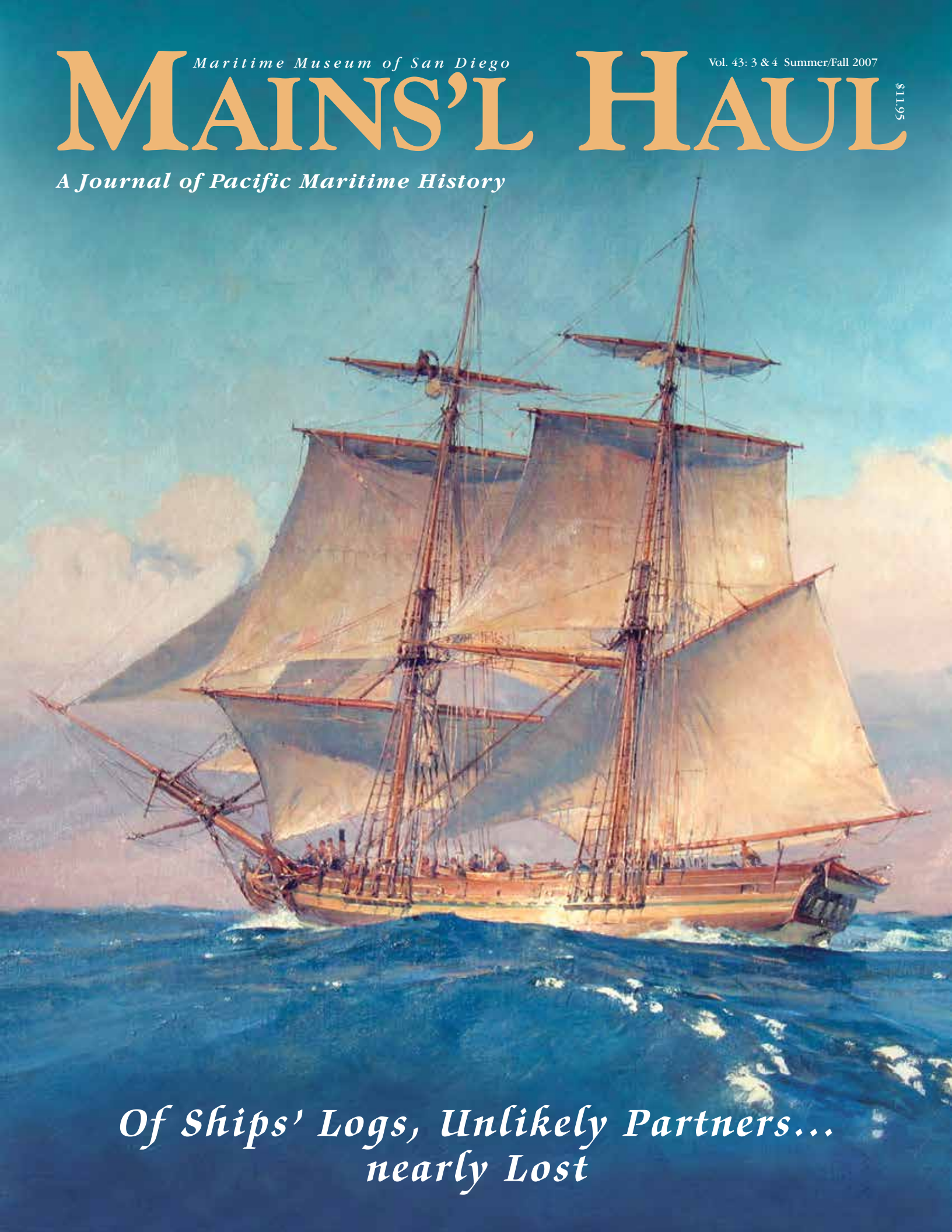

Of Ships' Logs, Unlikely Partners... nearly Lost

See Acknowledgements (page 4) for captions and credits

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MAINSAIL HAUL—An order
in tacking ship bidding,
"Swing the main yards."

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FROM THE HELM

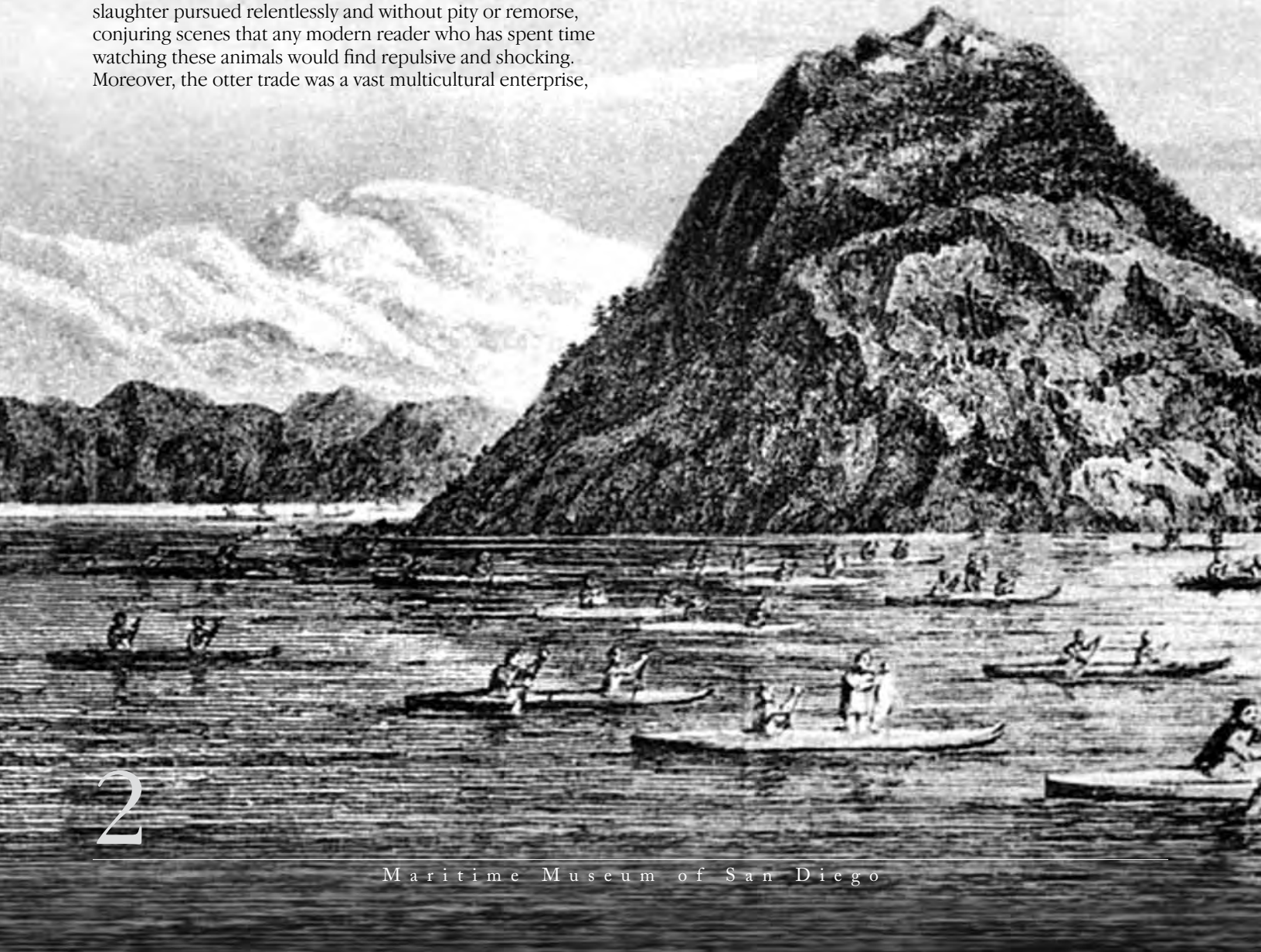
by Ray Ashley

Executive Director,
Maritime Museum of San Diego

We need to begin by confronting the sensibility that will one way or another animate almost every reader of the papers that follow. This issue of *Mains'l Haul* represents the latest work in a long, carefully, and lovingly assembled body of scholarship concerning an important topic in the maritime history of the Pacific, and indeed in the history of global economy. For our own regional interest, it constitutes the very first instance where San Diego played any significant role in the world economy, and the first time when Americans on the other side of the continent even became aware of the place. Moreover, what follows are engaging narratives filled with fascinating and admirable characters, the intersection of several cultures, exotic places, and exciting adventures. The papers herein honor the lifetime achievement of a remarkable historian, and they represent a marvelous spectrum of topical maritime history at its finest. In keeping, they are scholarly and objective. And that, perhaps most interesting of all, is the point where they cross the line of our sensibilities.

For they also document the slaughter on a massive scale and to near extinction, of a species of mammal that people today find endlessly captivating and endearing. It was a slaughter pursued relentlessly and without pity or remorse, conjuring scenes that any modern reader who has spent time watching these animals would find repulsive and shocking. Moreover, the otter trade was a vast multicultural enterprise, as enthusiastically pursued by the native peoples of the West Coast and Pacific Northwest, whose skills and technology were necessary ingredients, as it was by Asians, Europeans, and Americans. The otter trade was not conducted for food, fuel, or some other strategic or vital resource. The sea otter was hunted to near extinction for similar reasons that they are now prized attractions in aquariums: they possess unique qualities that people simply find irresistible. The difference of course, is context.

We've sadly grown used to it now, but the papers herein document what was then a new phase in human history where, for the first time, a truly global economy and associated technology gave us the ability to exploit natural resources to utter depletion at any point on earth, regardless of how remote. The otter trade came in consequence of the imperial expansion of Russia across Siberia and eventually Alaska, the expansion of the Spanish Empire northward from Mexico and the borderlands, the financial development of New England, the opening markets of China, the subscription of a native populace skilled in the maritime hunt, and the world girdling capacity of the sailing



ship to bring it all together as one construct. The sailing ships, in fact, became entire world cultures in microcosm, with Yankee officers and crews (occasionally augmented by Pacific Islanders), Kodiak (and occasionally Aleut) hunters, and Russian agents. They bartered with native Californians and contended with Spanish bureaucrats, officers of the British Royal Navy, pirates in the South China Sea, and Asian functionaries of many nations to deliver their cargos to Chinese merchants, among them the wealthiest and most influential businessman in all of history. An amazing polyglot of technology was deployed to hunt the otter: sailing ships and skin baidarkas, spears, rifles and naval artillery. The vast oceans of the world seemed no impediment: from large three-masted ships to small schooners less than 30' on deck, they doubled Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope ranging from the Bering Sea to Wampoa on the Pearl River. Without radio, telegraph, or the internet; the merchants who controlled the ships, cargos, and labor pools, were able to track closely the progress and value of a commodity in a production, distribution, and consumption network which spanned the earth.

Which brings us back to our sensibilities. We (as per our Museum Board) have formerly adopted the following premise:

The history of human achievement is defined in large measure by our historical relationship with the sea. Not only has the sea determined the progress and shape of civilization, our understanding of that relationship and our responsibilities for stewardship of the oceans will determine our future. This relationship cannot be understood or defined purely in scientific terms: culture exerts a dominating influence. The role of any maritime museum is translation between human experience of the oceans and our understanding of their nature.

In this issue of *Mains'l Haul*, we find an ample test of this premise…and a cause for finding it hopeful. For, as we know, the hunters didn't destroy the sea otter after all. As several of these papers mention, one small enclave of animals survived unnoticed along the central coast. Eventually they became a protected species and today their numbers are slowly expanding. As most of the papers also anticipate, perhaps one day we'll be able to enjoy the sight of these charming animals throughout their historical range. There is a reason why we should find this so appealing, and why it makes sense for us to love the animals our predecessors hunted – the otter's survival, falling within the realm of *our stewardship of the oceans*, defines the challenges we face for the future of our beleaguered planet.

Below: A flotilla of baidarkas, near Cook's Inlet, suggests the magnitude of the early hunting parties under the Russian directive at the turn of the nineteenth century. " 'This boat and the Aleuts who supplied its motive power were the key to Russian activity during the entire pre-1867 period,' writes Richard Pierce, who has translated and edited many of the Russian sources… ."

"When Russian America was ceded to the United States in 1867, the baidarka was thrown in as part of the deal, with fifty years or so left before the baidarka and the sea otter together grew commercially extinct." —George Dyson, *Baidarka*

Engraving from a sketch drawn (aboard the Chatham*) by Humphrys on 16 May 1794. Noted in pencil on the original sketch is: "baidarkas to be added later." From* Vancouver's Voyage*, 1798, Vol. III.*

Acknowledgements

This issue of *Mains'l Haul* has been a remarkable experience from start to finish, replete with its mysteries and last minute resolutions. Our four core contributors fanned out until there were no less than sixteen researchers digging for elusive facts.

It is unusual for *Mains'l Haul* to include a *Dedication* and yet this issue was guided by it. The notable contributions of Adele Ogden, Ph.D., became an overriding influence in presenting a history of the Russian-American Company intertwined with the Sea Otter trade. And so, thanks to Glenn Farris, Jack Hunter, Henry Silka, Michael Buxton, E. W. Giesecke (with the kind assistance of Linda Collins), Robert Wright and Susan Ham Baumann, who set the wheels of discovery in motion. Under their direction were library researchers: David Kessler (Bancroft Library, U.C. Berkeley), Kathleen Correia (California State Library), and Richard Crawford (Supervisor, Special Collections, San Diego Public Library), who joined the elusive task of creating the Dedication. With a U.C. Berkeley yearbook photo framing two "A. Ogdens", the inquiries expanded again, and with the assistance of Mrs. Eugene K. Chamberlin, Iris Engstrand (MMSD Editorial Board Member) and Donald Cutter, we were finally able confirm the photo of Adele Ogden.

Thanks also to Daniel Murley, Curator of the Healdsburg Museum, who provided images and captions for H. D. Fitch on extremely short notice, as did Susan Snyder (granting photo permissions) from the Bancroft Collection.

Aaron St. John kindly gave permission to reproduce his stunning painting of the Maritime Museum ships (see back cover).

It was more than a year ago that the editor first viewed contributor Rodney J. Taylor's painting of the *Betsy* (front cover) by lauded maritime artist Christopher Blossom. Thus began an intensive effort by our maritime historians to recreate an era *Of Ships' Logs, Unlikely Partners… nearly Lost.*

It is with this tremendous support that *Mains'l Haul* continues to fulfill its mission as the collective *memory of the seafaring experience…*

With Gratitude,
Neva Sullaway, editor

Opposite Right:

Following in the wake of Joseph O'Cain, Jonathan Winship, Jr. (pictured left), formed an ***unlikely partnership*** with Aleksandr Andreevich Baranof (Baranov, right) manager of the Russian-American Company.

Bostonians, Russians and Alaskan Natives joined in hunting expeditions (1800-1810) from Russian America (Alaska), reaching as far south as Cedros Island, off the Lower Coast (Baja California), in pursuit of the treasured pelts of sea otters. The armorial on John Brown's "China Trade" plate (see pg. 80) symbolized the counterbalancing of the new era of American exploration (the mariner), encouraged by the goddess of Liberty and coveted by the quintessential American Eagle. What was not apparent to the merchantmen was the impending loss of an entire species of mammal **– the sea otter.**

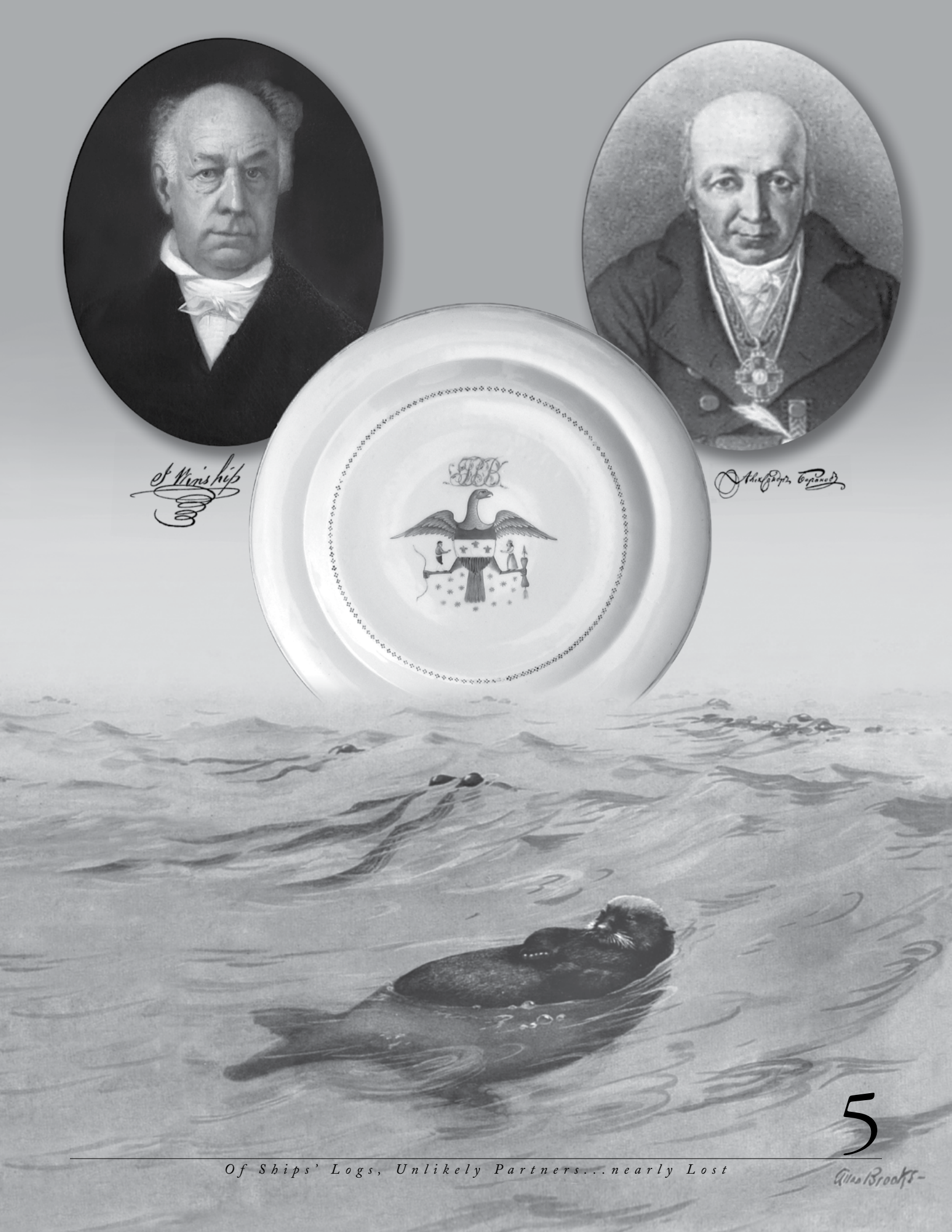
Front Cover:

The brig ***Betsy,*** owned by Abiel Winship, and reputedly the first American ship to anchor in San Diego Bay, 26 August 1800, was a forerunner in the "brief but intense phase of the sea otter trade." While Rodney J. Taylor presents her log, as written by John Brown, renowned maritime artist Christopher Blossom captures her in brilliant colors as she sails off the California coast.

Courtesy Rodney J. Taylor, Private Collection, Photo by Richard Harvey

Major funding provided by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.

Vibrant Culture, Vibrant City



5

Of Ships' Logs, Unlikely Partners...nearly Lost

Dedication to Adele Ogden
1902-1990

Aside from her intelligence and diligence as a researcher, Adele Ogden was an intensely private person. The only photo(s) of her, our fleet of researchers were able to uncover, was this 1924 University of California, Berkeley, yearbook photo with two A. Ogdens. Her yearbook photo in the 1925 edition had "Adele Ogden" spelled out, confirming her identity.

This issue of *Mains'l Haul* is dedicated to Adele Ogden, Ph.D., whose contributions to California's early maritime history, particularly on the sea otter fur and cattle hide trades, were major and permanent. Her landmark work (1941) on the commercial sea otter hunting era, as well as her scholarly articles in *Pacific Historical Review*, *California Historical Society Quarterly,* and *The Journal of San Diego History*, were groundbreaking for that era of California history. Her research remains a major source of information and inspiration. While others have built upon her efforts, few have matched the sheer amount of raw manuscript material she combed for information on her topics of interest.

Adele Ogden was born in National City, California, on 29 December 1902, to Lillian Keller Ogden and Charles R. Ogden, both originally from Ohio. Her father was a chemist who died at the young age of forty-one, when she was ten. Her mother later became the Treasurer of National City for more than a decade. Elder to a brother, she attended elementary and secondary school in National City and later studied at San Diego Junior College (which would eventually become San Diego State University). She attended the University of California, Berkeley and graduated with an AB in history in 1924. She was awarded a master's degree in 1925. Adele then moved south and taught at Fallbrook Union High School for two years, before returning to the Bay Area to take a position at University High School in Oakland. There she rose to supervising teacher and remained until 1945, with a two-year hiatus in 1934-35 as a Native Sons of the Golden West Research Fellow. She worked in the archives of Mexico and New England in support of her doctoral dissertation, which she received from U.C. Berkeley in 1937. It was an honor for her that UC Press published her student dissertation in 1941, recognizing her scholarly contribution on *The California Sea Otter Trade 1784-1848*.

In 1945, she accepted a position as Supervisor of Student Teachers at U.C. Berkeley and remained there until retirement in 1959. Due to the declining health of her elderly mother, Adele returned to San Diego to care for her. She continued to pursue her interest in California history well into her eighties. Adele Ogden passed away of cancer on 12 August 1990, at the age of 87. As former student Eugene K. Chamberlin noted in his obituary of Adele in the *Pacific Historical Review*: "If the all-male UCB History Dept. had broken its barriers in her lifetime, she would have been a prime candidate for appointment."

Perhaps foremost of her donations to the Bancroft Library is her 1,493-page typescript compilation listing the vessels that visited California during the Spanish and Mexican periods, entitled "Trading Vessels on the California Coast, 1786-1848." Much of her work was done in the time before photocopiers and computers, and she followed the practice of the day, meticulously citing her sources and carefully recording her information on three-by-five index cards.

Those who follow her are deeply grateful that she worked so intensely and with such dedication.

The *Forward* written by Adele in the materials turned over to the Bancroft Library reads:

All of the material on* Trading Vessels on the California Coast, 1786-1848, *is given to The Bancroft Library with the full right of copyright. May it be a token of gratitude to The Library and its staff for the years of service given to me. It is hoped that future scholars will find the data useful in making studies of merchants, seamen, companies, ports, and trade routes; all leading to larger works such as the westward movement by sea and a maritime history of California.

The Writings of Adele Ogden

1927 "Hides and Tallow – McCulloch, Hartnell and Company, 1822-1828," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 6, no. 3., San Francisco. Based on her U.C. Berkeley, Dept. of History Master's Thesis (1925).

1929 "Boston Hide Droghers Along California Shores," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 8, no.4, December, 289-305.

1932 **"**The Californians in Spain's Pacific Otter Trade, 1775-1795," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vols. 1-4, 1932.

1933 "Russian Sea-Otter and Seal Hunting on the California Coast 1803-1841," *California Historical Society Quarterly,* Vol. 12, pp. 217-231.

1936 "Havens for Whalers," *Grizzly Bear*, January 1936.

1941 *The California Sea Otter Trade 1784-1848.* Publication by University of California Press, Berkeley, California, Reprinted 1975. Based on U.C. Berkeley Dept. of History Dissertation (1937).

1944 **"**Business Letters of Alfred Robinson," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 22, December 1944.

1945 "New England Traders in Spanish and Mexican California," in *Greater America: Essays in Honor of Herbert Eugene Bolton*, Adele Ogden and Engel Sluiter, editors. University of California Press, 395-413.

1948 Introductory Note By Adele Ogden: A Letter From Stephen Reynolds of Honolulu to Thomas O. Larken of San Francisco, Nov. 1948. Stephen Reynolds. Book Club of California, San Francisco.

1979 "Trading Vessels on the California Coast, 1786-1848," unpublished typescript in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (Donated in 1979).

1980 "Mexican California: Topics in Maritime History," Unpublished manuscript, Bancroft Library.

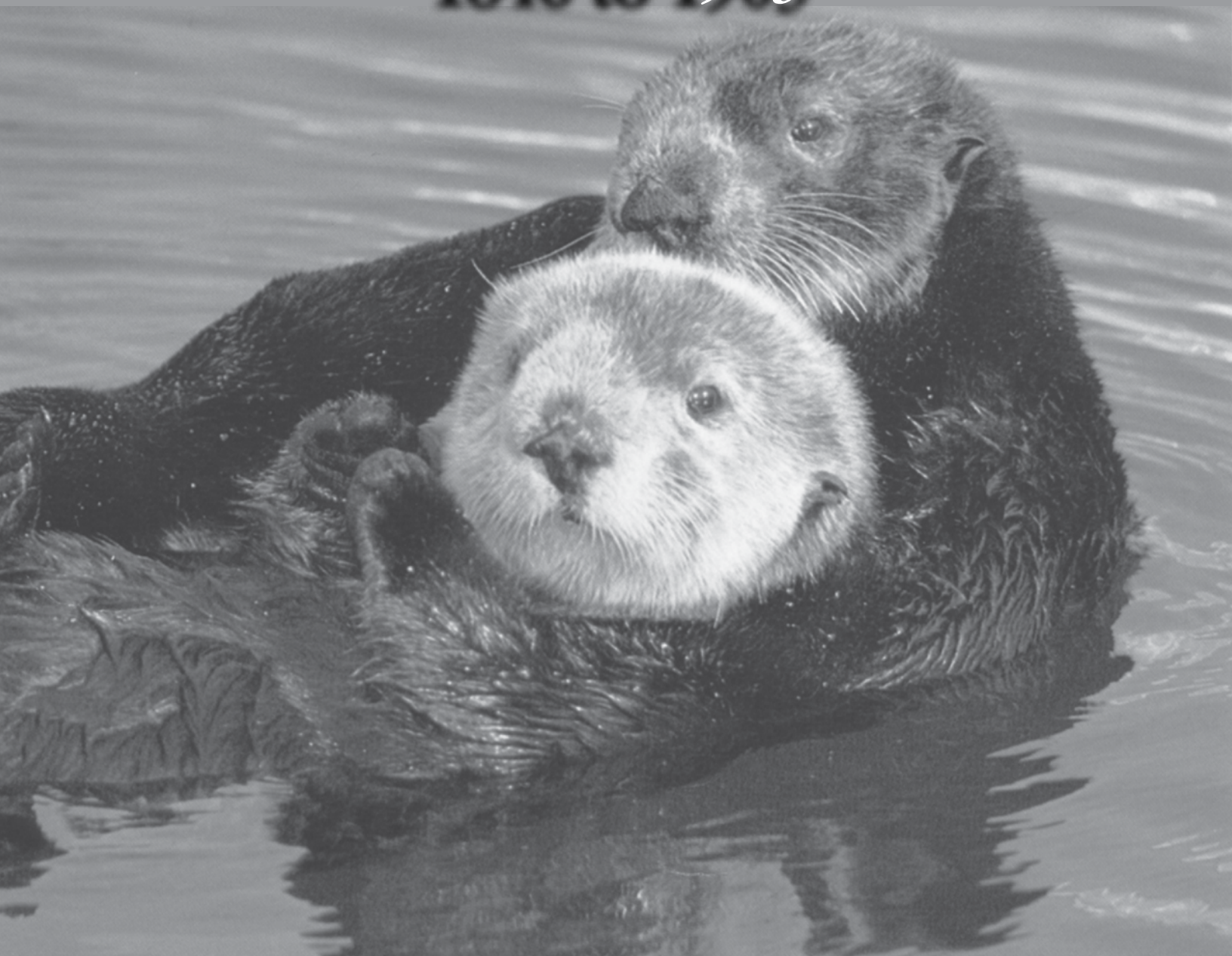
1981 **"**Captain Henry Fitch, San Diego Merchant, 1825-1849," *Journal of San Diego History*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Fall).

1991 *Fort Ross, California: Outpost of Russian Alaska, 1812-1841.* With E. O. Essig, Clarence John DuFour and Richard A. Pierce (editor), The Limestone Press, Fairbanks, Alaska.

Contributors to this preparation: Jack Hunter, Henry P. Silka, Glenn J. Farris, Robert G. Wright, David Kessler, Kathleen Correia, E.W. Giesecke, Michael Buxton, Mrs. Eugene K. Chamberlin, Susan Ham Baumann, Richard W. Crawford, Neva Sullaway, Iris Engstrand and Donald Cutter.

The Sea Otter Hunters of San Diego and the Lower Coast, 1846 to 1903

By Michael Buxton



Sea otters are mammals that dive to the sea floor to forage for food, and their diet includes crab, abalone, sea urchin, fish, octopus, shellfish and squid. Prior to the early 1800s, sea otters inhabited the near shore coastal areas from the Kuril Islands off northern Japan, across the Aleutian archipelago to Alaska, and southward to the central portion of the Baja Peninsula. Large groups often rested together in the kelp beds, a habitat that made them easy prey for hunters.

The sea otter, *Enhydra lutris (Linnaeus)*, has been swimming along the western coast of North America for at least one million years. Fossil sea otter bones, collected from the early Pleistocene Elk River formation in Oregon, indicate these ice age sea otters lived in a cold, shallow bay that once existed near Capo Blanco. Sea otters developed a dense under fur that insulated the mammal from cold water, a favorable characteristic which would contribute ultimately to their demise.

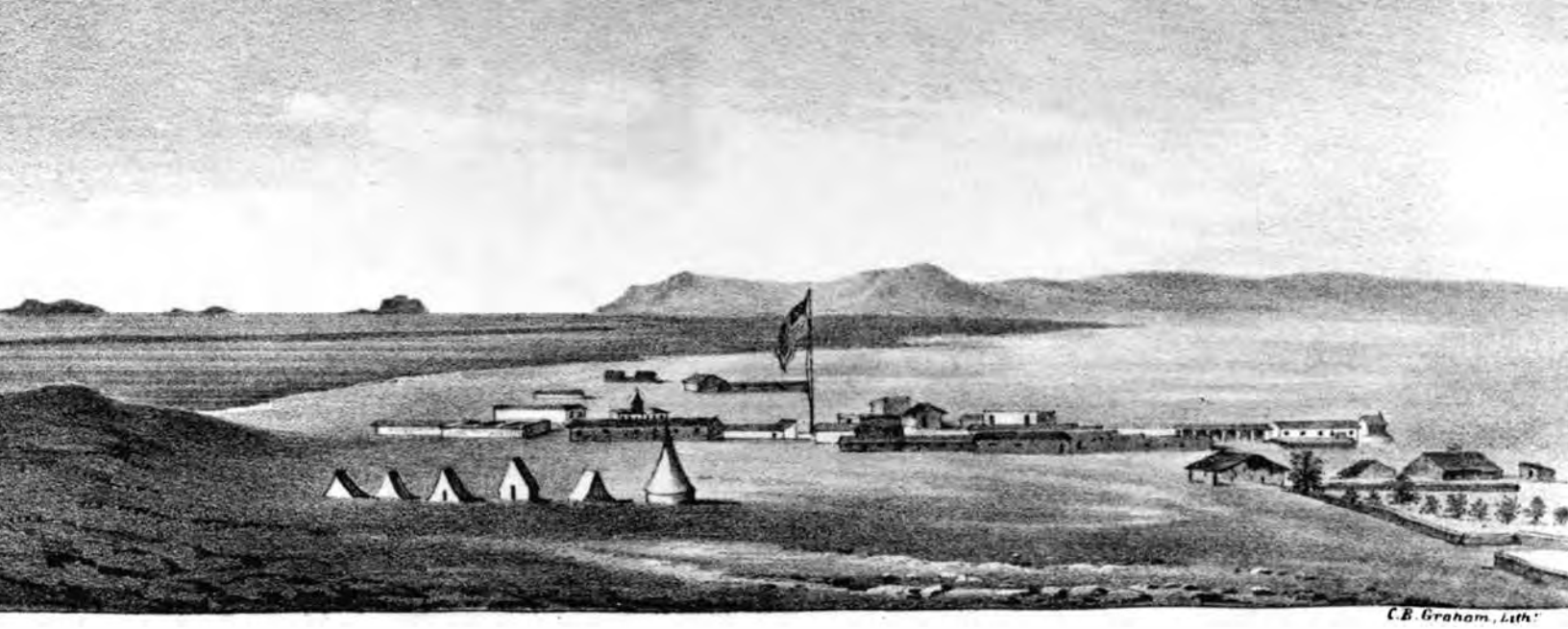
From prehistoric times until the early 1900s, sea otters in coastal waters were hunted with nets, harpoons, and later rifles, and were used for food and clothing. Sea otters soon became scarce along the Alta California coast, and by the 1850s only two areas in southern waters consistently produced pelts: the Channel Islands, and along the west coast and islands of the Baja Peninsula, also called the Lower Coast. The hunt for sea otters continued until no sea otters could be found in California or Mexican waters.

San Diego had developed as a center for trade with the Lower Coast, and the port served as a transshipment point for peninsula products, among them the last of the Lower Coast sea otter pelts. Sloops and schooners from San Diego sailed to the Lower Coast to gather mixed cargoes that included sea otter skins, while others were discouraged from the lack of returns and sailed thousands of miles across the Pacific to the Northwest Pacific Basin.

The Early Sea Otter Trade

Prehistoric inhabitants were the first to hunt for sea otters along western shores, and bones from sea otters have been collected from several San Diego county archaeological sites. Many of the bones had been burned, indicating the sea otter was used as a food source.[1] Early Spanish explorers traded beads and cloth for sea otter furs, and noted that the native inhabitants of San Diego Bay used canoes made from reeds, harpoons, and nets to hunt sea otters, and utilized the pelts for clothing.[2]

Michael Buxton developed his interest in maritime history after working as a commercial diver in San Diego. He currently works as an archaeologist for California State Parks, and has previously published articles in *Mains'l Haul*.



Above: A U.S. army encampment, marked by the flag at center, represents the nascent American presence in the Mexican settlement of San Diego. Sketched in 1846 by U.S. Army illustrator John Mix Stanley, this reproduction is one of the first illustrations of San Diego. It was reproduced as a lithograph by C. B. Graham.

This illustration is held at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
Courtesy Raymond Starr Collection, MMSD

During the 1700s, after Spain had colonized Alta California, missionaries, Indians, and soldiers traded sea otter skins. Skins were shipped to China, but trade was very restricted, and residents turned to American smugglers, who soon appeared along the coast.

In 1803, Boston merchant and ship captain, Joseph O'Cain, made an arrangement with the Russian-American Company in Alaska, which brought skilled Aleut hunters to California and the Lower Coast. The effective techniques of the Northwest Indians diminished greatly the sea otters from California and the Lower Coast. American trappers, who had traveled overland to California and hunted sea otters, further reduced the otter population. Small pockets of otter colonies, which managed to exist in remote locations, did not provide enough pelts for large vessels sailing directly to China.[3]

Fur trade from San Diego and along the Lower Coast

By the 1840s, many of the sea otter skins came from individual hunters and small vessel operations that made a profit by working the Channel Islands and Lower Coast. Small boats, or "otter canoes," were used to stalk the otters and shoot them as they swam in the kelp. These vessels were typically double-ended, about fifteen-feet long, and had a beam of five feet. They were designed to be maneuverable, and could be easily hauled through the surf.[4]

Phillip Crosthwaite was 21 years old in 1846 when he joined a small outfit of sea otter hunters at San Diego, but he ended up joining the U.S. Army before he saw any game. Crosthwaite had left port with Julian Ames for an otter hunt in waters near Mission Rosario on the Lower Coast just before the outbreak of the Mexican War. Ames owned the mission, and "the waters near the shore abounded with sea otter." The two men were accompanied by William Curley,

Left: Phillip Crosthwaite deserted from the vessel *Hopewell* after it arrived in San Diego in 1846, and joined a group of sea otter hunters for an unprofitable trip to the Lower Coast. Crosthwaite was more successful as a public servant and held many public positions during his life, including sheriff, clerk and recorder, treasurer, school commissioner, and justice of the peace. He passed away at San Diego in 1903.[5]

From The History of San Diego, The Silver Dons, *by Richard F. Pourade, Union-Tribute Publishing Company, 1963.*

John Post, and John C. Stewart. The hunt was cut short by rough weather and the outbreak of war with Mexico.

> The party had a terrible trip in their canoes to the mission, encountering storm after storm and running out of water. They were finally thrown out upon the beach some nine miles from the mission. Striking the trail to the mission they made haste to get something to eat. Coming to a turn in the road, they suddenly came upon Don Pio Pico, Governor of California. He appeared to be very much frightened and begged them to spare him. They then learned for the first time of the Mexican War.[6]

They remained at the mission that night and left for San Diego the next day. Arriving at Old Town late at night, the travel weary hunters rested in a local dwelling until daylight. The men were rudely awakened by "a thundering knock at the door," announcing the arrival of Captain Archibald Gillespie and his newly formed army. "There can be no neutrals in this country," Gillespie told the hunters. "Either enlist for three months, as the war will probably be over by that time, or else be imprisoned on the frigate *Congress*."[7] The men had planned on joining the Americans later in the day, but they made a timely decision to sign up right away. Crosthwaite survived the battle with Mexican troops at San Pasqual, and after the war was elected sheriff of San Diego.[8]

George Lyons was another San Diego sea otter hunter who later became an elected official. Lyons was a native of Ireland who had served as a ship's carpenter, and he arrived in port on board a whaler in 1847. He had worked for Henry Delano Fitch (see article: *Henry Delano Fitch and the Lure of the Sea Otter Trade*, pages 88-94) as a storekeeper and eventually opened a store of his own from 1851 until 1858, and later served as sheriff, city trustee, and postmaster.[9]

China had a close relationship with San Diego in Spanish times. In the 1800s, Canton was lined with hongs (warehouses) in which foreign goods, including sea otter furs from the Pacific coast, were traded for silk.

Painting in oil at the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts

This undated photo (probably taken in Alaska), shows several workers and a variety of pelts stacked for market. By 1868, all sea otters hunted in Alaskan waters were owned by the Alaska Commercial Company. Over-hunting had greatly reduced the number of sea otters in the south, forcing hunters to seek otters in northern waters.

Courtesy JupiterImages

Lyons and another hunter, known only as Captain Brown, built and launched two otter boats at San Diego in May 1855. Lyons and Brown used the vessel *Plutus* to transport the boats to the Lower Coast and islands for sea otter hunts. According to the *San Diego Herald*, 19 May 1855, the otter boats constructed by Lyons were well built:

> Our enterprising fellow citizens Messrs Lyons, Brown, and Stevens have launched during the past two weeks two as fine and staunch built crafts as ever floated upon the waters of our bay. They are designed for otter and seal hunting on the coast, and are being fitted out in connection with the pilot boat *Plutus*, owned by Capt. Chas Keating for a six month cruise. From Capt Browns experience in the business we predict for him and his associates a pleasant and profitable voyage.[10]

The schooner *Plutus* and her small boats made several successful hunts during the 1850s. In November 1855, she arrived with "a quantity of sea otter skins," and again in August 1857, under the command of Captain Stevens, the *Plutus* returned from an "otter cruise" with an unknown amount of pelts.[11] Not all hunts went smoothly, and sometimes nature could end operations early. In November of 1857, the *Plutus* encountered heavy weather that made it impossible to hunt sea otters, forcing the schooner to return ten days after she had left.[12] Whaler and ship captain, Enos Wall, also hunted with Lyons on occasion, and Judge Benjamin Hayes described the excitement of a hunt in August 1857:

> George R Lyons and Enos Wall return from a voyage down the Lower California Coast, otter hunting, below Santo Tomas. They killed 10 otter, skins worth about $45 on average. They think they must have chased one 20 miles. Another they must have fired more than 100 shots before killing, an exciting pursuit. The otter shews [sic] his head above water for air only

a little while, then is down again, and swims it may be yards or more before he comes up. They followed him in the boat, rowing and firing; having a good helmsman, they finally shot him. The sea was too rough for hunting on this occasion, owing to the strong current making down that part of the coast, with the strong wind blowing up. Otter, when wounded, sink, catch the kelp to hold on to, and die. When killed outright, they float on the water.[13]

On 24 Oct 1858, the *Plutus* was anchored near La Playa when a severe gale sprang up, and the violent winds dragged her anchor. The schooner was wrecked upon the beach and was damaged beyond repair.[14]

William Curley was a San Diego hunter who paddled his otter canoe south on sea otter hunts. He had come to San Diego in 1844 and married Ramona Alpias, and the two raised several children together. He was a member of the party that had the unsuccessful hunt on the Lower Coast with Julian Ames and Phillip Crosthwaite in 1846. He had joined the army with the rest of the hunters upon his return, and remained in San Diego after the war.[15] Curley died when his otter canoe overturned in the surf on Coronado Island in 1857. Coronado Island at that time was called "Aspinwalls Island," and the *San Diego Herald,* 3 January 1857, reported his drowning had occurred there:

Mr. Wm Curley, a man by the name of White and an Indian started from La Playa in a small canoe, last week to go down the coast to hunt otter. After getting outside of Point Loma the wind blew so hard that they put back. After an hour or so they concluded to go down along the beach on the outside of Aspinwalls Island, and get some clams. The canoe, having no keel, drifted to leeward so fast that they concluded to land in the surf, in attempting to do which the canoe broke in two pieces and Curley and the Indian were drowned. White was washed upon the beach and arrived in town the next day to tell the tale of his comrades sad fate.[16]

The Last of the California Sea Otters

By the 1860s, a small fleet of coastal sloops and schooners plied the Lower Coast, hauling general merchandise south from San Diego to peninsula mining camps and colonists, and they returned with holds full of gold ore, whale oil, orchillia (a moss used in making dye), sealskins, abalone shells and meat, and a few sea otter skins. San Diego continued to play an important role in Lower Coast trade by serving as a supply base and transshipment point for products. Most sea otter pelts landed at San Diego during this period came from vessels that carried a variety of Lower Coast goods.

Captain Kimberly hunted sea otters at the Channel Islands and Lower Coast with the schooner *Cygnet* and often called at San Diego. He sailed the *Cygnet* on sea otter hunts in the waters around Cedros Island, and also hunted for sea turtles at Scammon's Lagoon. Kimberly was "doing well, having taken about 100 skins" in October 1868, and the *Cygnet* landed forty sea otter skins at San Diego in one month.[17] He decided to try his luck elsewhere and in 1872, he overhauled the *Cygnet* and then sailed her across the Pacific to hunt around the Kuril Islands north of Japan. Kimberly had a successful hunt and sold his pelts for $90 to $100 apiece. Kimberly left a crewman at Hokkaido who told others of their lucrative hunt, and several vessels rushed to the Kuril Islands seeking a share of the swimming gold. It was estimated fifty American vessels were

Below: The schooner *Lou* (pictured circa 1909), formerly the sloop *New Hope*, hunted sea otters for a brief period in her long and sordid career. Prefabricated on the East Coast, she was shipped around the Horn in pieces and reassembled at San Francisco during the Gold Rush. The *New Hope* was later rigged as a schooner and renamed the *Lou* during the 1880s, but trouble followed. She was used by smugglers, poachers, and general troublemakers until she was sold to the government and used as a target for the guns of Fort Rosecrans on Point Loma in 1909.[23]

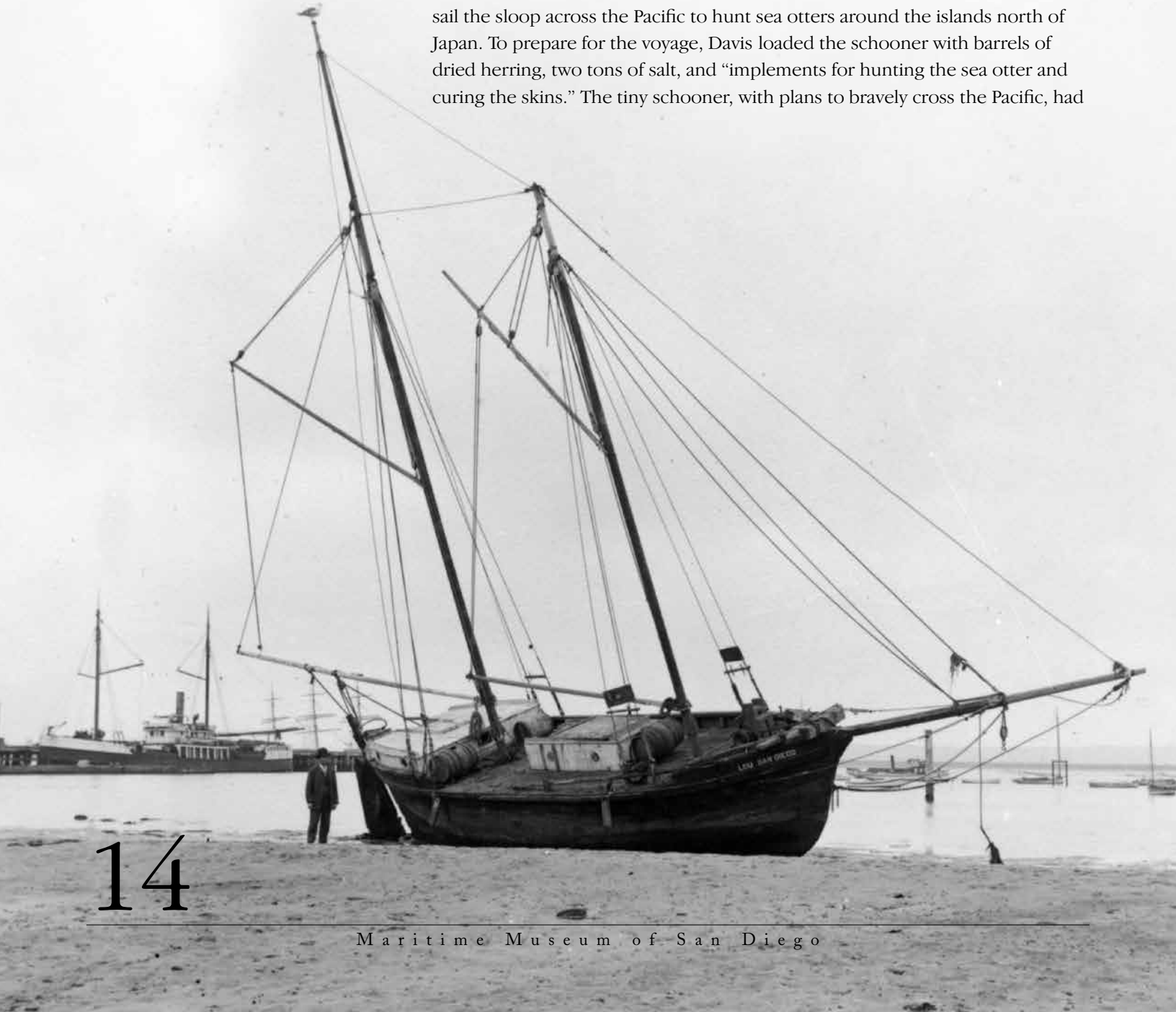
Courtesy of Union Title Insurance and Trust Co., Historical Collection, MMSD Collection P-2149c

hunting sea otters around the islands north of Japan by 1897.[18]

The small sloop *Dolphin* sailed from San Diego to Japan to hunt sea otter during the 1870s, no small feat for a vessel that was only thirty-feet long. Before her transpacific voyage, she had hauled supplies for goat hunters on Guadalupe Island until 1872, when she was purchased by Marco Bruschi. Bruschi was a local businessman who owned a store in San Diego and also operated seal hunting camps that were located on the Los Cornados and Cedros Islands, and Bruschi had purchased the *Dolphin* and another vessel, the *Lark*, to supply the camps.[19]

Although the *Dolphin* was smaller than the typical coastal vessel that worked the Lower Coast from San Diego in the 1870s, she was a stout vessel. She was "not much larger then a regular whale boat," and her decks had been covered over so she could work offshore. The sloop had a beam of 10 feet, and living quarters for the four sailors who manned her had been minimized to enable the vessel to haul up to eight tons of cargo.

In 1873, Captain Steadman Davis owned the *Dolphin* and he decided to sail the sloop across the Pacific to hunt sea otters around the islands north of Japan. To prepare for the voyage, Davis loaded the schooner with barrels of dried herring, two tons of salt, and "implements for hunting the sea otter and curing the skins." The tiny schooner, with plans to bravely cross the Pacific, had



captured the imaginations of San Diego residents. A crowd gathered on the dock when she sailed, "and when she cast off her moorings, cheer after cheer rent the air."[20]

The *Dolphin* sailed to Hawaii and then headed for a hunt in the waters north of Japan. She arrived at Hokkaido in October 1873, with thirteen skins which Davis sold for nine hundred dollars in cash.[21] Davis sailed the *Dolphin* to the Kuril Islands off northern Japan, and hunted during the winter of 1874-1875. Ten sea otter skins and two hundred fox skins were collected. Davis died (in April 1875) on Shikotan Island, after he fell onto burning coals used to dry out the cabin. The crew attempted to sail the *Dolphin* to mainland Japan, but the tiny schooner was lost with all hands. A Japanese steamer encountered the overturned hull of the *Dolphin* six miles offshore from the coast of Japan. The steamer maneuvered alongside the hull to investigate and when a line was used in an unsuccessful attempt to flip the vessel upright, it was reported that "the body of a man was seen hanging from the hatchway."[22] The *Dolphin* remained overturned, and the hull and corpse were abandoned at sea.

The sloop *New Hope* also worked the Lower Coast hunting whale and seal, hauling supplies, and occasionally landing sea otter skins. In 1879, and again in 1880, Captain Adelphus Packard arrived at San Diego with "several very fine otter skins."[25] Another coastal trade vessel that landed sea otter pelts at San Diego was the schooner *Dorinda*. In January 1884, she arrived

Above: The vessel *Dorinda* is shown at right moored alongside the Steamship Wharf at the foot of 5th Street, San Diego. She was built in 1848 at San Francisco and worked hauling products from the Lower Coast that were transshipped to markets at San Diego. Her cargoes included abalone meat and shells, ore, seal skins and oil, orchilla and sea otter skins. The schooner was smashed to pieces on the Lower Coast when a severe gale blew her ashore in 1890.[24]

MMSD Collection P-7820c

from Turtle Bay under the command of Capt. Johnson with a cargo of abalone shells, meat, and otter skins that were consigned to local shipper A. Wentscher. In July 1880, the vessel *John Stillson* arrived at San Diego with several sea otter skins from Guadalupe Island and reported that the San Diego vessels *Emma*, *Ellen*, *Isabella* and *Liberty* were hunting fur seals and sea otters on the Island.[26]

Captain Dave Dean brought the schooner *Ethel* into San Diego after an otter hunt around the Channel Islands in 1889. He had sailed from San Pedro on 11 April, and arrived in San Diego with fifty sea otter pelts on 6 July. "The skin of the mule colored and black otters are worth $75 to $80," reported *The San Diego Union*. "The silver tip worth from $110 to $120, and the whitehead about $120."[27] Captain Dean described to a reporter his method of hunting sea otters:

> In being hunted they are chased with small boats and shot with 44 calibre Winchester rifles and it requires a good man to tire and corral them. The first dive these animals make is about fifty yards, the next thirty yards, and the third about ten yards. After the third dive they become tired and can be easily shot. Some of the animals lead the boats on a long chase. The manner of turning them is to shoot ahead, and when they see the ball striking the water they will turn around and come directly toward the boat.[28]

This 1845 painting of a sea otter, by famous wildlife illustrator John James Audubon, F.R.S., shows the mammal on land – a very uncharacteristic pose. Sea otters spend their lives in coastal waters, floating on their backs at the surface (making them easy targets for hunters), or diving for food on the seafloor. Their fur, the densest and most luxurious fur of any mammal, was a highly-prized commodity in the nineteenth century.

From The Imperial Collection of Audubon Animals, *by John James Audubon, F.R.S. and be Reverend John Bachman, D.D.*

Dean began his work early in the morning and was ready for a hunt in the kelp beds before daybreak. The captain found that some sea otters, particularly older ones, were tricky to hunt no matter what time of day:

> The first morning in hunting a school, the otters will be found in the kelp near the shore, and the first morning the hunter must be on the ground before daybreak or the otters will put out to sea. One queer feature of their swimming out to sea is they invariably swim southwest. If a hunter misses them in the kelp bed in the morning, he can generally count them coming back just before sunset. The old bull who has been hunted before, is very cute, and will often baffle his pursuers. He will stick his nose out of the water and watch the boat to see which way it is coming and when they dive will start forward but generally comes up far astern of the boat. The whiteheads, which are the oldest, are the hardest to kill. The mule colored and black otter in time changes to a silver tip, and from a silver tip to a whitehead. The teeth of a black otter are very strong and sharp and will easily snap an arm from a man. The whitehead seldom have any teeth. The skins of the otters are put on stretchers and measure from five, six and seven feet in length, and from twelve to thirteen inches in breadth. They are sold in San Francisco, and from there are sent to England to be cured.[29]

Most readers today would consider a hunt for sea otters quite brutal. The animal was skinned by cutting once across its lower back and along both hind legs, and the loose skin was then easily stripped off the carcass.[30] Captain Dean killed every sea otter he encountered, and he showed no mercy to mothers or pups:

> The mothers are very easily killed as they carry their young in their arms the same manner as a woman, and nurse them in a like way. When the mother is killed the young will cry like a child. A mother who has been hunted before will hold its young out of the water and in front of her so as to protect herself from the bullets. If it becomes too hot for her, she will drop it and dive, and upon coming to the surface again, will take the pup in her arms once more. The young cow will stay with her pups until killed.[31]

The son of early Santa Barbara sea otter hunter, George Nidever, worked the Lower Coast during the 1880s. George Sr. had hunted otters around California and the Lower Coast during the 1830s and into the 1840s. The Elder Nidever had been one of the best shots on the coast and "could put a ball through an otters head at 100 yards while the boat was in motion."[32] Nidever's son, George Jr., was also a supreme marksman and was considered "the most expert of the sharpshooters of this business."[33] George Jr. landed pelts that were worth more than his father's, and a prime skin sold for $125 to $150 at the market.[34] Nidever hunted sea otters with his brother Jacob, and later went on a hunt in the waters of Washington that produced four sea otter skins valued at $1,000.00 in 1897.

By the 1890s, sea otters were hard to find along the Baja California coast. Hunting around the Channel Islands continued to produce a few pelts, but landings were very infrequent, "hunting them now is like skimming the cream from an empty milk pitcher," reported one newspaper.[35]

Charles Lutjens managed to land several sea otter pelts at San Diego after a hunt to the Lower Coast in 1898. Lutjens heard that otters were reappearing in the kelp beds of the peninsula, and quietly outfitted the schooner *Kate and Ann* at San Francisco for a hunt. He sailed the schooner to Santo Tomas and shot nineteen sea otters in one day. By the end of his hunt, Lutjens had secured thirty-two sea otter pelts. He also traded with a local peninsula resident for a pelt:

> While engaged in hunting the otters he was told that Charlie Shields, an old man who lives in Las Animas Canyon, had a particularly fine skin which he would no doubt sell. It had been killed with a club by a Mexican who sold the pelt to Mr. Shields for $6. Mr. Lutjens saw the old man and nearly caused him to drop dead by offering him $200 for the skin.[36]
>
> "What! $200 for that thing?" asked Shields in astonishment. "Why it aint worth no such money. I only paid $6 for it." "Well, I make you the offer, but if you don't want to accept it... ."
>
> "O, yes, I accept it," hastily put in the old man, "but I think you are paying too much." "That's my lookout," replied Mr. Lutjens.[37]

Lutjens took no chances with his valuable catch and had the skins brought to San Diego on the coastal steamer *St. Dennis*. The pelts were then shipped express to San Francisco and sold for $4,650.

Lutjens made what may have been the last sea otter hunt by Americans on the Lower Coast in 1903. He sailed nineteen men south from San Francisco on board the schooner *Merry Locks*, and was gone for three months. The hunters returned from the Lower Coast "without seeing a single otter," and had "captured but one fur seal."[38]

In 1913, Federal laws were passed that outlawed the hunting of sea otters, but few were left to protect. Possession of sea otter skins was also outlawed. An exception to the law allows native cultures to hunt sea otters, however, trading sea otter pelts is not permitted.

For centuries sea otters have been hunted for their pelts, and from the 1800s to 1900s vessels sailed from San Diego with hunters seeking otters in the kelp beds of the Channel Islands and Lower Coast. The lust for sea otter fur had led some San Diego vessels to sail across the Pacific in search of the mammal. Hunters were relentless in their pursuit of the sea otter and they continued to seek its furs until none could be found along the western seaboard.

A few sea otters survived the great hunt of the 1800s, and a small colony was discovered near Point Sur in 1938. Scientific study has greatly increased our knowledge of this fascinating animal, resulting in conservation efforts that allowed the population to grow. The sea otter seems determined to survive, and perhaps one day it will not be difficult to spy an otter in the kelp beds of Southern and Baja California.

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Otter Hunting By Alaskan Nativ

In The Early Nineteenth Century

By **Glenn Farris,** Senior State Archaeologist,
California State Parks

Glenn Farris has worked as an archaeologist (both prehistoric and historic) for California State Parks since 1978. In this capacity he has worked all over California, but has a special interest in Spanish/Mexican era sites and the Russian site of Fort Ross. Studying ethnohistorical documents related to these areas has become a particular fascination.

He completed his graduate work at the University of California, Davis, receiving his Ph.D. in Anthropology in 1982. In addition to field archaeology, Farris has published extensively in the realm of ethnohistory. Several of his publications deal with sea voyages that stopped at California (Russian Achille Schabelski on the *Apollon* in 1822-1823, Briton Lt. Edward Belcher on the *Blossom* in 1826-27, and Frenchman Cyrille Laplace aboard the *Artémise* in 1839). He is currently the supervisor of the State Archaeological Collections Research Facility for California State Parks. Farris lives in Davis, CA., with his wife, India, and two daughters, Ariane and Mariah.

IN ADVANCE OF THE RUSSIANS

From the time that the Spanish learned of the presence of the Russians in the North Pacific, fear of their moving down the coast into the Californias prevailed. In actuality, however, there were few ships available to the Russians to pursue these goals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In addition, the Russians were too focused on the high quality resources to be found in the North Pacific. On 16 May 1768, a Junta was held at San Blas, Mexico, led by the Visitador General, Joseph de Galvez. At this meeting Galvez imparted "definite knowledge of the attempts which the Russians have made to facilitate their communication with this America,"[4] in which the concern over the Russians drove a decision to send an expedition north into Alta California to establish a presence there. In particular, their mission was to rediscover the legendary Monterey Bay, previously identified by Sebastian Vizcaino in 1602-1603, and to build a presidio there to secure it as a port to support returning Manila galleons. The following year saw the movement north into Alta California by the Portolá-Serra expeditions bent on establishing a solid presence in the area. In 1769, the Portolá expedition saw a large body of water, the bay now called San Francisco. Before this time, Monterey Bay was considered the key coastal port in northern California. It would soon be superseded by its more dramatic rival.

Although the Russians and Alaskan native hunters are often associated with the major hunting of sea mammals, it is clear that the local Indians had some

Opposite Left: In the "Harbour of St. Paul on the Island of Cadiack" [Kodiak Island], two and three cockpit baidarkas trail in the wake of the Russian ship, the *Neva*, under the command of Yurii Lisianskii.

From Yurii F. Lisianskii's "A Voyage Around the World in 1803-1806," St. Petersburg, 1809-1812.

fair success in their own right. The account book of the *Mercury* (a ship that traded with various people along the California coast in 1806-07), reports a very large number of otter skins obtained by trade (2,848). However, as the Spanish authorities became more and more belligerent in denying permission to land and trade, an alternate plan was hatched by the Boston sea captains starting with Joseph O'Cain. That plan was to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Russian-American Company, then holding sway in Alaska, to use their native hunters[5] to capture sea otters in locations not as accessible to the Spanish and Indians, particularly the islands off the coast of California.

VENTURES ALONG THE CALIFORNIA COAST

Despite the fact that fear of Russian incursions into California was a major spur to the Spanish colonization of Alta California starting in 1769, the first Russians to actually come to California did so aboard an American ship, the *O'Cain,* in 1803. The ship's captain, Joseph O'Cain, had ventured north to Kodiak Island where the Russian-American Company had its headquarters at the time.[6] He made a deal with the Russian manager of the RAC in Alaska, Alexander Baranov, in which he would be lent 40 Kodiak natives and 17 canoes (called *baidarkas* by the Russians) to hunt sea otter along the California coast. Most of these baidarkas had two cockpits, although occasionally there would be one canoe with three to allow for a passenger, the Russian overseer or *baidarshchik*. Accompanying this expedition were two Russians named Afanasii Shvetsov and Timofei Tarakanov,[7] who were placed in charge of the native hunters. They can thus be noted as being the first Russians to come to California.

Aside from providing a means to carry the Northwest hunters to California to hunt the sea mammals, the American ships also had access to the lucrative port of Canton in South China, which the Russians did not.[8] Sales of the warm pelts were especially brisk in Canton in the first decade of the nineteenth century, although

Alexander Baranov, Governor, Russian-American Company

Engraving after an oil painting by Mikhail T. Tikhanov in 1818, Oregon Historical Society

Adele Ogden, in her painstakingly researched book ***The California Sea Otter Trade 1784-1848,***[1] provides wonderful details of the early Russian-American sea otter hunting expeditions in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In an earlier article, she crafted a vivid depiction of the story of sea otter and seal hunting along the California coast.[2] Although key parts of the following article are drawn from her incomparable work, new information, not available to Ogden at the time, and drawn from my own research into the Russians along the California coast, has been used to develop this article. Following up on her earlier research, Ogden created a monumental manuscript of information on ships coming to the California coast between 1786 and 1848,[3] providing grist for historians to comprehend California's developing role during this vital period of exploration and expansion.

The Baja Peninsula was referred to as the "Lower Coast" in the nineteenth century.

Professor James Gibson notes that the sale price in Canton for otter skins fluctuated between $20 and $30 apiece during the period of 1801-1810.[9]

By December 1803, the *O'Cain* had arrived off the coast of San Diego. However, upon being rebuffed by the Spanish authorities in a request to land, it continued south into Lower California to the bays of San Quintin and Todos Santos. There, Captain O'Cain pleaded *hardship of the sea* saying that he needed to land and refit his ship after the long voyage. Permission was given by Captain José Manuel Ruiz, commandant of the Presidio of San Diego. O'Cain's initial request to stay for three days was drawn out to three months. He was confronted by a Spanish military contingent led by Corporal Juan Maria Osuna,[10] who was captured but finally released by O'Cain. By this time the *O'Cain* had obtained 1,100 sea otter pelts by hunting (and another 700 that O'Cain had obtained by trading with various people along the California coast), and decided it was time to leave the coast. In the course of this hunt, it was claimed that all the sea otter from Mission Rosario to Mission Santo Domingo had been wiped out.[11]

Upon his return to Alaska, the success of the voyage inclined Baranov toward further contract arrangements. More ships were sent out from Boston in 1805, and in 1806 young Jonathan Winship arranged for the *O'Cain* to once again hunt sea otter along the California coast. The Russian in charge was named Sysoi Slobochikov. They took aboard over 100 Kodiak otter hunters and 70 baidarkas. In addition, there were twelve Alaskan women on the trip to support the hunters. Winship cleverly distributed the Kodiaks on various islands along the coast and left them to do their hunting, while he entered the Spanish port seeming to have nothing to do with otter hunting. Upon his departure, Winship carried onboard the *O'Cain* a nice haul of seal and otter skins worth about $60,000.

The *Peacock*, commanded by Oliver Kimball (O'Cain's brother-in-law), picked up another group of Alaskan natives after concluding a contract with Baranov in October 1806. The Russian in charge on this occasion was Timofei Tarakanov,[12] who had previously come to California on the *O'Cain* with Shvetsov in 1803. Since the Spanish were catching on to what the Americans were doing and were less willing to buy the sad tale of mending the ship, Kimball decided to stay away from the occupied Spanish areas and set up a base at Bodega Bay in 1807. It was most likely during this visit that Tarakanov made an agreement with the local Indian chiefs for permission to occupy this part of the coast.[13] The story of this transaction was obtained from two Bodega Miwok natives at Mission San Rafael in 1819, by Fr. Mariano Payeras. The Indians called him by the name "Talacani," which was their closest approximation to Tarakanov.[14]

In 1808 and 1809, George Washington Eayrs, captain of the *Mercury,* sailed south with more Northwest natives. His contract with Baranov has recently been published in Russian.[15] In the contract, he was referred to by the Russians as "W. Eayrs," suggesting that he introduced himself by the name Washington instead of George. A couple of years earlier in 1806-1807, the *Mercury* had sailed along the California coast from Port San Luis [Obispo] down to various ports in northern Baja California. It was then commanded by

Right: Fr. Mariano Payeras

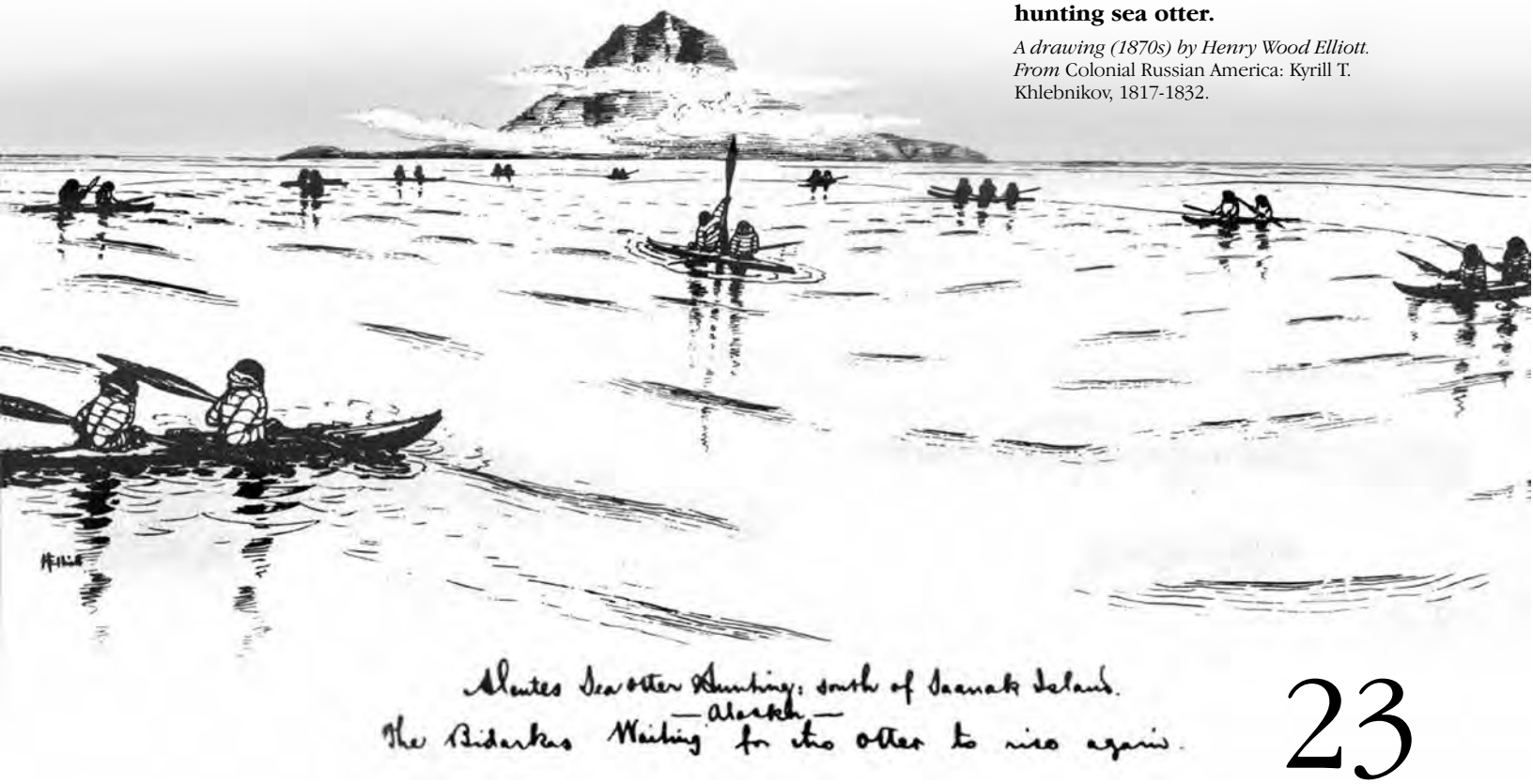
Painting at La Purisima Mission State Historical Park. Courtesy California State Parks

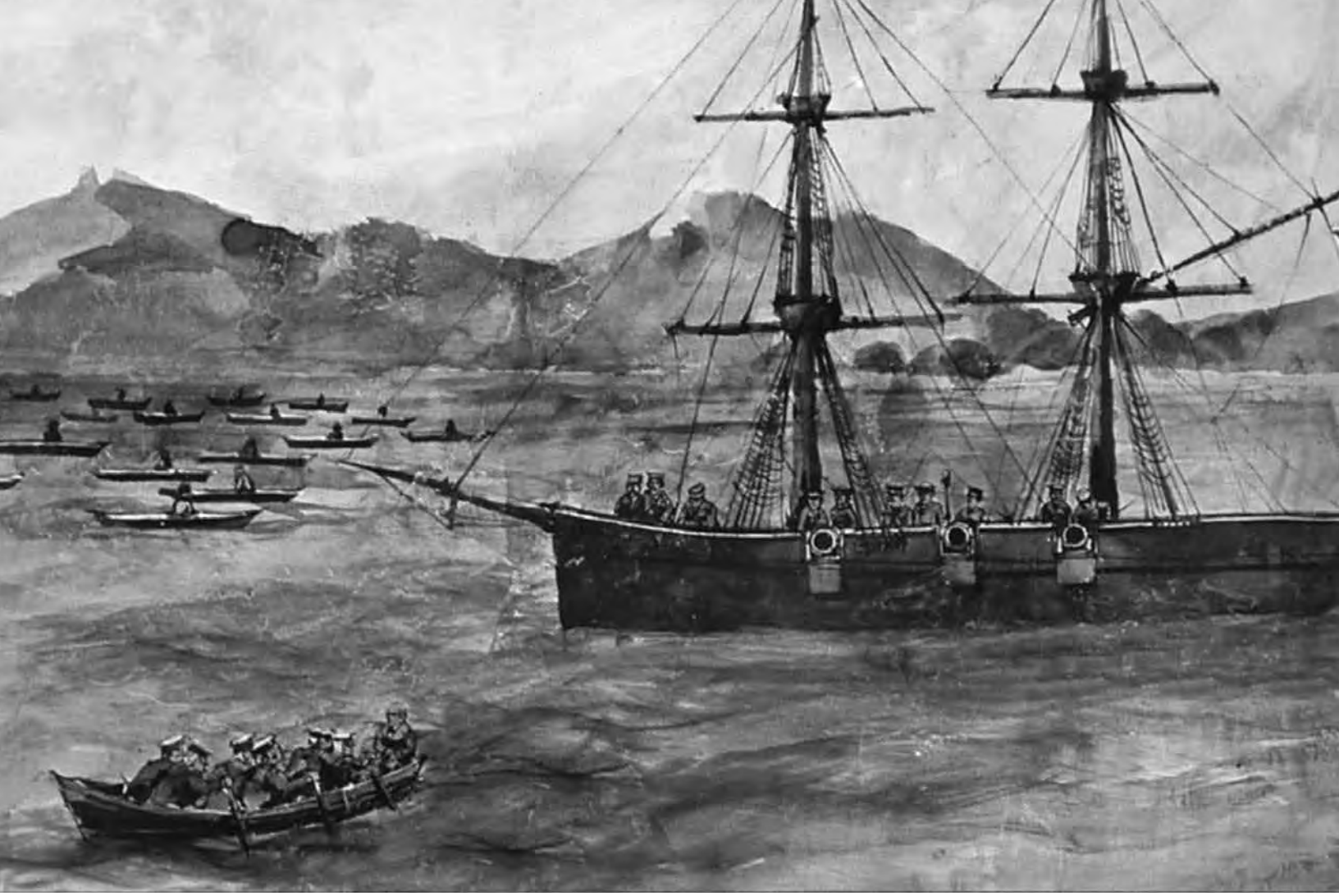
Captain William Heath Davis, Sr., who successfully traded with various local people for a total of 2,848 otter skins that had been hunted by the Spanish and Indians. In the account book of the *Mercury,* it showed payments of up to $10 for a prime sea otter pelt.[16] However, when the *Mercury* returned under Captain G. W. Eayrs, he decided to contract with the Russians rather than purchase the skins from the local people. Ultimately, the *Mercury* was captured by the Spanish in 1813.[17]

In 1808-1809, a Russian ship, the *Kadiak*, carried Ivan Aleksandrovich Kuskov and a crew of forty Russians, with 130 Unalaska and Kodiak natives and thirty Alaskan women to explore the coast north of San Francisco and scout out a base to develop in "New Albion." Along the way they stopped to hunt at Trinidad Bay in northern California and then came down to Bodega Bay where they set up their base. After approximately eight months they returned to New Arkhangel (now Sitka) with a cargo of 2,350 sea otter skins (1,453 full grown, 406 yearlings and 491 pups).

Below: A group of Alaskan natives hunting sea otter.

A drawing (1870s) by Henry Wood Elliott. From Colonial Russian America: Kyrill T. Khlebnikov, 1817-1832.





Above: Russian ship with baidarka flotilla

From an artist's rendition of a Russian ship and flotilla of baidarkas in Sitka Bay, Alaska, Natural History Association, 1979.

Kuskov returned to Bodega Bay in 1811 on the *Chirikov*. The ship also visited the Farallon Islands and when they departed for Sitka they were loaded with 1,238 sea-otter skins (1,160 grown, 78 yearlings), as well as a cargo of sea lion meat. The Russians subsequently set up an "*artel*"[18] on the Farallones to harvest and process sea lions and fur seals. Sea lion meat was much revered by the Alaskan native people and periodically a baidara (a large umiak-like open skin boat) was dispatched from the mainland Russian settlement to procure thousands of pounds of this meat for local consumption. In addition, the skins of the sea lions were needed to keep the skin boats in repair. The warmer waters of California were harder on the longevity of the skin boats than the frigid north Pacific waters.

The major Yankee interest in the sea otter trade seems to have tapered off with declining prices and numbers of otters remaining by about 1812-1813. The capture of the *Mercury* in 1813,[19] also added to the diminished interest. However, it appears that the Russians continued to hunt on their own. In 1814, Baranov sent down a ship named the *Il'mena*. It had been formerly known as the *Lydia*, but was renamed when purchased by the Russian-American Company. This was the first "Russian" ship to venture south of the Farallones into southern California. It dropped off contingents of Alaskan hunters onto various Channel Islands (off modern day Santa Barbara and Los Angeles). One of the Russians in charge of the otter hunters on this trip was named Yakov Babin. It appears that the Alaskan hunters under his command got into altercations (possibly even

a massacre) with the native California Indians on at least one of the Channel Islands (probably San Nicolas), which resulted in the death of a number of the Indians.[20] The renowned story of "The Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island," wherein a woman remained on the island of that name after the rest of the people had been taken to the mainland, may well be related to this event.[21]

MEXICAN ERA and the SEA MAMMAL TRADE

Although the prime period of the Russian-Aleut sea mammal hunting along the California coast seems to have dwindled by the early 1820s, it is clear from the ships' records compiled by Ogden that a lower degree of exploitation continued right up to the eve of the Gold Rush (see Table 2). Whether the strikingly diminished numbers of skins reported for the ships during the Mexican period (1821-1846) is a reflection of the impact of the intense hunting of the first decade of the nineteenth century, or whether it indicates the dramatically less efficient methods available once the Alaskan hunters and their kayaks were removed from the equation, is not clear. With the success of the Mexican revolution against Spain in 1821, came an opening of the California trade to other nations, although it is clear that the Americans and English overwhelmingly dominated the trade. Cooperative hunting between the Russians based at Fort Ross and the Mexican governor Luis Argüello occurred sporadically, although there were occasions when it became clear to Argüello that the Russians were not reporting the full number of skins taken and were short-changing him.[22] In his journals, RAC chief agent Kirill Khlebnikov shows that under-reporting was commonplace and he even provided specific instructions on how the calculations should be made.[23] Despite his concerns over being cheated, Governor Argüello renewed the hunting contract on the grounds that the Mexicans had inadequate nautical resources to conduct hunting on their own and so it was better to work with the Russians and get something rather than have them engage in clandestine activities and receive nothing.[24]

Ultimately, an increasing number of American hunters came to California and got involved in hunting sea otters. Men like Job Dye, George Nidever and Isaac Sparks[25] were active in hunting in the 1830s and 1840s. Some of these hunters were said to have hired Hawaiians to swim out to retrieve otters shot with a rifle, however, it is probable that, in general, the recovery rate was much lower than that obtained by the Alaskan natives.

An article in "The Pacific States Watchman" dated 15 October 1881, mentions that "[Sea] otters have been secured along the California coast for many years, but now there are but few secured. Of late, they have been shot from the shore by hunters who have wandered up and down in search of them."[26] With this final level of predation, the sea otters of California soon disappeared from view and were not seen again until the late 1930s.

TABLE 1

REPORTS OF SEA MAMMAL SKINS TAKEN BY VARIOUS SHIPS ON THE CALIFORNIA COAST, 1803-1818[27]

SHIP'S NAME	FLAG	YEAR(S)	QUANTITY OF SEA MAMMAL SKINS REPORTED TAKEN
Alexander	U.S.	**1803**	491 sea otter skins on board at San Diego, confiscated
Lelia Byrd	U.S.	**1803**	1,600 sea otter skins (purchased at San Blas, January 1803)
O'Cain	U.S.	**1803**	1,800 sea otter skins (including 700 skins sold by Californians)
Princesa	Spain	**1804**	"7 bundles" of sea otter skins
Activo	Spain	**1805**	292 sea otter skins
Lelia Byrd	U.S.	**1805**	Sea otter skins (no quantity given)
Princesa	Spain	**1805**	"3 bundles" sea otter skins
Peacock	U.S.	**1806**	No figures for number of skins taken
Mercury	U.S.	**1806-7**	2,848 sea otter skins (1,772 prime, 1,076 small)
O'Cain	U.S.	**1806**	Sea otter skins valued at $60,000 (probably about 2,000 skins—G. Farris) plus fur seal skins
Tamana	U.S.	**1806**	2,427 sea otter skins
Derby	U.S.	**1807**	No figure on furs taken but mention of 50 Kodiak hunters and 25 baidarkas
O'Cain	U.S.	**1807**	4,819 sea otter skins (3,006 prime; 1,264 yearlings, 549 cubs); also seal skins
Peacock	U.S.	**1807**	1,231 sea otter skins (753 prime, 228 yearlings, 250 cubs)
Princesa	Spain	**1807**	273 sea otter skins
Tamana	U.S.	**1807**	613 sea otter skins; plus seal skins
Kadiak	Russian	**1808-9**	2,350 sea otter skins (1,453 grown, 406 yearling, 491 pups)
Mercury	U.S.	**1808-9**	2,117 sea otter (1,688 grown, 256 yearlings, 136 cubs, 37 others)
Dromo	U.S.	**1809**	1,700 sea otter skins; 3,200 seal skins
Mercury	U.S.	**1809-10**	Sea otter skins (no figure)
Albatross	U.S.	**1810-11**	1,190 sea otter skins (778 grown, 140 yearlings, 202 pups, 70 others); 1,220 [sea otter] tails
Isabella	U.S.	**1810-11**	2,488 sea otter skins (1,978 grown, 432 yearlings, 566 pups)
O'Cain	U.S.	**1810-11**	2,726 sea otter; 18,509 seal skins (taken at Farallon Islands)
Princesa	Spain	**1810**	160 sea otter skins
Albatross	U.S.	**1811**	56,017 fur seal skins (33,740 from Farallones in 1810; 21,153 from Farallones in 1,811; 1,124 from Baja California
Chirkov	Russian	**1811**	1,238 sea otter skins (1,160 grown, 78 yearlings)
Albatross	U.S.	**1812**	8,000 fur seal skins from Farallon Islands
Amethyst	U.S.	**1812**	1,442 sea otter skins (1,310 grown, 98 yearlings, 34 pups)
Charon	U.S	**1812**	1,792 sea otter skins (1,596 grown, 136 yearling, 60 pups)
Chirikov	Russian	**1812**	No figures on number of skins
Katherine	U.S.	**1812**	1,516 sea otter skins (1,252 grown, 186 yearlings, 78 pups)
Mercury	U.S.	**1812**	500 sea otter skins
Mercury	U.S.	**1813**	1,603 sea otter skins; 947 sea otter tails (seized by Spanish)
Forester	U.S	**1814**	3,400 seal skins
Il'mena	Russian	**1814**	392 sea otter skins (322 grown, 50 yearling, 20 pups)
Chirikov	Russian	**1815**	8 sea otter skins
Il'mena	Russian	**1815-16**	955 sea otter skins from around Santa Barbara Channel Islands
Bordelais	France	**1817, 1818**	Sea otter skins (no specific number)
Columbia	England	**1817**	Fur seal skins (no number)
Clarion	U.S.	**1818**	Sea otter skins (no number)
Kutuzov	Russian	**1818**	72 sea otter skins

TABLE 2.
SEA MAMMAL SKINS TAKEN FROM THE CALIFORNIA COAST FROM 1821-1847[28]

SHIP'S NAME	FLAG	YEAR(S)	QUANTITY OF SEA MAMMAL SKINS REPORTED TAKEN
Eagle	U.S.	**1821**	Sea otter skins
Owhyhee	U.S.	**1822**	150 sea otter skins
Sachem	U.S.	**1822-23**	Sea otter skins
Volga	Russia	**1822-23**	56 Sea otter skins (40 grown, 16 yearlings)
Buldakov	Russia	**1823**	46 Sea otter skins (44 grown, 2 yearlings
Hebe	England	**1823-24**	Seal skins
John Begg	England	**1823**	Otter skins
Mentor	U.S.	**1823**	2,995 seal skins; sea otter skins
Neptune	England	**1823-24**	50 seal skins
Rover	U.S.	**1823**	10 sea otter skins
Rover	U.S.[29]	**1823-24**	303 sea otter skins; 300 sea otter tails; 1,310 seal skins
Ainoa	Hawaii	**1824**	5,845 seal skins
Becket	Hawaii	**1824**	Seal skins
Mentor	U.S.	**1824**	8,000 seal skins; 14 sea otter skins
Owhyee	U.S.	**1824**	110 sea otter skins
Rover	Mexico	**1824-25**	375 sea otter skins; 375 sea otter tails; 69 sea otter skins and pieces; 606 seal skins
Washington	U.S.	**1824**	500 seal skins; 18 sea otter skins
Baikal	Russia	**1825-25**	468 sea otter skins
Tartar	U.S.	**1825**	Fur seal skins
Ainoa	Hawaii	**1826**	Seal skins
Baikal	Russia	**1826-27**	Fur seal skins
Courier	U.S.	**1826-28**	5,000 seal skins
Kamahalolani	Hawaii	**1826**	3,160 seal skins
Waverly	Hawaii	**1826-27**	138 sea otter skins; 212 seal skins
Karaimoku	Hawaii	**1827**	Sealskins
Baikal	Russia	**1826-29**	63 sea otter skins
Griffin	U.S.	**1828**	40 sea otter skins
Héros	France	**1828**	Seal skins
Karaimoku	Hawaii	**1828**	300 seal skins
Waverly	Hawaii	**1828-29**	1 barrel sea otter skins
Brookline	U.S.	**1829-30**	Sea otter skins
Dhaulle	England	**1829**	40 sea otter skins
Washington	U.S.	**1829**	6 sea otter skins
Santa	Mexico	**1830**	32 sea otter skins (obtained off Santa Barbara)
Bárbara	U.S.	**1831**	Sea otter skins
Convoy	England	**1831**	300 sea otter skins
Griffon	England	**1831**	478 sea otter skins
William Little	U.S.	**1832**	160 sea otter skins
Crusader	U.S.	**1832-33**	96 sea otter skins
Crusader	U.S.	**1832**	100 sea otter skins
Griffon	U.S.	**1832**	316 sea otter skins
Plant	U.S.	**1832**	106
Victoria	U.S.	**1833**	300-400 sea otter skins

(Continue on page 28)

(Continue from page 27)

TABLE 2.
SEA MAMMAL SKINS TAKEN FROM THE CALIFORNIA COAST FROM 1821-1847[28]

SHIP'S NAME	FLAG	YEAR(S)	QUANTITY OF SEA MAMMAL SKINS REPORTED TAKEN
Convoy	U.S.	**1833**	Sea otter skins
Harriet	•	•	•
Blanchard	U.S.	**1833-35**	18 sea otter skins
Lagoda	Mexico	**1833-34**	8 sea otter skins
Leonor	U.S.	**1833-34**	188 sea otter skins; 165 sea otter tails
Loriot	Hawaii	**1833**	114 sea otter skins
Maraquita	U.S.	**1833-34**	80-100 sea otter skins
Volunteer	U.S.	**1834**	Sea otter skins
Avon	U.S.	**1834-35**	Sea otter skins
California	U.S.	**1834**	Sea otter skins, sea otter tails
Convoy	U.S.	**1834**	Sea otter skins
Don Quixote	U.S.	**1835**	Sea otter skins
Avon ***Bolivar*** ***Liberator***	U.S	**1835**	400 sea otter skins
	U.S.	**1835-36**	Sea otter skins
Diana	England	**1836-37**	Sea otter skins
Clementine	U.S.	**1836**	Sea otter skins
Convoy	U.S.	**1836**	Sea otter skins
Don Quixote	U.S.	**1836**	Sea otter skins
Loriot	England	**1837-38**	Sea otter skins
Lama	U.S.	**1837-38**	Sea otter skins
Rasselas	Mexico	**1838-39**	5 sea otter skins
California ***Flaherty*** ***Gibbet***	England	**1838**	Sea skins
	England	**1838**	Sea otter skins; seal skins
Lama	Mexico	**1839-40**	16 sea otter skins
California	U.S.	**1839-40**	100 fur seal skins
California	U.S.	**1839-40**	Sea otter skins
Thomas ***Morse*** ***Perkins***	U.S.	**1839**	Sea otter skins (valued at $9,000 in Honolulu)
	U.S.	**1840**	142 sea lion skins; 387 seal skins
Don Quixote	Mexico	**1840**	155 sea otter skins
Nymph	U.S.	**1842-44**	80 sea otter skins
Barnstable	U.S.	**1843-46**	55 sea otter skins
Admittance	Mexico	**1843-44**	Sea otter skins
Oajaca	England	**1843**	44 sea otter skins
Diamond	U.S.	**1844-47**	2 sea otter skins
Sterling	U.S.	**1845-46**	103 sea otter skins
California	U.S	**1845**	39 sea otter skins
Don Quixote ***Nadezdnik*** ***Aleksandra***	Russia	**1845**	50 Sea otter skins
Euphemia	Hawaii	**1846**	Sea otter skins

IMPACT ON CALIFORNIA SEA MAMMAL ENVIRONMENT

In reviewing the numbers of sea otter and fur seal skins reported by various ships that came to the California coast in the period 1803-1818 (primarily 1803-1814 for quantity), the impact on the sea mammal population along the California coast is impressive. For the instances where counts are given, there were at least 40,005 sea otters killed and 89,126 fur seals. Since a number of the ships do not give figures, but only report that they did ship out skins, the numbers are probably considerably lower than what actually took place. In addition, it is likely that some of these counts are under-reported by ship's captains who wanted to limit how much they shared with their partners. Table 2, showing the further harvest of sea mammal skins after the time that various authors had suggested the sea otters were largely wiped out, partially confirms this belief. However, it also indicates that there were still a considerable number of the creatures being taken after 1820.

Today, the sea otter is not threatened by an approaching folbot in his protected habitat. Glenn Farris and fellow kayaker were boarded by the unwary mammal in the waters off of the Monterey Bay Aquarium in Northern California As in the old days, one kayaker steadied the boat with a paddle, while the other "shot" the sea otter.

Courtesy author, Photographs by Glenn Farris

Another point to consider is that inevitably there would be a sizeable number of animals that were mortally wounded, but which got away to die elsewhere and were not taken. Generally, the Alaskan native hunters would have had a higher rate of recovery of their kills because they utilized harpoons on lines that would usually assure the animal did not get away. The intent of these tables is not to purport accurate counts of the total impact, but rather to give a sense of the magnitude of the slaughter that took place primarily during the first half of the nineteenth century. These figures should be factored into the studies of those interested in considering the compound effects of a diminution in sea otters affecting the abalone and sea urchin numbers – their main prey. Without the otters, a resurgence of the urchins and abalone would have seriously damaged the kelp beds.

The impact on rookeries up and down the coast from Trinidad to Cedros Island was dramatic. For many decades, it was believed that the sea otter was extinct along the California coast. However, in the 1930s a small colony (possibly as few as 14), was discovered along the Big Sur coast and has since grown to about 3,000 mammals. Adele Ogden credited the interest in her 1941 publication on the California sea otter trade to the timing of this rediscovery.

References:

Alaskan natives in baidarkas demonstrate their hunting technique of steadying the kayak with their paddle, while preparing to throw the "javelin" or spear.

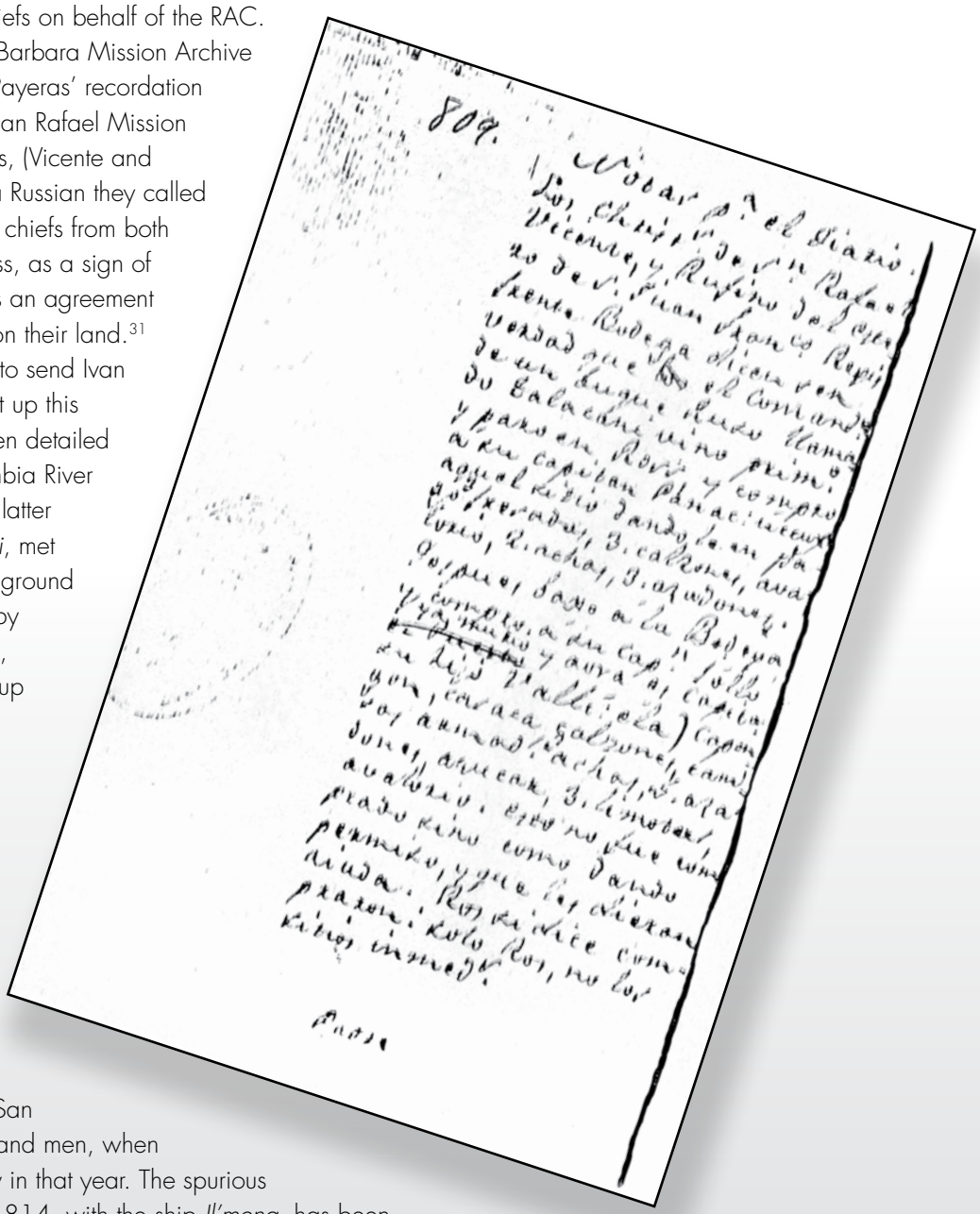
An engraving by Friedrich von Kittlitz, F.P. Litke, Atlas, A Voyage around the World, carried out by order of Emperor Nicholas I in the Navy Sloop Seniavin, by Captain Fedor Litke in 1826-29. *Historical Section, 1834, St. Petersburg, Printing Office of H.I.M's Chancellery.*

For the most part, the Alaskan native hunters who came to California are silent in the record. However, we do have one "song" that was associated with a Tanaina man from the Kenai Peninsula named Qadanalchen. He was known by the Russians as "Nicolai Kenaitski" (the man from Kenai), when he arrived at Fort Ross sometime around 1812, but when he returned to his home in Kenai, in 1821, he had a new moniker, "Nicolai Kalifornski". His song was passed down to his great-great-grandson, Peter Kalifornsky, who published it in 1991.[30] In a footnote to this piece is the statement, "It is said that he [Nicolai] was not sure that he would ever get back to Cook Inlet, and to ease his loneliness he would sing this song."

Another dark night has come over me.
We may never be able to return home.
But do your best in life.
That is what I do.

Qadanalchen was unusual among the Alaskan native peoples who came to California. Rather than being an Aleut or Kodiak native, he was a Tanaina Indian.

Timofei Osipovich Tarakanov (1780-?) was one of the all-important field men for the Russian-American Company who was often lost in histories that typically focused on the top-ranking officials. Tarakanov made numerous trips south to California beginning with his participation in the first foray of the *O'Cain* in 1803. It is clear that his reports on what he saw in the south were very important in the planning for the eventual settlement of Fort Ross. His time spent at Bodega Bay in 1806, when sailing with Captain Oliver Kimball on the *Peacock,* resulted not only in his detailed report back to Alexander Baranov about the potential of Bodega Bay as a base for hunting activities, but also in his meeting with local Indian chiefs on behalf of the RAC. In a document found at the Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library, we have Father Mariano Payeras' recordation of an account received from two San Rafael Mission Indians circa 1819. These Indians, (Vicente and Rufino) from Bodega Bay, told of a Russian they called "Talacani," who distributed gifts to chiefs from both the Bodega Bay area and Fort Ross, as a sign of friendship with the Russians and as an agreement to let the RAC set up a settlement on their land.[31]



Ironically, when it came time to send Ivan Kuskov down to New Albion to set up this base in 1809, Tarakanov had been detailed to another expedition to the Columbia River for a similar reconnaissance. This latter expedition, aboard the *Sv. Nikolai*, met with disaster when the ship went aground and the expedition was captured by local Indians. Eventually, in 1810, Tarakanov and others from the group were ransomed and returned to Alaska. His story is brilliantly told in *The Wreck of the* Sv. Nikolai, by Kenneth Owens and Alton Donnelly (1985). The last time Tarakanov can verifiably be placed in California is when he returned again in 1811 aboard the *Isabella,* under the command of Captain William Heath Davis. Tarakanov was encountered there hunting in San Francisco Bay with 48 baidarkas and men, when Kuskov came back to Bodega Bay in that year. The spurious account of being in California in 1814, with the ship *Il'mena,* has been shown to be a fraudulent document written by Ivan Petrov. Tarakanov's true story was sufficient without the fables created by Petrov, which have misled many generations of California historians.[32]

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"Trading Vessels on the California Coast, 1786-1848." Manuscript on file at Bancroft Library, Berkeley, 1979. (**Note**: This is not a manuscript as such. It consists of two boxes containing 1,493 leaves of research from Adele Ogden, gathered over several decades. Her 1941 book [listed above] can be considered a summary of this large collection of data and information. The date of "1979" is the date of her donation of this extensive information to the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. The leaves of both boxes have been microfilmed.)

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1 Adele Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade, 1784-1848,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941).

2 Adele Ogden, "Russian Sea-Otter and Seal Hunting on the California Coast: 1803-1841," *California Historical Society Quarterly,* 12: 216-239, (1933).

3 Adele Ogden, "Trading Vessels on the California Coast, 1786-1848." Manuscript on file at Bancroft Library, Berkeley, 1979. As noted in the **References**, this manuscript consists of two boxes of 1,493 leaves. They are the author's working papers, representing decades of research on this subject. The date of 1979 is the date of her donation to the Bancroft Library. They are currently on microfilm.

4 Douglas S. Watson, *The Spanish Occupation of California: Plan for the Establishment of a Government. Junta or Council Held at San Blas, May 15, 1768,* (San Francisco: The Grabhorn Press, 1934).

5 Whereas, the Russian documents usually refer to the Alaskan natives as Aleuts, it is interesting that the Spanish called them "*Codiacas*." This term was probably more accurate for the majority of the Alaskan natives who came to California were from the Kodiak Islands rather than the Aleutians.

6 The following year, 1804, the headquarters of the RAC was moved from Kodiak down to Sitka, called by the Russians "New Arkhangel" or Novo-Arkhangel'sk.

7 Short biographies of these men are available in Richard A. Pierce, *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary* (Ontario: The Limestone Press, Kingston, 1990), pp. 469 and 497-499. Whereas most accounts only give Svetsov's surname, Pierce provides the full name given here.

8 The Chinese rulers attempted to limit foreign nations to only one port of entry for trade. Since the Russians already were trading through the Russo-Chinese border city of Kiakta, permission for access to Canton was denied. Richard A. Pierce, "Russian America and China," Chapter 5 in *Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier*, pp.72-79, edited by Barbara Sweetland Smith and Redmond J. Barnett, (Tacoma, WA: Washington State Historical Society, 1990).

9 James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships and China Goods* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), pp.58-59.

10 Juan Maria Osuna was later to become the first alcalde of the pueblo of San Diego. See Glenn Farris, "Don Juan Maria Osuna (1785-1851), Native of San Vicente Ferrer and First Alcalde of the Pueblo of San Diego." *Estudios Fronterizos: Revista del Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales*, No. 35-36, (Enero-Junio/Julio-Diciembre, 1995), pp.43-50.

11 Ogden, 1941, pp. 46-47.

12 In a number of publications, including Ogden's, this man was identified as Vasilii Petrovich Tarakanov, however, this was an invention of one of Bancroft's researchers, a man named Ivan Petrov (Kenneth Owens, 1990, "Magnificent Fraud: Ivan Petrov's Docufiction on Russian Fur Hunters and California Missions," *The Californians*, July/August 1990, pp. 25-29). In fact, the Tarakanov on this trip was an individual named Timofei Tarakanov, who was a very important personage in the early sea mammal hunting expeditions along the Pacific Coast.

13 Since it is also known that Tarakanov was in the area of San Francisco Bay in 1811 on another expedition and was contacted by members of the Kuskov expedition, it is thus conceivable that the event occurred at that time rather than in 1807.

14 Glenn J. Farris, "Talacani, the man who purchased Fort Ross," *Fort Ross Interpretive Association Newsletter,* September/October 1993, unnumbered pages (7-9); Glenn J. Farris, "The Bodega Miwok as seen by Mikhail Tikhonovich Tikhanov in 1818," (1998). *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology,* 20 (1)2-12.

15 Alexei A. Istomin, James R. Gibson, and Valery A. Tishkov, *Russia in California: Russian Documents on Fort Ross and Russian-Californian Relations in 1803-1850*, Volume I. (Moscow: NAUKA, 2005), pp. 177-183). Note: This publication is in Russian, however, an English translation by James Gibson is due out soon.

16 Account Book of the *Mercury*, Santa Barbara Mission Archives Library.

17 The intriguing story of the *Mercury* is told in a book by Robert Ryal Miller, *A Yankee Smuggler on the Spanish California Coast: George Washington Eayrs and the Ship* Mercury.
(Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, 2001).

18 A Russian term for a small cooperative work party, often used for groups assigned to killing and processing animals.

19 Miller, A., Yankee Smuggler.

20 Istomin et al., 2005, pp. 267-270.

21 Robert F. Heizer and Albert B. Elsasser (eds.), *Original Accounts of the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island.* (Ramona, CA: Ballena Press, 1973), reprinted from Reports of the University of California Archaeological Survey, Berkeley, No. 55, 1961.

22 Ogden 1933, 236. Ogden mentions that Captain John Rogers Cooper complained that the Russians were only turning over 112 out of a potential total of about seven hundred pelts from a hunting trip in January 1824.

23 In his instructions to RAC Agent Movistov regarding hunting of sea otters in San Pedro Bay, Khlebnikov states: "The following procedure should be observed…if the hunt is fairly good, i.e., more than 300 pelts, remove one quarter of the take and do not report it in the records you send to the [Mexican] Governor and myself; if the hunt is fairly good, i.e. between 150 to 300 pelts, remover one ninth, and if the hunt is poor, i.e., less than 150 pelts, indicate the whole figure; when you send me the records, do not mention the pelts you have removed for the Company, because I will assume that you are following my instructions and that I will find out eventually what the actual total is." Khlebnikov 1990, pg. 159.

24 Ogden, 1933, 236.

25 It is interesting to note that Isaac Sparks was married to the daughter of Captain George Washington Eayrs of the *Mercury*, Maria de los Remedios Josefa Eayrs. She was born 7 May 1813, at Bodega Bay, when her father was on his way south on the expedition upon which the Mercury was seized by the Spanish. Arthur Woodward, "Isaac Sparks—Sea Otter Hunter," Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly, 1938, Vol. XX, No. 2, pp. 42-59.

26 Article titled "Hunting the Sea Otters," *The Pacific States Watchman*, 15 October 1881, pg. 335.

27 Ogden, 1979. This table is derived from the monumental compilation of shipping data done by Adele Ogden and given to the Bancroft Library in 1979.

28 Ogden 1979. This table is derived from the monumental compilation of shipping data done by Adele Ogden and given to the Bancroft Library in 1979.

29 On this voyage of the *Rover*, it was now owned by the governor of California, Luis Argüello, who purchased the vessel on 29 December 1823, from John Rogers Cooper.

30 "Peter Kalifornsky, A Dena'ina Legacy, K'tl'egh'I Sukdu," the Collected Writings of Peter Kalifornsky, 1991, pp. 252-253.

32 Farris, "Talacani, the man who purchased Fort Ross," 1993.

33 Kenneth Owens, "Frontiersman for the Tsar: Timofei Tarakanov and the Expansion of Russian America," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Autumn, 2006.

Unlikely Partners

Bostonians, Russians, and Kodiaks Sail the Pacific Coast Together, 1800-1810

By E. W. Giesecke

Above: An engraving of Boston by Paul Revere, 1774, leaves the impression of Boston harbor as the hub of coastal trade and commerce.

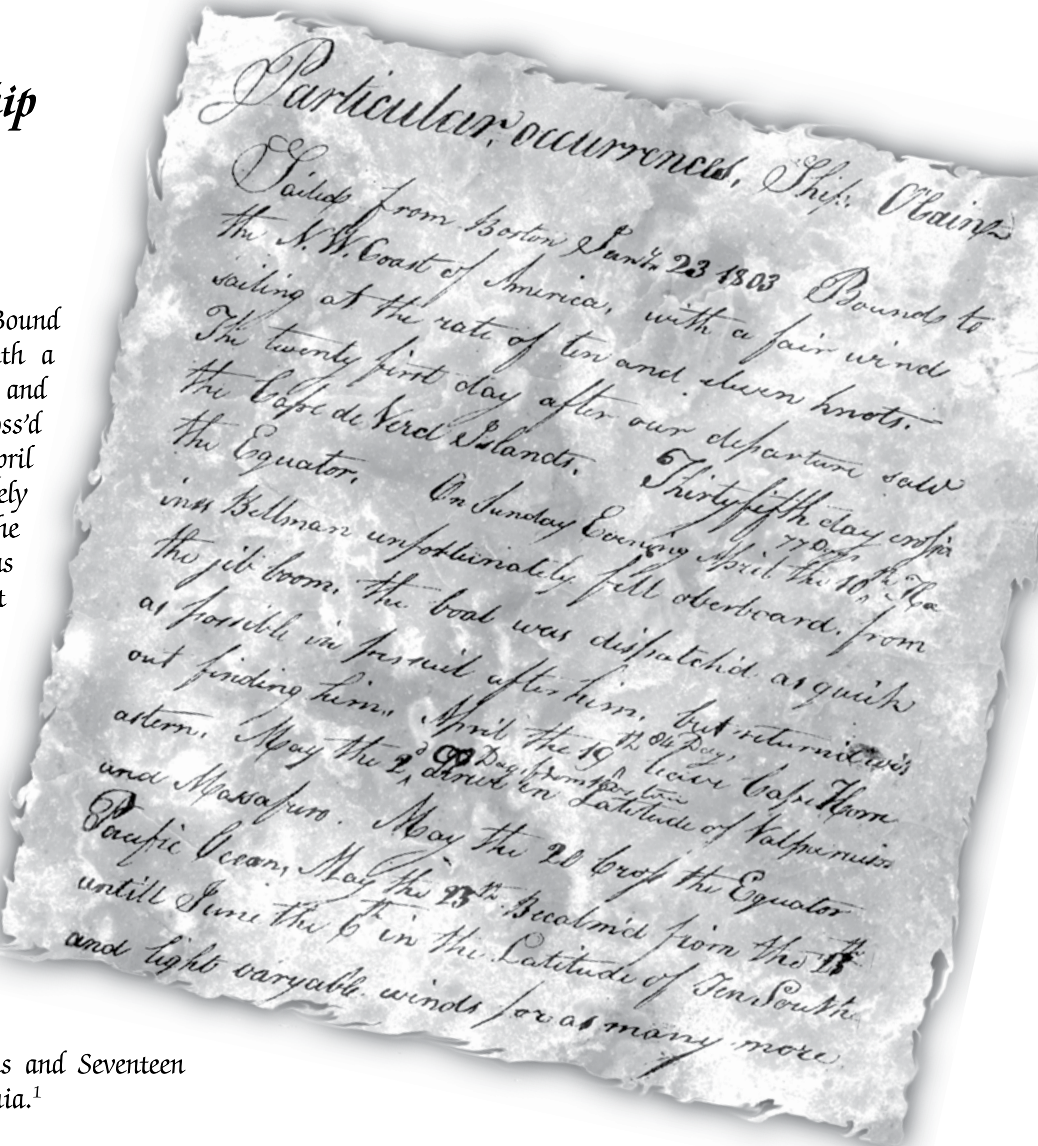
From the Royal American Magazine.

Mr. E. W. Giesecke has compiled for *Mains'l Haul* an exclusive article based on years of research surrounding three ships' logs, which he has acquired over a period of forty-five years. The manuscript journals encompass the voyages of Jonathan Winship, Jr., aboard the ship *O'Cain* 1803-1815 (the diary of the first of fifteen contract voyages between the Russians and Americans; Jonathan Winship's *Journal of a Voyage from Boston to the North Pacific Ocean, from there to China back to Boston* (1805-1808); and *A Journal Kept on Board the Ship* Albatross (by William A. Gale), *Nathan Winship Commander, On a Voyage from Boston to the Northwest Coast of America and China in the Years 1809, 10, 11, 12*.

Mr. Giesecke specializes in researching Western America and Pacific history, and has lectured extensively on the topics relating to his course of study and research, as well as having published widely in several recognized historical Journals.

Prior to his years teaching college, Mr. Giesecke's vocations included several years as staff officer of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Manpower (Col. Ret.), followed by several years as manager with an international historical research project (Naga Research Group) encompassing much of Europe and Asia.

Particular occurrences, Ship O'Cain, [from the diary of] Jonathan Winship, Jr.


Particular occurrences, Ship O'Cain
Sailed from Boston Jan'y 23 1803 Bound to
the N. W. Coast of America, with a fair wind
sailing at the rate of ten and eleven knots.
The twenty first day after our departure saw
the Cape de Verd Islands. Thirtyfifth day cross'd
the Equator. On Sunday Evening April the 10th Ha-
ines Bellman unfortunately fell overboard from
the jib boom, the boat was dispatch'd as quick
as possible in pursuit after him, but return'd with-
out finding him. April the 19th leave Cape Horn
astern. May the 2d arrive in Latitude of Valparaiso
and Massafuero. May the 20 cross the Equator
Pacific Ocean, May the 25th Becalm'd from the
untill June the 6th in the Latitude of Ten South
and light varyable winds for as many more

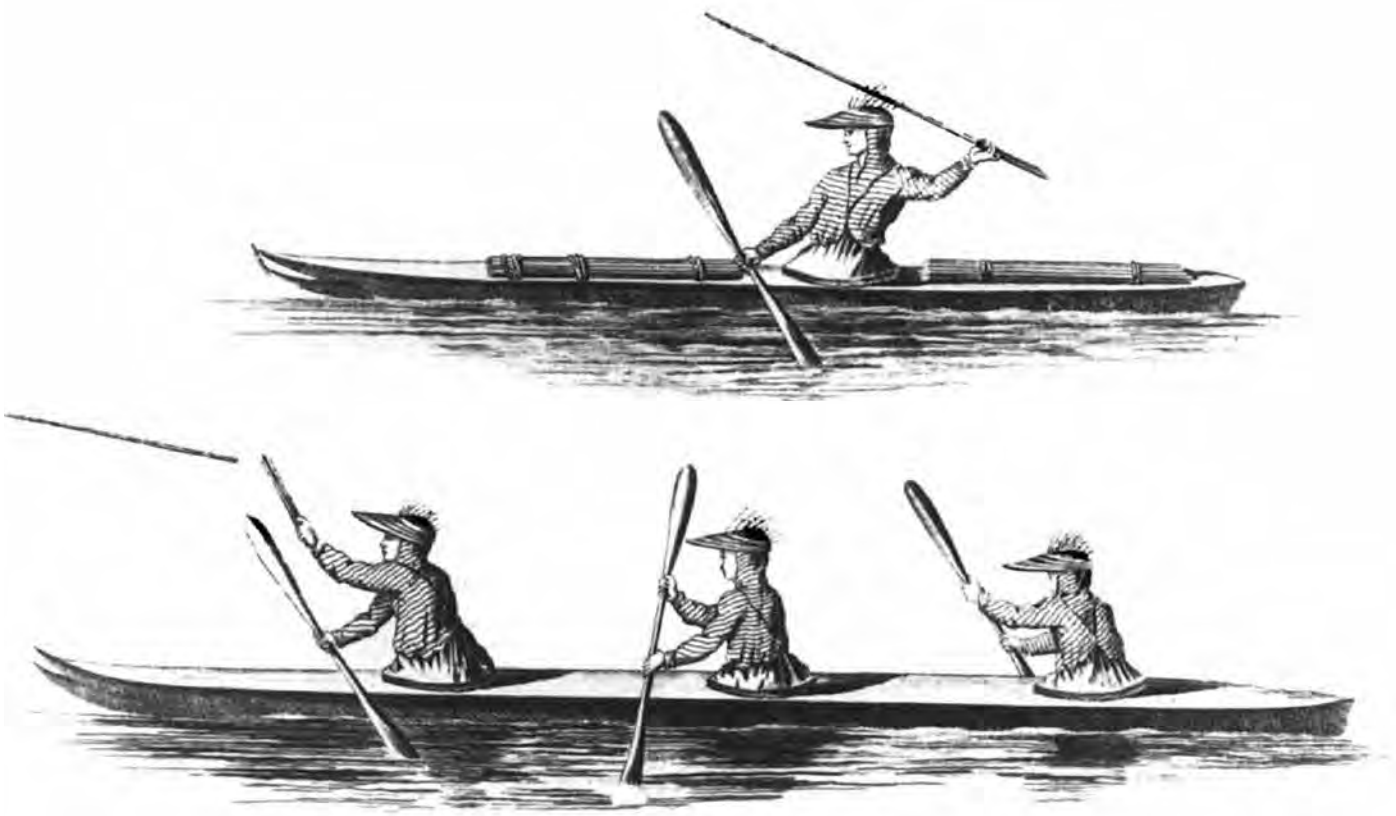
Sailed from Boston Jan'y 23 1803 Bound to the N. W. Coast of America, with a fair wind. Sailing at the rate of ten and eleven knots. Thirty Fifth day cross'd the Equator. On Sunday Evening April the 10th Haines Bellman unfortunately fell overboard from the jib boom. The boat was dispatch'd as quick as possible in pursuit after him but return'd without finding him.

Pacific Ocean, May the 25th Becalm'd until June the 6th in the Latitude of Ten South. July the 8th (166 Days from Boston) arrived at the Bay of St. Quintin Lat 30.15 [175 miles south of San Diego]. *July the 20th Sail'd from St. Quintin for the North Coast October 1st arrive at Kodiac. November the 6th sail from Kodiac with forty of the natives and three Russians and Seventeen canoes on board for the Coast of California.*[1]

Cruising in good time, Captain Joseph O'Cain sailed the ship named after him into San Diego Bay on 4 December 1803. During the 28-day passage from Kodiak, some 2,000 miles down the coast, the 93-foot-long *O'Cain* suffered *the severest gales of wind that we have had during the voyage, laying too at one time six days and nights without setting*

Below: Pavlovsk Harbor at Kad'iak [Kodiak Island], circa 1804, founded by Baranov in 1792.

From G. H. von Langsdorff, 1804



Above: The Russians were fascinated by Kodiak and Aleut ability with one or two-hatch baidarkas. Their hunting skills could not be duplicated by southern natives. The three-hatch baidarka was often used for transporting a prominent person.

From Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier, *Barbara S. Smith and Redmond J. Barnett, Tacoma, Washington St. Historical Society, 1990.*

any material sail.[2] Sailing again south, they arrived back at San Quintin Bay on 13 December. The Russian supervisors over the forty Kodiaks on board were Afanasii Shvetsov, Timofei Tarakanov and a third, name unknown. These three were *promyshlenniki*, freelance fur hunters from the eastern Siberia taiga. They were recruited and then sailed to the far northwest coast when the Russian-American Company was chartered in 1799.[3]

The Siberians launched the northern Kodiak islanders with their baidarkas (usually two-seated, skin-on-frame vessels) into San Quintin Bay. So began an experiment. Bostonians, strong-willed and enterprising Irishman Joseph O'Cain and Jonathan Winship, were leading the first voyage of

Right: Two Natives of Kodiak Island, 1818. These were the hunters selected for the voyages by Jonathan Winship and the other Boston captains, for the expeditions to the Lower Coast [of California and the Baja Peninsula]. These Kodiak were paid on apiece basis for their work.

From Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier

Young male sea otter drawn by John Webber, 1778.

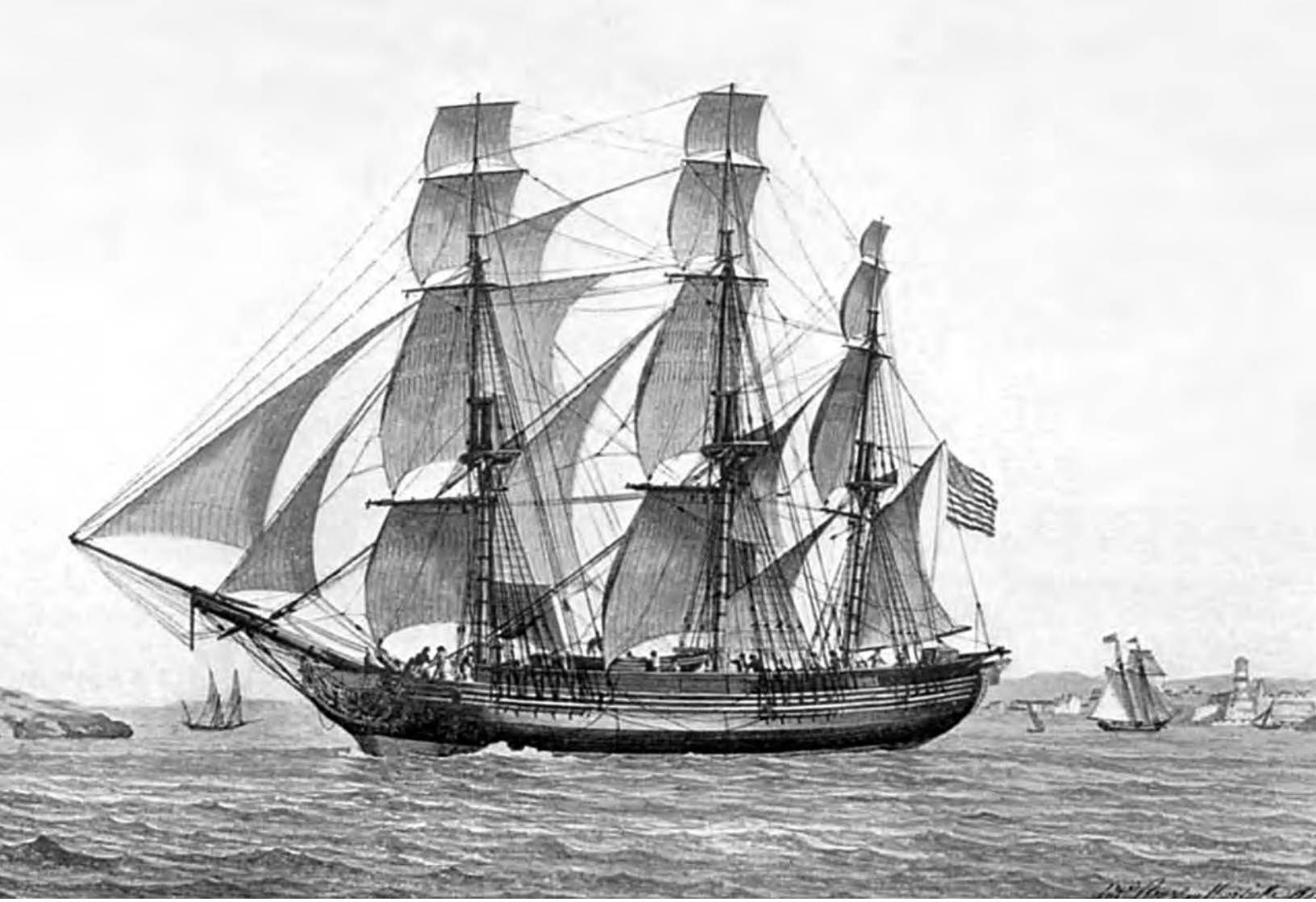
a Yankee ship just contracted with Aleksandr Baranov, the Russian company manager at Kodiak Island.

Winship, only 23 years old, would prove to be a natural leader. The question that the Russian and the Bostonians certainly had was: *would this first joint hunting contract work?* Would there be enough pelts and profits for both of them in the China trade? The Kodiaks had no doubts about their hunting skills. They could paddle their baidarkas at seven miles per hour.

They carried a good supply of arrows, or darts and launching shafts. And O'Cain had assured them, from his previous cruises to California, that the sea otters were plentiful there. The Kodiaks were motivated by Baranov's promise to pay $2.50 Spanish per pelt in each man's catch.[4] It was unique, three different cultures aboard the *O'Cain* – New Englanders, Siberian Russians, and Kodiak natives. One can imagine a cacophony of voices, desires and expectations.

Problems in this joint venture loomed. Was it to be the Russian supervisors, acting for Baranov, or the Bostonians O'Cain and Winship who were responsible for the ship and its navigation? Who would decide which bay or inlet to put into for water and wood, or for a promising otter field? Who would recall the natives from their hunt on the various small islands? When was the number of pelts sufficient? Would the health of the northern hunters hold up in this warm, semiarid climate? At stake was the promise of riches at the Canton market. A good cargo of sea otter skins sold at Canton (Whampoa) could yield as much as $100,000. One such voyage frequently produced sales for Boston ship owners with more than their entire investment in the ship itself, outgoing cargo, and the crew's wages.[5]

Now at San Quintin Bay, the baidarkas were manned and ready to be paddled away from the 280-ton *O'Cain*. With three languages among them – Russian, English and Aleut – the instructions from the supervisors of the hunters may not have been clear to all, at least not to the Bostonian crew. Would the sailors really know where the Kodiaks were headed for their several



The ship *Lovely Matilda,* **built in 1808, the same decade as the** *O'Cain,* **was similar in size to her. This ship's homeport was Philadelphia. There are no known paintings or sketches of the** *O'Cain* **owned by the Winship family.**

From the Collection of Ship Portraits, *Charles H. Taylor, The Peabody Essex Museum of Salem, booklet, 1949.*

months of hunting? How would the ship meet up with them again? Captain O'Cain and Jonathan Winship had agreed with the tough, wiry Baranov at Kodiak Island to make every effort to return each native back home safely. Both knew that any future joint hunting contract depended on this. Additionally, O'Cain had to agree to a payment of $250 to any Kodiak family whose hunter was not returned alive to his northern home.[6]

O'Cain, now 28 years of age, had been to San Quintin before in 1800. He had seen that these rich Baja fields would provide yields for many years. But he was then without men onboard trained in efficient sea otter hunting. Certainly the ship's Bostonian crew could not as quickly and efficiently capture these otters and take their dense, silky pelts. The rich rewards lying in wait for the *O'Cain* in the lucrative China trade appeared to depend on employing the highly skilled Kodiaks of the far north. But the Spaniards, in their onshore posts and missions, and their Indian subjects were understandably up in arms against the poaching Americans, albeit with limited resources and soldiers.

Eager Captain O'Cain, desirous of the abundant otter fields some distance from San Quintin, could not accompany the baidarka flotilla with his ship. He had already learned how to avoid being hailed and boarded by the Spaniards: He, and Jonathan in the future, would position his hunters with their small baidarkas at remote Baja beaches and islands. His very visible ship at San Quintin would be peacefully trading for provisions, wood and water, and for any pelts that the missions had to barter. After allowing some months for hunting, and when the attention from the Spanish shore was somehow diverted, they would haul anchors on the ship and sail out to seek the baidarka parties.

The forty Kodiaks with their seventeen baidarkas paddled off from the *O'Cain*. The three *promyshlenniki* were with them, perhaps in an accompanying baidara, a large, northern skin boat which also carried supplies for the natives. It is likely that the Bostonian crew onboard did not fully comprehend where the Kodiaks were headed, or where they could hope to meet with them again along the island-rich coastline. They would not want, nor could they afford, given Baranov's requirements, to lose any of the hunters or have them captured by the Spaniards.

The O'Cain Heritage

Joseph Burling O'Cain was born in Ireland circa 1775. He arrived in Boston as a boy. The most reliable records find him on the East India Company bark *Phoenix* on the Northwest Coast between 1792 and 1795.[7] It was on this voyage that O'Cain first met Baranov and saw firsthand the latter's leadership ability among the Kodiaks, Aleuts, and adjoining native groups. The *Phoenix* had first sailed out of Calcutta under Irishman Captain Hugh Moore. O'Cain, recounting his own roots in Ireland, quickly became friendly with the captain. From his original sea duty as a carpenter, O'Cain soon was assigned the job of mate on the vessel.

The East Indiaman suddenly appeared to Aleksandr Baranov at one of his new outposts, a fur pelt collecting station at Nuchek, a small island just off the coast of Prince William Sound.[8] This encounter took place in May 1793.[9] One of the 75-foot bark's masts had broken. Perhaps the island's forest would supply a new one. Baranov had not seen a foreign ship in more than a year. He was anxious to make contact. Dressed in native skins, he paddled a native baidarka up to the vessel.

The English of Hugh Moore and Russian of Baranov did not match and communication failed at first. Baranov experimented. He tried a few words of German and the captain responded. At that point, Baranov could introduce himself as the Russian-American Company manager for North America. At some point, Joseph O'Cain was introduced. Baranov was apparently pleased with the young man's geniality. Pleasant conversation and Baranov's offer of assistance saw the broken mast taken down with some of the native's helping

Baranov asked many questions of the southern coast, of California and Mexico, of Pacific ports such as the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), Manila, and Canton. News of the world reached his eager ears. It was a landmark five days that Moore, O'Cain, other ship's officers and Manager Baranov spent together. O'Cain noted with much interest Baranov's apparently fair and evenhanded relations with the Aleuts. At the manager's request the natives brought Moore a small number of fine pelts as a farewell gift. Baranov was to meet O'Cain again in a number of years and the latter would be even more eager for favorable trade.

Fellow Irishman Moore and the *Phoenix* introduced O'Cain to southern waters in 1795. On Moore's planned course to Hawaii and Canton, the captain made a wide detour to stop at Santa Barbara. The reason for the visit to Southern California is not clear, but he likely needed fresh foods and supplies as they had not been obtainable in the barren north. While there Joseph O'Cain requested permission of the Spanish commandant to leave the *Phoenix* and join the Catholic community on the California coast. He received a favorable reply from the commandant and happily took quarters in the Spaniard's house.

Pictured is the Winship mansion in Brighton (Boston), Massachusetts. Built in 1780 by Jonathan Winship, it was occupied by Jonathan, Jr.

After a month at Santa Barbara, Joseph O'Cain was sent to San Blas, Mexico, on a Spanish vessel. On whose initiative this further voyage was undertaken is not known. San Blas had been established as a major Spanish port for coastal trade. A California-China trade would be operated with southern sea otter pelts as a prime cargo. San Blas would link distant ports from Acapulco to Russian and English anchorages in the far north. Into this plan stepped Joseph O'Cain. He served on at least two voyages to the north, giving him more knowledge of the Baja otter fields as he sailed by. The Spanish fur trade, however, had a short life. By 1798, O'Cain was on his way home to New England. But even this return passage required all of his ingenuity and persuasive ability. For some months he was a Spanish prisoner. Then he had to work his way to Boston via Havana, Cuba – an unusual journey for a Pacific fur trader.

In Boston, O'Cain married Abigail Kimball in March 1799. She was the sister of Oliver Kimball whose name and vessel, the *Peacock*, were to become one of Baranov's favorites in the decade of contract hunting voyages.[10] It was in this bustling New England port that the restless Irishman established his early relations with the Winship brothers. And it was with their new shipping firm that he would make two voyages into the Pacific. In the decade that followed, the Winships would themselves contract with Baranov for a total of five more hunting voyages to the West Coast, all featuring the tripartite mix of Bostonians, Russians, and Kodiaks or Aleuts. These "unlikely partners" would on occasion create unusual scenes.

The Winship Fortune

The father of the brothers was Jonathan Winship Sr. of Brighton, a community lying a dozen miles from Boston's center. The family founded a beef supply business in 1775, and entered into a contract with the Revolutionary Army to provide its units with meat. Jonathan Sr. had ten children, four of them active in the maritime trade: Abiel, the eldest (born

Right: The Boston port register, 1799, for the 65-foot brig, Betsy, shows the sole owner as Abiel Winship.

Permanent

No. 274 two hundred seventy nine

In Pursuance of an Act of the Congress of the United States of America, entitled, "An Act concerning the registering and recording of Ships or Vessels," Abiel Winship of Boston in the State of Massachusetts

having taken or subscribed the oath required by the said act, and having sworn that he is the

only owner of the ship or vessel called the Betsy of Boston whereof Charles Winship is at present master, and is a citizen of the United States, as he hath sworn

and that the said ship or vessel was built at Portsmouth in the State of Virginia in the Year 1799 as appears by a Register No. 6 issued at this Office on the fifth day of March 1799 now cancelled

1769) ran the maritime business out of Boston; Charles, seven years younger would lose his life on the voyage of the *Betsy* 1799-1800; Nathan joined several voyages and lived a number of years in Hawaii; Jonathan Jr. (born in 1780) was two years younger than Nathan, but wise for his age, temperate by nature, and clearly a leader with respect to Nathan and his associates. That they entered the maritime fur trade was not surprising. The sea was the road to upward mobility in New England. The American-China trade had opened in the late eighteenth century upon news of the value of sea otter skins in the Canton market. Boston quickly became the leading port in the China trade. Her sea merchant families conveyed an air of optimism to the Pacific shores and took early advantage of the economic gains to be found in this unspoiled, last temperate coast.

Five months after his marriage in 1799, O'Cain signed up on the 104-ton *Betsy* bound for the northwest coast and California. The Boston port register for this 65-foot brig shows the sole owner as Abiel Winship.[11] The master was listed as Charles Winship, but onboard manuscripts supersede this and show O'Cain as the captain.

Below: The harbor of Whampoa, China, with a vantage toward Canton, shows the variety of international ships involved in trade with China at that time.

From an engraving by E. Duncan, in the Macpherson Collection, after a painting by W. J. Huggins.

In the 1800s the sailing routes of the American fur ships originated in Boston, rounded the treacherous Horn, followed by the long sail north along the western seaboard, where hunting would get underway from Mexico to the Northwest waters. Farther on, the Far East ports awaited with promises of high prices for the luxuriant, warm furs.

Charles, age 23, had just returned from the Northwest coast and China on the brigantine *Alexander* in July 1799, and now the following month, he was preparing for his next voyage, that of supercargo (or purser) on the *Betsy.* Neither of these officers nor their crew would fare well on this voyage, with imprisonment, illness and death as the penalty for illicit trading along the Spanish coast of California.

The brig *Betsy* sailed from Boston, 21 October 1799, overtly intending to trade for pelts on the northwest coast but looking sharply at Baja California. Joseph O'Cain was captain. He had just returned from that coast and knew he could obtain permission from Spanish shore officials to make contact with local traders, missions and natives based on a simple ruse. He would be allowed to anchor in their ports if he asserted his desperate need for water, provisions and wood. Under this cover they often procured otter skins from Spanish merchants and natives of Baja California. O'Cain's recently acquired knowledge of the plentiful California otter populations was most promising as compared to the much depleted source of pelts in the far north. O'Cain may well have planted the seed of an idea here, of transporting northern natives to far southern Baja California to carry out the otter hunting, rather than pursuing the difficult job of bartering with local people on shore for whatever skins they had for trade.

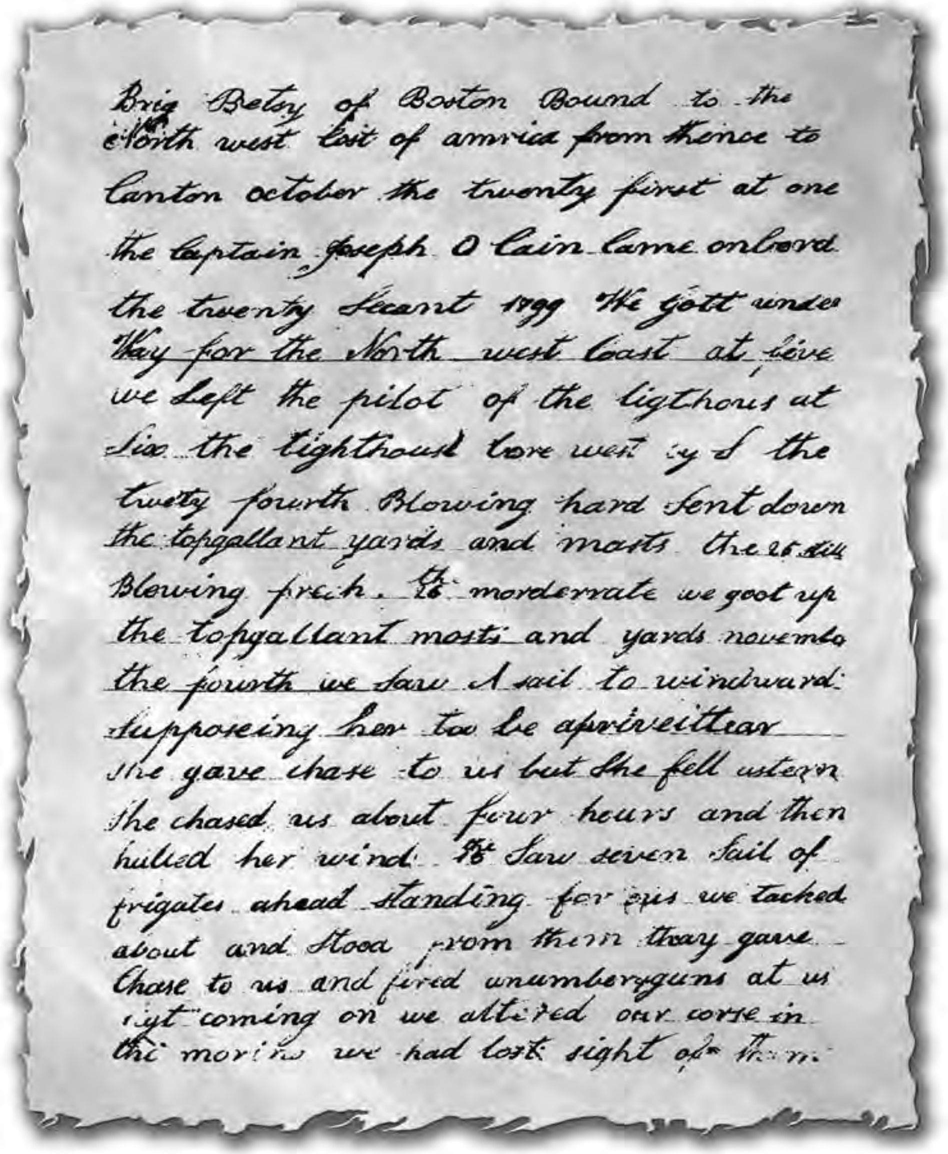
The impetuous side of O'Cain's nature may not have learned its lesson. He had already been imprisoned once at San Blas. This new voyage would have him reinforce that lesson. A short journal by one of the *Betsy's* crew gives a poignant account of episodes of that cruise of 1799-1800.[12] Several of the events distressed the sailors:

> ***February the fifth, it blowing fresh off the land . . . after eight days of fatigue we weare obliged for to go round the cape*** [Horn]***. March the second*** [1800] ***we saw sail to leaward supposing her to be an American we bore down for to speak her she proveing to be a Spanish Letter of Marck maintain twelve guns and fifty five men we having no guns on deck they hailed us and ordered us to heave too and sent thare boat on board***

with a prise master and twelve men took out the captain, mate and twelve Men . . . we were close confined down in the hold with a centenel over us with sword and pistols. We arrived at valparraiso after being onboard twenty four days we ware still kept on board eighteen days and then put onboard the armed Ship Jubiter til after the trial. After being onboard six days the captain Joseph O'Cain arrived from the vicroys. . .the brig was cleared and we sett at liberty after being eight and forty days in confinement. . . .[13]

Released from confinement by the Spaniards at Valparaiso, O'Cain sailed the *Betsy* out of the bay on 1 May 1800, bound (as the keeper of this account assumed), "for the northwest coast."

Heading north and west they saw "Cape St. Lucas" (Cabo San Lucas) on 4 July, which marks the southern point of Baja California. From 26 July to 23 August, they landed frequently with the jolly boat, having become very short of water and wood and in search of game, which they found. The account does not say they traded with local inhabitants for sea otter and other pelts, but subsequent events, i.e., a good cargo sold later at Canton, can only mean that they obtained many of their skins during these weeks at Baja.[14] There had been only limited opportunity for bartering elsewhere. It was there on the long outer coast of Baja that O'Cain saw areas rich in sea otter, and for which he likely began making plans for his next voyage with a larger ship and a crew of hunters on board. None of this could be written in the Larnerd journal, for fear it would fall into Spanish hands and so incriminate them. The account also emphasizes that the brig sailed only between 24 and 33 degrees north in these weeks, perhaps highlighting that it was far removed from the more populated Spanish coastline (south of San Diego) where illegal trading would have been more dangerous. The *Betsy* sailed on from Baja to San Diego and then southward again to San Blas and to the sorrow that unfolded:


Brig Betsy of Boston Bound to the
North west Cost of amrica from thence to
Canton october the twenty first at one
the Captain Joseph O Cain Came onbord
the twenty Secant 1799 We gott under
Way for the North west Coast at seve
we Left the pilot of the ligthous at
Six the lighthous bore west by S the
twety fourth Blowing hard Sent down
the topgallant yards and masts the 25 dit
Blowing frech the 26 morderrate we goot up
the topgallant masts and yards novembr
the fourth we Saw A sail to windward
Supposeing her too be aprivetiear
she gave chase to us but She fell astern
She chased us about four hours and then
hulled her wind the 8 Saw seven Sail of
frigates ahead Standing for us we tacked
about and Stood from them thay gave
Chase to us and fired anumberyguns at us
nigt coming on we altered our corse in
the morning we had lost sight of them

Above: The entry from the 1799 log begins: *Brig* **Betsy** *of Boston bound to the Northwest of America from thence to Canton October the twenty first ...* **The writer of this journal was John Larnerd, a sailor on the brig.**

Courtesy of the Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

The morning of the twenty sixth [26 August 1800] ***we goat under way and stood in for St. digo [San Diego] . . . the twenty ninth five*** [men] ***came on board September first we goot the Brig ashore Carreened her the third we halled off and after getting Water on board the Seventh we got under Way the fort Salutes on pasing we returned the Fier. The ninth we Came to ancor in the bay of all Saints***

The harbour of Woahoo (Oahu), Hawaiian Islands, 1821

From the Charles Taylor collection in Stephen Reynolds, The Voyage of the New Hazard, *Ye Galleon Press, 1970*

[B. de Todos Santos, 50 miles south of the present Mexican border] ***to get wood for we could not Procure none at st diego. After geeting wood onboard and filing our emty Casks with water we got under way on the fourteeneth*** [September]***. . . We got under way and stood for Sant Blaz were we arrived on the nineth of October where we found we mite procure a mast (the existing one had been weakened by gales . . .the Twnetyeth)*** [of October] ***the Capt*** [O'Cain] ***Supercargo*** [Charles Winship] ***and nine of the people were on shore. . . the twenty first the boats Came onboard they informed us that they had bin taken up and put in the guardhouse on suspicion of being on Smuglin intenion we got in the main mast and hove up our ancor and stood out from under there fort***[15]

But the *Betsy* was not cleared to pass the fort. The Spaniards informed O'Cain that he could not sail off without proper clearance papers and that he would have to return in person to the commandant for them. O'Cain and two of the crew went ashore on 28 October. The boat returned to the vessel the same day, but without O'Cain. The next day inquiry was attempted. The boat took the supercargo, Charles Winship, on shore to the commandant. They did not return. Late on the thirtieth the crew spotted their boat returning with three men on board. But on pulling near, they saw them to be three Spanish soldiers. They carried with them, as an order from O'Cain and the supercargo, cloth from the vessel's stores for delivery to the Spaniards. But the order included instructions from O'Cain to John Brown, listed as the pilot. Likely these were disguised inside the order for merchandise, hidden from the non-English speaking Spaniards. O'Cain wrote Brown that he, Winship, and one other of the crew were in custody on shore while "papers" were sent to the viceroy of Mexico for examination. Brown was instructed to sail on to a nearby island group, "the marear islands," likely the Islas Marias, 75 miles due west off San Blas. There the *Betsy* was to wait 15 days. If Captain O'Cain and Winship were not released in order to reach them in that time, Brown should set his best course without them for Canton, and from there return to Boston.

Avoiding Spanish ships sailing in and out of San Blas, Brown cruised among these Marias for the full fifteen days. The brig's crew did not spot any boat which could have contained their two officers. On 7 November, an entry in the account read that one of the crew, Epheraim Hyde, the *Betsy's* armorer, died during this wait at the offshore island group. He had been ill for five days. Not having seen the captain or any likelihood of his coming to the ship, Brown bore away and stood for Oahu, Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) arriving there on 10 December 1800. Larnerd's account closes at this point without Joseph O'Cain or Charles Winship on board.

From brief notes in other contemporary sources, we learn that the brig sailed from Canton in March 1801, and returned to Boston that October. Before that O'Cain was picked up at San Blas within weeks of the *Betsy's* departure. The New York ship *Enterprise*, Captain Ezekiel Hubbell, took him aboard as supercargo. Again, the plucky Irishman had succeeded in freeing himself from the Spaniards' grasp. But Charles Winship's fate remains unknown. Reports emerged that he died at San Blas on 4 December 1800, just after the *Betsy's* delayed departure. Perhaps these vague reports of "death by sudden illness" were related to the cause of death of crew member and armorer, Hyde, on 7 November 1800. In any event, no record of Charles' death has been found in archives in Mexico or Spain.[16] Such a notation by the Spaniards of the death of a prominent American would likely have been made. Winship represented a notable family of Boston at that time. This voyage is significant in that the *Betsy* was apparently the first American vessel to enter the harbor of San Diego, and Joseph O'Cain, the Winships, and a few other fur trade captains later used the discoveries of this voyage to swing a major source of skins for the China trade temporarily from the Pacific Northwest to the coast of Baja California.

The voyage led the Winship brothers of Boston into a series of six cooperative hunting contracts with the Russian-American Company over the next decade. Baranov had lamented the increasing inability of his natives to hunt sea otters in the north, this once unlimited supply having been nearly depleted by over-hunting. He also needed supplies such as those brought on the *O'Cain* to Kodiak: dried foods, tools, weapons, and ammunition.

By 1806, the Russians had made permanent settlements in southeast Alaska. The fortified city of Sitka protected its Russian inhabitants from attacks by Tlingit warriors, which continued sporadically through the early part of the nineteenth century.

From *Lisianski's Voyage, the first picture ever drawn of Sitka, 1805*

Deliveries from Russia were unreliable. Baranov's posts and men suffered from a severe shortage of most goods.[17]It was not economical for him to continue to build his own ships, and his company had lost several. The Chinese ports with their high demand for skins were generally closed to the Russians.[18] But now the joint hunting agreements with the Winships, and with several other American sea captains, would significantly aid the Russians. With the resulting increased profits, more badly needed supplies, navigational assistance and coastal intelligence, the Russians were able to expand their operations. They established Fort Ross, north of Bodega Bay, in 1812. Their southward move was accelerated by a few select Bostonians of the maritime fur trade who profited immensely from this partnership with the Russians.

By early January 1801, Joseph O'Cain was an officer on the *Enterprise* bound for the northwest coast. He and Captain Hubbell first sought out Baranov at New Arkhangel (Sitka). The new post already had a cadre of thirty Russians and was surrounded by the camps of several hundred friendly Aleuts. But Baranov was not there. He had just sailed for his long-standing Kodiak base, 600 miles to the north. Hubbell quickly followed.

Baranov was fifty-three and tired from his construction work at New Arkhangel. The captain and O'Cain proposed to trade a good portion of the *Enterprises's* cargo in exchange for the Russian company's furs. But such a trade violated the latter's rules. However, Baranov was desperate. Supplies, clothing, and ammunition were at a critical low at Kodiak. Baranov had no recourse but to trade. Hubbell and O'Cain offered prices for his furs that were much too low, so he sold the visitors only black and red fox furs, 2,000 of them, but no precious otter skins. Baranov received the sorely needed supplies. They were reported to have saved Kodiak from near starvation and disaster.[19] O'Cain did not propose the employment of Baranov's Kodiak islanders for hunting the

Right: The Kodiak islanders were employed on the Russian-Boston contract voyages, their skills exceeding those of the nearby Aleuts or the coastal natives to the south.

From Smith and Barnett's Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier

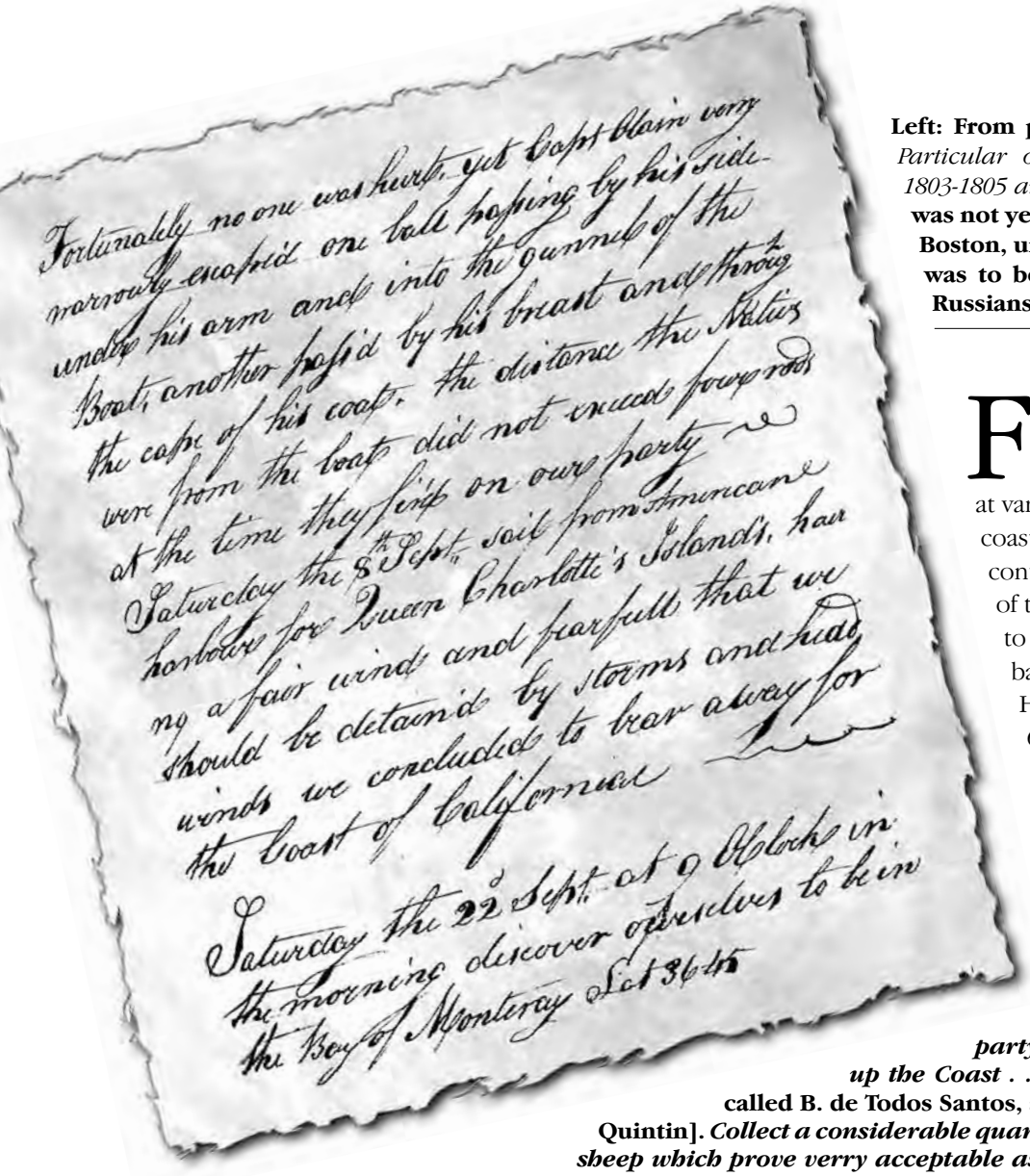
otters. That arrangement was yet to be made. In May, Captain Hubbell cleared Kodiak and set his course for California. He needed a full cargo of west coast furs for Canton. He and O'Cain planned to operate off that southern coast and barter out of range of patrolling Spanish frigates and guns.

Southbound, the *Enterprise* stopped first at San Diego at the end of June 1801. Hubbell requested the commander of the port, Manuel Rodriguez, to sell him bread, fruit, and other supplies for his long voyage to Canton and New York.

The commander knew that the visitors, certainly coached by the experienced O'Cain, would attempt to trade with San Diego civilians for valuable China goods whenever the garrison's attention was turned. The ship sailed a week later without a full cargo. Without conscience, Hubbell and O'Cain anchored in several bays along Baja's outer coast and engaged in covert trading.[20] This harvest, added to their northern trade, and gave them ample profits at Canton. They sailed from the Pearl River at the end of January 1802. It would take them five months to round the Cape of Good Hope and return to New York.

Below: Originally painted in color, this stylized view of Whampoa, China, reflects the congestion of the harbor with ships of five nations engaged in commerce and trade.

From the Oregon Historical Society's publication Soft Gold, *1982*


Fortunately no one was hurt, yet Capt Blain very narrowly escaped one ball hopping by his side under his arm and into the gunnel of the Boat, another past'd by his breast and throug the cape of his coat. the distance the Natives were from the boat did not exceed fourty rods at the time they fired on our party
Saturday the 8th Sept. sail from Amercane harbour for Queen Charlotte's Islands, had no a fair wind and fearfull that we should be detain'd by storms and bad winds we concluded to bear away for the Coast of Californae
Saturday the 22d Sept. at 9 OClock in the morning discover ourselves to be in the Bay of Monterey Lat 36.45

Left: From page one of Jonathan Winship, Jr.'s, *Particular occurrences, Ship O'Cain (Journal of 1803-1805 and Some Subsequent Voyages).* **Winship was not yet 23 years of age when he sailed from Boston, under Captain Joseph O'Cain, on what was to be the first contract voyage with the Russians at New Arkhangel.**

For four months until mid-April 1804, the forty Kodiaks and three Russians off the ship *O'Cain* were encamped at various islands and beaches at the north coast of Baja. As Jonathan Winship Jr. continues in his journal of the first voyage of this new ship, it was time for the vessel to go in search of the hunters, their baidarkas, and the Russian supervisors. Having secluded the high profile *O'Cain* from the watchful eyes of the Spaniards, the Kodiaks and their tiny craft were freer to venture to the rich otter fields without much alarm from shore.

March the 26 [1804] ***Sail from the Bay [San Quintin]. April the 13th arrive at the Bay of all Saints Latitude 32 N. Find our party of fishermen who had proceded up the Coast . . . at the aforementioned Bay*** **[now called B. de Todos Santos, approximately 75 miles north of San Quintin].** ***Collect a considerable quantity of skins, six fat bullocks, several sheep which prove verry acceptable as those that we procured at the Bay of St. Quintin were miserable poor. April the 21th Sail from the bay bound to Kodiac. June the 2d at 12 OClock make the Island of Kodiac ran in and come to and anchor in the middle bay. The Comandant sends us a supply of fresh provisions.***[21]

In forty-two days the 93-foot, copper-clad ship *O'Cain* sailed from Baja California to Kodiak Island, a distance of some 2,200 miles. Aleksandr Baranov, welcomed them. In June of 1804, he was preparing to take back by force his new colony at New Arkhangel in the south. The Kolosh had warred upon that post during its building in 1802, massacring nearly all the Russians and Aleut men and women there.

The news at Kodiak was good. This first joint hunting expedition to Baja was a success. Baranov, the Winship firm, Captain O'Cain and the northern Kodiaks had carried it out with cooperative energy. The *O'Cain's* voyage of 1803-1805 gave evidence that these cultural groups and nationalities — unlikely partners — could work together peacefully. The ship's crew returned the 40 Kodiaks and the three Russians safely.

One half of the 1,100 furs taken in the south went to Baranov. O'Cain and Jonathan Winship had 700 additional skins on board purchased, usually covertly, from Spaniards and mission staff.[22] This first contract proved O'Cain's plan. Employing the willing Kodiaks was many times more effective for

harvesting furs than the crew's piece-by-piece bartering with natives on the shore.

Back at Kodiak in October 1803, this contract voyage had almost never begun. It was only by an odd circumstance that Baranov had agreed. He desperately needed the supplies brought on the *O'Cain,* but he had neither the money nor accumulated fur skins to pay the captain. He had just recently shipped his furs to Siberia to the amount of 1.2 million rubles.[23] And O'Cain, with the young supercargo Jonathan Winship standing by, could not extend to Baranov the Winship firm's credit. The shrewd Irishman found this the opportune time to set his plan on the Russian's table. With the use of the Kodiaks and their baidarkas on the Boston ship they could together generate a fur catch by hunting at Baja, which would then be divided 50-50. It had worked. Now at Kodiak in 1804, the partners calculated the prices at Canton. As mentioned in Winship's journal, Baranov's share of this one voyage made him many times more than able to purchase 11,000 rubles of the *O'Cain's* cargo. The sorely needed food, tools, hardware, arms, and ammunition would save his expansion plans. The ship's crew at Kodiak made preparations to sail.

June 1804

We make trade with the Russians to the amount of about 11,000 Rubles. July the 7th we got under weigh and proceded about one mile when meeting with a head wind. We came to an anchor. The Ship Niva George Lisansky **[the sloop Neva, Iurii Lisianskii]** ***Commander arrives from Petersburgh. Sunday morning August the 12th we are fortunate enough to get to sea after making continual trials during the time that we have been detained. August the 19 Make Cape Edgemont*** **[Cape Edgecumbe, a landmark for New Arkhangel from the sea]** ***at four Oclock in the morning. . . As we should make a good voyage with the property we have on board, we thought it best to steer for the Sandwich Islands . . . Sunday the 15th October arrive at the Island of Wharhoo [Oahu]. Visited by a large number of canoes with Europeans and Americans and likewise Natives by Hundreds. During our stay here we collected about 150 Bushels potatoes a large quantity sugar cane, tara yams cocoa nuts and fruits of different kinds. The 18th we discharge our passengers, shiping 11 Natives and Mr. Kittias for armourer. Sail for Canton.***[24]

On 24 November, the *O'Cain* approached the entrance to the Pearl (Canton) river. In the afternoon a pilot came to the ship from the shore. O'Cain agreed to pay him forty dollars including an advance of twenty-five.

Below: Bocca Tigris, at the mouth of the Pearl River leading to Canton. The oil painting resides at the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

"Houqua," the well-known "Hong" merchant at Canton.
Painting from Russell & Co., Boston

Guiding a ship up to Canton presented a daunting series of problems. The Bostonians and other foreign traders needed to navigate not only the river, but through sundry tolls and authorities. The 80 miles from Macao at the entrance to Canton required patience, diplomacy, and much cash on hand to pay off the different Chinese officials, customs and duties. Just past the half-way point the Pearl narrowed greatly into the Bocca Tigris.

Warping the ship was in order. Twelve miles short of Canton was Whampoa, the official anchorage. Very few foreigners were permitted beyond it. Captain O'Cain (and presumably Winship) went up with presents for the merchants. Fortunately, O'Cain had learned of these hurdles in January 1802, when he sailed up the Pearl on Hubbell's ship, the *Enterprise*.

Young Jonathan Winship was now receiving valuable instruction in 1804 on his family's own vessel. He was about to captain it beginning the next year in a fur trade quest that would far exceed this first contract voyage.

On 26 January 1805, the *O'Cain* sailed from Whampoa through the Pearl's constriction at Bocca Tigris, out into the river's broad estuary, and into the South China Sea. Keeping sharp lookout for the China coast ladrones (pirates), and frequently firing a few of their cannon both in warning and in salute, the captain sailed under the lee of Sumatra. Fighting a strong current, the three-master made her way into the Strait of Sunda. On 20 February 1805, Jonathan recorded in his journal the sighting of Java Head on the western tip of that island. They had entered the Indian Ocean. In navigating that ocean and then rounding the Cape of Good Hope in mid-February, Winship frequently recorded being pursued by unidentified ships, whether *English, French or Dutch ships-of-war*. O'Cain's skill at seamanship avoided close contact. But at the English island of St. Helena on 29 April, the British had the force of arms. Nevertheless, this island port was a necessary mid-Atlantic stop for traders for water, wood, and supplies. As was the rule here, the *O'Cain* was boarded.

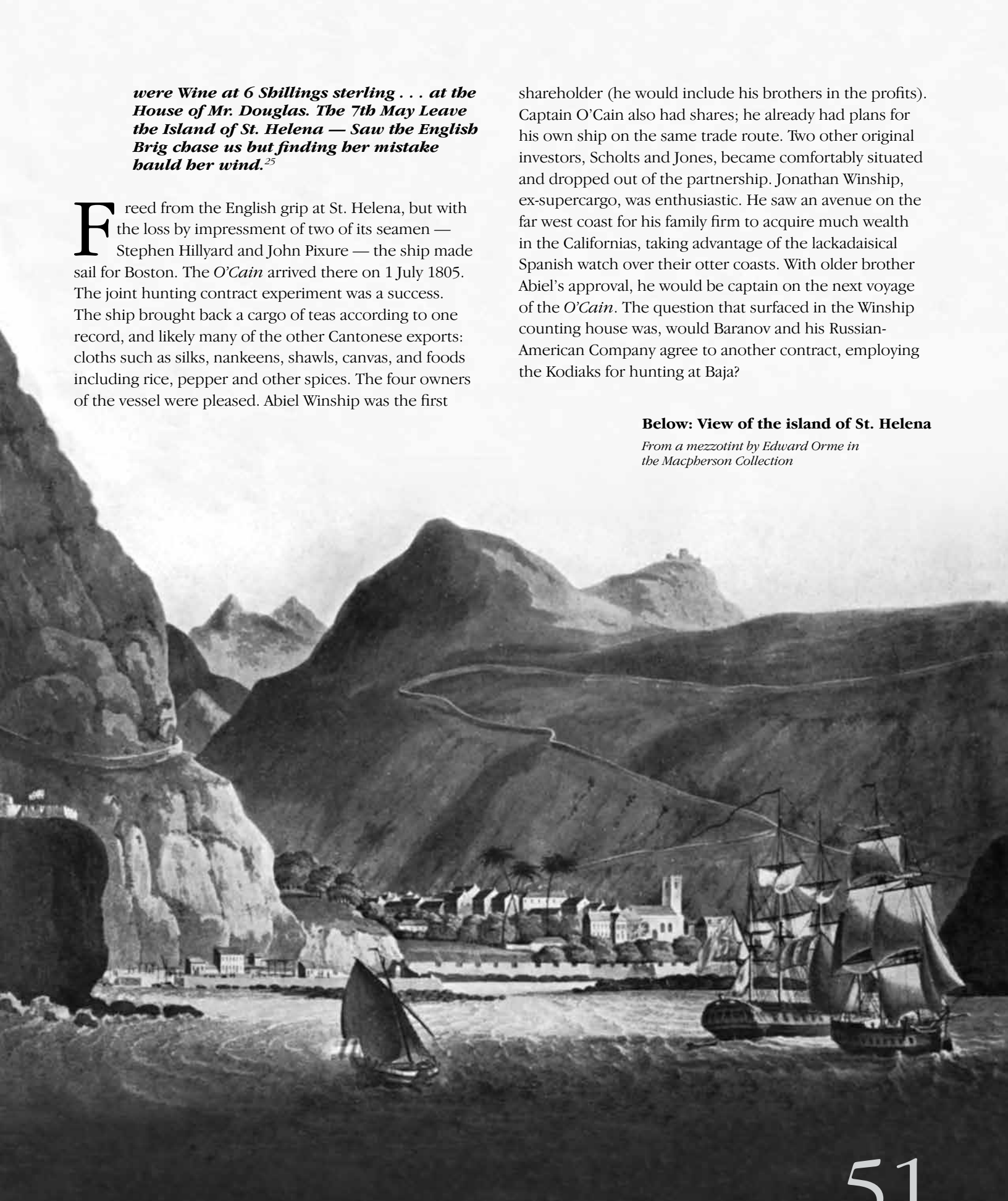
At the Island of St. Helena . . . came to anchor. Vessels lying in this port — 8 Indiamen – 1 Portuguese – 1 ship and 1 Schooner belonging to America. April the 29th came on board of our Ship the First Lieutenant of the Man of War Brig Capt* [no name written] *Commander — order'd all our people (Not excepting the Officers)–into the Boat — from this they went on board the Brig and they gave a strict examination. Surcharg'd* [released] *all except the Boatswain Ridley, Stephen Hillyard, John Shurburne, Joseph Tufts, John Pixure — 30 April Capt OCain & Perley Cadis report'd that Abraham Ridley, John Shurburne, Joseph Tufts were Americans and procur'd their Echasiment. I* [Jonathan] *visited the shores of St. Helena twice in the water boat. Find it impossible to procure any thing eatable. The only articles to be obtain'd

were Wine at 6 Shillings sterling . . . at the House of Mr. Douglas. The 7th May Leave the Island of St. Helena — Saw the English Brig chase us but finding her mistake hauld her wind.[25]

Freed from the English grip at St. Helena, but with the loss by impressment of two of its seamen — Stephen Hillyard and John Pixure — the ship made sail for Boston. The *O'Cain* arrived there on 1 July 1805. The joint hunting contract experiment was a success. The ship brought back a cargo of teas according to one record, and likely many of the other Cantonese exports: cloths such as silks, nankeens, shawls, canvas, and foods including rice, pepper and other spices. The four owners of the vessel were pleased. Abiel Winship was the first shareholder (he would include his brothers in the profits). Captain O'Cain also had shares; he already had plans for his own ship on the same trade route. Two other original investors, Scholts and Jones, became comfortably situated and dropped out of the partnership. Jonathan Winship, ex-supercargo, was enthusiastic. He saw an avenue on the far west coast for his family firm to acquire much wealth in the Californias, taking advantage of the lackadaisical Spanish watch over their otter coasts. With older brother Abiel's approval, he would be captain on the next voyage of the *O'Cain*. The question that surfaced in the Winship counting house was, would Baranov and his Russian-American Company agree to another contract, employing the Kodiaks for hunting at Baja?

Below: View of the island of St. Helena

From a mezzotint by Edward Orme in the Macpherson Collection

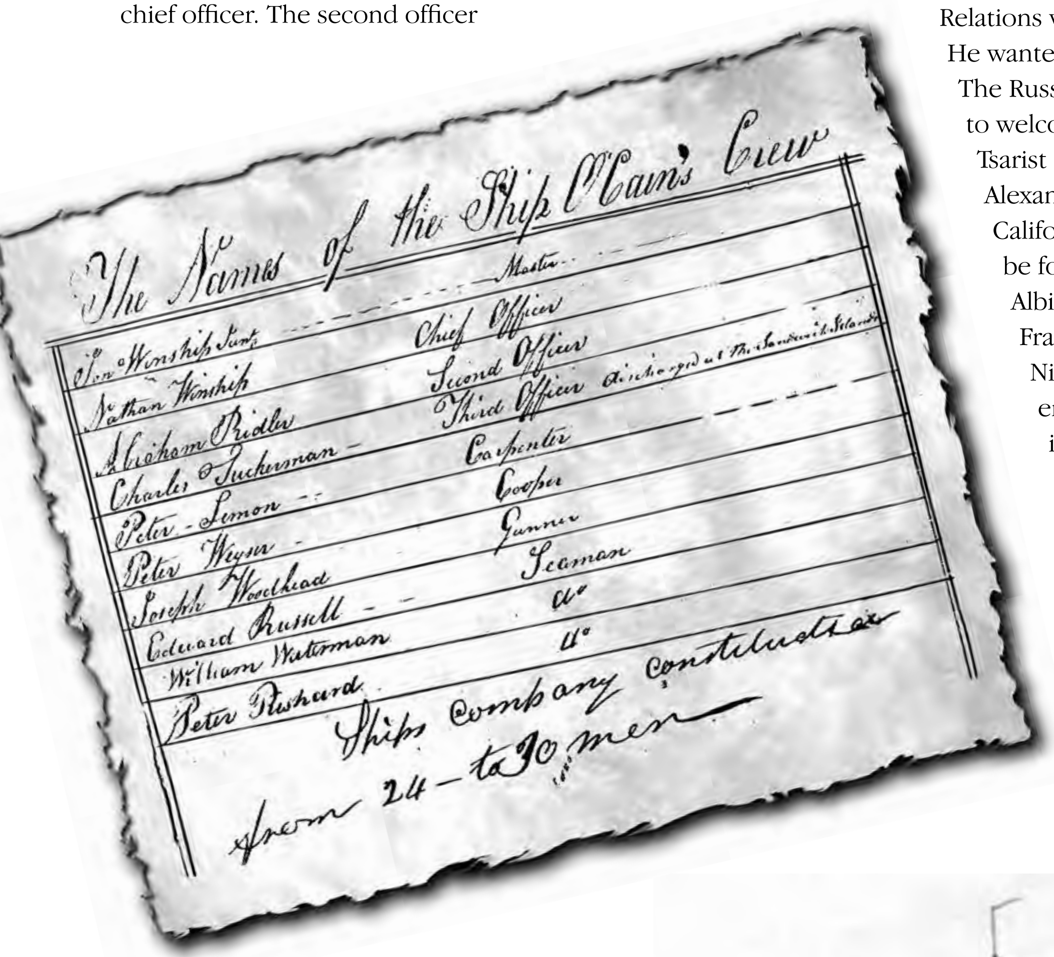


Jonathan Winship, Jr., Captain of the *O'Cain*

The Winships decided, in that late summer of 1805, to send Jonathan out as captain as soon as possible. He was only 25, but wise beyond his age; skilled and considerate of others. The crew that they would recruit, at least the new hands, would generally be younger than he.

The 280-ton *O'Cain* sailed out of Boston Harbor on its second around the world voyage on 7 October 1805. It was captained by Jonathan Jr., older brother Nathan was chief officer. The second officer was Abraham Ridler, veteran of the first contract voyage; Captain O'Cain had procured Ridler's release from imminent English impressment at St. Helena in the central Atlantic. In his journal of this new voyage, the young captain noted that the *Ship's company constitutes from 24 to 30 men*.[26] But in eight months he would add 112 Kodiaks and their baidarkas plus Russians to his onboard complement, a challenging load for a 93-foot vessel.

Weathering Cape Horn again on his ship, the *O'Cain*, Jonathan arrived at New Arkhangel in early May 1806. Relations with Baranov were surprisingly pleasant. He wanted another voyage to the south coast. The Russians' shortage of vessels caused him to welcome the Bostonians. Additionally, the Tsarist regime under the young Emperor Alexander I wished to open trade with Spanish California, and indeed, if a suitable bay could be found, to establish a settlement in Nova Albion, the unclaimed coast north of San Francisco. The Russian Court Chamberlain Nikolai Rezanov, intellectual and energetic, had arrived in New Arkhangel in 1805. He urged Baranov to send expeditions to the south. The Russians needed the fur pelts and the crop-bearing lands down the coast. Their fur supply in the north was greatly depleted. In the decade ending in 1800, more than 100,000 sea otters and fur seals had been subject


The Names of the Ship O'Cain's Crew

Jon. Winship Junr.	Master
Nathan Winship	Chief Officer
Abraham Ridler	Second Officer
Charles Tuckerman	Third Officer discharged at the Sandwich Islands
Peter Lemon	Carpenter
Peter Wigm	Cooper
Joseph Woodhead	Gunner
Edward Russell	Seaman
William Watterman	do
Peter Pishard	do

Ships company constitutes from 24 – to 30 men

Above: Crew list of the *O'Cain* (out of Boston, 1805). Jonathan Winship was captain at age 25 (born in 1780 in Brighton, Massachusetts).

From. E. W. Giesecke's original ship's log.

Right: This three-masted ship (of Massachusetts) was similar to the *O'Cain* built in 1807.

By Antoine Roux, Marseilles

Left: Count Nicolai Resanov, Chamberlain of the Czar, was also one of the organizers of the Russian-American Company.

Right: Aleksandr Andreevich Baranof (Baranov) was chief manager of the Russian-American Company from 1790 to 1818.

The Russian-American Company in New Arkhangel (Sitka), circa 1808.

From The Wreck of the Sv. Nikolai, *by Kenneth N. Owens, Drawings by Karen Beyers, The Press of the Oregon Historical Society, 1985.*

to Russian slaughter.[27] (This was an almost irrecoverable number considering the slow rate at which these fine-haired animals replenish themselves.) Now, Rezanov urged Baranov to continue the southern otter hunt and search for possible settlement sites. He urged the colonial manager to enter the Columbia River, find suitable bays, and later push south to the California coast. This was, he said, the desire of the imperial court at St. Petersburg.[28]

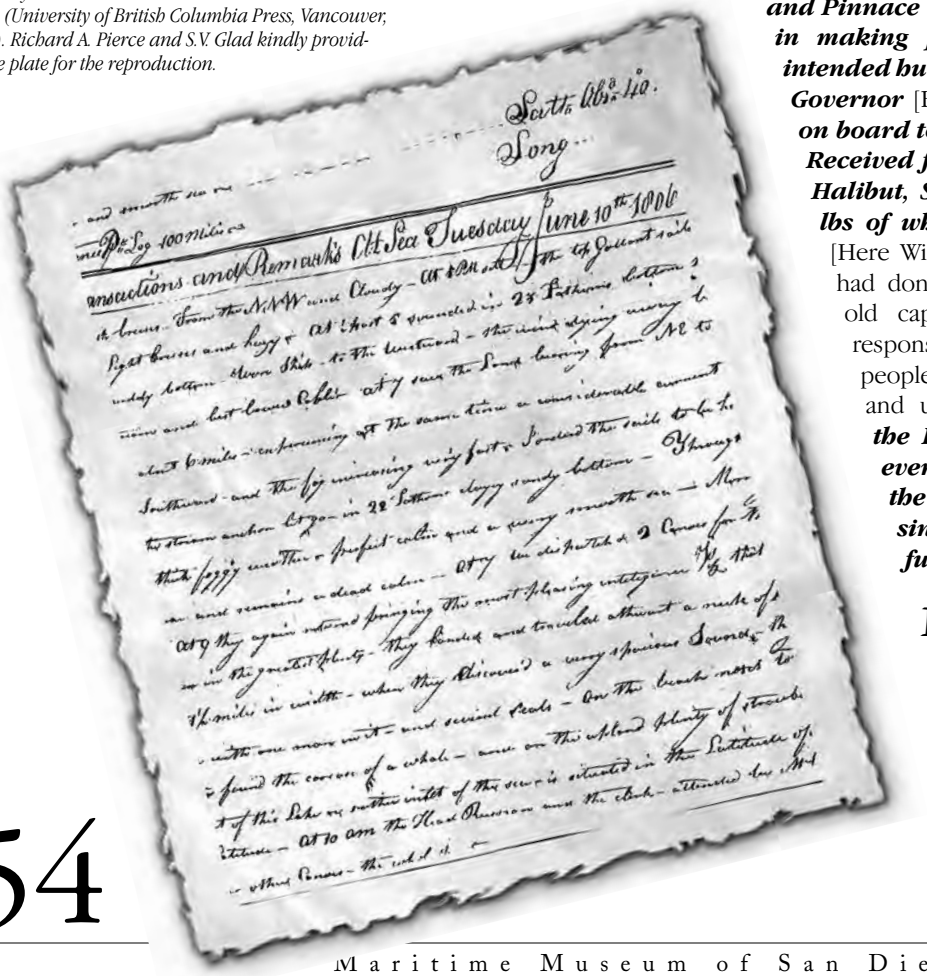
Winship had arrived at New Arkhangel at the best of times for his and the Russians' mutual interests. At Baranov's dinner table over many evenings he learned his objectives. By mid-May, he had Baranov's agreement for him to take on the shipload of Kodiaks, baidarkas, one large baidara and the three Russian supervisors. The leader of these was Sysoi Slobodchikov, a mature

Above: Sketched by Martin Sauer (1790), who was employed on a Russian Naval vessel under Lt. Joseph Billings (both Englishmen), during the second official expedition to the North Pacific, 1785 to 1795, framed the early Russian settlement (Baranov's first headquarters in 1791-1792) at Three Saints Harbor, Kodiak Island. The native "Kadiaks" used the watertight, two-hatch, skin-on-frame baidarkas most commonly for hunting sea otter.

From Glynn Barratt's Russia in Pacific Waters 1715-1825, *(University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1981). Richard A. Pierce and S.V. Glad kindly provided the plate for the reproduction.*

promyshlennink and Russian hunter-trader. Preparing for departure from New Arkhangel, Captain Winship ensured that the natives would be well-equipped and cared for:

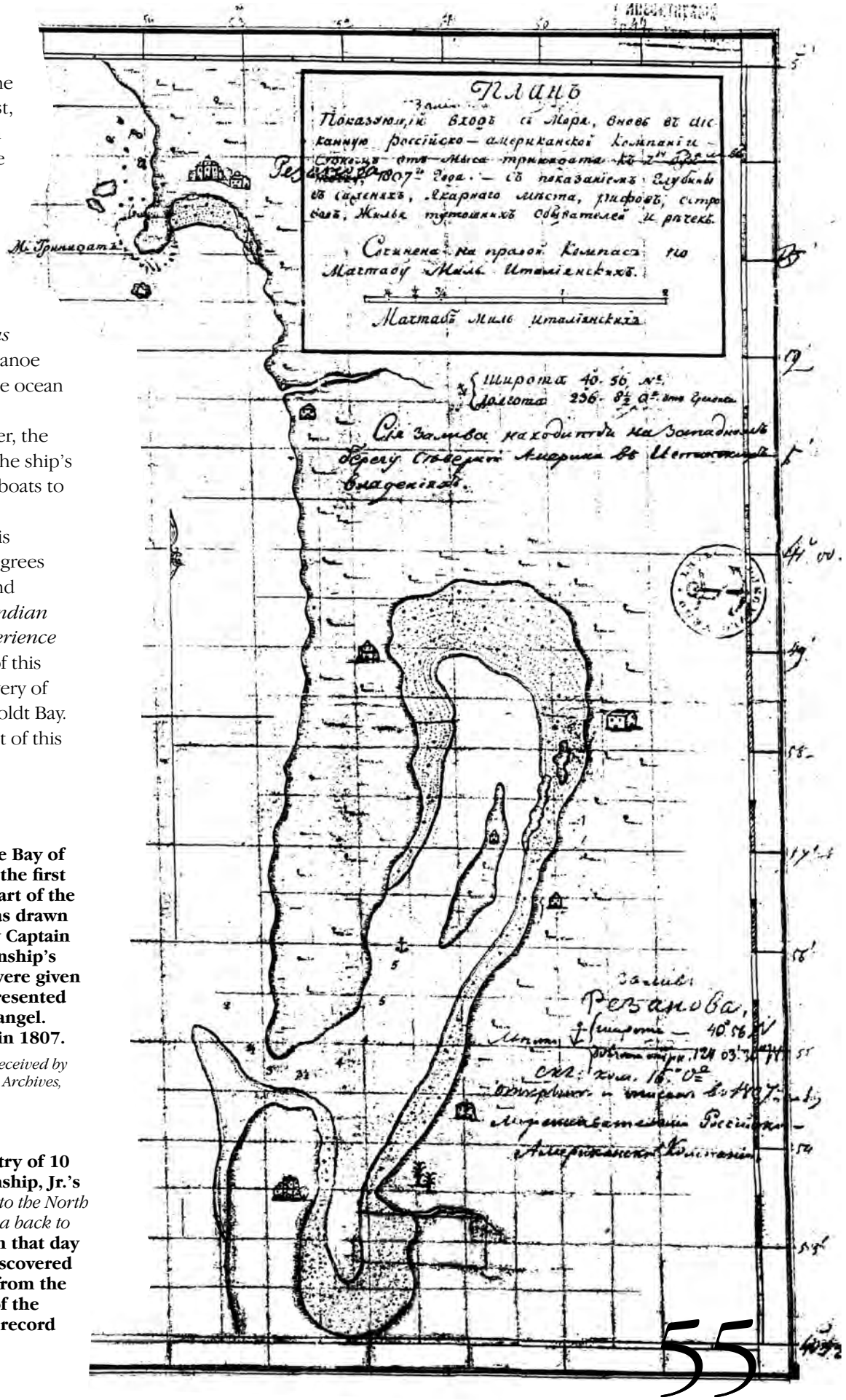
> ***Transactions and remarks, 17th May*** [1806, ship *O'Cain*]**.** ***Ships Company employed in performing necessary work. Received on board a large quantity of packages belonging to the Russian Company and 20 canoes*** [baidarkas] ***stor'd them between decks. The continual generosity and friendship are felt and acknowledged by us to the Russians. 18th May, Received on board 29 more Canoes. People employ'd in stowing the Hold with Goods belonging to the Russians . . . and receiving the Natives' stores, arms and other necessary articles Hoisted the Long Boat and Pinnace on board. 21st May 1806. Employ'd in making preparations for sea — all our intended hunters*** [112] ***came on board. At 10 the Governor*** [Baranov] ***and other Gentlemen came on board to take leave and bid us farewell. . . Received from the Russians great supplies of Halibut, Salmon, Geese besides about 1,000 lbs of whale food for the natives enroute.*** [Here Winship offered up a devout entry as he had done on previous occasions. The 26-year-old captain had shouldered a tremendous responsibility for the ship and its many people on board in taking them to distant and unknown challenges.] ***Thus far has the Protector of mankind afforded us every assistance and we agreeable to the dictates of honest minds offer our sincere congratulations and request further favors.***[29]



Discovery

On 10 June, the *O'Cain's* crew spotted land six miles off to port. In the morning, Winship dispatched two baidarkas as

they were near the center of the desirable and unoccupied coast, Nova Albion (today's Northern California). After two hours the boats returned bringing *the most pleasing intelligence*. The Kodiaks had observed sea otters in great numbers. They landed, and on foot crossed a mile of land *when they discover'd a very spacious Sound*. In the bay, they saw a canoe with one man, seals, and on the ocean beach the carcass of a whale. An hour later, the young captain sent off one of the ship's boats and four additional skin boats to discover the entrance into the sound. Winship wrote in his journal the location as forty degrees and fifty-two minutes north, and this pleasant report that *Our Indian Hunters this day I believe experience Perfect happiness*. The event of this day marked the original discovery of what became known as Humboldt Bay. There is no known prior report of this sighting or entrance.[30]



Right: First known chart of the Bay of Rezanov (Humboldt Bay) and the first known Russian chart of any part of the California coast. This chart was drawn from the survey conducted by Captain Jonathan Winship in 1806. Winship's measurements and sketches were given to Sysoi Slobodchikov, who presented them to Baranov at New Arkhangel. Baranov completed the chart in 1807.

Chart and interpretive information received by E.W. Giesecke from the Russian Naval Archives, St. Petersburg, 1996.

Opposite Left: "Discovery" entry of 10 June 1806, from Jonathan Winship, Jr.'s *Journal of a Voyage from Boston to the North Pacific Ocean, from there to China back to Boston 1805, 1806, 1807, 1808***. On that day in June, Humboldt Bay was discovered by hunters walking overland from the beach. On 14 June, the crew of the** *O'Cain* **made the first entry of record into the bay by small boat.**

Captain Scammon gave the general public its first view of the sea otter with this illustration published in his 1874 book, *The Marine Mammalia of the Northwestern Coast of North America.*

Captain Jonathan Winship and Mr. Clark, second officer, discovered the bay's entrance, surveyed it including both northern and southern arms, and drafted a chart. They saw approximately 500 Indians. On 15 June older brother Nathan, chief officer, set out for the new sound with fifty skin boats. The Russian supervisors and the Kodiaks explored and hunted. For four nights they camped near a village of friendly natives on shore. On the nineteenth difficulties arose. A large group of Indians had arrived and commenced hostilities with the villagers. The latter deserted their village and fled to the ship's party for protection. Firing from both sides ensued. The invaders appeared to be collecting in greater numbers. The Russian commander (Slobodchikov) gave orders for the party to return to the ship offshore. By the next day all the baidarkas from the shore had been received onboard. Winship, seeing the extent of hostilities, wrote it is advisable *to try our fortune to the Southward*.[31] The *O'Cain's* crew prepared for departure. The large sound they had discovered would not host a sailing vessel until 1850, when it was rediscovered by Americans and named after Alexander von Humboldt.

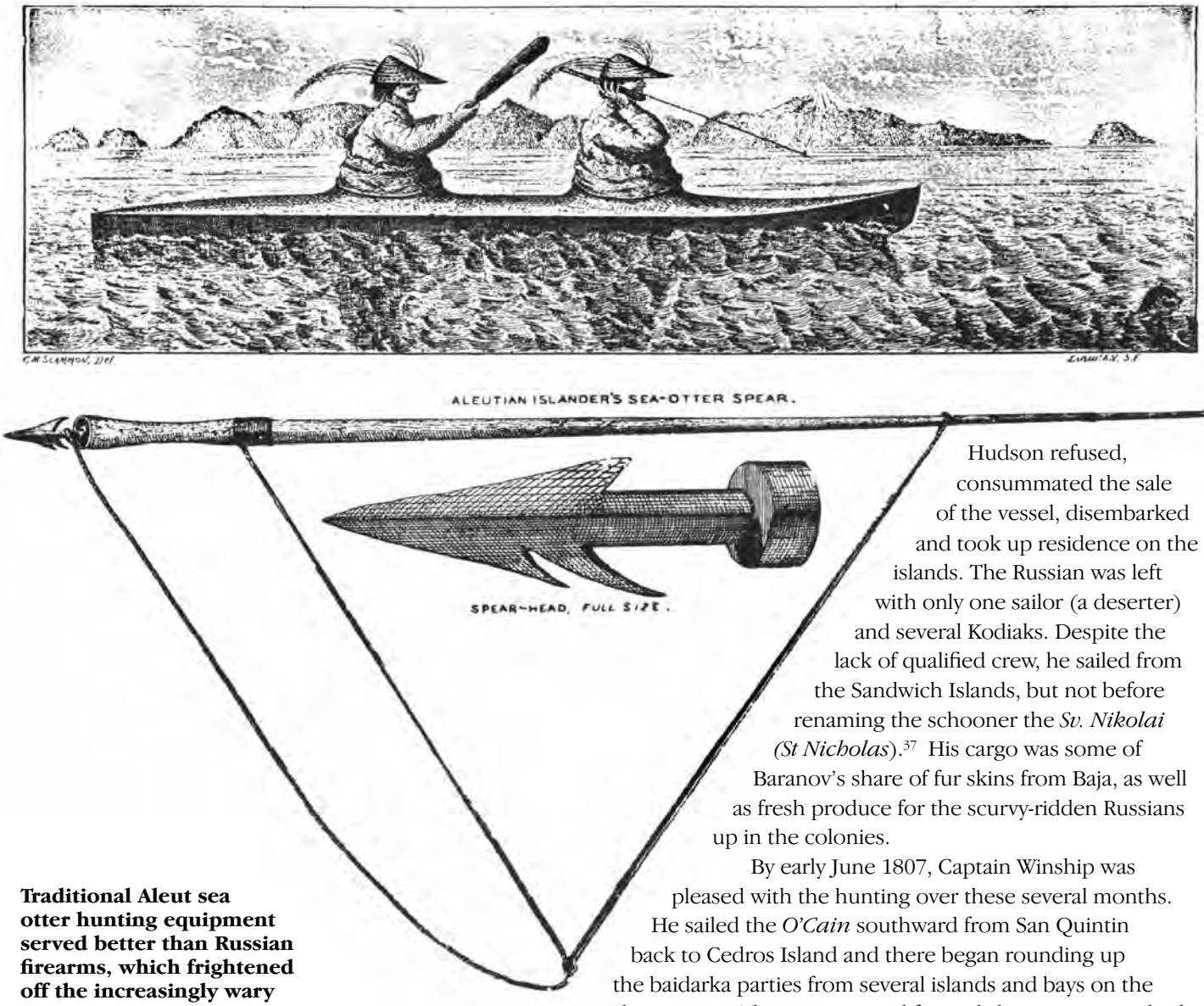
Sailing south along Baja California that summer of 1806, Winship landed his hunting parties first at San Quintin and then at Cedros Island, Vizcaino Bay. Here all 112 Kodiaks and the three Russians under Slobodchikov would make camp and hunt the sea otters and fur seals. There was little sign of Spanish patrols here. Nathan Winship was to camp near them as overall manager. Captain Jonathan, finding Cedros abounding in otter, could see that even more hunters would increase the harvest. He determined to return to Baranov with the good news.

> ***9 November 1806. Saluted the fort*** [New Arkhangel] ***with 5 guns and had the same number returned. Heard that O'Cain*** [Captain Joseph] ***had visited the place and taken Mr. Barranoff to Kodiak and had made a contract — to take a quantity of furs to Japan. Captain Kimball in the Brig Peacock had visited this place and was*** [acting] ***like a mad man — neither of them being able to obtain Canoes — they were extremely disappointed.***[32]
>
> ***But both O'Cain and Kimball did work out contracts with Baranov — at Kodiak Island. The Russian manager was more agreeable at his old base in the far north.***

Jonathan also discovered this at Kodiak when he arrived in late November. Within days, Baranov promised him more baidarkas and hunters for Baja.

He was obviously impressed with Jonathan's observations of more sea otter populations at Cedros. Winship, however, had to remain at Kodiak all through December. The fourth of the month was Baranov's birthday. The Russians hosted a large celebration and the spirits and presents flowed freely. Of slight build, Baranov nevertheless handled a large mug. The *O'Cain's* crew added to the gift-giving and the ship saluted the occasion with nine guns. Winship finally freed himself from the Russian manager's dinners and parties and sailed from Kodiak on 16 January 1807, with forty-eight additional islanders onboard. He skirted the California coast and sailed 2,300 miles for Cedros Island. He arrived on 12 March, disembarked his new Russian supervisor and his hunters, and welcomed Nathan on board from his long winter camp. The news was not what he had hoped for. In the seven months that Jonathan was gone from Cedros on the *O'Cain,* only 900 otter skins had been taken. He had expected a harvest of at least 3,000 by the 112 Kodiaks under Slobodchikov and his two assistants. Jonathan suppressed his anger, but noted the disappointment in his journal.[33] Slobodchikov would have felt his anger, he wrote, but brother Nathan advised against a confrontation. Jonathan went ashore to Slobodchikov's house on Cedros and listened to his excuses. The weather had frequently been poor. One hunter had drowned (this was the only life lost on the entire 1806 and 1807 hunting voyage.) Slobodchikov was apologetic. Winship could do little more. But he did learn from others onboard that this *promyshlennik* had previously been reprimanded by Baranov for his lackluster performance. Jonathan also did not question Nathan who was in charge while at Baja, about the lack of production; he was, after all, his older brother. However, the young captain would make a change in the supervision at Cedros. He appointed the *O'Cain's* gunner, Joseph Woodhead, to be the party chief on the island for the next four months. For those spring months the ship's crew would drop off other hunting parties at Baja islands between Cedros and San Quintin, 150 miles to the north. Winship would remain at the latter bay as support vessel for that group of hunters.[34] Jonathan was determined to step up the pace in order to procure a good load of skins for the final return trip to New Arkhangel in August.

Hunting activity proceeded cooperatively through the spring. In June 1807, however, Slobodchikov showed his obstinacy. He found a way to demonstrate his independence. He would leave the Baja expedition. A visiting schooner would be his means of returning to New Arkhangel. Captain John Hudson had sailed his Sandwich Island topsail schooner *Tamana* into San Quintin on 26 May. By the next day this news had reached Slobodchikov. On the twenty-ninth, he purchased the 45-ton vessel for 150 otter skins.[35] (As Baranov's representative on this voyage, he knew that the Russian-American Company's share of the harvest of furs would be fifty percent. He therefore must have considered himself legal owner of this amount.) He did not hide this purchase from Jonathan Winship, who recorded the fact objectively in his journal. The captain gave no reason for Slobodchikov's planned departure except for the brief suggestion that the Russian wished to return as soon as possible to his home base in the far north. On 17 June, Winship wrote that *At 9 Schooner Tamanah got underway for the Sandwich Islands*.[36] They would be the stopover for Slobodchikov's return to New Arkhangel. John Hudson would command the *Tamana* to the islands. Slobodchikov pleaded with Hudson to help him navigate the schooner onward for the nearly 4,000 miles to New Arkhangel.



Traditional Aleut sea otter hunting equipment served better than Russian firearms, which frightened off the increasingly wary animals. Hunters approached the sea otter silently in light, easily maneuverable baidarkas wearing the *dereviannaia shapka,* which provided protection from brilliant sun and sea reflections, while looking vaguely like a seal or otter's head.

From Charles Melville Scammon's
The Marine Mammalia of the Northwestern Coast of North America, 1874

Hudson refused, consummated the sale of the vessel, disembarked and took up residence on the islands. The Russian was left with only one sailor (a deserter) and several Kodiaks. Despite the lack of qualified crew, he sailed from the Sandwich Islands, but not before renaming the schooner the *Sv. Nikolai (St Nicholas*).[37] His cargo was some of Baranov's share of fur skins from Baja, as well as fresh produce for the scurvy-ridden Russians up in the colonies.

By early June 1807, Captain Winship was pleased with the hunting over these several months. He sailed the *O'Cain* southward from San Quintin back to Cedros Island and there began rounding up the baidarka parties from several islands and bays on the mid-Baja coast. The sea otter and fur seal skins were stretched on the Cedros shore or on the deck of the ship.

Those already dried were stowed below. Gradually the baidarkas, 95 of them, were also stowed, along with a few three-hole frame boats and the baidara. The Kodiaks carried on board their weapons and their sea foods for the cruise to the north. All of Baranov's hunters were safely accounted for except for the one Kodiak who had drowned on the Lower Coast. They boarded the *O'Cain* in good order, most reserving a small space on the ship's deck as their sleeping area. From his previous visits to New Arkhangel, Baranov and the natives knew that they would receive their wages based on the number of otter, seal and other pelts each had brought in. Winship's crew supervised the final loading of people and goods onto the *O'Cain*, during the first days of August 1807.[38]

On the ninth of the month, the 93-foot ship sailed from Baja jammed with an amazing crowd, a polyglot of cultures: 149 native men and 13 native women (Kodiaks and Aleuts); three Russian supervisors (not Slobodchikov, the *promyshlennik* who had sailed away seven weeks before on the *Tamana,* but his two assistants and the new Russian, Verkhovinsky, who had been placed on the *O'Cain* by Baranov in January), and the *O'Cain's* crew, the majority out

of Boston. The total number of people on the ship on 9 August, the day of the departure from Lower California, amounted to 192. Jonathan Winship, Commander, had a difficult load to supervise. His journal, however, reveals a safe and pleasant voyage, routinely disciplined, non-stop to New Arkhangel. The five week, approximately 2,300 mile cruise was not without its diversions on deck. Winship wrote brief but enlightening comments while at sea:

> ***10 August*** [1807] ***the young Kodiackers on the quarter deck entertaining the Ships Company with Songs, dancing, etc. 13 August, the Natives performing many plays. 21 August Evening the Kodiac Priest performing to bring fair wind — much to the satisfaction of everyone. 31 August, all hands employ'd in overhauling the otter skins***.[39]

On 15 September the vessel arrived at the entrance of the passage into New Arkhangel. Winship wrote: *Thank God we came too in a safe, calm and commodious Bay.*" Small boats came to meet them from the settlement. One of the first reported that chief manager Baranov was not there, but was residing at his former post on Kodiak Island. Ivan Kuskov, his assistant, was in charge. The *O'Cain* was towed against the current into the post by boats that Kuskov had sent out. On the eighteenth, Winship wrote: *At 1 Mr. Slobotchiskoff arrived from the settlement with Gov Kuskoffs compliments & a present of ducks*.[40] Slobodchikov had arrived safely from the Sandwich Islands. He had sailed in the latter part of July, set his course across the vast north Pacific, and in one month, traversed the nearly 4,000 miles on his small *Sv. Nikolai* to the Russian colony. He had arrived at New Arkhangel on 22 August.[41] Winship made no record of any ill feeling on the part of Slobodchikov. The *O'Cain* anchored in New Arkhangel harbor and discharged the 162 Kodiaks and their equipment. The fur skins were unloaded, taken onshore and there sorted out. A part of Baranov's fifty-fifty share had already arrived on the schooner *Sv. Nikolai*. The pelts were precisely accounted for and the total sea otter skins brought back from the Lower California coast numbered 4,864.[42] Though there is no known record of Kuskov's reaction, he certainly must have been pleased. The total pelts by Winship's 1806-1807 efforts was to be the largest yield of any of the thirteen hunting contracts between Baranov and New Englanders. For Winship, it was the basis for his family's fortune in the American-China trade. Jonathan Winship did not see Baranov on this return visit of September 1807.[43] But he would meet him again in 1809, and agree to another joint hunting contract. Having reloaded his own share of pelts, Winship directed activities as small Russian boats assisted in towing the *O'Cain* down the passage until her sails filled. On 9 October, with fine weather, the ship sailed out into the Pacific.[44] Captain Winship set course for the Sandwich Islands. In the two weeks there during November, he re-provisioned: loaded hogs, pigs, sugar, cocoa nuts, and other island products, and gave presents and did favors for King Kamehameha. The *O'Cain* reached Macao on 29 December, entered the Pearl River and worked up to Whampoa, the harbor for Canton. Winship traded there for six weeks. He had been there before, learning the arts of negotiating with the Chinese from Joseph O'Cain. He satisfactorily exchanged his pelts for specie and China goods. Then he coursed his ship down the Pearl, south through the Strait of Sunda,

Kodiak islander or Aleut (as drawn by John Webber, 1778) were employed by the Russian-American Company. Baranov, and later company managers, found these natives irreplaceable for the taking of animal skins. They would often voyage 14 to 20 hours a day in their baidarkas during the early summer. The glare visor was highly decorated with feathers, seal and walrus whiskers. Also functional were their waterproof garments of bear or seal gut.

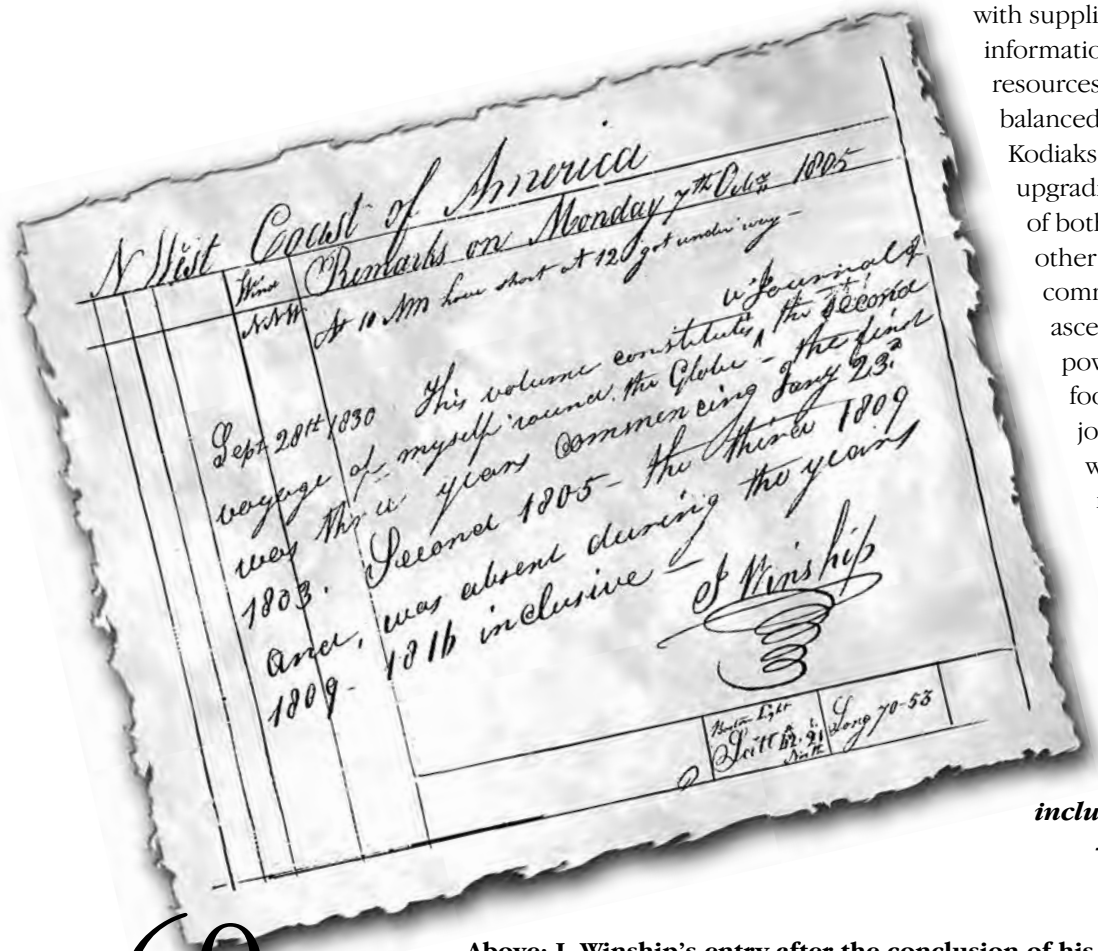
The sepia and watercolor drawing is held at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, The photo reproduction is by Hillel Burger.

Left: The only known likeness of Jonathan Winship Jr., this painted portrait dates to approximately 1840, when he was nearing the age of 60. The retired China trade merchant, Pacific explorer and diplomat lived out his life in Brighton, Massachusetts, having founded the Winship Gardens and Nurseries.

Photograph courtesy of descendant Johnson Winship of Simsbury, Connecticut; with gratitude to Tracy Huntington for her fine photography (Winship's daughter-in-law married to son David Winship); and to William Marchione, President of the Brighton-Allston Historical Society, the organization which holds the original portrait.

across the Indian Ocean, rounded the Cape of Good Hope and sailed on to Boston. He arrived on 15 June 1808 with a good cargo of teas, nankeens, silks, spices, and other Oriental products. Jonathan Winship's final entry in his journal for this voyage of 1805 to 1808, gave the total miles sailed for the entire cruise – an astounding 68,120 miles.[45]

On this around-the-world cruise, Winship, now a seasoned but still young twenty-eight year old, had entered into the arenas of maritime diplomacy as well as geographical discovery. His successful relations with Aleksandr Baranov and the Russian-American Company established the presence of the fledgling United States in the Pacific. He helped open the door for the company to move south into unsettled Nova Albion. He had provided Baranov with supplies and increased profits as well as information about the southern coastline, its resources and native populations. Winship's balanced and caring treatment of the Kodiaks and Aleuts served as a model for upgrading native relations on the part of both the Russian supervisors and other Boston traders. His multi-cultural commercial venture forecasted the ascendancy of the Americans as a Pacific power and onto the world stage. A final footnote in Jonathan's manuscript journal of his 1805-1808 voyage, written fourteen years after his final return to Boston, reads: ***Sept. 28th, 1830 This volume constitutes a Journal of the second voyage of myself 'round the Globe – the first was thru years commencing Jany 23.d 1803. Second 1805 — The third 1809 and was absent during the years 1809-1816 inclusive —J. Winship.***[46]

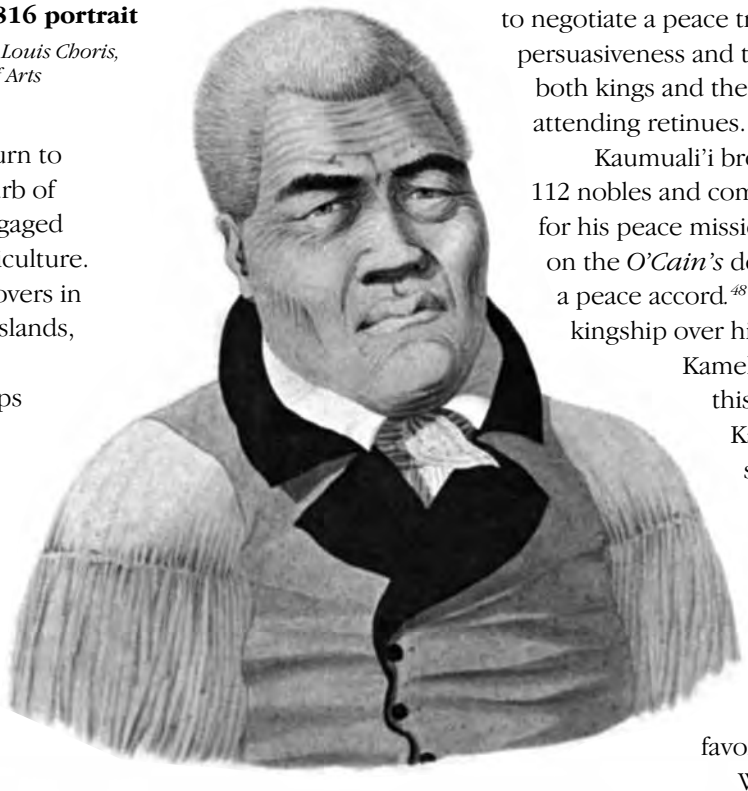


Above: J. Winship's entry after the conclusion of his last voyage

From the manuscript owned by E. W. Giesecke

Right: Kamehameha I, 1816 portrait

Kamehameha I, 1816, portrait by Louis Choris, courtesy of Honolulu Academy of Arts



Soon after his final return to Brighton (now a suburb of Boston), Jonathan engaged in his new vocation of horticulture. During his long trading layovers in Canton and the Sandwich Islands, especially throughout the quarantine of American ships during the War of 1812, he had observed the use of hotbeds for growing flowers. He expanded his plantings to early vegetables and "From the small beginning sprang the then famous Winship Nurseries."[47]

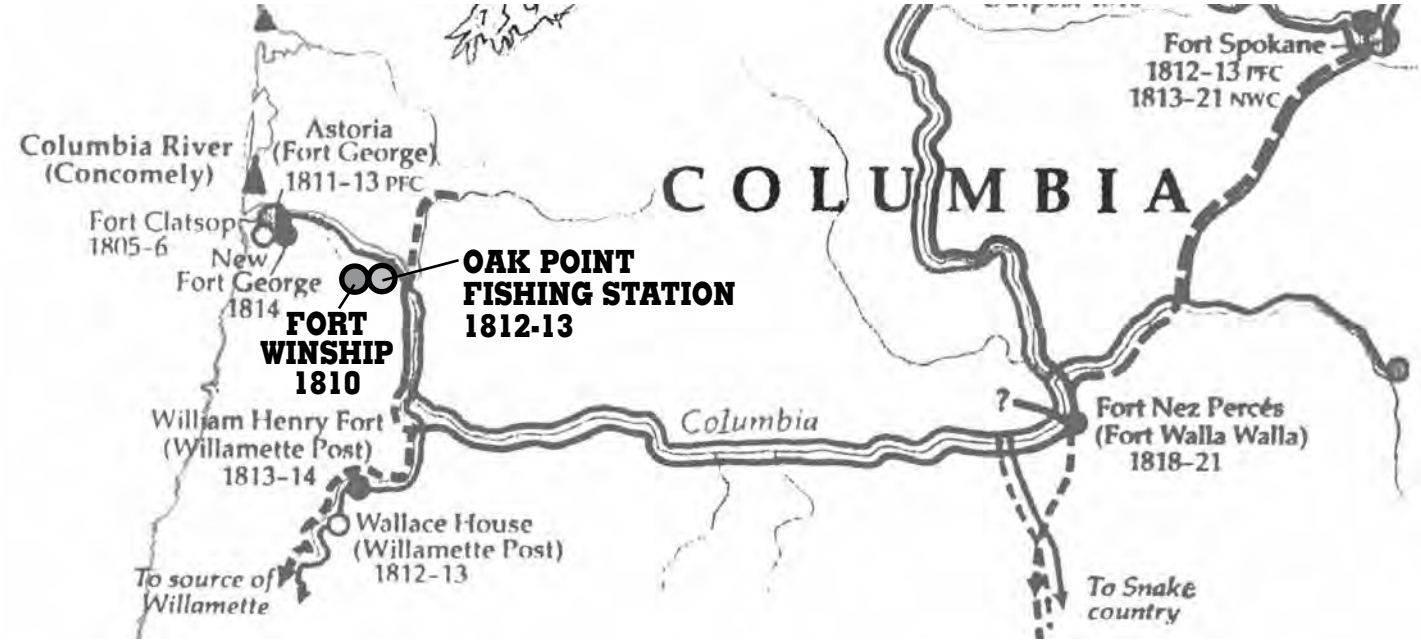
On his third voyage, again a contract hunt with Baranov's people (but smaller in scope this time), Jonathan engaged in diplomacy in the Sandwich Islands. From 11-25 March 1810, he invited and then transported Kaumuali'i, king of Kauai and adjacent islands, to meet with Kamehameha I, the Great, to negotiate a peace treaty. Jonathan exercised persuasiveness and tact in handling the pride of both kings and the protocol for their numerous attending retinues.

Kaumuali'i brought with him from Kauai 112 nobles and commoners onboard the *O'Cain* for his peace mission to Oahu. On 20 March, on the *O'Cain's* deck, the two kings signed a peace accord.[48] Kaumuali'i would retain kingship over his islands as long as he lived. Kamehameha would not invade. With this subordination of the former, Kamehameha became sole sovereign over the Sandwich Island chain. Jonathan Winship maintained his good relationship with the king and subsequently entered into the sandalwood trade late in 1812. The aromatic wood, grown in Hawaii, was much favored in China.

Winship knew from Baranov of his and Rezanov's plans (following the goals of St. Petersburg) to establish Russian posts in the south. The Columbia River was first on Rezanov's list, followed later by California. The Russian court chamberlain sailed out of New Arkhangel in March 1806.

Below: Port of Honolulu, 1816

Drawing by Louis Choris, Voyage Pittoresque Autour du Monde, *Paris, 1822.*



On the fourteenth, his ship the *Juno* (renamed the *Iunona*) began the attempt to enter the Columbia River and take possession.[49] But the storm of that March resisted their efforts. Rezanov wrote:

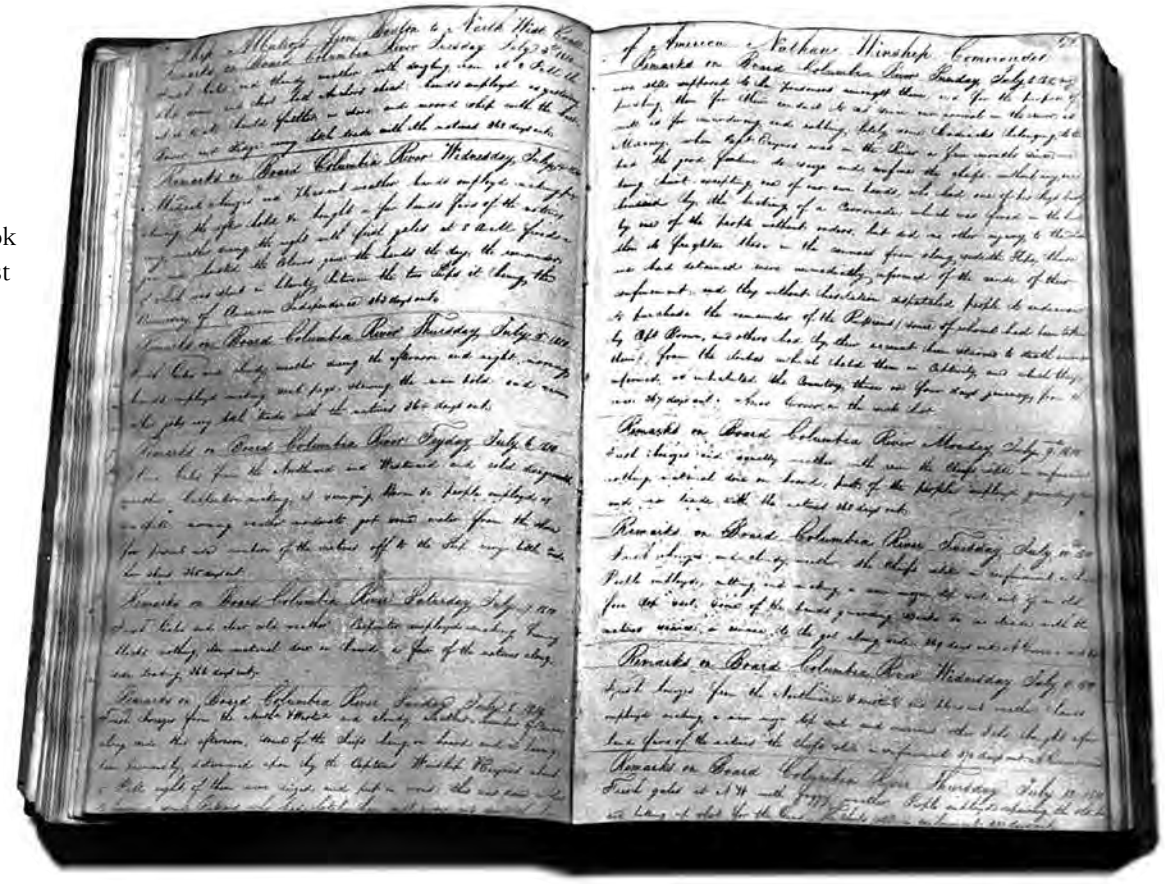
> ***We sighted the mouth of the*** [Columbia] ***river on March 14*** [1806]***. But head winds forced us to stand off. . . We approached it*** [again] ***on the evening of March 20 and dropped anchor. We planned to enter the river the next day, but the tremendous current and the great breakers in the channel hindered us.***[50]

The Russian-American Company made a second attempt to enter the Columbia. In the fall of 1808, Baranov dispatched the topsail schooner *Sv. Nikolai* (formerly the *Tamana*) with a party of hunters under the command of the *promyshlennik* Timofei Tarakanov. The latter was ordered to use all possible means to open trade with the natives at the mouth of the river.[51] Misfortune then took its hand. Baranov's schooner sailed south and crossed the Strait of Juan de Fuca on 10 October 1808. The commander, Bulygin, allowed some trade with coastal natives. Some days later a strong wind came up and increased to a gale. The crew was unable to control the vessel and the

Left: Baranov had hoped to locate a site for the Russian-American Company on the Columbia River, however, while heading south, along the present day Washington coast, the topsail schooner *Sv. Nikolai* was forced ashore during a strong gale and was wrecked on 1 November 1808.

From The Wreck of the Sv. Nikolai*, by Kenneth N. Owens, Drawings by Karen Beyers, The Press of the Oregon Historical Society, 1985.*

Nikolai was forced close to shore. On 1 November the schooner was driven onshore. The beaching took place on the northern coast of present Washington State, north of the mouth of the Quillayute River. The twenty-two persons onboard, Russians and half as many Aleuts, either perished or were captured. This came as a hard blow to Baranov. With the *Nikolai* he had intended to locate a site for a company settlement on the Columbia. His plan to advance commercial enterprise was again delayed.



Albatross

Ship *Albatross* Journal
2 July to 12 July, 1810
From the Journal owned by E. W. Giesecke

Jonathan Winship, knowing of the Russian plan to enter the river, took up the challenge and attempted to establish a permanent post upstream Earlier in 1809, the Winships had gathered in Boston to make plans. Abiel, the oldest brother, advised Jonathan and Nathan to sail 30 miles up the Columbia in the spring of 1810, and purchase land from the natives. A post should be built. The object was to anticipate further movement of the Russians to the Columbia, and to be the first to harness the upstream trade for the skins of sea otter, beaver, mink, and any pelt suitable for the China or American markets. With Jonathan continuing his trading in the Sandwich Islands, it fell to older brother Nathan to command another Winship vessel, the 77-foot *Albatross*. Under guidance of the veteran sea captain William Smith, who would serve as first mate, the ship stood in for the Columbia on 25 May 1810.[52] Smith and Nathan carefully sought out the river's channel and warped up frequently. They worked the vessel approximately 40 miles upstream. On the south bank, at the bend in the Columbia named Oak Point, they selected a site for their trading post.

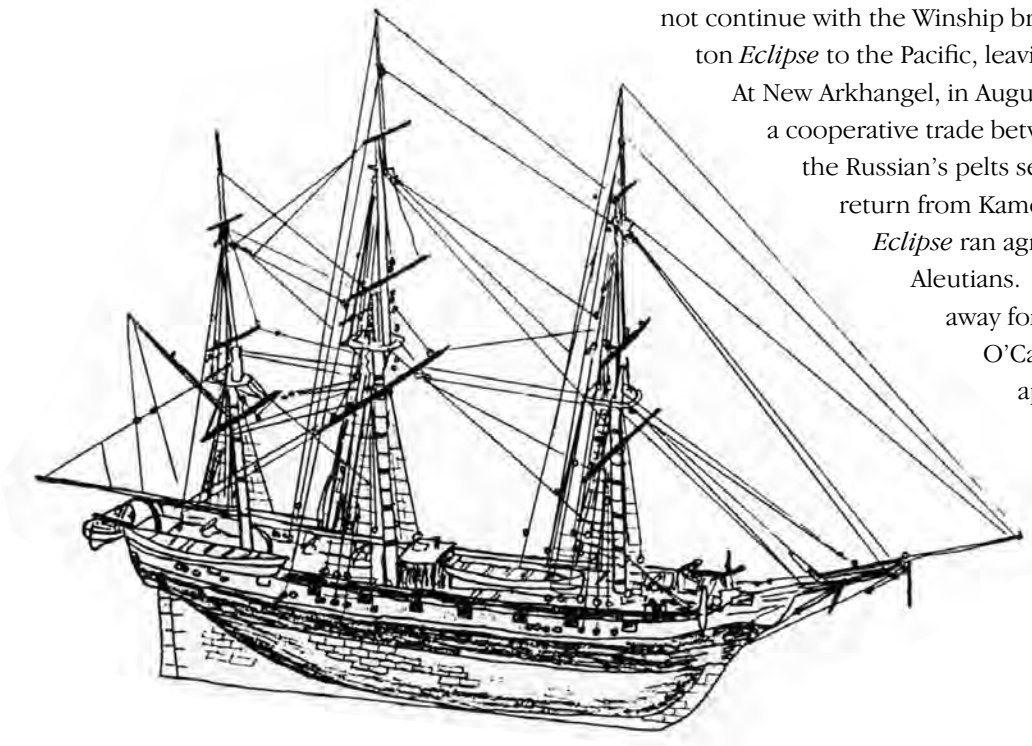
The *Albatross* crew progressed to build a ten-foot log structure during early June. The local natives observed the work in the first days without interference. The Chinooks from the mouth of the Columbia arrived and hostilities began. Displeased at this encroachment on their age-old trading route along the river, they aimed musket fire and arrows at the new post. At the same time the river's spring flood came down from the Cascade gorge.

The post was inundated the timbers uprooted.[53] The Winship effort of June 1810, at a settlement on the Columbia, did not succeed. It would have been the first white settlement on the entire coast between New Arkhangel and the Spanish mission at San Francisco. (It was one year later, in the spring of 1811, that John Jacob Astor's ship, the fast, copper-sheathed *Tonquin*, arrived on the river and established the post named after him at the Columbia's mouth.)

Nevertheless, Jonathan had communicated his plan well to his brothers Abiel and Nathan. It was to have established a productive garden and trading post on this fertile Columbia soil. It would have provided produce for the barren Russian posts in the north and pelts for the China market. The Winships' attempt at settlement on the Columbia was significant because these farsighted merchants saw the long river valley as a key link in a broadened commerce from American posts and their ports, the Russians in the north, to the Hawaiian Islands and the Orient.[54] Begun with the maritime trade, the land fur trade, then reaching over the mountains and into the Columbia, completed a route for commerce that would cross the continent and the Pacific.

A Partner Lost

Joseph O'Cain, the early mentor of Jonathan Winship, remained daring and independent until his untimely end. After sailing back to Boston, in July 1805, at the end of that two-year voyage, he purchased his own ship and did not continue with the Winship brothers. He captained the 343-ton *Eclipse* to the Pacific, leaving Boston in January 1806. At New Arkhangel, in August, he proposed to Baranov a cooperative trade between Canton and Japan with the Russian's pelts serving as initial cargo. On her return from Kamchatka in September 1807, the *Eclipse* ran aground on Saanak Island in the Aleutians. While some of the crew rowed away for assistance, the energetic O'Cain began to construct a brig of approximately 70-ton size from planks and timbers of the wrecked ship. During this effort a Russian vessel from



This sketch by author E. W. Giesecke is based on the model of the ship *Tonquin,* which resides at the Oregon Historical Society. The *Tonquin* was built in New York in 1807, and provides a good facsimile of the 93-foot, 280-ton *O'Cain*. Both were representative of the merchant ship of the first decade of the 1800s sailing from East Coast ports for the Pacific trade routes. The *Tonquin* was destroyed off the Northwest Coast in 1811.

Kodiak sighted them and anchored. The crew offered O'Cain assistance. Four Russians and five Kodiaks were left with O'Cain, who wished to continue building and to be able to sail back to the company's colony on his own, albeit with a smaller vessel.[55] O'Cain wished to save some of his valuable cargo. Timber and wood were virtually unobtainable on the Aleutians. Many months were devoted to finishing the new brig. O'Cain eventually put to sea with a small crew of Russians, Kodiaks, and Americans. The vessel's fate from that time on at Saanak Island is sketchy. The Russian-American Company official and historian, Khlebnikov, wrote that O'Cain, two American sailors and a woman from the Sandwich Islands drowned off Unalaska Island.[56] The ice and rocks of the barren Aleutians had taken its toll. Aleksandr Baranov had waited patiently at Kodiak for his friend Joseph O'Cain, but the latter never arrived. O'Cain's efforts over the preceding year, followed through by Jonathan Winship, set a new dynamic in American and Russian activities in the Pacific, accelerating expansion along the coast in the period ahead.

Joint Russian-American Hunting Voyages (1803-1810)

American Captain	Year of Contract	Ship's Name	Russian Supervisor(s)
O'Cain, Joseph	1803	*O'Cain*	Afanasy Shvetsov Timofei Tarakanov
Winship, Jonathan	1806	*O'Cain*	Sysoi Slobodchikov (& two assistants)
Winship, J.	1807	*O'Cain*	Verkhovinsky
Kimball, Oliver	1806	*Peacock*	Tarakanov
Swift, Benjamin	1807	*Derby*	two unnamed
Ayers, George	1808	*Mercury*	Shvetsov
Winship, J.	1809	*O'Cain*	
Davis, Wm. H.	1810	*Isabella*	Tarakanov
Winship, Nathan	1810	*Albatross*	Losev
Winship, J.	1810	*O'Cain*	

NOTES

1 Jonathan Winship, Jr., "Particular occurrences, Ship *O'Cain"* (ms private collection), 1, 2 and 4. On this voyage of 1803–1805 Jonathan was supercargo. The captain was Joseph O'Cain. This is the only known journal or logbook of this world-spanning cruise of the *O'Cain* which inaugurated the Bostonians' joint hunting contracts with the Russian–American Company.

2 Ibid., 5.

3 C. L. Andrews, *The Story of Alaska* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1943), 30, 32, 70.

4 Hector Chevigny, *Russian America* (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), 102. Baranov's practice was to have the *promyshlenniki*, either Tarankonov or Shvetsov, recruit the native hunters who brought along their own baidarkas. Kodiaks were selected at first, they being more aggressive than the Aleuts. However, thousands of Aleuts also lived on Kodiak Island and they were employed, coerced by Baranov if necessary, for later contract voyages. By and large, the natives were motivated by the wages and by the opportunity to display their hunting skills.

5 Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts 1783-1860* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1921), 70, 71. F. W. Howay, A *List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-1825*, ed. Richard A Pierce (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1973), 82. Howay indicated Captain Suter's cargo to Macao, 6,000 sea otter skins, was the largest catch on record for a single voyage. The American Captain John Suter on the ship *Pearl* in 1808 and 1809 collected 6,000 skins on the northwest coast and sailed for Macao. With his profits he purchased a desirable cargo for resale in Boston: porcelain, tea, Chinese cottons, and silks. This netted him $206,000 after all expenses and customs duties were paid. The initial value of his ship, fittings, supplies, and outgoing cargo had been less than $40,000.

6 Chevigny, 102. There was no need for O'Cain or Winship to pay out any $250 sums. They returned all the natives safely to Kodiak Island in June of 1804. This first contract helped establish Baranov's trust. The next contract with Jonathan Winship in 1806 more than doubled the number of native hunters and their skin-on-frame boats, and was again set on course for Baja California.

7 Richard A. Pierce, *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary* (Kingston, Ontario and Fairbanks: The Limestone Press, 1990), 388. Names of the ship owners of early Boston vessels may be obtained from the National Archives and Records Administration, "Boston Ships' Registries." O'Cain became acquainted with the Winship family before the voyage of the *Betsy* in 1799.

8 P.A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company*, Richard A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978) 33, 352, 417. The East India Company bark *Phoenix* should not be confused with the first vessel built by Baranov of the same name. In 1791, G. I. Shelikov, Baranov's director in Okhotsk, asked Baranov to build the first vessel for the company in America. Shelikov had originally enlisted Baranov for the post of American manager of the Russian company. In 1790 Baranov sailed for what is now Alaska and was to remain its energetic and strong leader for the next 28 years. The Russian ship *Phoenix* was launched at Resurrection Harbor, today called Seward, in 1794. It was three-masted, 180 tons. Its first voyage was to carry a three-year catch of sea otter, fur seal, and other skins across the Bering Sea to Okhotsk, the delivery route for the company's harvest of skins. However, the American ships personally selected later by Baranov for contract voyages between 1803 and 1812, also carried the Russian–American Company's share of skins (usually 50 percent of the total harvest) to Whampoa (Canton) to be sold. Nuchek, where Joseph O'Cain apparently first met Baranov in 1793, was known to the Russians as Konstantinovskii Redoubt and was located on Hinchinbrook Island, southeast section of Prince William Sound, Alaska.

9 Elton Engstrom, *Joseph O'Cain, Adventurer on the Northwest Coast* (Juneau: Alaska Litho Printers, 2003), 9, 10.

10 Chevigny, 101. Although Baranov thought well of Oliver Kimball, no further joint hunting contract was extended to Kimball or the *Peacock* after 1806. Of the 13 joint expeditions, the Winships were granted six, including the first contract co-owned with O'Cain in 1803. As was the case with Kimball, no other sea captain had a second contract with Baranov and his Russian–American Company. He was careful with whom he dealt and required absolute honesty and care as to monies, fur pelts taken, and safety of the natives in his charge.

11 Port of Boston, Ship's Registry, "*Betsy*, Abiel Winship [owner], Charles Winship, master, sixty-five feet, 104 tons, two masts. . ." (ms, copy), 17 October 1799.

12 John Larnerd, "Account of the Voyage of the Brig *Betsy* Bound to the Northwest Coast of America" (ms, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library). Although the title reads ". . . to the Northwest Coast of America," this short narrative account of the *Betsy* shows no further northward passage than 33° North, e.g., [17 July 1800] ". . . we got underway the Latitude twenty four north and one hundred nine west . . . we were no farther than thirty three north [on this voyage] we finding it to be too late to go on the coast we boar away for the main[land]. . ." San Diego was the brig's northernmost port of call, her

stay there running from 26 August to 7 September 1800, according to Larnerd's account.

13 Larnerd, ms pages not numbered, from Cape Horn on 5 February 1800, on to the last few days of April when the crew of the *Betsy* was released from 48 days of confinement at the Spanish garrison, Valparaiso.

14 The limited information available for this 1799-1801 voyage of the *Betsy* does not include the value of the skins sold at Canton. O'Cain's last written instruction to John Brown was to proceed to Canton, thus suggesting a good cargo. The *Betsy* remained on the Pearl River for six weeks, indicating a good degree of activity. The average number of skins brought to Canton in the year 1800, of six ships that were recorded, was nearly 2,000. They sold there at an average of $22 per skin, a handsome profit. William Sturgis, *The Journal of William Sturgis*, ed. S. W. Jackman (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1987) 113. Mary Malloy, *"Boston Men" on the Northwest Coast: The American Maritime Fur Trade 1788-1844* (Fairbanks: The Limestone Press and the University of Alaska Press, 1998), 79.

15 Larnerd, ms pages not numbered, from San Diego on 26 August 1800, to captivity at San Blas, 20 October. Joseph O'Cain and Charles Winship were not released and after waiting offshore the *Betsy* under John Brown finally sailed from San Blas Bay on 17 November bound for Hawaii and Canton.

16 Virginia K. Sparks, letter to the author, 8 November 2002. Mrs. Sparks obtained much Spanish correspondence concerning Joseph O'Cain and this voyage of the *Betsy*. One document is the crew list and it shows O'Cain as captain, Charles Winship as purser, and John Brown as pilot. But these documents shed no light on the death of Charles at San Blas. No reference has been found. One other note is warranted here. The name of Nathan Winship, younger brother to Charles by two years, appears in a few sources as belonging to this cruise of 1799-1801. However, Nathan is not mentioned in the Larnerd account, summarized here. Had he been on this two year voyage, it seems logical that a brother of Charles, the Supercargo, would have been mentioned, but he was not.

17 Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov, *The Beginning of Russian-American Relations, 1775-1815*, trans. Elena Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 181. Glynn Barratt, *Russia in Pacific Waters, 1715-1825* (Vancouver and London: University of British Columbia Press, 1981), 126.

18 Richard A. Pierce, "Russian America and China," in Barbara Sweetland Smith and Redmond J. Barnett, ed., *Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier* (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1990), 76. Peking permitted trade with Russia at one location, Kiakhta, on a remote plain at the border between the two nations.

19 K. T. Khlebnikov, *Baranov, Chief Manager of the Russian Colonies in America*, ed., R. A. Pierce (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1973), 32-36. Though receiving some supplies from his new colony at New Arkhangel, Baranov's stores were nearly depleted, to a great extent due to the recent shipwreck of one of his expected supply vessels, the first to leave Okhotsk in two years.

20 Adele Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade, 1784-1848* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1941), 34-35.

21 Jonathan Winship Jr., "Particular Occurrences, Ship *O'Cain*," ms, 5, 6. All of the 40 Kodiak islanders were returned safely to their home along with the catch of fur pelts which would be shared equally between the Russians and owners of the *O'Cain*.

22 Khlebnikov, 42. Baranov received valuable intelligence from the *promyshlennik* Shvetsov, a supervisor of Kodiaks on this first contract voyage (1803-1805) on the *O'Cain*, about the California coast, its bays, rivers, fertility of the land, and the areas where sea otter abounded.

23 Chevigny, 102.

24 Jonathan Winship Jr., "Particular Occurrences, Ship O'Cain," ms, 7, 13. The *Neva's* crew and soldiers helped recapture New Arkhangel from the Kolosh in October 1804. The *O'Cain* had first sighted the island of Hawaii on 8 October, but without anchoring there.

25 Ibid., 44–47.

26 Jonathan Winship Jr., "Journal of a Voyage from Boston to the North Pacific Ocean, from there to China back to Boston 1805.6.7.8" (ms, private collection), fore page "The Names of the Ship *O'Cain's* Crew." The Boston China traders routinely added crew at Hawaii: Kanakas and often stranded American seamen. For the larger scope, this 1805-1808 journal can be considered the primary source document for two events: 1. The most successful of the 13 joint American-Russian hunting contracts of the period 1803 to 1812, of which Jonathan Winship Jr. captained four; 2. The first recorded sighting (discovery) and exploration of Humboldt Bay, northern California, also by Jonathan Winship.

27 Bolkhovitinov, The *Beginning of Russian-American Relations, 1775-1815*, 181. Deliveries to the colonies from Siberia and Russia proper were not reliable, and the food, tools, weapons and powder brought on Boston ships were much needed. Tikhmenev, 94. One critical need of the Russian colonies was wheat. Rezanov proposed to grow this crop on the coastlands of New Albion.

28 Lydia T. Black, *Russians in Alaska 1732-1867* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004). Rezanov took the *Iunona* (renamed from the *Juno*, a Rhode Island ship captained by D'Wolf and sold to the Russian-American Company in 1805) southbound in 1806 shortly before Winship's arrival at New Arkhangel. On this voyage, Rezanov "planned to take possession of the Columbia River but Khvostov was not able to bring his vessel past the famous Columbia bar. Rezanov bitterly blamed Khvostov for this failure" to enter the Columbia. Tikhmenev, 100; Rezanov "thought two hundred men to be sufficient to occupy Discovery Bay, Gray's Harbor and the Columbia River. Having settled there and befriended the natives, it would be an easy matter . . . to move gradually toward California."

29 Winship, "Journal of a Voyage. . .1805.6.7.8," ms, May 17-25, 1806.

30 E. W. Giesecke, "Discovery of Humboldt Bay, California, in 1806 from the Ship *O'Cain*, Jonathan Winship, Commander," *Terrae Incognitae* 29 (1977): 51-60 and 30 (1998): 96-98.

31 Winship, "Journal of a Voyage. . .1805.6.7.8," ms 8 November 1806.

32 Ibid., 8 November 1806.

33 Ibid., 13 March 1807.

34 Ibid., 14 March to 26 May 1807.

35 Ibid., 29 May 1807.

36 Ibid., 17 June 1807.

37 John Haskell Kemble, "The Cruise of the Schooner *Tamana*, 1805-1807," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* (vol. 78, pt. 2, 16 October 1968): 296-297. Before coursing for Hawaii, the *Tamana* would stop at Cedros where the company's share of the skins, both otter and seal, would be stretched and then loaded aboard the schooner. At Hawaii, Hudson handed over the ownership of his vessel to the Russian on 12 July and took up his accommodations on shore. Within a few months Hudson departed for Canton and there in February 1808 met again his friend Jonathan Winship. The latter invited Hudson onboard and together they sailed on the *O'Cain* back to Boston.

38 Winship, "Journal of a Voyage . . . 1805.6.7.8," ms, 28 July to 7 August 1807.

39 Ibid., August 10, 12, 21, 31, 1807.

40 Ibid., 18 September 1807.

41 Tikhmenev, 111. Hudson had refused to sail on with Slobodchikov from Hawaii to New Arkhangel and provide him with skilled seamanship and navigation. The crew therefore was limited to "one foreign sailor" (a deserter from a trading ship) and several Aleuts (or Kodiaks). Certainly, luck was with Slobodchikov in coursing him and his topsail schooner safely and timely to New Arkhangel.

42 Kyrill T. Khlebnikov, *Colonial Russian America: Kyrill T. Khlebnikov's Reports, 1817-1832*, trans. Basil Dmytryshyn and E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1976), 6-8. The majority of the pelts were prime sea otter, each measuring up to six feet in length.

43 Winship, "Journal of a Voyage . . . 1805.6.7.8," ms, 16 September 1807.

44 Ibid., 9 October 1807.

45 Ibid., 11 June 1808.

46 Ibid., entry written 28 September 1830 within the journal space for the date of 7 October 1805, the departure date for Jonathan Winship's second voyage to the Pacific out of Boston.

47 J. P. C. Winship, *Historical Brighton* (Boston: George A. Warren, 1899), 131. The author of this printed volume, the primary available source of the Winship family history, was the third child of Jonathan Winship Jr. who is the subject of this writing.

48 Jonathan Winship Jr., "Journal of a Voyage from Boston to the Northwest Coast of America Beginning June 1, 1809," on the ship *O'Cain*, ms extract for the dates March 10 to 21, 1810, the Sandwich Islands (ms, private collection).

49 Black, 175. Rezanov's letter to Rumiantsev of 17 June 1806 urged that the Russians take possession of the Columbia River. Tikhmenev, 133; Baranov ordered Tarakanov "to use all possible means to open trade at the mouth of the Columbia River." This may be the primary reason why the Winship brothers, in the spring of 1810, began their new settlement 40 miles up the Columbia, still anticipating Baranov's new post at the entrance to the river. Rezanov had also written earlier, 16 February 1806 that "we shall be in a position to attract our colonists to the Columbia from various places" (Glynn Barratt, *Russia in Pacific Waters, 1715-1825* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981), 237. The planned Columbia post would serve as a stepping stone to further Russian settlement in California.

50 Basil Dmytryshyn, E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughn and Thomas Vaughan, ed., *The Russian American Colonies 1798-1867* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1989), vol. 3, 112-113.

51 Tikhmenev, 133 (note 49).

52 William A. Gale, "A Journal Kept on Board the Ship *Albatross*' Nathan Winship, Commander, On a Voyage from Boston to the Northwest Coast of America and China in the Years 1809,10,11,12" (ms, private collection), 25 May 1810.

53 Ibid., June 8-12, 1810.

54 Dorothy Johansen, *Empire of the Columbia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 61-62. When Astoria was established a year after the Winship attempt at settlement 40 miles up the Columbia, the new traders such as McDougall, Stuart and Franchere dealt directly with the Chinooks living at the mouth of the river and thus did not break into their long trade route to the east as the Winships would have done, however unknowingly.

55 Jonathan Winship Jr., "Particular Occurrences, Ship O'Cain," ms, 65, 65a. Jonathan's account was written in late 1807 before the death of O'Cain, covering only the wreck of the *Eclipse*.

56 Khlebnikov, *Baranov, Chief Manager of the Russian Colonies in America*, 63, 64.

The Log of the Brig

The Brig *Betsy* was purportedly the first American ship to anchor in San Diego Bay, 26 August 1800.

Painting by Christopher Blossom, reproduced in Mains'l Haul *with the artist's permission. Courtesy of Rodney J. Taylor, Private Collection. Photo by Richard Harvey.*

In 2003, I was approached by a friend, an antique dealer, who had purchased the ship's log of an early American circumnavigation (with other related items at auction) and, only after he had read it completely, was he at last willing to part with it. A first reading and some cursory research convinced me that this was the inside account of a significant voyage discussed by historians from Bancroft to Pourade, but about which we had only speculation and secondhand knowledge.

I spent the next two years transcribing the log, and researching the brig *Betsy* and the history of the sea otter fur trade. This included working in and with museums, libraries, and historical societies from Salem to San Diego, corresponding with interested scholars, and building the necessary research library of Northwest Coast material.

Since no images of the brig existed, I took the next step in resurrecting the *Betsy,* which was to give her a visual life, as well as a paper one. I contacted a leading expert in contemporary marine art, J. Russell Jinishian, for advice on commissioning a painting that would be both historically correct and fine art. He recommended that I work with Christopher Blossom, who brings to his studio serious maritime scholarship and superb artistic skill. He is a member of the American Society of Marine Artists, the Society of Historical Artists, and the National Academy of Western Art.

Although the painting would have to involve a certain amount of conjecture to flesh out her registry information, I compiled a meticulous list of every sail, line, spar, and piece of gear mentioned in the log. Then Blossom placed them in the context of other Virginia-built ships of the period, particularly those noted in Howard Chapelle's work, which draws extensively from British Admiralty lines of captured American vessels. For color, he referred to the maritime watercolors of the Roux family, and other resources in the archives of the Mariner's Museum. One key problem was determining the tonnage method – the system of measurement that resulted in *Betsy's* listed dimensions. She is painted as a light, fast, spartan, substantially canvassed, Virginia-built brig, of a type related to very early Baltimore Clipper designs, prototypical of other Boston Ships in the sea otter fur trade. Blossom placed her off the California coast, close-hauled, in late afternoon sun.

— Rodney J. Taylor

Betsy 1799-1801

by Rodney J. Taylor

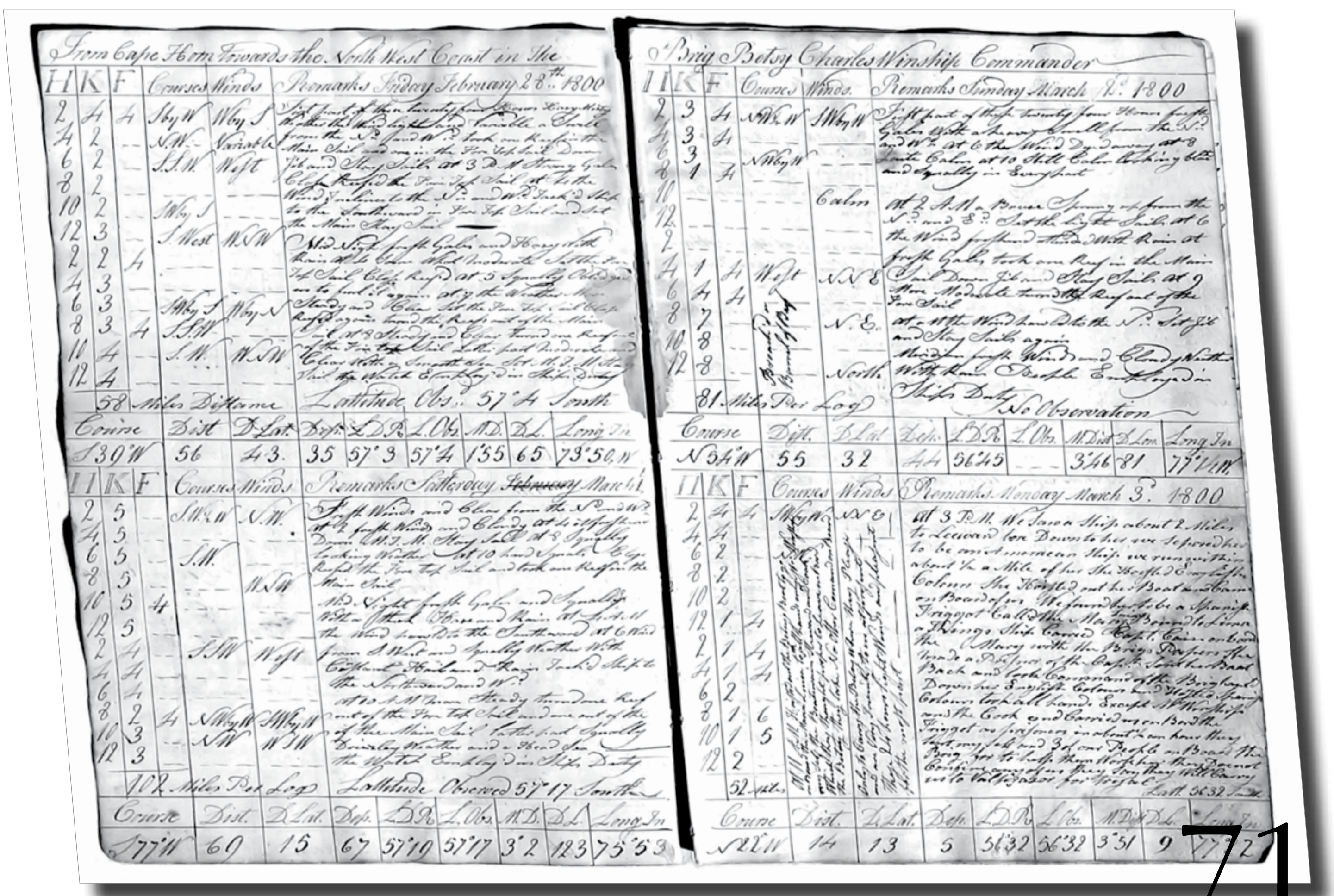
We now take leave of the Gentlemen Likewise our Native Shore to trace the pathless Seas though Not Without Some Serious Reflection but Still in hopes by the Hand of Providence to Return in Safety once More.[1]

On 21 October 1799, the 65-foot, 104-ton brig *Betsy*, owned by Joseph O'Cain and Abiel Winship, commanded by 22-year-old Charles Winship, and mounting ten guns, sailed from Boston with a crew of 19, bound for the coast of Spanish California to exploit the new risky but profitable sea otter fur trade. This was to be the first of many significant trading and exploratory voyages led by the extraordinary Winship brothers of Brighton, Massachusetts. Described by Mary Malloy as a "most unlucky vessel,"[2] by 26 August 1800, she had endured a desperate rounding of Cape Horn, capture by a Spanish frigate, and internment in Valparaiso before she became the first American ship to anchor in San Diego Bay.[3] There, she executed a carefully planned black market enterprise, a prototype of the impending onslaught of such "Boston Men."

Rodney J. Taylor earned his doctorate from the University of Rochester and his Master's from Oberlin College. His twin passions have been teaching English and collecting small, historic Adirondack boats. He typically keeps on his desk a volume of *Hamlet,* a 1789 Falconer's *Dictionary of the Marine,* Atwood Manley's *Rushton and His Times in American Canoeing,* and a can of *Epiphanes* varnish as a bookend.

Below: In the log entry for 3 March 1800, just days after a harrowing rounding of Cape Horn, Brown describes *Betsy's* capture by what he identifies as a Spanish "friggot" named *Maria Luisa*, sailing under a false flag.

Courtesy Rodney J. Taylor, Private Collection, Photo by Richard Harvey


From Cape Horn Towards the North West Coast in the
Brig Betsy Charles Winship Commander
Remarks Friday February 28th 1800
Remarks Sunday March 2d 1800
Remarks Saturday March 1
Remarks Monday March 3. 1800

Using inside information, she continued her smuggling ways, scouting and trading southward along the Baja California coast, not the North Pacific grounds of earlier fur trade voyages. Along the way, her captain, commander, and first mate were captured, then marooned at San Blas before she made her way to the Sandwich Islands and Canton, returning to Boston on 6 October 1801.[4] Enigmatically, in 1803, she was destroyed by native people on the coast of Africa along with her papers.[5]

Malloy believed that although some logs of the Winships were available to Hubert Howe Bancroft, they had since disappeared.[6] As for Charles Winship's earlier days, first as supercargo of the *Alexander,* and finally as commander of the *Betsy*, William Dane Phelps laments that "no account of those voyages is to be found."[7] However, J. P. C. Winship, in his *Historical Brighton,* claims that the "very large and interesting journals of the [Winship] voyages are in the possession of the author."[8] E. W. Geisecke, in his work on the early Boston-Russian contract system (see pages 34-69), examined (and owns) two journals of Jonathan Winship, Jr., concerning his voyages on the ship *O'Cain* spanning 1803-1815.[9]

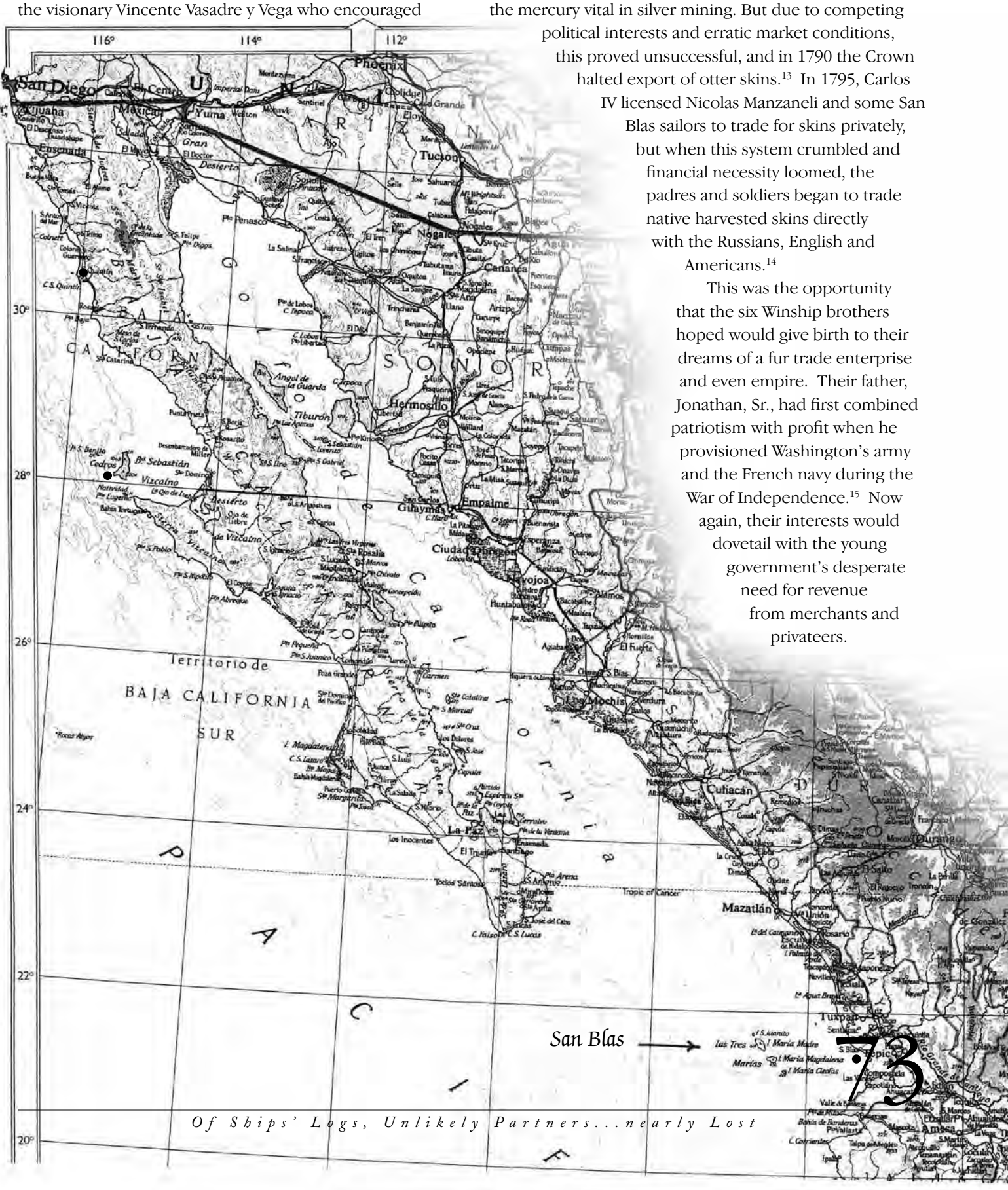
In fact, the log of this first voyage 1799-1801, probing the Winships' expedition was kept by John Brown, a man who began the voyage as second mate and who would assume her captaincy after the remarkable events at San Blas. The log had descended in his family– not with the Winships – and entered a private collection in 2003, along with other related property and documents.[10] It indeed fulfills Bancroft's speculation that "a full record of her movements would show the *Betsy* to be the pioneer in a new field of west coast enterprise, that of contraband trade and fur hunting on the shores of the Californias...or at least Captain Winship may have been engaged in exploring the new field in which his brothers subsequently reaped so rich a harvest."[11] And it reveals how this voyage links the careers of key entrepreneurs on the California Coast: the Winship brothers, Joseph O'Cain, John Brown, Richard J. Cleveland, and William Shaler.

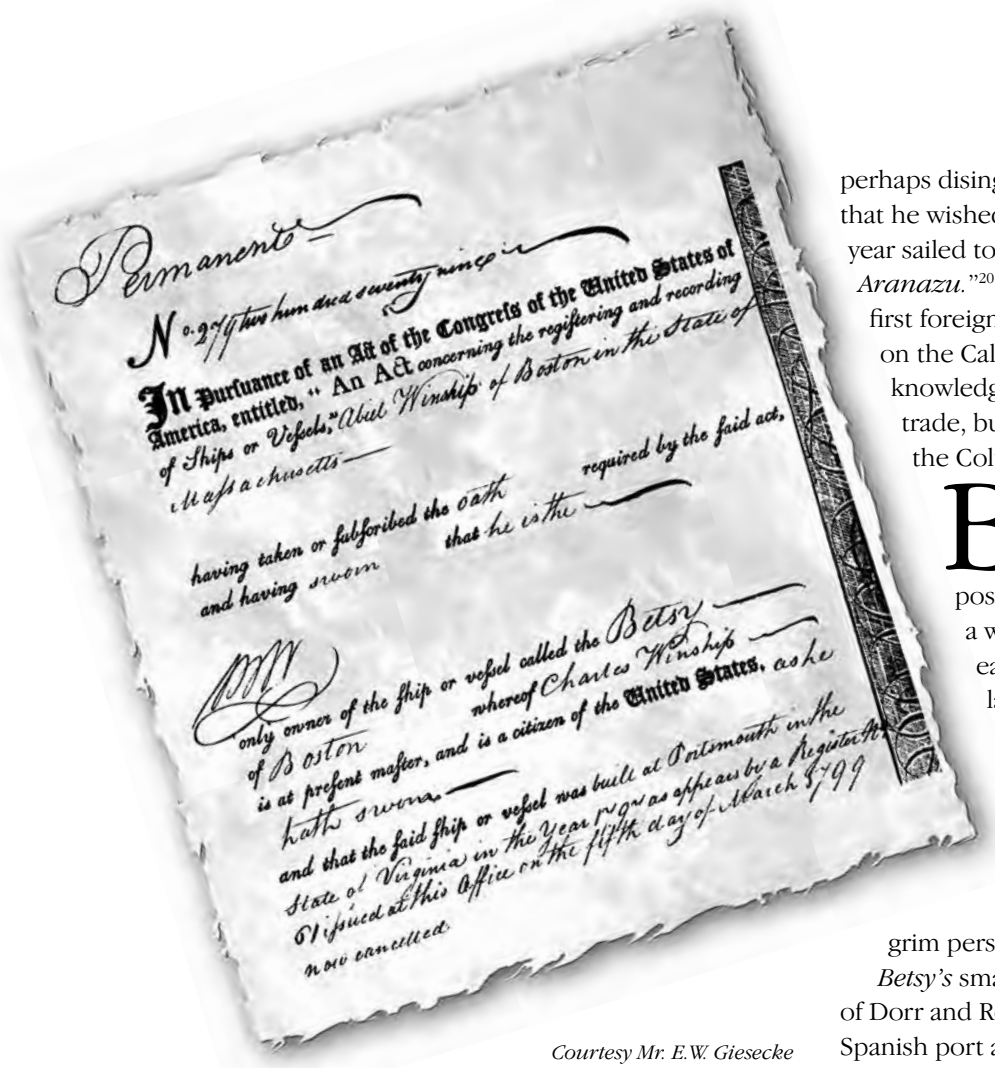
Numerous accounts of astonishing profits in the fur trade had reached Boston since Cook's third voyage. Sea otter skins, acquired from missionaries, soldiers, and natives for less than five dollars in money or goods, could be traded in a favorable market for forty dollars or more apiece in Canton. News of the perils and successes of the first Boston ships on the Northwest Coast, such as the *Columbia, Washington, Hope,* and *Union* in the early 1790's inspired entrepreneurs. Soon, Boston captains, such as Ebeneezer Dorr of the *Otter* in 1796, and James Rowan of the *Eliza* in 1798, became even bolder, and began a pattern of abusing traditional Spanish harbor hospitality by requesting urgent help for food and repairs, while surreptitiously trading for contraband skins. Such tactics soon confirmed the suspicions of Spanish officials about the true intent of these Yankee visits, and they became rightly cautious of such requests.

Below: Boston Harbor in the clipper-ship days – the hub of maritime trade.
From an engraving by C. Mottram, owned by Allan Forbes, Esq.

The *status quo* that these "Boston Men" were subverting was a weakening Spanish mercantile system. Until 1788, the Spanish Crown had attempted to halt Russian and English encroachment on the fur trade by means of a monopoly managed by the visionary Vincente Vasadre y Vega who encouraged otter hunting and stabilized the trade.[12] Under this arrangement, settlers, soldiers, and natives could sell their skins for cash to Presidio Commandants and Franciscan missionaries only, so that Spanish officials in San Blas could then either sell them in Canton, or trade them for the mercury vital in silver mining. But due to competing political interests and erratic market conditions, this proved unsuccessful, and in 1790 the Crown halted export of otter skins.[13] In 1795, Carlos IV licensed Nicolas Manzaneli and some San Blas sailors to trade for skins privately, but when this system crumbled and financial necessity loomed, the padres and soldiers began to trade native harvested skins directly with the Russians, English and Americans.[14]

This was the opportunity that the six Winship brothers hoped would give birth to their dreams of a fur trade enterprise and even empire. Their father, Jonathan, Sr., had first combined patriotism with profit when he provisioned Washington's army and the French navy during the War of Independence.[15] Now again, their interests would dovetail with the young government's desperate need for revenue from merchants and privateers.




Permanent

No. 274 two hundred seventy nine

In Pursuance of an Act of the Congress of the United States of America, entitled, "An Act concerning the registering and recording of Ships or Vessels," I Abel Winship of Boston in the State of Massachusetts

having taken or subscribed the oath required by the said act, and having sworn that he is the only owner of the ship or vessel called the Betsy of Boston whereof Charles Winship is at present master, and is a citizen of the United States, as he hath sworn

and that the said ship or vessel was built at Portsmouth in the State of Virginia in the Year 1797 as appears by a Register No. issued at this Office on the fifth day of March 1799 now cancelled

Courtesy Mr. E.W. Giesecke

They planned shrewdly, buying the *Betsy,* which was ideal for this venture, and would become the paradigm for vessels in the trade. Built at Portsmouth, Virginia in 1797,[16] relatively small and nimble, such Virginia-built ships were widely used as privateers, serving merchant and military needs. Howard Chapelle points out that speed was an overriding concern for American vessels of this period, and merchantmen knew that they had to take to their heels for their existence.[17]

Then, typical of practice in Boston, they signed on a small crew of trusted local men, led by her owners. Commander Charles Winship had already sailed to Canton in 1798 as supercargo on the *Alexander*[18] and had been granted a letter-of-marque for this new voyage by President John Adams in 1799.[19] More significantly, Winship interests aboard the *Betsy* were also entrusted to her co-owner, Captain Joseph O'Cain, an iconic Northwest Coast adventurer who brought invaluable experience and inside information to the position. Beginning as early as November of 1791, he had sailed the entire coast on the *Jefferson* and the *Phoenix*. In 1795, he was mysteriously, perhaps disingenuously, "left" at Santa Barbara, claiming that he wished to "give up the sea," but later that year sailed to San Blas on the frigate *Nuestra Senora Aranazu."*[20] Elion Engstrom says that O'Cain was "the first foreigner to arrive and for a short time reside on the California coast."[21] He had not only firsthand knowledge of the practical conduct of the sea otter trade, but also of the missions and settlements from the Columbia River to San Blas.

But it is through second mate John Brown's eyes that we see an ecstatic, Yankee vision of San Diego's commercial possibilities, a garden ripe for picking. His was a worldly paradise, though, quite unlike the earlier Franciscan view of a California Eden, land of innocent natives, fruitful vines, and blooming roses.[22] Rather, the log reveals the darker tactics of this enterprise: half-truths, temptations of money, muskets, and brandy, justified by a sense of entitlement, and tinged with a condescending attitude of cultural superiority. These would yield grim personal and cultural consequences.

Betsy's small size and the arid Baja coast made the use of Dorr and Rowan's earlier tactical subterfuge of a plea to Spanish port authorities for help in supplying wood, water, and provisions appear plausible. And the log indicates that on this voyage, the claims were at least partly grounded in truth. Genuine need for these items prompted several frustrating stops at uninhabited coastal bays with only modest success in replenishing the brig's stores.

25 July 1800, *finds the Cap't and Mr with 7 men on shore a Hunting and Cutting Wood Killed 4 Rabbits and a Fox No Other Game Seen on the Shore it being Verry Dry Barren land Scarse any Green in a low Valley the face of the Earth looked as if there had been No Rain for Many Years Not any Inhabitants to be Seen there*."[23] Here as well as at other times on the circumnavigation, her crew subsisted on turtles, sharks, dolphins, "boneters," and rainwater. When she reached San Diego, she had been at sea almost four months since her release from Valparaiso and was in great need of maintenance on her hull and rigging. On board, however, the crew, while repairing sails and seams, also prepared for military action, "making boarding nettings, running musket balls, and making Carterages."[24] Tales of the fierce attacks by natives faced by Boit and others, as well as the potential of facing hostile Spanish soldiers, alert for smugglers, made readying muskets as prudent as caulking.

Sunday, August 24th, 1800

(Winds WSW, S by E, variable, S. East, Variable)

Light Breese all Sail Set Standing towards the Land at 8 P.M. about 4 Leagues from the Shore Shortened Sail until Day Light At 6 the Land in Sight Bore from North to S.E. by E the Nighest about 6 Miles Distance Latter part Some What Variable Tack'd off on from the Shore Taking Every advantage to gain our intended Port At Noon the North point of St. Diego Bay Bore South East about 4 Leagues Distance the Precidia bore East about 4 Leagues Distance 45 Miles Per Log

Monday, August 25th, 1800

(Winds Variable, S.E., SSE, SE, WSW)

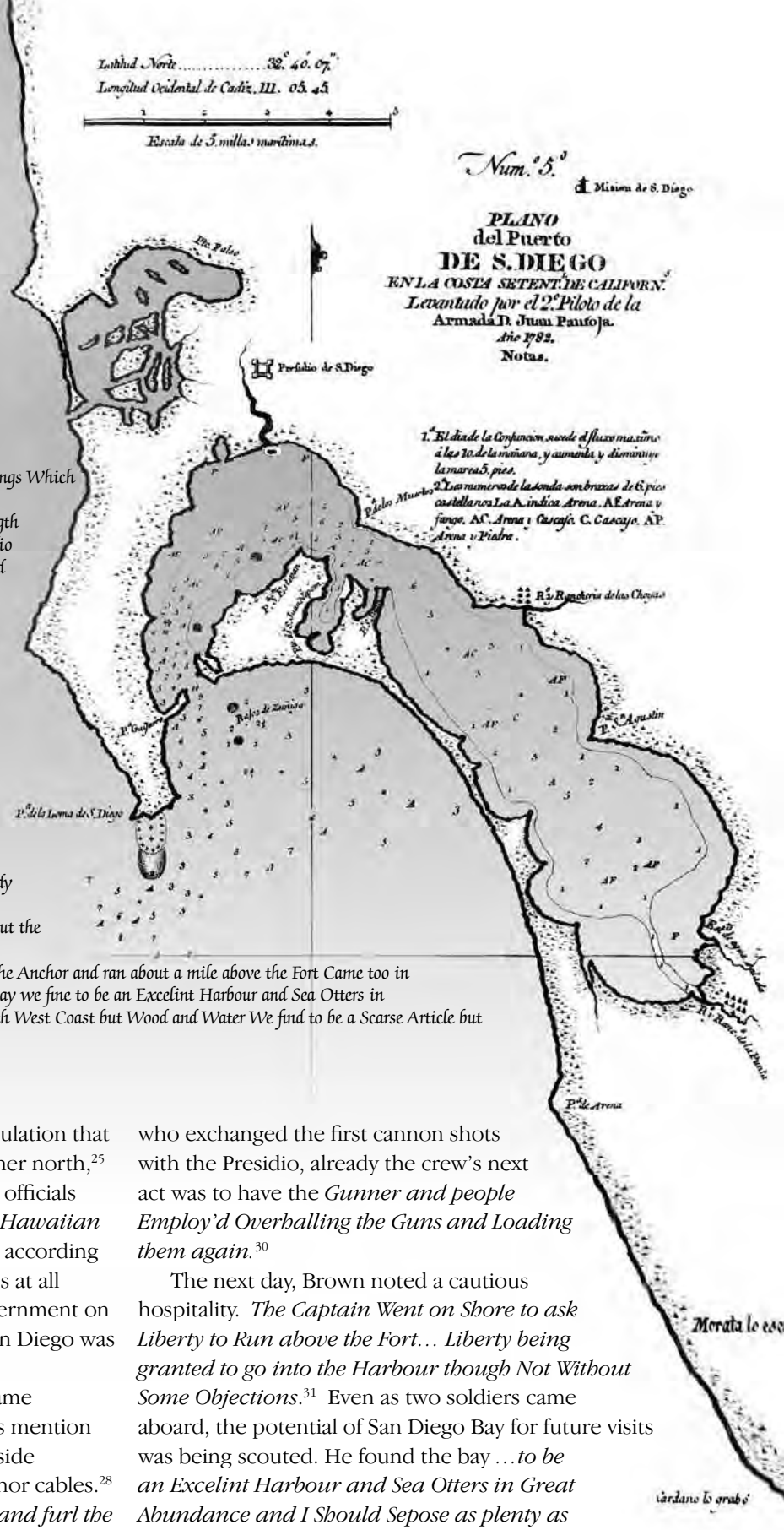
Moderate and Clear With unfavorable Wind. Tack'd Ship Occationally by Reason of a Large Swell from the Westward and Light Variable Wings Which Set the Vessel So far into false Bay We were Obidg'd to Let Both Anchors go and furl the sail in 20 fathom water Within a Cables Length of a Long Reef Which Extended Some Miles from the Shore the Presidio Bearing east 1/2 North several Men Came Down on the Shore Hoisted the Colours and fired a Gun came too at 6 PM at Mid Night With a light Breese off the Land Hove up and Stood to the S'd and Westward With all Sail Set at 4 A.M. the Point of St. Diego Bay Bore ESE 4 or 5 Miles Distance the Gunner and people Employ'd Overhalling the Guns and Loading them again At Noon Clear and Pleasant the North Point Bore N.E. by N about 2 Miles Distance Several small peeked Islands a few Miles to the Southward of the Bay 40 Miles Per Log

At St. Diego on the Coast of California

Tuesday, August 26th, 1800

(Winds Variable)

At 3 P.M. came too With out Stream Anchor in 5 fathoms water Sandy Bottom about 2 Miles from St. Diego Fort at Bearing about North the Captain Went on Shore to ask Liberty to Run above the Fort Hoisted out the Long Boat and Cleared Decks Liberty being Granted to go into the Harbour though Not without Some Objections at 10 A.M. Weighed the Anchor and ran about a mile above the Fort Came too in 5 fathoms Water again 2 Soldiers Came on Board to pay a Visit this bay we fine to be an Excelint Harbour and Sea Otters in Great Abundance and I Should Sepose as plenty as any part of the North West Coast but Wood and Water We find to be a Scarse Article but Provisions in Abundance Pleasant Weather
Latitude 32'44 North Longitude 117'00 West



The log also contradicts both Bancroft's speculation that the *Betsy* might have traded or explored farther north,[25] and the stories Charles Winship told Spanish officials on arrival that *He had been in the north and at the Hawaiian Islands. Now he was on his way to China*.[26] In fact, according to the log, *Betsy* and her crew made no trading stops at all during those four months after her release from internment on 2 May 1800.[27] There is little doubt that, all along, San Diego was her carefully planned first objective.

As *Betsy* approached San Diego, the entries became lengthier and more animated, with nearly breathless mention of sperm whales, seals, and sea otters playing alongside in great numbers, even as the crew bent on the anchor cables.[28] At last, on 25 August 1800, she *Let Both Anchors go and furl the Sail… within a Cables Length of a Long Reef Which Extended Some Miles from the Shore the Presidio Bearing East ½ North several Men Came Down on the Shore Hoisted the Colours and fired a Gun.*[29] Although it would be the *Lelia Byrd* in 1803 who exchanged the first cannon shots with the Presidio, already the crew's next act was to have the *Gunner and people Employ'd Overhalling the Guns and Loading them again.*[30]

The next day, Brown noted a cautious hospitality. *The Captain Went on Shore to ask Liberty to Run above the Fort… Liberty being granted to go into the Harbour though Not Without Some Objections*.[31] Even as two soldiers came aboard, the potential of San Diego Bay for future visits was being scouted. He found the bay *…to be an Excelint Harbour and Sea Otters in Great Abundance and I Should Sepose as plenty as any part* of the North West Coast," balanced with the cautionary: *…but Wood and Water We find to be a Scarse Article but Provisions in Abundance.*[32]

On the very first night, a pattern of deceit emerged. While publicly engaged in the legitimate acts of hauling the brig ashore to clean her bottom, loading "Barrels of Beens and Peas and Some Corn,"[33] and butchering the five oxen they had purchased, privately, the contraband trade began in earnest. Under cover of darkness: *…the Soldiers Brought off 48 Good Otter Skins Which Was purchased at a Moderate Price…Latter part Getting our Trade in Readiness for Sail.*[34] Probably to insure more privacy for further night business, the crew tried to shift *Betsy's* anchorage from directly under the Fort, but they were not able to do so.

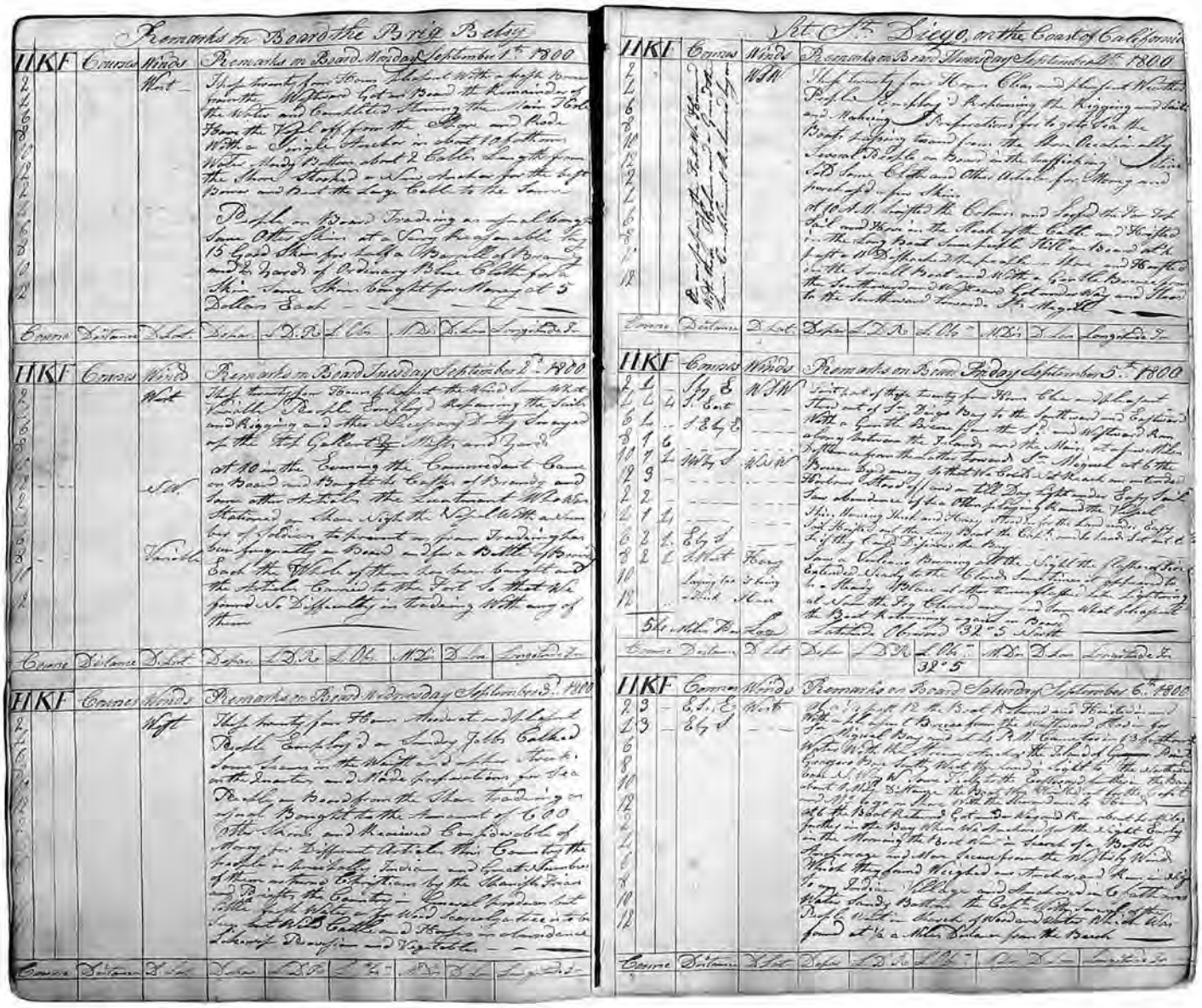
Tuesday followed the same pattern. By day, rigging was repaired and trade items readied. But by night *…about 10 in the Evening, the People began to Come off and sell there Skins they Not having the Liberty to Come on Board only in a Smuggling Manner by order from the Commedant Who is the Chief in Command of St. Diego.*[35] This quickly proved successful as they *Bought about 3 hundred Otter Skins at a Moderate price about one Gallon of Brandy for Each Skin and other articles … the Skins valued at about 5 Dollars in Trade or Money.*[36] The twenty-ninth of August proved even more successful, when in the evening, *the People Came off to Trade Bought 350 Otter Skins of Very good Quality for Brandy and Some Hard Ware and Money Average at 5 Dollars Each Skin.*[37]

Here, in a reflective moment, Brown offers Boston's pragmatic reliance on local self-interest to trump mercantile rules. *The Custom of this Country among the Spanyards is Not to go on Board any forign Vessels though them Laws is frequently Broken the Common People being Prohibited of a free Trade With all Nations Except With the King of Spain or by his Permition.*[38] Then the second stage of trading skins for tea at Canton could further circumvent the tea monopoly of the East India Company, whose historic domination of that taxed commodity might well still have been on the minds of Bostonians.

By Saturday, 30 August, more caution was noted on both sides.

Below: An 1856 view of American Old Town, sketched by Henry Miller, shows the general layout of the settlement relative to the bay. The view from the *Betsy*, fifty-six years earlier, would have been much sparser.

This illustration is held at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. *Courtesy Raymond Starr Collection, MMSD*



Even though the crew was permitted to bring their water casks on shore for refilling, Spanish caution and American scouting continued, with *Not any one allowed to go to the Precidia there being Nothing More than a Fort of 8 or 9 six pounders at the North of the Harbour from this Fort is a Procedia or Rather a Garrison 9 or 10 Miles Distance to the N'd.* Military staff was reported to be "a Commedant one Cap't and Lieutenant and Some Soldiers and Dragoons" and, incidentally, there were "but few White Women." Trading also continued that night with "Liberal People on Board to Trade."[39] The next day, the vessel was "Kren'd Verry Much to Port" to clean the bottom and repair some sheathing, and by the evening, "A Number of Men and Women Came Down from the Procedia on the Beech abrest of the Vessel and Some on Board to trade."[40]

The role of alcohol continued to be an important factor on this voyage, and may have been greater than Samuel Eliot Morison's estimate of its "curious absence from the Northwest fur trade."[41] On 1 September, "15 good skins were to be had for half a barrel of brandy and 2 yards of "Ordinary Blue Cloth," even while on the same night, quiet preparations for sea accelerated, the cables bent and the anchors stocked.[42] During the day, on 2 September, even the *Commendant Came on Board and Bought 4 Casks of Brandy and Some other Articles.*

Casual corruption was a reliable lubricant for night time trade, and the *Lieutenant Who Was Stationed on Shore Nigh the Vessel With a Number of Soldiers to prevent us from Trading has been frequently on Board and for a Bottle of Brandy Each the Whole of them has been bought and the Articles Carried to the Fort So that We found No Difficulty in trading With any of them.*[43]

Trade the next day produced an astonishing 600 skins and "Considerable of Money for Different Articles." Ever alert to intelligence useful for future visits, Brown records that in *this Country the people is principally Indians and Great Numbers of them as turned Christians by the Spanish Friars and Priests,* and that the *Country in General produces but little fresh Water as for Wood Scarcely a tree is to be Seen but Wild Cattle and Horses in abundance Likewise Provisions and Vegetables.*[44] Indeed, Brown would return to the California coast and San Diego in 1803, in possession of this log.[45]

Their final preparations for sea on 4 September brought a late flurry of *Boats passing to and from the Shore Occationally Several People on Board in the trafficking Line,* even while the slack was being taken in from the anchor cable. As *Betsy* stood out to sea, mutual courtesy was observed, and *On our passing the Fort We (were) Honored With there Colours and a Gun the Same Compliment Returned by us …*[46] The chagrin and indignation over Winship's duplicity expressed later by San Diego officials in documents they sent to San Blas after *Betsy's* departure, seem to have been conveniently tardy. Further, the enthusiastic participation in illicit trade for luxuries or money by so many strata of men and women in the settlement suggests widespread local disregard for the rules of the old mercantile system. But by December 1800, Commandante Jose Font's report of *Betsy's* visit did prompt stricter rules, allowing only a single visit for any vessel claiming distress, and that second of such visits were to be refused.[47] In fact, Joseph O'Cain returned to San Diego the very next spring as supercargo on the *Enterprise*, after being picked up at San Blas, in December 1800, and would again trade for skins on the watch of the same officials.[48]

Almost remarkable sighting occurred onboard Friday, 5 September 1800, which at first warrants a degree of skepticism. Brown states that approximately 50 miles south of San Diego, they saw *A Vulcano Burning all the Night the flashes of Fire Extended Nearly to the Clouds Some times it offered to be a Steady Blase at other times flashed like Lightning.*[49] Common wisdom holds that no active volcanoes exist near San Diego. Yet, Carl S. Strand reminds us that not only is there indeed substantial geothermal activity in the region such as in hot springs, but also in numerous "mud volcanoes" which have been observed historically, rather than the more stereotypical cinder cone structures.[50] He reviews the journals of Major Heintzelman in 1852-1853, which recount steam jets rising 1000 feet or more; a sighting by Captain Brady of a dense column of black smoke on the road between San Diego and Yuma late September 1856; another by a group of miners in February 1892, of black smoke and a burst of flame, and one by Joe McCane, of steam by day and flames by night near Campo.[51] This observation onboard the *Betsy* may be the first recorded Yankee sighting of such an event, although Strand notes that seismic activity in the region was noted as early as 1540 by Melchior Diaz, in 1776 by Friar Eixarch, and in the traditional stories of natives.[52]

On 7 September, *Betsy* anchored in "Sn. Miguel Bay" at 31 degrees 53 minutes north latitude, which is actually Bahia de Todos Santos, near modern Ensenada.[53] There, they again went in search of wood and water, whether out of need or for future reference, and anchored near an Indian village. Trading with both clergy

and military commenced immediately and in full light of day. *At 1 P.M. the Fathere or tuterer of the Mision at Sn. Miguel With Severel Officers and Soldiers Came on Board from the Mision With Skins Which We bought to the Amount of 32 at 4 Dollars Each in the Evening they all Returned on Shore.* Although little water was available, *Wheat and Other Country Produce is found plenty likewise Good Cattle at 4 Dollars and Good Horses at 6 Such as Would Sell for 100 Dollars in America.*[54] He commented that the bay afforded very good anchorage but warned of *Many Westerly Gales Which Blows into the Bay*.

Two days later, Brown observes native cultures with an obvious distain. Ironically, he sees little virtue or profit in the very people who actually harvested the skins, which were the prize of his trading and source of his potential wealth. He condescendingly finds *Some Indians to have Little to Espose of Excepting fish…as Eating the fish they throw on the fire Guts and all as they are Caught.* He notes that the native *Mode of Living is a few Broken Shack up on One Side and a fire on the other Without any Shelter over there heads … there Beads* [beds] *is hard Which they lie on the Same as Hogs and but little Cleaner.* The clothing of the women *Were Some kind of Dress Either of Skins or a Sort of Petti Coats Made of bark,* and that the *Men's Commonly go Naked those that Will Not turn Christian With the Spanyards.* [55]

Landfall on 12 September 1800 was at "St. Francisco Bay," 30 degrees 24 minutes North Latitude, which indicates that it was actually Bahia de San Quintin, where they anchored on 16 September.[56] Here, even greater promise than otter skins beckoned. While seeking good anchorage, Brown noted a *Sandy Bottom Intermixed With Gold Dust Which Was found in Every part of the bay Where they Sounded… The father of the Mition of St. Francisco Informed the Cap't that the Coast Was full of Gold Mines and that they had in Many places found Considerable Quantities of fine Gold Where the water had Run of the Mountains but Very little Success has been Made Yet being few Peoples in this part of the Coast.*[57] If that was not promising enough, the crew had been *Creditably informed that from one Bushell Sowing of Wheat it is Common to Raise five Hundred this Year they Complain of 3 from one to be an Ordinary Crop.*[58] While there, "Cap't Cain" traveled to the Mission of St. Rosario to buy skins, probably renewing old contacts from his previous years on the coast. With fresh provisions aboard ranging from a 40-pound salmon to a large sea lion, the *Betsy* departed toward its fateful days at San Blas.[59]

Existing historical accounts of the brig's problematic stay and abrupt departure from San Blas are somewhat contradictory and often cynical. Ogden implies, joined by Pourade, that *Betsy* offered a "story" about a broken mast to gain entry, and that only after *Betsy* had sailed did the authorities in San Blas realize, based on seized documents and reports, that they had been cheated. It seems possible that these papers may have included Abiel Winship's incriminating letter of instructions to his brother and partner, and the San Diego fiscal's report that "said captain hid the truth in his declaration."[60] Bancroft suggests that Brown fled San Blas with *Betsy* so suddenly at the appearance of a Spanish man-of-war, that he left her captain and supercargo on shore with the supplies they had purchased. Ralph J. Roske claims that Brown "panicked," and Richard Batman speculates that Brown "possibly leaped into action because he thought the Spanish ship intended to seize the *Betsy*, but more likely he saw a perfect opportunity to take over the ship." Further, he states that Brown "made no real attempt to rescue Winship or O'Cain, but took the *Betsy* directly to China where he sold the furs…"[61] The log entries of her days there reveal a more dramatic and complex scenario.

The armorial that decorates John Brown's monogrammed "China Trade" plate and teapot, suggests the roots of his perspective toward his voyages and those of his Boston contemporaries. It features a spread-winged American Eagle, wearing a red, white, and blue shield emblazoned with three fleurs de lis. Rising above fifteen stars, and under its sheltering wings, the eagle bears on one side a mariner who reaches toward the shield; on the other side, the figure of a woman with a spiked headdress beckons toward the eagle. No doubt, she represents "Columbia," goddess of Liberty, the patriotic icon transformed in America into the female embodiment of Columbus.

One can interpret how John Brown saw himself — the mariner, as commissioned by the Columbian imperative of exploration and exploitation, and justified by Liberty, under the aegis of the American eagle. Serving these higher gods, he must have felt freed from honoring the "Old World" mercantile restrictions of Spain. Through this lens, the exploitation of the Northwest Coast, like the New World for Columbus, must have seemed an entitlement, a divine destiny, sanctified by the Hand of Providence, and sealed by hard trading.

The popular image of Columbia was also honored by one of the original American explorers and traders on the Northwest Coast, Robert Gray, who in 1792, named the "Great River of the West," after his ship – the *Columbia Rediviva* (meaning *Columbia*, or Columbus, *Restored to Life*).

Courtesy Rodney J. Taylor, Private Collection, Photos by Richard Harvey

As the brig approached San Blas, the crew rightly anticipated trouble, and spent watches "Cleaning there Muskets and other War Like Implements."[62] *Betsy's* appearance so frightened an outbound schooner that she ran away, but "We Sailed So Much faster by 4 We Run along Side of her and Spoke her." [63] The first morning in port, an ominous pattern emerged when the *Comedant and Several Gentlemen Came on Board in the King's Barge to pay us a visit Bought Several Articles and about Noon Set out to go on Shore Accompanied by the Cap't and Supercargo.*[64] The ostensible reason for the brig's visit was the critical need to replace her sprung mainmast. Although Brown and four crew members were allowed to go to the "Kings Yard" to begin work on a new spar, O'Cain and Winship were also daily on shore, presumably dealing with the clearly suspicious authorities.[65] With over 1000 contraband skins stored aboard in boxes and casks which, if discovered, could be seized along with the ship and crew, the Spanish perception of the state of the old mast was critical. On 17 October 1800, as the crew was about to hoist aboard the new mast, "the Kings Boat Came off to Inspect the old one With a Jury of Carpenters". But perhaps citing the ongoing work, the crew seemed to stall them, and "Not having a Convenient Oportunity they Concluded to Come another time". Upon the jury's departure, the old mast was immediately hoisted out, and Brown claims, with no Spaniard on board to corroborate its condition, that they found it to be "Rotten in many places besides being Sprung 4 feet from the Deck."[66] The log reveals the Yankee claim to be a half truth. The mast had, indeed, been sprung during a fierce gale and been fished. But this break and repair had actually happened the previous Fall, outbound from Boston, though no doubt it had subsequently deteriorated. For the *Betsy,* this indirection was critical, for had the San Blas officials actually seen the break, they would easily have recognized the difference between old and recent damage, and immediately seized the vessel.

Matters soon darkened. By Wednesday, 22 October, the *Cap't Master and 8 hands* [were] *imprisoned 48 hours,* and even before the boat returned the

next day, *the People Employ'd Rigging the Masts being in formed they they Wer making preparation on Shore to take us We bent the Main Sail Weighed the Anchors and Stood to Sea Loaded all the Guns to Defend our Selves.* With its essential papers including *Sea Letter and Spanish passport Likewise Some Charts Which Was Lent to the Commedant* on shore with either O'Cain or Winship at various times, communication deteriorated, and was mainly carried out by means of various boats approaching *Betsy* and letters being exchanged. Late on 23 October, the crew *Espyed a Boat Coming out of the River Which We Seposed by our former usage Was a Mind to take us Cleaned and Loaded all the Guns and Small Arms in our own Defense*, although no attack transpired. On the twenty-sixth, while the crew hurried to rig the main mast, Brown dispatched two hands with a letter for the third time to *Demand the Brigs papers and to pay the Commedant Demand for the Mast,* but were told that the papers were now at the city of "Tay Peck."[67] By 29 October, the fourth boat envoy had not returned from shore, *the Reason We Know Not,* and instead, *one of the brigs officers and 2 Soldiers Came off Our People Kept on Shore.* Captain O'Cain was then told that *Mr Winship Must Go on Shore Before the Commedant Would Deliver up the papers*.[68]

This delicate dance soon ended when, on 1 November 1800, "Cap't Ocain and Mr Winship With two of the People" did not return to the *Betsy*. Instead, the "lingester," or translator, returned and informed them that O'Cain, Winship, and two "People" were confined in the guard house. More ominously, *We Were also Informed in a private Manner that they Were Determined to Carry the Brig in by force and that he thought it likely She Would be Condemned*.[69]

At sunrise, the Spanish appeared to make good that intelligence. *We Saw 3 Sail a Brig Sloop and Schooner the Brig Which We Seposed her to be Mounted 16 Guns.* Brown, obliged to support O'Cain and Winship's claims of innocence, could not reveal the damning evidence of her cargo, and so, *We being informed that they Were Determined to Carry us in By force and Examine the Cargo we thought it Most prudent to Get under Way Which We Did. Betsy's* ability to take to her heels allowed her to gain the weather gage of all three pursuers, *So far that they Could Not Reach us With there Guns*, and in spite of the sloop which *Hailed us with Spanish Colours and fired a Lee Gun*, they *Stood on…With the Intention to Run to the Maries Islands and Get a Stock of Wood and Water until further Orders–*[70]

This is the first indication that the officers may have planned for this eventuality, and the word "orders" is mentioned three times. Being under the paramilitary orders of a letter-of-marque, Brown implies that his orders as ranking officer were that *Betsy* was to wait at the Marias Islands for O'Cain and Winship, or for their further orders. When the brig arrived at one of them, Prince George's Island, they immediately began to search for the inevitable wood and water, supplies no doubt denied them at San Blas to prevent their escape. From 4 November through 13 November, the crew stayed on or near the island, and struggled to find water, finding salt in several wells before having some success. Their gloom deepened with the death of their blacksmith, Ephriam Hyde of Brookline, who "departed this life after 6 Days Sickness of a Violent Fever." On the thirteenth, they sighted a sail, assumed it to be Spanish, and belatedly took flight. When they were overtaken after a brief chase and a third cannon shot that "passed Close to the Main Sail and Went Some Distance Windward," they discovered her to be the English letter-of-marque, the *Walker,* a whaler commanded by Captain Nichols. *Betsy* had apparently retained enough of her papers, perhaps her own letter-of-marque,

to satisfy Nichols, who did not seem to need the Sea Letter, coastal charts, or Spanish passport that were still held at San Blas. Brown writes that after examining her papers, Nichols was sympathetic with his plan, and "Wished Me to Do the best I Could for the Cap't and Owners." The two ships kept friendly company off Prince Georges Island until 16 November, while *Walker's* doctor attended *Betsy's* sick.[71]

As late as the fifteenth, 13 days after leaving San Blas, Brown decided that time was against any happy outcome for those left behind, and he ordered her to *steer a little over toward the Main if No appearance of the Commander Getting from San Blas to the Island.* Once more, Brown intimated the existence of a plan for this contingency, likely the fifteen days mentioned by Larnerd, and decided it time to *Make the best of our Way to Canton our time is Now at Which I was Limited to Stay if they Did Not Come to the Islands.* On 16 November, he reiterated these "orders" that the time had now *Expired in which I was Limited to Stay if they Did Not Come to the Islands.* Twice on 16 November, he stood in for the islands, but there was "No appearance of the Commander and Sailing Masters Coming." Finally and reluctantly, on 17 November, they bore West, with *no appearance of the Commander and Sailing Master Getting away from St. Blas and having Stayed two Days longer than We Were Ordered if they Did Not Get on Board thought it most prudent to procede to Canton for the Bennefit of the Owners.* They set a direct course for the Sandwich Islands.[72]

The log shows no evidence that Brown callously abandoned his shipmates at San Blas. Whether he fabricated these "orders" or not, the 15 days he delayed before he departed cannot entirely be explained by the need for water, crew illness, or strategic confusion. True, he did not mount a raid to rescue O'Cain and Winship, but with the appearance of three armed ships in port, one mounting 16 guns, such a move would have been foolhardy. In any case, claims of flight done merely in panic or for opportunistic gain do not appear to be justified.

There may be a further reason why the captives could neither return to the *Betsy* nor escape from custody. Howay states that Charles Winship died at age 23 in San Blas on 4 December 1800, and Malloy says that he "died a few months later at San Blas." Phelps, however, says that he died at Valparaiso of sunstroke. Bancroft concurs, probably based on Phelps' work. These two are echoed by Morison, Batman and Roske.[73] But the funeral sermon preached by John Foster, Pastor of Third Church in Cambridge on 16 May 1802, soon after word of Winship's death reached Boston, confirms Howay. It notes that "he went ashore at St Blas, on the coast of the North Pacific Ocean, for the purpose of transacting business relative to some necessary repairs of the vessel. He had been there but a few days, when he was seized with the malignant fever of the climate, which on the 4th of December put a period to his life."[74]

But this same "malignant fever," probably mosquito-borne malaria with its characteristic fever and shaking, likely contracted at San Blas or on the Mexican shore while seeking water, had already struck others on the *Betsy*.[75] The log notes as far back as 4 November "two men sick of a feaver," 6 November, *Two Men Sick one of a violent feaver Several More Making Complaints of being unwell*, and on the 7th *only one man sick of Ague and Feaver*, because that was the day that Ephriam Hyde died.[76] This may be the very fever and reason that Charles Winship and Joseph O'Cain did not return or escape to the *Betsy* at the Marias Islands as they planned. They likely could not, because one, or all of the prisoners, might have been too ill to do so.

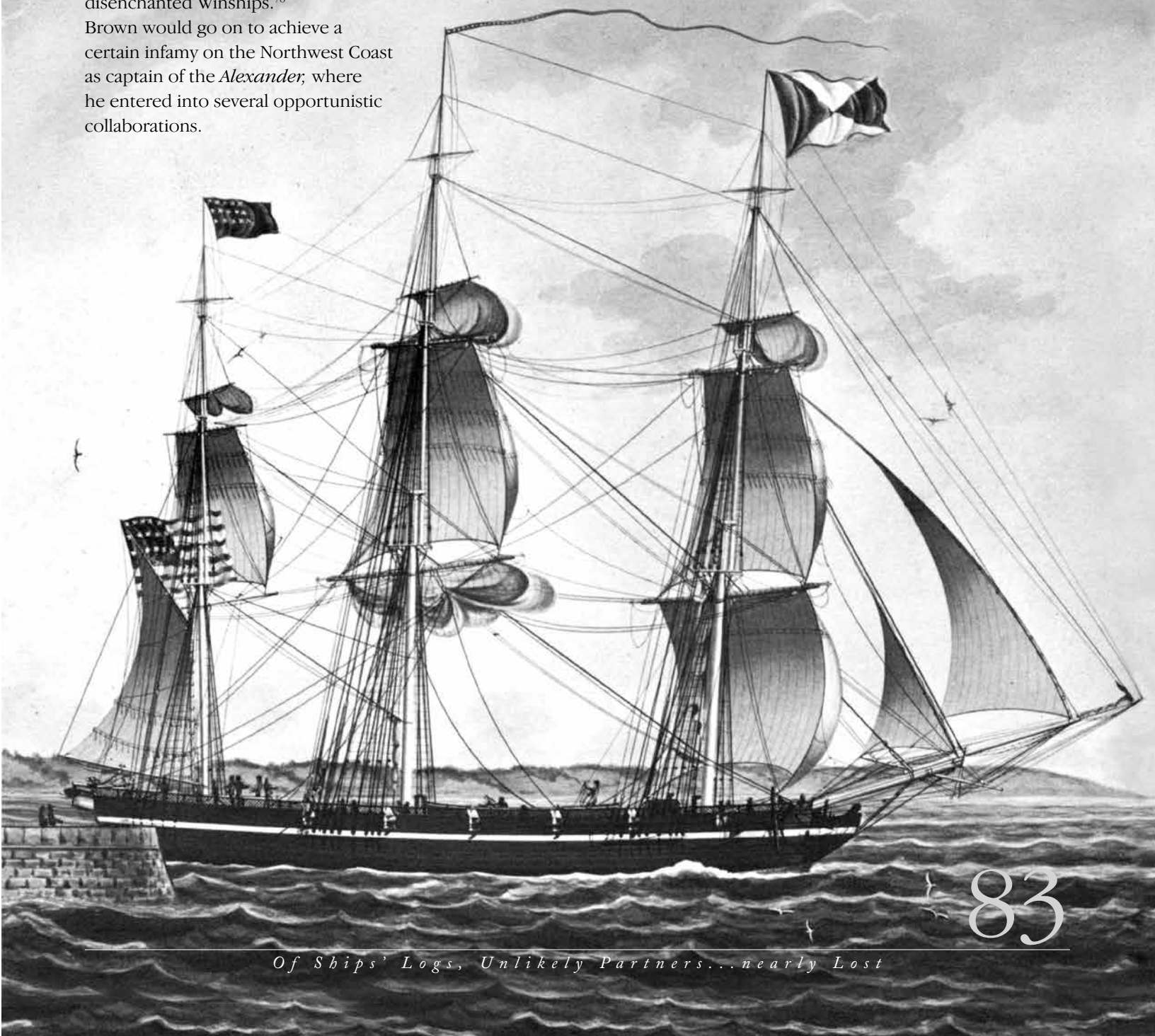
Unfortunately, Joseph O'Cain left us no record of those days. He would later go on to become one of the most storied figures in the history of the Northwest Coast. Having revisited San Diego in 1801, as supercargo on the *Enterprise,* after leaving San Blas, he returned to the coast in 1803 as captain of the eponymous *O'Cain*, and in 1806 as captain of the *Eclipse.* During these voyages, he renewed old contacts, created alliances with the Russians, and pioneered innovative sea otter hunting techniques using Kodiak natives and their baidarkas.[77] With Baranov, he would perfect this approach which would eventually help decimate the otter stocks, from which they have not since recovered.

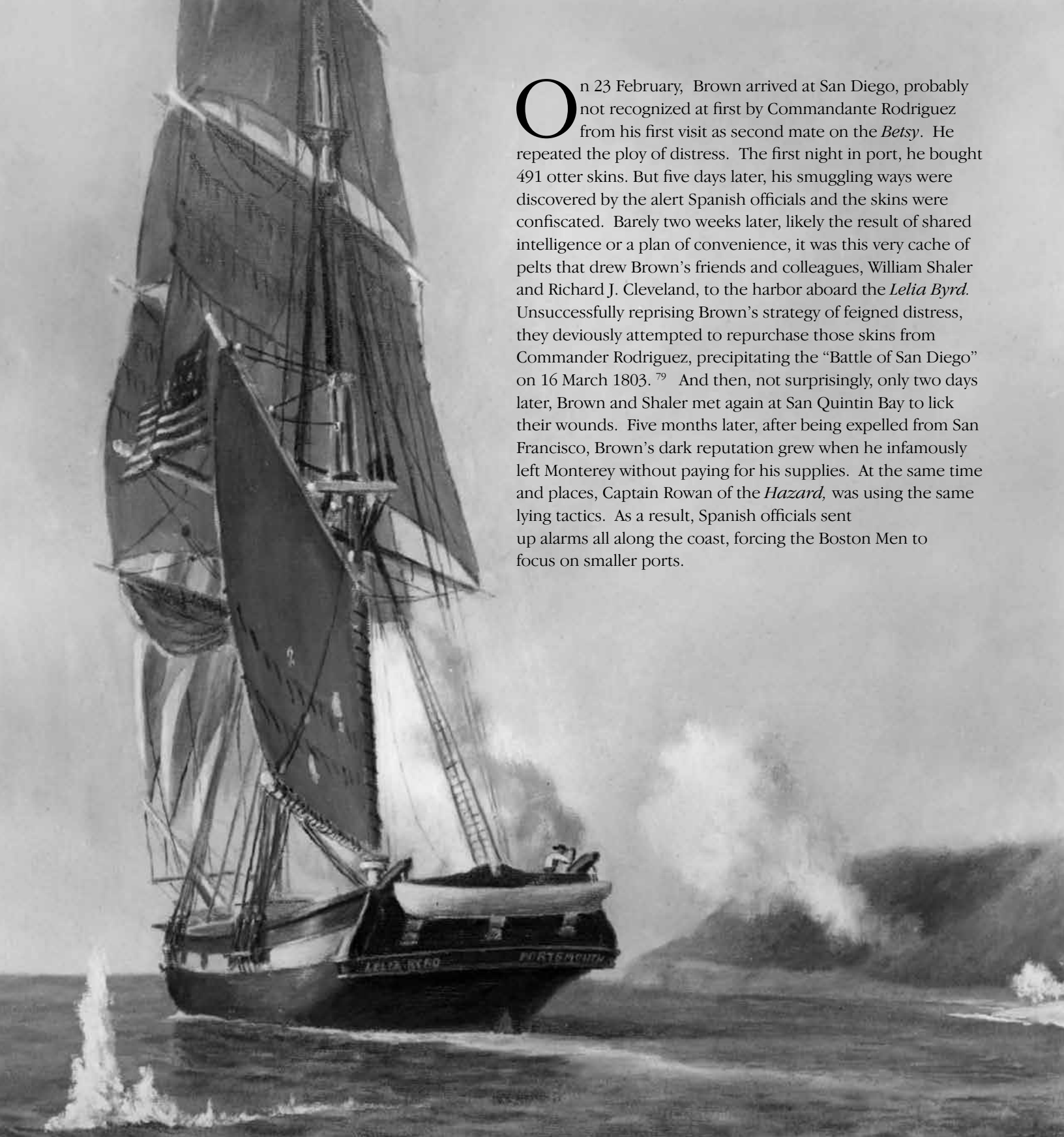
After trading sea otter furs for Bohea Tea in Canton, log keeper and now captain, John Brown, sailed *Betsy* past Sumatra and its pirates, around the inhospitable Cape of Good Hope, stopping at St. Helena, back to the Long Wharf in Boston on 6 October 1801. As captain of the *Alexander,* he returned to San Diego and Todos Santos in 1803, no longer employed by the apparently disenchanted Winships.[78]

Brown would go on to achieve a certain infamy on the Northwest Coast as captain of the *Alexander,* where he entered into several opportunistic collaborations.

Ship Alexander

Illustration of Alexander *held at the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.*





On 23 February, Brown arrived at San Diego, probably not recognized at first by Commandante Rodriguez from his first visit as second mate on the *Betsy*. He repeated the ploy of distress. The first night in port, he bought 491 otter skins. But five days later, his smuggling ways were discovered by the alert Spanish officials and the skins were confiscated. Barely two weeks later, likely the result of shared intelligence or a plan of convenience, it was this very cache of pelts that drew Brown's friends and colleagues, William Shaler and Richard J. Cleveland, to the harbor aboard the *Lelia Byrd.* Unsuccessfully reprising Brown's strategy of feigned distress, they deviously attempted to repurchase those skins from Commander Rodriguez, precipitating the "Battle of San Diego" on 16 March 1803. [79] And then, not surprisingly, only two days later, Brown and Shaler met again at San Quintin Bay to lick their wounds. Five months later, after being expelled from San Francisco, Brown's dark reputation grew when he infamously left Monterey without paying for his supplies. At the same time and places, Captain Rowan of the *Hazard,* was using the same lying tactics. As a result, Spanish officials sent up alarms all along the coast, forcing the Boston Men to focus on smaller ports.

Three years after the *Betsy* first sailed into Puerto de San Diego, John Brown would return as captain of the *Alexander*. Having his cargo of illicit sea otter pelts confiscated by the Spanish, Brown's unsuccessful attempt at smuggling would be rerun several weeks later when the American brig *Lelia Byrd* attempted to load the confiscated pelts at night. The brief, but memorable "Battle of San Diego" took place as *Lelia Byrd* made a hasty departure while under cannon fire from Fort Guijarros (now Ballast Point). She returned fire, but sustained damage as she fled seaward.

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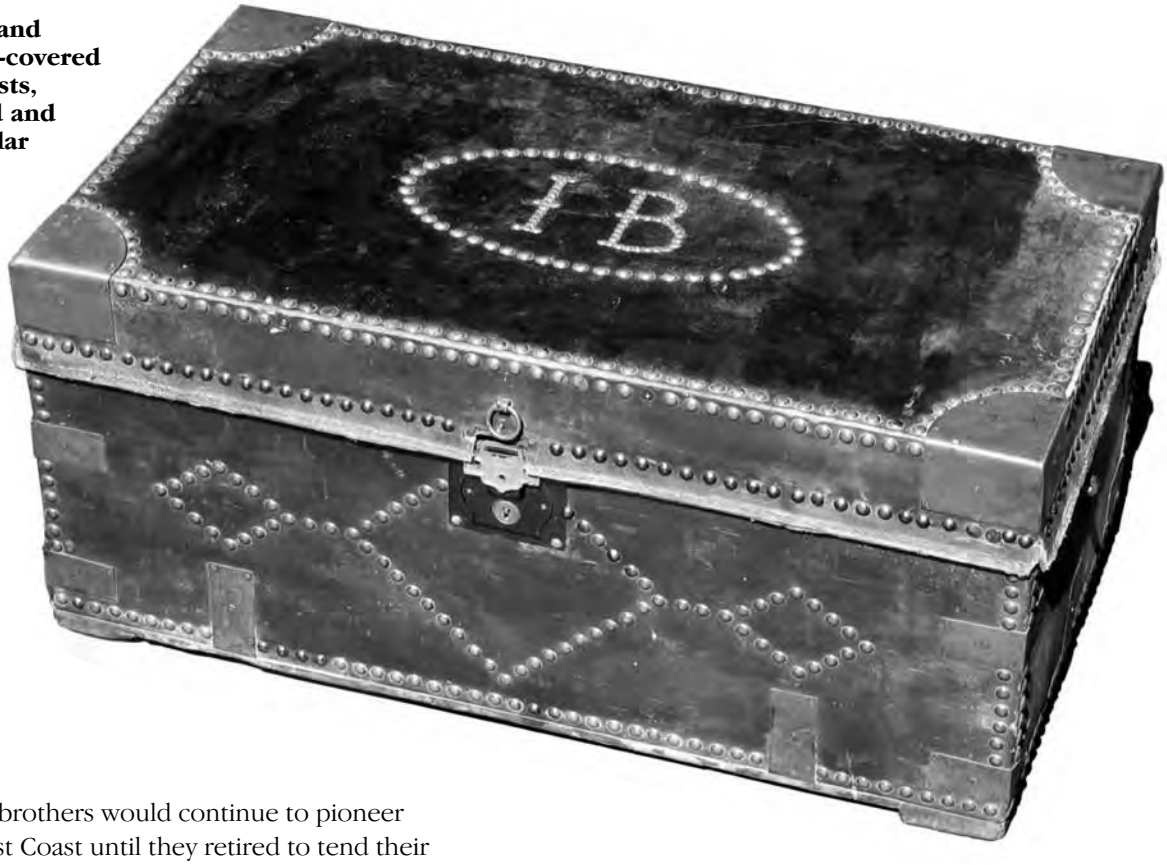
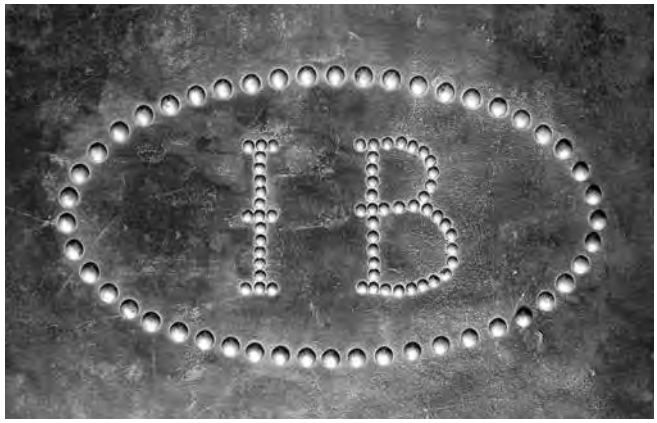


Such brass-bound and decorated, pigskin-covered camphorwood chests, sometimes painted and nested, were popular souvenirs in the trade to store personal items or carry tea home from Canton. Brown's chest bears the Latinate initial "I" for "Iohannes," rather than the traditional "J" for "John".

Courtesy Rodney J. Taylor, Private Collection, Photo by Richard Harvey

The Winship brothers would continue to pioneer the Northwest Coast until they retired to tend their storied gardens in Brighton, Massachusetts.[80] In 1806, Jonathan Winship, Jr., with brother Nathan,[81] extended and perfected O'Cain's use of Aleuts and their baidarkas as otter hunters, and profitably contracted with Rezanov and Baranov of the Russian-American Company. Then, in a bold but unsuccessful attempt to establish for themselves the first American trading colony on the Columbia River, Captain Nathan Winship returned to the coast in 1810 aboard the *Albatross.*[82] The family's sacrifice for the fur trade was not yet finished. *Betsy* Commander Charles Winship's nephew and namesake, Captain Charles Winship Jr., died of sunstroke at Valparaiso in 1819, while on a sealing voyage.[83]



The log proves Bancroft to have been largely accurate in his prediction. By design, *Betsy* was indeed the early leader in this brief and intense phase of the sea otter fur trade which, since Cook, Dixon, Kendrick, Gray, and others, had previously been focused on the northern Nootka Sound grounds.[84] It seems most likely that even though Brown's log lists *Betsy's* destination to be the "North West Coast of America," the Winships had intended from the start to exploit the untapped California coast to the south known so well to Joseph O'Cain. And perhaps, they were already dreaming of taking this model northward to their own empire on the Columbia, as yet oblivious to the ultimate cost of their "harvest" for the Winship family, the sea otters, and what had once been for the Spanish, the well-ordered world of Puerto de San Diego.

In the log's laconic final entry that "several of the owners came on board," we are left to imagine the scene that October morning in 1801, on Boston's Long Wharf, when John Brown had to face the surviving Winships and explain... .

1 John Brown, *Log of the Brig Betsy 1799-1801*, 21 October 1799, private collection, edited by Rodney J. Taylor. This transcription has retained the spelling, punctuation, syntax, and capitalization of the original.

2 Mary Malloy, *"Boston Men" on the Northwest Coast: The American Maritime Fur Trade, 1788-1844,* (Kingston, ON: The Limestone Press, 1998), 78.

3 Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft,* Vol. XXVII of *History of the Northwest Coast*, *Vol. I. 1543-1800* (San Francisco: L. Bancroft & Company, 1884), 308. It is possible that the *Enterprise* had surreptitiously scouted the harbor earlier that year but did not stay.

4 Brown., *Log of the Brig Betsy.* Dates and sequence of events from the log.

5 *Boston Ship Register, 1789-1829, A-B,* 376. Available in the Phillips Library of the Peabody-Essex Museum.

6 Malloy, *Boston Men,* 79.

7 William Dane Phelps, *Solid Men of Boston in the Northwest, 72.* Original, circa 1860 manuscript in The Bancroft Library, University of California.

8 J. P. C. Winship, *Historical Brighton* ,vol. 1, (Boston: George A. Warren, 1899), 128.

9 E. W. Giesecke, "Discovery of Humboldt Bay, California, in 1806 from the Ship *O'Cain,* Jonathan Winship, Commander." *Terrae Incognitae.* Vol.29, (Arlington, Texas, 1997), 51 – 71.

10 Yale University's Beinecke Library holds *Betsy* crewman John Larnerd's summary of the voyage in its James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection. The undated, eleven-page manuscript often reflects Brown's own language, phrasing, and choice of detail, suggesting that Larnerd had Brown's log at hand. His careful editing of the events at San Diego describes the visit as a friendly one simply to make repairs and to take on needed water and wood. He never mentions trading activity, sea otter skins, or smuggling behavior. His account of the events at San Blas seems designed to support the innocence of *Betsy's* visit and to exculpate John Brown's abandonment of Charles Winship and Joseph O'Cain. He describes repairs to the mainmast, never mentions contraband cargo, but does state that their dispute with Spanish authorities was "on suspicion of being A smuglin in tention." He tells of receiving instructions from the detained Captain to Mr. Brown that if he were not released, to proceed to the Marias Islands, to wait fifteen days for them, and then "to make the best of our way" to Canton. The manuscript ends at Hawaii, and, aside from a fragmentary mention of the stop at St. Helena's, omits their time at Canton and the voyage home, which further suggests a limited purpose for the document. The Beinecke file also contains the draft of a later note from Larnerd to Capt. Brown, requesting a berth aboard the *Alexander,* confirming some enduring personal loyalty. Interestingly, neither Brown nor Larnerd ever mentions the presence of Nathan Winship who Ogden claims was on board, and who Malloy states took ownership of the brig prior to her loss on the African coast. "Account of the voyage of the Brig *Betsy* bound to the northwest coast of America, 1799 – 1806." Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library: WA MSS S-2423.

11 Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast,* 308.

12 Adele Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade, 1784-1848* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1941), 16-24.

13 Steven W. Hackel, "Land, Labor, and Production: The Colonial Economy of Spanish and Mexican California," in *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush,* ed. Ramon A. Gutierrez and Richard J. Orsi, (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1998), 119.

14 Jean Flaherty Krase, 1979. "The Old World Ceramic Sherds from San Diego Presidio: A Qualitative, Quantitative, and Historical Analysis," Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Anthropology, San Diego State University, 75.

15 Ralph J. Roske, *Everyman's Eden: A History of California.* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1968), 128-129.

16 *Boston Ship Register (see note 5).*

17 Howard Chapelle, *The Search for Speed Under Sail,* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, Inc., 1967), 4, 5.

18 Elton Engstrom, *Joseph O'Cain, Adventurer on the Northwest Coast,* (Juneau: Alaska, Litho Printers, 2003), 18; Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast,* 306.

19 John Foster, *A Sermon, Delivered May 16, 1802. (Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1802), 10, in footnote; Boston Ship Register,* (see note 5) also notes that *Betsy* was commissioned as a privateer.

20 Engstrom, *Joseph O'Cain,* 11- 14.

21 Ibid., 12.

22 Michael J. Gonzalez, "The Child of the Wilderness Weeps for the Father of Our Country: The Indian and the Politics of Church and State in Provincial California," in *Contested Eden:California Before the Gold Rush*, ed. Ramon A. Gutierrez and Richard J. Orsi, (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1998), 155-157.

23 Brown, *Log of the Brig Betsy,* 25 July 1800.

24 Ibid., August 13, 14.

25 Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast,* 308.

26 Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade 1784-1848.,* 34.

27 Brown, *Log of the Betsy,* May-July, 1800.

28 Ibid., 21 August 1800.

29 Ibid., 25 August 1800.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., 26 August 1800.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 27 August 1800.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., 28 August 1800.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 29 August 1800.

38 Ibid., 28 August 1800.

39 Ibid., 30 August 1800.

40 Ibid., 31 August 1800.

41 Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts 1783-1860, (*London : William Heinemann, Ltd., 1923), 57.

42 Brown, *Log of the Brig Betsy,* 1 September 1800.

43 Ibid., 2 September 1800.

44 Ibid., 3 September 1800.

45 Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade,* 158; John Brown, *"A Cure*

for Rumatic Pains," 1803, private collection, edited by Rodney J. Taylor. Ogden documents his return. The log manuscript itself suggests he had it in his possession at that later time. As part of the last signature of the *Betsy* manuscript, Brown appends a curious "cure" involving burial in fresh horse manure which he attributes to "Capt. Shaler." Brown places and dates this entry "California Francisco Bay March 28th AD 1803." Ogden confirms that both William Shaler on the *Lelia Byrd* and John Brown on the *Alexander* were at San Quintin Bay at that time. In the log entry of 13 September 1800, Brown described his position as "St. Francisco Bay", 30 degrees 24 minutes north latitude, consistent with Bahia San Quintin.

46 Brown, *Log of the Brig Betsy,* 4 September 1800.

47 Jose Joaquin Arrillaga, Letter to Aguilar, Presidio of Loreto, 4 October 1800, volume C-A 25 (Provincial State Papers – Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley), page 133; Letter to Berenguer, President of Loreto, 6 December 1800, C-A 14 (PSP), pp. 51-52.

48 Engstrom, *Joseph O'Cain, Adventurer on the Northwest Coast,* 19.

49 Brown, *Log of the Brig Betsy*, 5 September 1800.

50 Carl L Strand, "Mud Volcanoes, Faults, and Earthquakes of the Twentieth Century." *Journal of San Diego History,* Spring 1981, 3 – 7.

51 Ibid., 4, 5, 11 – 13.

52 Ibid., 3, 14, 15.

53 Brown, *Log of the Brig Betsy,* September 7, 11.

54 Ibid., 7 September 1800.

55 Ibid., 9 September 1800.

56 Ibid., 12 September 1800.

57 Ibid., 17 September.

58 Ibid., 20 September 1800.

59 Ibid., 22 September 1800.

60 Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade*, footnote 7, page 192.

61 Ralph J. Roske, *Everyman's Eden: A History of* California, 129*;* Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast,* 309; Richard F. Pourade, *Time of the Bells,* (San Diego: Union-Tribune Publishing Company, 1960), 93; Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade,* 34, 35; Richard Batman, *The Outer Coast,* (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 137.

62 Brown, *Log of the Brig Betsy,* 30 September 1800.

63 Ibid., 10 October 1800.

64 Ibid., 11 October 1800.

65 Ibid., October 12 – 16, 1800.

66 Ibid., 17 October 1800.

67 Ibid., October 22, 23. "Tay Peck" was likely "Tepic" which is inland at the cooler, dryer, healthier elevation of 3025 feet, in contrast with San Blas, which is on the coast and surrounded by wetlands on three sides, by bodies such as the Miasma Tigris, all potentially malarial.

68 Ibid., October 22 – 29, 1800.

69 Ibid., 2 November 1800.

70 Ibid. Elsie Greene, "To Miss Anne Head," manuscript, private collection, edited by Rodney J. Taylor. John Brown's daughter's recalls her father's story, partly confusing events at Valparaiso with those at San Blas: "The next voyage the vessel was taken by the Spaniards as a privateer and carried to Chili and they took the Captain and Supercargo who did the trading and put them in prison 80 miles from where the vessel was. The vessel was left in father's care. Father went two or three times to see the Captain and as they had not had a trial they told father to run and get away. The vessel had a war vessel on each side of it, but one day they had a celebration and the guard got drunk and went to sleep. The wind was favorable and father got his vessel out before they discovered it. They were chased three days, but father's vessel being lighter could tack quicker and got away."

71 Ibid., November 4 – 13, 1800.

72 Ibid., November 15 – 17, 1800.

73 Judge F. W. Howay, "A List of Trading Vessels In The Maritime Fur Trade, 1795 – 1804," 10; Malloy, 79; Phelps, 72; Morison, 59; Batman, 138; Roske, 129.

74 Foster, *A Sermon Delivered May 16, 1802,* 10.

75 See note 67 concerning the risk of malaria at San Blas.

76 Brown, *Log of the Brig Betsy,* November 4 – 7, 1800.

77 Engstrom, *Joseph O'Cain,* 19 – 39; Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast,* 323 – 324. Morison, *Maritime History of Massachusetts,* 60, 61. Baidarkas are skin covered native craft used by the Aleuts, Kodiaks, and others.

78 Pourade, *Time of the Bells*, 93. Pourade's sources suggest that Brown may have "allowed a high price for tea and received a private compensation for so doing," thus cheating the owners. Brown, *The Log of the Brig Betsy,* January 31 – February 7, 1801. The *Betsy* log is curiously blank for the week he traded at Canton.

79 Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade,* 36 – 40; William Shaler, *Journal of a Voyage Between China And The North-Western Coast of America, Made in 1804,* (Claremont: Saunders Studio Press, 1935), 15 – 20. Suspicious Spanish officials seized the skins which had, according to Brown, mysteriously appeared on board the *Alexander*. Forced to leave, he next repeated the ploy of extreme need at Todos Santos. Two weeks later, the *Lelia Byrd,* commanded by William Shaler and Richard Cleveland, entered San Diego harbor for supplies and to acquire those skins. After repeated unsuccessful, surreptitious attempts, they were expelled by the commandant, Rodriguez, and cannon fire was exchanged between the ship and fort.

80 Morison, *Maritime History of Massachusetts, 58, 59.*

81 Geisecke, *Discovery of Humboldt Bay,* 1, 7.

82 Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast,* 325; Phelps, *Solid Men of Boston,* 40 – 48; Morison, *Maritime History of Massachusetts,* 58.

83 Morison, *Maritime History of Massachusetts,* 59.

84 George Dixon, 1789, *A Voyage Round The World: But More Particularly To The North-West Coast Of America.* Facsimile of the 1st edition, Bibliotheca Australiana #37, (New York: Da Capo Press; Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1968), vii – xxii. Dixon summarizes the earliest years of the trade, citing the voyages of Captains Cook, Meares, Tipping, and others to the Nootka region; Frederic Howay, ed., *Voyages of the Columbia To The Northwest Coast 1787-1790 and 1790-1793,* (Oregon Historical Society Press and the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), vi – xxvii. Howay's book includes the logs of Robert Haswell's first and second voyages of the *Columbia,* Robert Hoskin's narrative of her second voyage, and John Boit's log of the second voyage.

Henry Delano Fitch
and the Lure of the Sea Otter Trade

By Michael Buxton
with additional contributions by Daniel F. Murley

RIGHT: Henry Delano Fitch, a Massachusetts merchant, made his mark in San Diego society and commerce, but his associations and marital connections placed him prominently in the history of Sonoma County, in Northern California. In 1829, Henry, having been baptized "Enrique Domingo," married Maria Antonio Natalia Elijia Carrillo, daughter of Joaquin Carrillo and Maria Ignacia Lopez of San Diego. He would be one of a group of prominent early Californians who improved their lot by marriage to connected *Californio* women. Henry Fitch's brother-in-law was the dominant Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo. Vallejo's influence and his accumulation and consolidation of power saw land grants given to Fitch (Rancho Sotoyome); to his brother-in-law, John Bautista Rogers Cooper (Rancho El Molino) and to his mother-in-law, Maria Ignacia (Rancho Cabeza de Santa Rosa), in the "Frontera del Norte."

–Daniel F. Murley, Curator, Healdsburg Museum
Courtesy of the Healdsburg Museum, Healdsburg, CA.

1798-1849

In his years of captaining various trade vessels, Henry Fitch was well aware of the wealth generated by the sea otter trade and so, after settling in San Diego in 1829, Fitch purchased sea otter skins from hunters and then shipped them off to buyers in Hawaii, Mexico, and China. Fitch opened a general store in San Diego and owned a small fleet of fifteen-foot otter boats manned by hunters, who were sent on hunting expeditions to the Lower Coast and offshore islands. An examination of business letters and other documents belonging to Fitch provide details on the extent of his trade in sea otter pelts at San Diego. They describe the willingness of buyers to purchase sea otter skins, the difficulties of trading in an unstable political atmosphere, and the problems he encountered while negotiating with sea otter hunters. Some of the letters include interesting perspectives from San Diego residents who experienced political revolutions and Indian attacks.

Sea otter fur contains over 16,000 fibers per square centimeter, a density that is unmatched in the animal world.[1] This thick fur was much desired by early Spanish, Mexican, and American fur traders. During the Spanish period of California history (1769-1822), sea otter pelts were the principle export product; by the early 1800s hunters had significantly reduced otter populations. The revolution of New Spain in 1822 (creating a Mexican-ruled California until 1846), opened California ports for trade with foreign vessels. By this time, residents had developed sprawling ranchos with large herds of cattle, and the hide and tallow trade emerged as the main industry for California. Ships from Boston, South America, and England called at California ports, trading cargoes of general merchandise for cattle hides, tallow, and horns.

The small cargo space requirements of sea otter skins and their high returns at market made them very desirable to vessel supercargoes who wished to supplement outward bound cargoes of hides and tallow.[2]

Henry Delano Fitch was one of many Americans who came west and married their way into Mexican California. He had come to California as a supercargo on board the *Maria Esther* in 1825, and later took command of the trading vessel *Leonor*. He also traded along the California coast sailing onboard the vessels *Vulture*, *Fulham*, and *Nymph*. Fitch first came to San Diego in 1829, and created a romantic stir when he eloped with Josefa Carrillo, daughter of prominent California resident, Joaquin Victor Carrillo, a native of the Baja California. Fitch converted to Catholicism and took the name of Enrique Domingo Fitch.

In 1841, Fitch was granted a license to hunt for sea otters, seals, and sea elephants.[3]

Early San Diego resident Phillip Crosthwaite recalled the role Fitch played in the sea otter trade during the 1840s:

> Sea otter were plentiful in the kelp along the coast of Lower California and around the islands. There were two companies of otter hunters in San Diego. They were usually fitted out for their hunts by Capt. Fitch. Each company had three canoes and during the spring and summer months hunted along the coast, landing through the surf everyday at places known to them where there was wood and water for their camp. Prime otter skins were worth $40 each and were sold to Capt. Fitch, who sent them to China, where they were disposed of at a good profit.[4]

By 1833, Fitch had opened a store in San Diego, which became an important center for trade with the Baja Peninsula.[5] To ensure his supply of otter skins, Fitch owned otter boats that he sent on trips to the coast and islands of Lower California. Fitch bartered with Edward Stokes in 1843 for the purchase of a boat. Stokes spelled out the details for the sale in a letter to Fitch:

> ***In respect of the ottering boat; I wrote you about 6 weeks ago by Sr Battisae, who is gone to the frontier the purpose of the letter was in case you wish to take the boat you could have her for 35 dollars cash. Also if you wish to take the skins, you could have them by writing for them to your compadre Refugio, as I was coming to the Rancho for goods. In respect of Sr Don Pedro Poncia, I told him in case you did not take the boat that he could have her for 40 dollars cash or an equivalent that in skins, or skins equal to 40 dollars cash***
>
> ***You say you have not bargained for the price of those 2 otter skins which they caught last. You had better make your bargains with them and not wait for my coming in, for I cannot tell when that will be, and as my part is only three 1/8 it make but very little difference***[6]

Michael Buxton developed his interest in maritime history after working as a commercial diver in San Diego. He currently works as an archaeologist for California State Parks, and has previously published articles in *Mains'l Haul*.

Stiff competition among groups of hunters could make things difficult for those who did not act fast, and Stokes advised Fitch to get his hunters to the otter grounds as soon as possible: *You say you wish the otter hunters to have another trail, you had better push them before the Black Steward comes, for after they arrive the San Diego hunters may go to sleep.*[7] "Black Steward" was a nickname for sea otter hunter Allen Light. Light had come to Santa Barbara in 1835, on board the vessel *Pilgrim*, and his African heritage made him one of the earliest black settlers in California.[8]

Sea otter skins needed to be protected while they were transported to far away markets in the holds of a ship. Early California merchant William Heath Davis wrote that pelts were placed into "empty rum casks, which were clean and dry, but still retained the odor of rum." [9] Davis continued: *Furs were packed, with heads put onto the casks, and they were thus secure from moths and other insects and were not exposed to dampness. All the vessels used this method*. Pelts were stretched on frames to dry before they were packed into the casks.

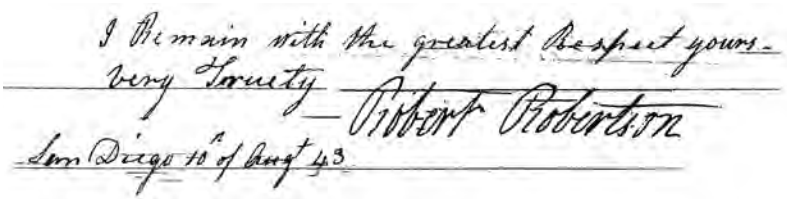
Sea otter hunters could drive a hard bargain, and Fitch had to negotiate with hunters who demanded top dollar for their skins. In 1843, Fitch left on one of his frequent business trips and Robert Robertson was put in charge of the store at Old Town. Robertson wrote a letter to Fitch that described the difficulties of negotiations with hunters, and of revolution in other parts of California:

> ***Mr Augustin Manuelia has come up with a load of hides and saddles and otter skins and boots*** [page ripped] ***given me nothing for you. I understand that Don Martin Marino will pay his debt. I gave him goods for his barrel of aguadente to the amount of forty dollars. He brought one otter skin of the mark, but I would not buy it. It was cut across the back about six inches so that I could not have stretched it on the fream*** [frame]***. If he would have sold me all the skins I would have took the cut one too but he would not. He is going to the Angelos*** [Los Angeles] ***to sel*** [sell] ***his saddles and boots. I told the prices you would give, like wise the discount on the price of the goods, but all would not due. His brother has lost 1000*** [dollars] ***at cards along with Camenino. I understand he sold his skins on board of the California. I have heard but little from your otter hunters and that little is unfavorable. Mr John Bean, Capt of Stewards party, has been here and have left nine skins in deposit. They say you have agreed to give them***

Below: Well-known for carrying Richard Henry Dana aboard her, the 180-ton Boston Brig *Pilgrim* transported hides along the California coast in the 1830s. Also on board in 1835 was the "Black Steward," Allen Light, considered to be "a man of great strength and a good hunter." Light hunted sea otters until settling in San Diego in 1847, but later headed for the gold fields in 1851.

The painting of the Brig Pilgrim *resides at the Santa Barbara Historical Society*

thirtyseven dollars a skin. If it is so when you write you better let me know for I shall not give so much without your order. Sir, I am sorry you was so unlucky as to miss of the California and Don Quixote which I fear has lead you out of the track of the shipping. We here [hear] ***that there is revolution again to windward but here all is peace thank God. There is nothing doing in this place in regard of tread*** [trade] ***so wishing you better luck to windward than I have had to Leeward***


I Remain with the greatest Respect yours
very Truely
Robert Robertson
San Diego 10th of Augt 43

Fitch shipped not only sea otter pelts, but land otter, beaver, bear, and deer skins. Fur seals were also traded, and the Lower Coast island of Guadalupe was a favored fur seal and sea otter hunting area. Fitch wrote to Abel Stearns about a trading voyage to the island for fur seal and sea otter skins on the vessel *Nymph* in 1840. He also wrote that expert hunter Isaac Sparks was no pushover when it came to bargaining for the price of sea otter skins:

I arrived home last Monday, I had two days passage. Much calm weather and light head winds. I have made up my mind to run down to the island of Guadalupe and from there to Ensenada where I expect to get from 3 to 400 hides, as Mr. Fama write me that I may expect about 300. I expect to be back home in about 12 days, and in San Pedro in about 20 from this date and that is allowing some time for everything. I am in hope that the sealers on Guadalupe have done something otherwise they would have returned long ago, or else they have lost their boat and in that case it would be an act of charity to take them off. I hope you will have all the documents ready by the time I arrive at San Pedro so as to have no detentions there; tell Temple to bear a hand and have his argte [brandy] ***- I cannot make my trade with Sparks for his otter skins. He asks $37 dollars cash for them all around and will not take less. He has 99 or 100.***[11]

Fitch conducted his business in the shifting political environment of Mexican California, and frequent revolutions and Indian attacks were a part of life. In June of 1841, Mexican officials got wind of a plot by American revolutionaries to overthrow the government.[12] Governor Alvarado ordered the arrest of all foreigners who were in the country without proper documents. A few who were rounded up were trappers who had no papers. Fitch was told by Government officials to bring in his otter boats manned with foreign hunters, and he received the news in a letter from his storekeeper at San Diego:

They have also sent an order from above to call the boat in and not let her go out again, also all others that are hunting on the coast. They read a banda [proclamation] ***here on Sunday saying Jose Castro has completely gained the day in Mexico and that they are determined to excommunicate all the foreigners who are not married or naturalized but I believe by the date it is the news that Cava Rivera brought when he arrived in the Catalina.***[13]

After his boats were recalled, sea otter hunters were required to obtain a special permit from the government.[14] The storekeeper also expressed the insecurity of residents created by hostile Indians. Stokes wrote about the hanging of Indians at San Diego, and suspected restless Indians might have had revenge on their minds. Fitch had been requested to supply arms and ammunition if the town came under attack, and nervous officials wanted to confirm exactly how much firepower was at hand. Fitch also had a sick wife to contend with:

As for the Indians they are all quiet below it is true that they was a little discontented on account of hanging up the heads of those they shot but nothing more. The Maricopes have rose but I believe it only against some other tribe and there is no — [unintelligible] ***of their coming this way***

I think you must have told the perfects — [prefects] ***what arms and ammunition you have left for me, for he wrote to the Alcalde the other day to call on me for it in case of necessity, mentioning exactly the quantity of arms and powder & shot I have got.***

Pictured is Pio Pico, cousin to Josefa Carrillo (Fitch's wife), and Governor of California during the Mexican-California period.

From Richard Pourade's The History of San Diego, Time of the Bells, *The Union-Tribune Publishing Co., San Diego, CA., 1961.*

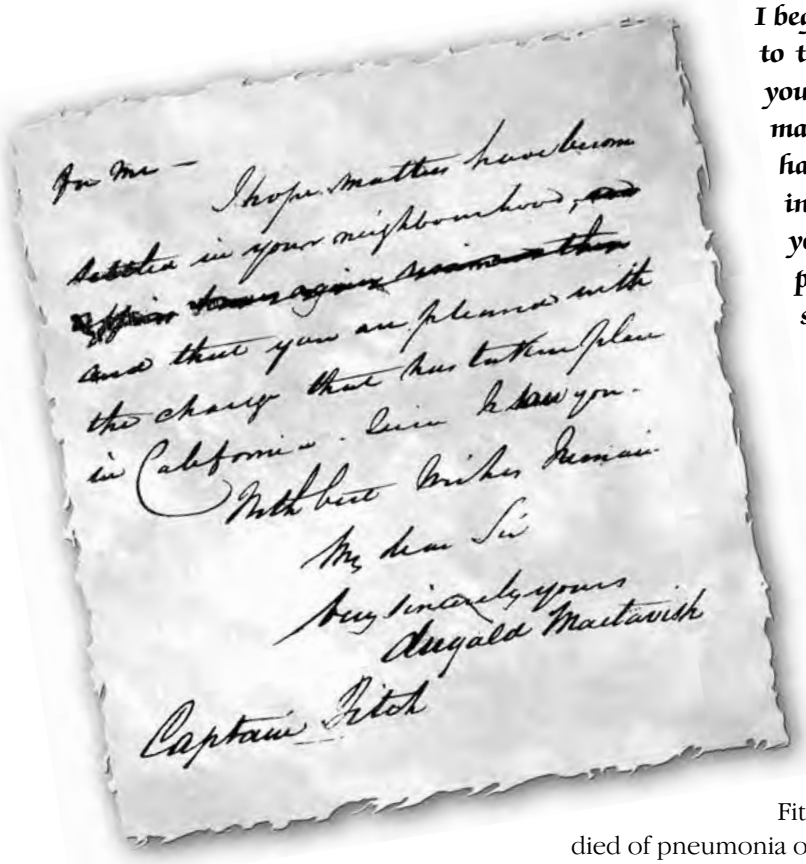
Mrs Fitch has been very bad and confined to her bed for two or three days but she has got quite well again the children also are also quite well Mrs Fitch sends her love to you and Gellermo. I do not think that you need be afraid of the Indians but incase of an accident I have everything ready for to move

yours truly
— James Orbell.[15]

The Indian attacks that residents feared never took place, and Mrs. Josephina Fitch indeed recovered from her illness and outlived her husband by several years. She would eventually move the family to Fitch's Rancho Sotoyome, (now Healdsburg, in Northern California).

In May 1846, President Polk declared war with Mexico. Hostilities between the two nations continued until Governor Pio Pico surrendered on 13 January 1847. Fitch shipped sea otter skins during the war, but lost "skins and boats" from unidentified causes.

Due to the decline of the sea otter population by 1848, Fitch found it difficult to acquire sea otter skins. An anxious agent for the Hudson Bay Company wrote a letter in January that reminded Fitch of his obligation to deliver on an unfilled order for sea otter pelts. The agent, who was apparently uncomfortable in the tropics, felt optimistic about the future of trade with California under an American Flag:



I beg to remind you of your note, binding yourself to deliver to the company agents here four sea otter and to inform you that only three have been received I hope you will make it a point to attend to this as soon as you can. I had expected the otter skins due would have been here in time for our homeward bound ship which sailed yesterday for Hyland — but have been disappointed I presume you have letters with — [unintelligible] ***the other skin you were owing me.***

I have now been here some eight or ten months but can not say that I like it much the climate is all together too warm for me.

I hope matters have been settled in your neighborhood and that you are pleased with the changes that have taken place in California since I saw you.[16]

With best wishes...

—dugald Mactavish

Fitch was active in the sea otter trade at San Diego until he died of pneumonia on 10 January 1849. He never made much money in fur trading (though he prospered in other areas of trade and land acquisitions). He struggled to turn a profit from the thick fur of the sea otter for eight years, enduring revolutions, stubborn otter hunters, and war.

The "Fitch Castle" on the Russian River, Northern California.

Courtesy of the Healdsburg Museum, Healdsburg, California

H. D. Fitch's involvement in the trade of the pelts of fur-bearing animals brought him in contact with many trappers, hunters and mountain men. Cyrus Alexander, a former trapper and otter hunter, met Henry Fitch in San Diego and was sent to the "Frontera del Norte" of Alta California, where he managed the 48,800 acre Sotoyome Rancho along the Russian River. With minimal financial backing and shipments of manufactured goods from Fitch, and the assistance of local Pomo and Wappo people, Alexander built an adobe for the Fitches on the southeast side of the Russian River, in the shadow of what is now called Fitch Mountain, near present day Healdsburg.

Many other American and Californio traders and entrepreneurs, like Fitch, had commercial relationships with the expanding Russian-American Company. The Russians and their Alaska Native hunters had been exploring, charting and "poaching" sea otters the entire length of the California coast. The verdant valleys of the Russian River watershed were explored and Russian ranches had been established in three main locations. In 1808, Ivan Kuskov and his crew explored Bodega Bay, which they called Port Rumiantsev, after a Russian patron of exploration, and later traveled through and investigated twenty-five miles up the Russian River, which he called the Slavianka, and passed through what would become the (Cyrus) Alexander Valley area of Fitch's original Sotoyome Grant. The area which would become Sonoma County, during the period of Russian influence (1808-1841), had very few non-native residents and so the citizens, whether they were Russian, Californio or American, were for the most part acquainted. Though their politics and national affiliations differed, they seemed to get along.

Henry Delano Fitch died in 1849 without ever having lived on his Sotoyome Rancho. Josefa Carrillo de Fitch and nine of her children settled on the Russian River rancho shortly after his death. The humble adobe built in 1844 was remodeled many times with lumber from the mills Henry had encouraged and, in 1878, the new, formidable structure had seventeen rooms. "Fitch's Castle," as it was called, burned in 1913. Henry, Josefa and their intricate and influential web of relatives and descendants indelibly marked the pages of California history and are remembered particularly in connection with the colorful years preceding statehood.

Daniel F. Murley is curator of the Healdsburg Museum, and a retired Ranger and Archaeologist for the State of California. Murley spent 25 years at Fort Ross, assisting in the excavations of the Russian-American Company's site. He also worked on the Farallon Islands, and in Alaska, at the site of the first permanent Russian settlement (1784) on Kodiak Island.

In 1968, archaeological excavations on Presidio Hill in San Diego, uncovered a forgotten cemetery. Among the finds was the grave of Henry Delano Fitch. The remains had been placed in an elaborate leather-covered coffin embossed with the letters *HDF*. **The interment of Henry Delano Fitch suggests that this pioneer American in San Diego, who had been a resourceful businessman, did not want to be forgotten. Fitch's trade in sea otter skins (only a small part of his larger concerns), provided one portal through which one can observe early American commerce and trade in the Mexican-California era.**

From "Landscape of the Past, the Story of the Royal Presidio Excavations," Rita Larkin, ed., The Journal of San Diego History, Vol. 14, no. 4, Oct. 1968.

NOTES

1 California Dept. of Fish and Game, "Californias Living Marine Resource: A Status Report," December 2001.

2 Ronald L. Miller, "Henry Delano Fitch: A Yankee Trader in California: 1826-1849," (Masters Thesis, USC, 1972), 118.

3 Adele Ogden, "Captain Henry Fitch, San Diego Merchant, 1825-1849," *Journal of San Diego History*, Vol. 27, no. 4, 1981.

4 Phillip Crosthwaite, "San Diego in 1845," *San Diego Union*, 29 Mar 1885.

5 Ogden, "Fitch," 1981.

6 Henry Delano Fitch, Stokes to Fitch, 7 May 1844, folder 301, Documentos para la Historia de California (Originals at the Bancroft Library).

7 Stokes to Fitch, folder 301, Fitch "Documentos."

8 Allen Light hunted with George Nidever and Isaac Sparks and operated from Santa Barbara. He left the others to organize his own hunting parties around 1838, operating along the Lower Coast. He still worked with Sparks and Nidever, but sometimes Light competed with his partners on the hunting grounds. Light was well respected by the other hunters. He was a crack shot, and was tough enough to have survived a mauling from a grizzly bear. One who knew him remarked, Light was "a man of great strength and a good shot," and a another fellow hunter wrote: "He was quite intelligent, well behaved and mannerly, and a good hunter." Light was respected by the government as well. He had been appointed in 1839, as "principle representative of the National Armada, assigned to the branch of sea otter hunting." The appointment allowed him to "take measures which prudence dictates" to stop the poaching of sea otters. Light hunted sea otters until he purchased a saloon and store at Old Town in 1847. In 1851, Light gave up bartending and storekeeping to try his luck in the gold mines at Yuba County. See David J Weber, "A Black American in Mexican San Diego, Two Recently Recovered Documents," *Journal of San Diego History*, Vol. 20, no. 2, 1974; William Dane Phelps, *Fore and Aft; or Leaves From the Life of an Old Sailor*, Boston, 1871, 266; George Nidever, *The Life and Adventures of George Nidever*, William Henry Ellison ed, University of California Press, 1937, 39.

9 William Heath Davis, *Seventy-five years in California* (San Francisco: J. Howell, 1929), 158.

10 Robertson to Fitch, 10 August 1843, folder 267, Fitch "Documentos."

11 Fitch to Abel Stearns, 3 Aug 1840, Stearns Collection, Huntington Library. Isaac Sparks was a sea otter hunter from Santa Barbara who had hunted with Allen Light and George Nidever under the license of William Goodwin Dana. Like Fitch, he had married into California citizenship. Sparks opened a store and sold general merchandise, but still hunted sea otters until he left for the gold camps on the Feather River during the gold rush. He became ill and later returned to Santa Barbara where he served as a member of the city council. See Arthur Woodward, "Isaac Sparks–Sea Otter Hunter," *Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*, no. 20 (June 1938), 42-59.

12 Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (Santa Barbara: Wallece Hedderd), 4: 2-42.

13 Orbell to Fitch, 3 June 1841, folder 166, Fitch "Documentos."

14 Ogden, "Captian Henry Fitch."

15 Orbell to Fitch, 3 June 1841, folder 166, Fitch "Documentos."

Eighth Maritime Heritage Conference

October 9 – 12, 2007
Maritime Museum of San Diego, California

The Maritime Heritage Conference is a triennial event designed specifically for those interested in maritime culture, history, and heritage. This conference gives researchers the opportunity to present the manifold aspects of the story of human interaction with oceans, seas, and waterways, and to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for this integral part of our history. Specialists in maritime history, education, the preservation of historic vessels, marine sanctuaries, historic small craft, lighthouses, underwater archaeology, as well as interested amateurs will gather in San Diego to socialize, exchange ideas, and share experiences. Those wishing to register for the conference should visit the official website found at **www.sdmaritime.org** and follow the link to the Maritime Heritage Conference.

The response by contributing organizations and interested individuals to the official *Call for Papers* has been truly phenomenal. Member organizations, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee, the Historic Naval Ships Association, the Naval Historical Foundation, and the Museum Small Craft Association, have submitted more than thirty complete panels. These collected presentations reflect the rich tapestry that makes maritime culture, tradition, history, and science such a vibrant group of subjects. The presenters are among the most prominent specialists in their respective fields, and promise a series of papers that will not only entertain, but also inform, by representing the cutting edge of current research. Conference attendees will learn about developments in the field of underwater archaeology, the vital role played by maritime sanctuaries, tall ships and education, and the history and preservation of naval vessels, to name but a few of the topics to be presented and discussed. As well as these officially sponsored panels, over 100 papers have also been proposed by individual researchers, educators, and maritime heritage professionals. These represent an enormous breadth of learning and expertise. Attendees will have upward of seventy different panels to choose from, making this one of the largest Maritime Heritage Conferences ever held.

With all conference sessions held on board the vessels of the **Maritime Museum of San Diego** and the **San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum**, this conference offers participants the unique opportunity of not simply

Eighth Maritime Heritage Conference

listening to presentations, but also experiencing maritime heritage firsthand. The World War II Victory Ship, SS *Lane Victory*, will berth alongside the Maritime Museum of San Diego for the duration of the conference. Attendees may travel free of charge on the *Lane Victory* as she steams south from Los Angeles to San Diego on Monday, **October 8.** Those interested should check the appropriate box on the conference registration form. Attendees also have the option of returning to San Pedro on board the *Lane Victory* on Monday, **October 15.**

The visit of the *Lane Victory* to San Diego also coincides with the conferral of the World Ship Trust award by the Trust chairman, Lord Ambrose Greenway. This ceremony will be held on board the *Lane Victory* at 2:00 P.M. on Tuesday, October 9.

Conference festivities will commence officially at 5:00 P.M. on the evening of Tuesday, **October 9**, with a welcome reception on the *Star of India*, the world's oldest active sailing ship. Entry to this reception is included with full conference registration. The American Society of Marine Artists' Region 5 Maritime Art Exhibit will also open on board the *Star of India* in the evening, and conferees will have the opportunity of viewing some of the best maritime artists in North America.

The following morning at 8:00 A.M., Wednesday, **October 10**, all will gather on the flight deck of the USS *Midway* for the official commencement of the conference proceedings. The keynote address formally opening the conference will be delivered by Ian Toll, author of *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy*, published in 2006. Following this, conference sessions will get off to a brisk start at 9:30 A.M. Specifics of the daily conference program can be found on the official conference website.

The conference will conclude on the evening of Friday, **October 12,** with a true highlight – the formal conference banquet and harbor cruise on board the luxury yacht *Inspiration Hornblower*. This will be a chance to wine, dine, and celebrate maritime heritage against the spectacular backdrop of San Diego's historic harbor and city lights. Dr. Alex Roland, co-author of *The Way of the Ship: America's Maritime History Re-envisioned*, to be published in late 2007, will be the banquet keynote speaker.

Questions regarding conference panels and papers can be addressed to the **conference program chair, Kevin Sheehan, at librarian@sdmaritime.org (tel. 619 234-9153, ext. 118)**. Inquiries about special needs, the *Lane Victory* voyage, registration, sponsorship packages, annual general meetings, and vendor/exhibitor booths, can be sent to the **conference coordinator, Robyn Wilner at rwilner@sdmaritime.org (tel. 619 234-9153, ext.106)**.

Inquiries concerning all panels and papers should be directed to the Conference Program Chair, Kevin Sheehan, at librarian@sdmaritime.org: (619) 234-9153 ext. 118

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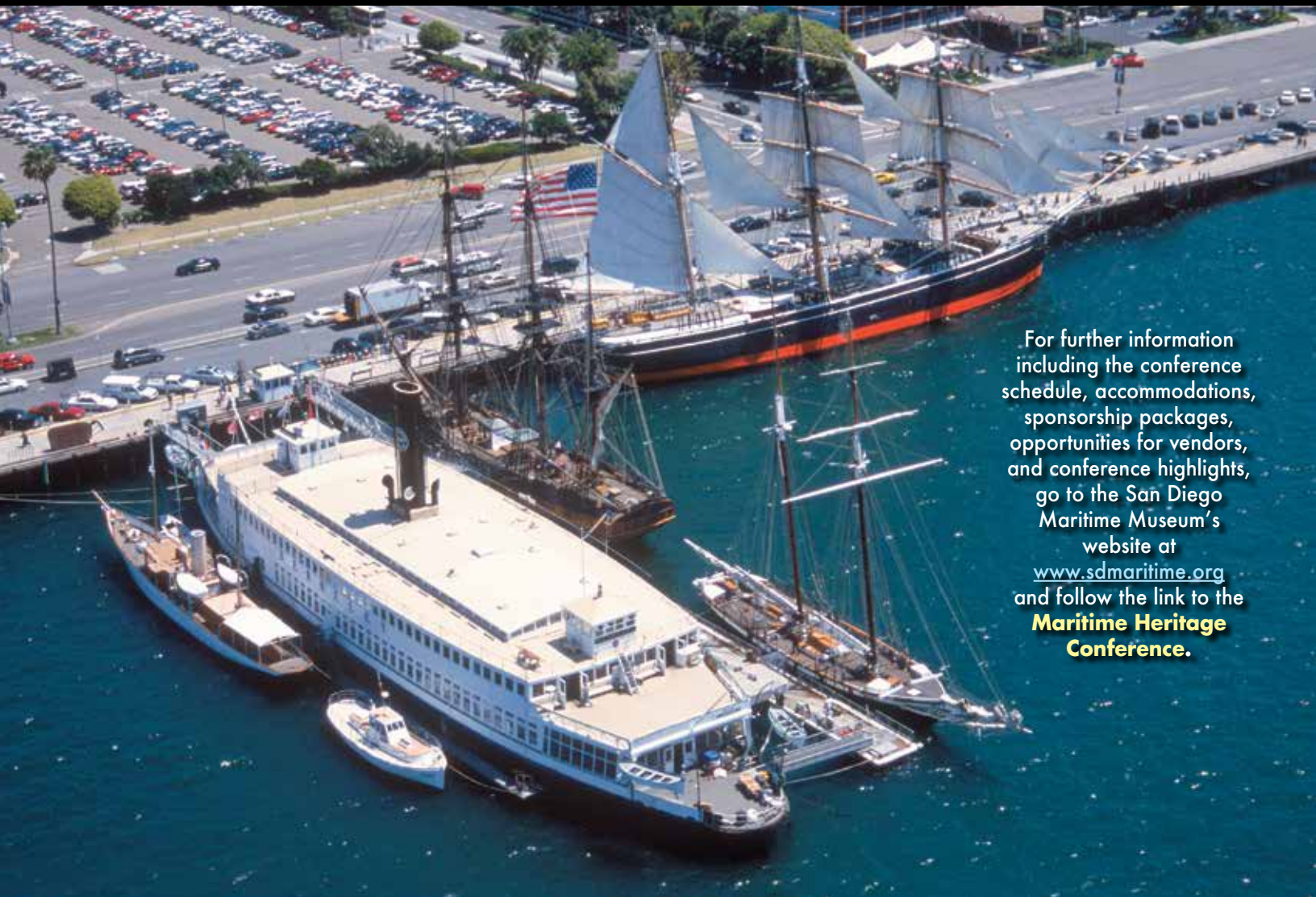

For further information including the conference schedule, accommodations, sponsorship packages, opportunities for vendors, and conference highlights, go to the San Diego Maritime Museum's website at www.sdmaritime.org and follow the link to the **Maritime Heritage Conference.**

A special issue of **Mains'l Haul**
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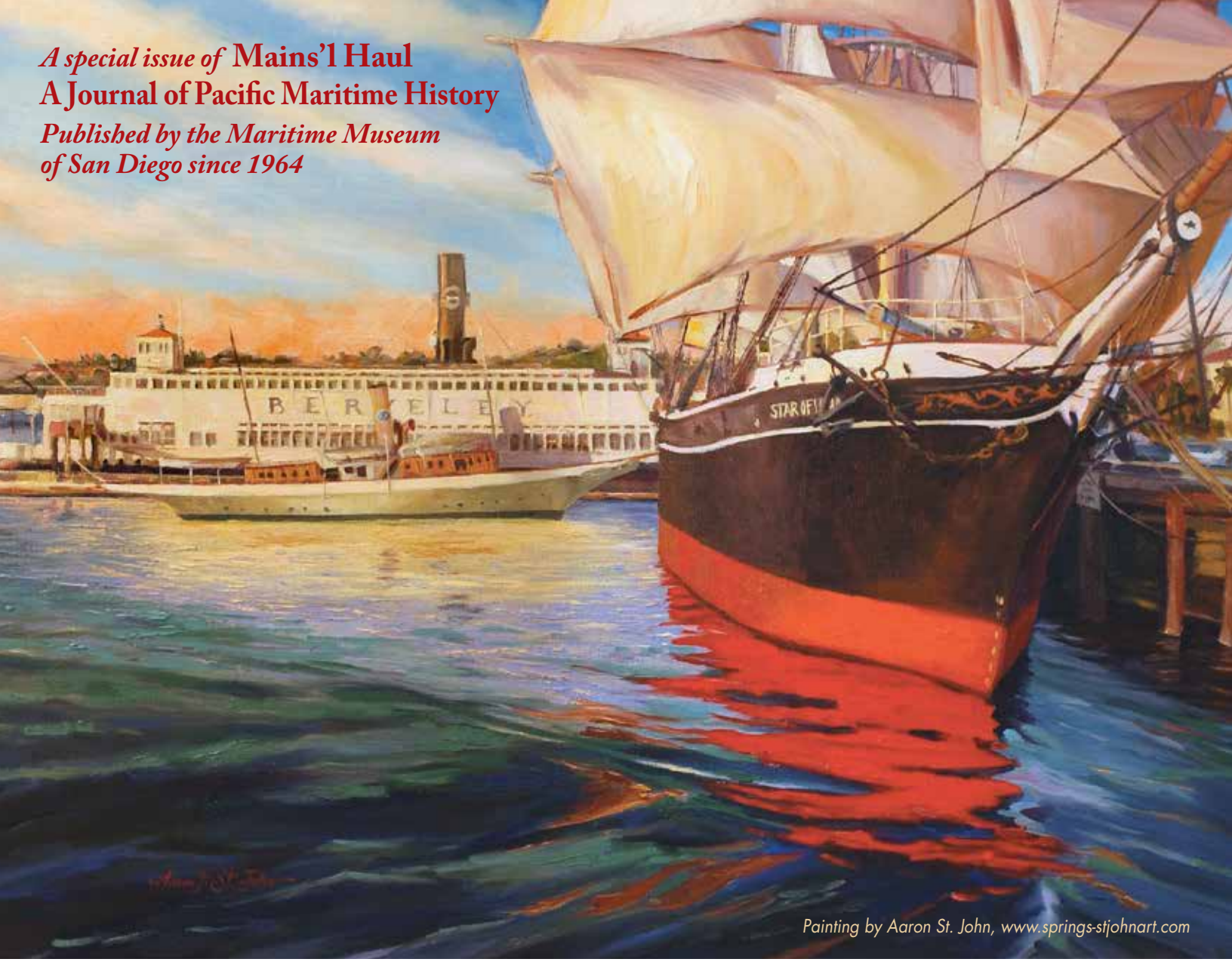

Painting by Aaron St. John, www.springs-stjohnart.com

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